



**2** Lebanese president to visit Kuwait, hails Amir's stances



**17** NBK reports net profits of KD 322.4m for FY 2017



**31** 'Three Billboards' wins big at female friendly SAG awards



**16** Struggling Djokovic out but Federer into quarters



# Cabinet discusses Duterte's 'sudden' Filipino worker ban

FM: Kuwait has 'clean' human rights record • Divisions over Sabeeh grilling

By B Izzak and Agencies

**KUWAIT:** Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah briefed the Cabinet yesterday about Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte's "sudden" suspension of sending workers to Kuwait, which runs counter to mutual interests. Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled said Duterte's "sudden statement" prompted relevant authorities in Kuwait to contact authorities in the Philippines to clarify the president's statement. He said the president mentioned individual cases which did not apply to the majority, and those cases were subjected to legal procedures.

Kuwait, said the top diplomat, has a clean human rights record due to which expatriates enjoy full rights. Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled said the laws in Kuwait organize relations between employees and employers, which has encouraged many nationalities to come work in Kuwait. The foreign ministry summoned Ambassador of the Philippines Renato Pedro Villa on Sunday and expressed regret and bewilderment towards Duterte's decision.

In another development, the National Assembly session today is expected to witness the grilling of Minister of Social Affairs and Labor Hind Al-Sabeeh over a variety of allegations, including her alleged failure to fix the demographic structure which is massively in favor of expatriates. The minister may ask for a two-week delay, but the three grillers MPs Al-Humaidi Al-Subaei, Khaled Al-Otaibi and



**KUWAIT:** The Cabinet holds its weekly meeting yesterday. — KUNA

Majed Al-Mutairi carried out a rehearsal in the Assembly yesterday. The grilling is likely to take several hours and will take place at the start of the weekly session today.

MPs however appeared divided over the grilling, with several lawmakers expressing total support and others saying they will first listen to the minister's replies to the allegations before declaring their opinion. MP Riyadh Al-Adasani said that he is not inclined to sign any no-confidence motion against the minister, as he considers that she has convinced him so far.

Opposition MP Shuaib Al-Muwaizri said that he does not want to hear the minister's defense because she has not fulfilled her promises after another grilling last year. He said that he will support any no-confidence motion against the minister. Muwaizri also said he has

filed a complaint at the International Parliamentarians Union against several people over the jailing of MPs Waleed Al-Tabtabaei and Jamaan Al-Harbash. He called on all lawmakers to vote on a letter sent by the two MPs calling for allowing them to attend the grilling of the minister.

About 20 MPs have signed a motion calling to debate two draft laws relating to domestic helpers today after the grilling of the minister. The lawmakers said in their request that the cost of recruiting domestic helpers remains very high despite establishing a special government company, and the issue needs to be debated. They said that the problem has become more complicated because the company has so far failed to perform the duties it was established for.



**BAGHDAD:** Editor-in-Chief of Kuwait Times Abd Al-Rahman Al-Alyan (left) meets Speaker of the Iraqi Parliament Salim Al-Jubouri on Sunday. Jubouri praised the "great" positions adopted by Kuwait during a meeting with a Kuwaiti media delegation currently visiting Baghdad. — KUNA (See Page 2)

## News in brief

### UAE house fire kills 7 children

**DUBAI:** A house fire killed seven siblings yesterday near the eastern city of Fujairah in the United Arab Emirates, the education ministry said in a statement. The victims from the Rabia family ranged from kindergarten age to the eighth grade, the ministry added on its official Twitter page. A UAE newspaper quoted a local police and civil defense officials saying that their mother reported the fire at dawn and though the cause of the blaze remained unknown, a short-circuit was suspected. "We have today instructed the state's civil defense to ensure immediately that all necessary fire protection systems are in place in all citizens' homes", Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum, Prime Minister and Vice-President of the United Arab Emirates and ruler of Dubai, said in a tweet.

### Louvre Abu Dhabi replaces map

**ABU DHABI:** The Louvre Abu Dhabi said yesterday it has replaced a map of the Arabian Peninsula that omitted Qatar, embroiled in a months-long diplomatic dispute with its Gulf neighbors. The museum said the map was an "oversight" that had been rectified. The map, one of several aiming at placing exhibits in their geographical context, was located in the children's section of the museum. The error was pointed out on Jan 19 by Qatar's museums head, Al Mayassa Al-Thani, who retweeted a picture of the map showing Bahrain and the Gulf coast with blank sea in the place of Qatar. The UAE and Qatar have long had sour relations, but they worsened last year when Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain and Egypt in June cut all ties with Doha, including land, sea and air links.

### New curbs on Mideast airports

**WASHINGTON:** The US Transportation Security Administration said yesterday it is requiring six Middle Eastern carriers to participate in an enhanced cargo screening program as part of an effort to raise global aviation security. The emergency amendment covers Egypt Air operating out of Cairo International Airport, Royal Jordanian operating out of Queen Alia International Airport, Saudia operating out of King Abdul-Aziz International Airport and King Khalid International Airport, Qatar Airways operating out of Doha International Airport and Emirates and Etihad operating out of Dubai International Airport and Abu Dhabi International Airport. The TSA said most of the requirements are already being voluntarily applied by airlines around the world.

## Pence vows US embassy move by 2019; Abbas seeks EU recognition

**JERUSALEM/BRUSSELS:** US Vice President Mike Pence pledged to move the American embassy in Israel to Jerusalem by the end of 2019 yesterday in a speech to Israel's parliament that saw Arab lawmakers expelled after they shouted in protest. As Pence spoke, Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas arrived to meet European Union foreign ministers in Brussels, urging them to "swiftly" recognize the state of Palestine.

Pence's speech, filled with biblical references and praise of Israel, was greeted with loud applause by Israeli Jewish lawmakers, including Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Referring to the 1948 founding of Israel, he said US President Donald Trump's decision to recognize Jerusalem as the country's capital last month "righted a 70-year wrong". The decision has drawn near global condemnation and deeply angered the Palestinians, who have refused to meet with Pence on his visit. "In the weeks ahead, our administration will advance its plan to open the United States embassy in Jerusalem," Pence said. "And that United States embassy will open before the end of next year."

As Pence was set to begin his speech, a group of



**JERUSALEM:** Israel's Arab parliamentary bloc and Knesset members scuffle with security after they held signs in protest during the speech of US Vice President Mike Pence in Israel's parliament yesterday. — AFP

around a dozen Arab Israeli lawmakers shouted in protest, with some holding signs saying Jerusalem is the capital of Palestine. They were escorted out by security agents as Netanyahu and others stood and applauded their expulsion. Saeb Erekat, secretary-general of the Palestine Liberation Organization, denounced Pence's speech as "messianic" and a "gift to extremists". Pence's visit, initially scheduled for December before

being postponed, is the final leg of a trip that has included talks in Egypt and Jordan as well as a stop at a US military facility near the Syrian border. Arab outrage over Trump's Jerusalem decision on Dec 6 had prompted the cancellation of several planned meetings ahead of Pence's tour. Abbas and other Palestinian leaders refused to meet Pence, making his visit a rare

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## Turkey steps up assault on Kurd militia in Syria

**HASSA, Turkey:** Turkey yesterday intensified its offensive against Kurdish militia targets in Syria as President Recep Tayyip Erdogan vowed there would be no stepping back in a campaign that has stoked concern among Ankara's allies and neighbors. The Turkish military on Saturday launched operation "Olive Branch", its second major incursion into Syrian territory during the seven-year civil war. The operation, where Turkish war planes and artillery are backing a major ground incursion launched with Ankara-backed Syrian rebels and Turkish tanks, aims to oust the People's Protection Units (YPG) militia from its enclave of Afrin.

Turkey considers the YPG to be a terror group and the Syrian offshoot of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) which has waged a bloody three-decade insurgency against the Turkish state. "We are determined. Afrin will be sorted out. We will take no step back," Erdogan said in a televised speech in Ankara. But the operation is hugely sensitive as Washington relied on



**HASSA, Turkey:** Syrian opposition fighters and Turkish troops are seen near the Syria border yesterday. — AFP

the YPG to oust Islamic State (IS) militants from their Syrian strongholds and the Kurdish militia now holds much of Syria's north.

State-run news agency Anadolu said ground forces had already taken 15 villages and other locations in

their advance into Syria. Meanwhile, Turkish artillery fired shells on YPG targets inside Syria and ground troops opened a new front by moving on Afrin from the town of Azaz to the east, state media said.

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## Local

# Iraqi Parliament Speaker hails Kuwait's 'great' initiatives

## Iraq seeks 'excellent' status with Kuwait: Interior Minister



BAGHDAD: Members of the Kuwaiti media delegation, including Kuwait Times Editor-in-Chief Abd Al-Rahman Al-Alyan (second from left) pose for a group photo with Speaker of the Iraqi Parliament Salim Al-Jubouri.

BAGHDAD: Speaker of the Iraqi Parliament Salim Al-Jubouri has praised the 'great' positions adopted by the State of Kuwait starting with His Highness the Amir, government and the Kuwaiti people, noting the special relationship between the two countries.

Al-Jubouri said in a speech on Sunday night during a meeting with a Kuwaiti media delegation that Kuwait's public policy is well known for containment besides its initiatives to assist in overcoming problems that arise in the region including formal, popular and sports initiatives that contributed to healing the rift among states.

He added that the State of Kuwait continued its support for Iraq through the development of relations and building of joint communication with state institutions and various sectors of society not through the three branches only but also through the fourth power thanks to the various visits of Kuwaiti media delegations to Iraq. He expressed his hope to strengthen the attendance in the rare conference (Conference to rebuild Iraq) so that the Iraqi people can sense its outcome, stressing his keenness to develop relations between the two countries and overcome all the difficulties that may hinder it.

He pointed to the challenges that have been overcome by Iraq, which were culminated in victory over IS, stressing that this victory must be culminated in security and stability and renounce violence, terrorism and sectarianism.

He stressed the need to maintain security and intellectual stability through the closure of the ports, from which terrorism and extremism are being fed in cooperation with educational institutions, pointing to the importance of achieving political, economic and social reform. He said that in the past Iraq was suffering from sectarian divisions that threatened the unity and cohesion of the country and was overcome when everyone turned to logic, law and the Constitution.

He added that the current reality differed from what was in the past, thanks to the declared calls for the need to renounce sectarianism and support co-existence, stressing the need for cooperation, unity and a unified position. He said that after the announcement of the Federal Court not to postpone the upcoming legislative elections, the House of Representatives will adopt a resolution endorsing a fixed date and come up with some controls, security and technical conditions to reassure those who doubt that elections are fair.

### Continuous communication

Meanwhile, Iraqi Interior Minister Qasim Al-Araji said that the Iraqi government is determined to upgrade its relations with Kuwait from 'very good to excellent,' adding that Kuwait is "a neighboring country and we respect all international agreements and resolutions." Araji said during his meeting with the Kuwaiti media delegation that is visiting the Iraqi capital Baghdad, that there is continuous communication with the Kuwaiti Interior Ministry and with the Kuwaiti Interior Minister, stressing commitment of Iraqi prime minister to create conditions to encourage Kuwaiti investments in Iraq. He expressed great optimism about the future of relations between the two countries.



Kuwait Times Editor-in-Chief Abd Al-Rahman Al-Alyan meets with Iraqi Interior Minister Qasim Al-Araji.

stressing that there is nothing that could disturb the relationship between the two nations.

He expressed hope that the government relations between the two countries would resemble those social ties, expressing readiness to bolster them at all levels. He said that the elimination of the so-called Islamic State (IS) through military means alone was not enough, as it must be eliminated intellectually and through intelligence cooperation, stressing that once the situation stabilizes in Syria, conditions will settle in Iraq with the need to take into account the future of the Syrian people in the determination of their fate.

He pointed out that there has been a great deal of work against local and international terrorist organizations, stressing the need for regional and intelligence cooperation to eliminate these organizations and the need to form a regional security system, community reconciliation at home and the return of displaced persons to their areas. He pointed out that there is a single security coordination with the neighboring countries which did not reach a "system" status, stressing that "by overcoming the differences in the region, arranging the internal situation and the activation of intelligence, no terrorist organization would be able to harm Iraq."

### \$100 billion

The Kuwaiti delegation also met with Iraqi Planning Minister Salman Al-Jumaili, who announced that Iraq has set up an integrated plan for the reconstruction of the country to be presented to the Kuwait International Conference for Rebuilding Iraq slated in Kuwait mid-February.

Jumaili said that the plan is based on extensive studies on the scale of damage done to infrastructure, estimated at \$100 billion, including about \$47 billion in infrastructure and government facilities. He explained that the reconstruction plan will extend over a period of 10 years to be funded from multiple outlets, the most important of which is by the Federal Government of Iraq within the investment budgets in

similar bitter experience in 1990, he said, referring to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.

"His Highness the Amir, the then foreign minister, played a key role in Kuwait liberation and restoring the country's active and essential role in the region," President Aoun recalled.

On the bilateral ties, he said both countries maintained firm and deep-rooted historical relationship and share the desire to open new horizons for cooperation in all areas. "The state-to-state and people-to-people friendship creates proper ground for the two countries to restore the unity and solidarity of the Arab nation in the face of mounting challenges.

"To do so requires building a political consensus on how to address the current problems through open and candid dialogue because risks face all of us," he stressed, citing the efforts of His Highness the Amir to bring the views of Arab leaders close to each other.

President Aoun expressed desire to work with Kuwait for preventing hostile forces from taking advantage from the current disputes among some Arab countries in order to undermine the Palestine question, which is the Arabs' central cause. He denounced the Israeli designs to Judaize Jerusalem and blur its Arab identity, and deprive the Palestinians of the right to statehood and the refugees of the right to return to their homes.

Dealing with the tourist sector that suffered problems late last year due to security concerns, President Aoun said his country doubled efforts to restore its position as a main destination for tourists from the Gulf region, particularly from Kuwait. "The security of tourists is an integral part of the security of Lebanon. There is no justification for Arab brothers to panic into staying away from Lebanon. "The situation in Lebanon is



Members of the Kuwaiti media delegation pose for a group photo with Iraqi Planning Minister Salman Al-Jumaili.



Members of the Kuwaiti media delegation pose for a group photo with Iraqi Interior Minister Qasim Al-Araji.

the country, besides grants and financial investments from the Kuwait International Conference on rebuilding Iraq. "We rely heavily on international support at the Kuwait conference, whether from international organizations or direct support from countries, in addition to loans or grants or through the entry of foreign, Arab and Gulf investments," he added. He pointed out that the Iraqi government will present within this plan 130 projects to investors in Kuwait, including 10 projects that are very important for the Iraqi economy, including Baiji oil refinery in Salahuddin province, in addition to phosphate and sulfur factories in the west of the country.

He stressed that the plan will not only involve the reconstruction of infrastructure but will include programs for economic and human development, community reconciliation, spreading moderation and rejecting extremism.

He pointed out that the reconstruction will target the areas and provinces of Iraq that have been directly and indirectly affected by terrorist operations. He urged investors not to hesitate to enter the Iraqi market at the present time because the opportunity will not always be available, in his opinion, citing Turkey, which highly contributed with many of its companies in the Iraqi investments in most provinces without intermediaries.

He explained that the Iraqi government facilitated many of its procedures to grant investment licenses,

especially to large Arab companies, stressing that the Higher Committee for Investment in Iraq, headed by Iraqi Prime Minister Haider Abadi, granted in its first meeting about three months ago investment opportunities for well-known UAE companies without entering the competition in its desire to attract well-known companies to work in Iraq.

Also, Iraqi Minister of Industry Mohammad Sudani announced a plan to sell factories destroyed during the war against IS on investors, during the conference. The Ministry of Industry prepared a file including all factories that were damaged or destroyed, and plans to distribute copies of this file to investors during the February 12-14 conference, Sudani said. He said factories would be offered for all investors, but Kuwaiti investors would have a priority. Iraq, added Sudani, was genuinely interested in facilitating business procedures for Kuwaiti investors.

The Kuwaiti delegation includes Kuwait Times Editor-in-Chief Abd Al-Rahman Al-Alyan, Deputy Director General for Editorial Affairs and Editor-in-Chief of Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) Saad Al-Ali, Secretary of Kuwait Journalists Association Adnan Al-Rashed and senior officials in the Ministry of Information and Kuwaiti newspapers. The international donor conference to rebuild Iraq will be held from the 12th to 14th of February 2018, chaired by the European Union (EU), Iraq, Kuwait, the UN and the World Bank. —KUNA

## Amir's stances very supportive of Lebanon: Aoun

BEIRUT: Lebanese President Michel Aoun said the stances of His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah since he was foreign minister have made Kuwait very close to Lebanon and other friendly countries. The State of Kuwait under His Highness the Amir is held in great esteem by the Lebanese and all Arab peoples, President Aoun said in an interview ahead of his first visit to Kuwait as president, scheduled for today.

"My visit to Kuwait is to convey a genuine desire on the part of the Lebanese people for openness and cooperation with all active players in the region on the principles of mutual respect for the sovereignty, independence and privacy of each other. "I will carry a message of love and respect," he pointed out. President Aoun noted that Lebanon has never adopted a hostile policy towards any countries in the Middle East region.

"To the contrary, Lebanon was antagonized and victimized repeatedly by aggressors, but struggled relentlessly to defend its own values and distinctive role in the region," he said, apparently alluding to Israel.

The State of Kuwait understands, more than any other country in the region, the situation in Lebanon because it (Kuwait) underwent a

stable and calm thanks to the vigilance of the security services and the strong will of the people for stability," he said, citing recent reports of field studies.

Regarding the new oil and natural gas discoveries in Lebanon, President Aoun welcomed cooperation with Kuwaiti energy producers that have long experience in this sector. "It sounded a far-fetched for Lebanon to join the oil club but the dream came true," he said, noting that many energy companies from around the world have offered bids to explore for and exploit the energy resources in Lebanon. He added that Lebanon is preparing to launch a plan to turn its economy from consuming into productive. The plan is well set through taking the advice of experienced international companies, fighting corruption and developing infrastructure. As for the Syrian refugees in Lebanon, President Aoun said that more than 1.8 million refugees added more strains on the already fragile economy of Lebanon besides the security burdens.

"Many donor countries failed to honor their aid pledges and humanitarian undertakings towards Lebanon. This is why we are lobbying for the return of the refugees to safe havens inside Syria," he regretted. "In this connection, Lebanon pins high hopes on Kuwait which proved to be a reliable friend of Lebanon at numerous regional and international forums," President Aoun went on.

"The State of Kuwait, mindful of the developments of the situations in Lebanon and the region, can play an essential role in international conferences, we are preparing for, in support of Lebanon," he stated. President Aoun added that Lebanon's policy to keep its distance from turmoil in neighboring countries gained global praise. —KUNA

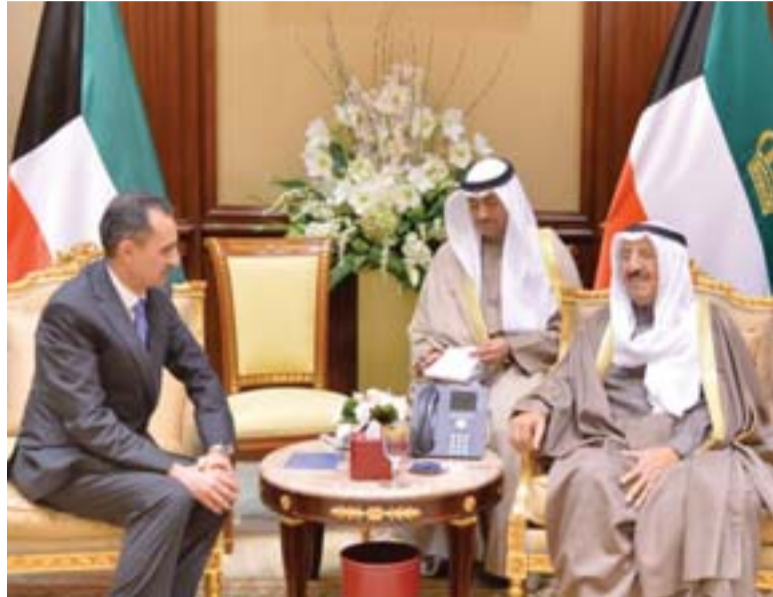
Local

# Amir, Crown Prince receive Ambassador of Australia

## King Abdullah invites Amir to visit Jordan



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with the Ambassador of Australia to Kuwait Warren Hauck. — KUNA



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Jordanian ambassador to Kuwait Sager Matrouk Abu Shtal.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with the Ambassador of Australia to Kuwait Warren Hauck.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received yesterday at Bayan Palace the Ambassador of Australia to Kuwait Warren Hauck on the occasion of ending his tenure. The meeting was attended by Amiri Diwan Affairs Minister Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah later received the Australian envoy in a meeting that was attended by head of the Protocols at the Diwan of His

Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mubarak Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Amir received the credentials of newly-appointed Ambassadors of Ghana, India, Portugal, Denmark, and Sweden. The ceremonies were attended by Sheikh Ali Jarrah, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Head of His Highness the Amir's Office Ahmad Fahad Al-Fahad, Amiri Diwan

Advisor Mohamad Abdullah Abu Al-Hasan, Head of Amiri Protocol Sheikh Khaled Al-Abdullah Al-Nasser Al-Sabah, Assistant Foreign Minister for the Protocol Affairs Ambassador Dhari Ajan Al-Ajran and Chief of Kuwait's Amiri Guard, Brigadier Hamad Abdullah Al-Saleh.

Separately, His Highness the Amir received a letter from King of Jordan Abdullah II tackling bilateral ties between the two nations and means to boost and enhance them. The letter included an official invitation

from King Abdullah II to His Highness the Amir to visit Jordan. The Ambassador of Jordan to Kuwait Sager Matrouk Abu Shtal handed His Highness the Amir the letter. In other news, His Highness the Crown Prince received Minister of Finance Dr Nayef Falah Al-Hajraf, as well as President of the National Security Bureau Sheikh Thamer Ali Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, and Chairman of the National Industries Group Saad Mohammad Al-Saad. — KUNA

## US State Secretary to attend anti-terrorism conference: Official



KUWAIT: Assistant Foreign Minister for the United States Ambassador Reem Al-Khaled (right) and Ambassador of Australia to Kuwait Warren Hauck cut the cake during the reception. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson is set to take part in a conference of the International Coalition Against Terrorism to be hosted by Kuwait in February, reflecting the great efforts various countries are making in combating terrorism, a Kuwaiti official said.

Assistant Foreign Minister for the United States Ambassador Reem Al-Khaled made those statements to reports on the sidelines of a reception hosted by the Ambassador of Australia to Kuwait Warren Hauck on Sunday at Jumeirah Messilah Hotel, on the occasion of Australia's National Day. Khaled praised the excellent and exemplary Kuwaiti-Australian relations on all levels. Meanwhile, Hauck said the Australia Day celebration was themed 'clean and green' this year. "Kuwait is an important partner for Australia. Australian exports to Kuwait are valued at AUD 700 million and we estimate Kuwaiti investment into Australia is valued over \$15 billion," he said, adding that 2017 was the last year Australia exported cars to the Middle East, including Kuwait, with Australian auto producers ceasing production in 2017.

Hauck noted Australia and Kuwait are continuing to develop new areas of cooperation. In October 2017, the Kuwait Foreign Petroleum Exploration Corporation (KUFPEC) announced that its first investment in international liquefied natural gas production through the

Wheatstone LNG Project in Australia had commenced production.

"This multibillion dollar development is an important partnership between Australia and Kuwait. We have also developed new education and science cooperation. Australia's University of Canberra and Kuwait's Dasman Diabetes Institute signed an agreement this year for cooperation on research around diabetes. The embassy also helped to bridge the gap between Australian and Kuwaiti government research agencies. Also, Australia has over 1,300 Kuwaiti students," Hauck said.

In his farewell speech, Hauck said: "It has been an honor and a privilege for us to represent Australia here in Kuwait over the last three years. Diplomacy is sometimes about the big issues helping to combat terrorism and coordinating humanitarian support in places like Syria, Iraq and Yemen - but it is also about building bridges between cultures, and at a personal level, the connections that can be made between people. I hope that over the last three years, we might have done something small to help convince you to look 'Down Under' and consider Australia for travel, study or business."

On the role of Australia in combating IS, he said: "We are supporting Iraq and Syria. In addition to our substantial military support, Australia has committed AUD 613 million in response to the Syria and Iraq crises since 2011. In 2017, Australia was elected to serve a three-year term on the UN Human Rights Council, the world's foremost body for promoting and protecting human rights. Australia is ready to work closely with other countries and civil society to protect and advance human rights around the world."

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## Local

## Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: A picture taken yesterday shows tower cranes operating at a construction site in Kuwait City with the 372-metre-high Liberation Tower seen in the background. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

# Ooredoo hosts aerial photography seminar at its headquarters

## More than 80 of Ooredoo's social media followers invited

**KUWAIT:** Ooredoo hosted an Aerial Photography seminar in collaboration with DJI and Falcon Company, presented by Ali Younis Ali, Film Maker and Director of Photography and Nezar Beidas, R&D Manager of Falcon Company. The objective of the Aerial Photography Seminar is to give a chance for Ooredoo's social media followers who are enthusiastic about drones and aerial photography to learn

from two experts that were present on that day. The seminar was met with major success, where more than 80 enthusiasts and drone fans were present to experience a unique hands on training experience with the DJI drones that were brought by the presenters.

The main highlight of the day took place after the Ooredoo Aerial Photography Seminar ended, in which the

participants went outdoors to apply their newly gained knowledge with the drones and started flying them outside the Ooredoo headquarters to record some amazing footage of the building itself with all the lively LED screens illuminating the night sky. Ooredoo will keep on supporting the youth, by helping them to discover their hobbies and interest fully with unique experiences such as this one.

Ooredoo's core values are based on caring, connecting and challenging, with a great focus on corporate social responsibility. Empowering youth play a major role in its strategy, in addition to directly translating the recommendations of His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah who stressed on numerous occasions the importance of investing in youth.



## Green Flame Gas Company finished Shegaia Solar Station

**KUWAIT:** The Green Flame Gas Company (GFGC) has achieved all related gas system networks for Shegaia Solar Power Station before the due date, Chairman of the Board Bashar Al-Qattan said. The Chairman has also pointed out the accomplishment of the Shegaia project which was a pleasure for the GFGC to participate in completing it, as it contributes to the advancement of Kuwait.

This press release was given dur-



KUWAIT: Bashar Al-Qattan is seen in a commemorative photo with the company's engineers and employees at the project.

ing the Horeca 2018 exhibition, held recently in Kuwait. The event was inaugurated by Sheikh Nimer Malik Al-Sabah, Deputy Secretary of Foreign Institute and International

Trade at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. The event specialized in the catering, hotel and restaurants industry and other related business.

## Dickson House celebrates 17th anniversary

**KUWAIT:** Dickson House Cultural Center celebrates today the 17th anniversary since its transformation into a cultural center, and named after the first British political agent Colonel Harold Dickson and his wife Violet. The Dickson House Cultural Centre is one of many other historical buildings acquired by the Kuwaiti National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL) which restored it and turned it into a tourist attraction.

The British Political Agency in Kuwait was based in a house that had been built in 1870 for a Kuwaiti merchant. The Dicksons moved into the house in 1929, and the building served as the British political agency until 1935. Dickson lived there until his death in 1959 and Dame Violet until the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990, when she was evacuated to Britain. Sadly, Dame Violet passed away before the liberation of Kuwait.

The museum's official in charge Amal Al-Hazaa said that



KUWAIT: The Dickson House Cultural Center. — KUNA

the house, which is located opposite of the dhow harbor in Sharq and east of Seif Palace, was built in the 19th century from local sea rocks. The house displays photos of Lord Curzon, a British statesman as well as photographs of Kuwaiti rulers from the time of Mubarak the Great to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

It is one of few surviving examples of Kuwait's 19th century architecture, with 30 rooms and two floors. The house was ransacked during the Iraqi invasion, but has since been restored by the NCCAL and opened for public in 23 January, 2001 where a number of cultural events take place as well as hosting international visitors. —KUNA

Local

Legalese

The Philippines' labor ban

By Attorney Fajer Ahmed



I was very saddened when I heard the news that Filipinos may be banned from entering Kuwait in the future because of the rise of torture cases against them in Kuwait. Filipinos have been in Kuwait for many years, and we Kuwaitis see and interact with them nearly on a daily basis - from waiters to teachers to nurses to engineers, accountants and so on. There is a population of approximately 250,000 Filipinos working in Kuwait, according to the Philippines foreign ministry - 60 percent of them as domestic workers.

As a lawyer who works closely with pro-bono organizations and has worked with many Filipino clients, I have been receiving many questions on the legalities of the ban and the consequences that may arise in the future, so I have answered the questions below. One thing though that I want to make clear - I have seen cases of domestic workers and migrant workers in Kuwait being mistreated regardless of where they are from, and it has also been clear to me that those that are mistreating others also are from different countries and not just Kuwaitis!

The issue here is not where the person is from, but the laws and bylaws that I hope will improve in the future for Kuwait to be a better place. I also hope that the public awareness and respect necessary between society members will improve.

Residency renewal

**Question:** As a Filipino who has been living in Kuwait all my life, will I be able to renew my residency in the future? I am worried that we will be banned from renewing our residencies.

**Fajer:** The news of the ban is not a law or bylaw, so we do not know what the consequences will be or if any bylaws will be issued in Kuwait. But from my understanding, there have not been any legal amendments in Kuwait currently and this decision is from the Philippines.

**Question:** I hear a lot about domestic violence or sexual harassment against domestic workers, and as a domestic worker myself, I would like to know what options I have should I ever be in such a situation.

**Fajer:** This question largely depends on the situation that you are in, but I would advise the following in general:

1. Always have a phone on you if possible. If not, know what options you have to communicate with the outside world available in the house.
2. Always have your embassy's number on you, as well as the emergency numbers of the police and so on.
3. Be aware of your address/location.

I hope the above helped. If you have a concern, please email me at ask@fajertlawyer.com

# 12-hour weak water supply in Khaitan, Farwaniya, 6 other areas

## Scheduled maintenance starts at 8:00 pm Friday

By Meshaal Al-Enezi and A Saleh

**KUWAIT:** The Ministry of Electricity and Water (MEW) has scheduled maintenance to be carried out on the freshwater network in Subhan. As a result, water supply will be affected in Khaitan, Farwaniya, Omariya, Yarmouk, Qurtuba, Shuhada, Zahra and Surra from 8:00 pm Friday to 8:00 am Saturday (12 hours). The weak water supply will be temporary, as part of the periodic maintenance program of the freshwater network, Assistant Undersecretary for Water Operation and Maintenance Khalifa Al-Furaij said.

Pharmacy sector

Health Minister Dr Basel Al-Sabah received the board of directors of the Pharmacists Society chaired by Waleed Al-Shimmari, and obstacles facing the pharmacy sector in the government were discussed. Shimmari said several important issues were discussed including the permanent appointment of an assistant undersecretary for the medicine and medical supplies sector and assistant undersecretary for medical supervision and inspection. He said it is necessary to appoint specialized undersecretaries in the pharmacy sector from within the health

ministry, as they understand the nature of challenges the sector faces.

Housing welfare

Director of the Public Authority for Housing Welfare



### Recommendation to send Interior's expenses to prosecution

Bader Al-Wuqayan said a tender to build houses in East Taima for citizens who already sold their government homes will be issued next week. He said the project has 509 homes, adding it will be completed in two years after signing the

contract and awarding the tender to the winning company. Nearly 1,600 citizens will benefit from the project.

Inspection

The public authority for food and nutrition conducted inspections in Qurain, resulting in issuing two citations and destroying 10,385 kg of fish and meat.

Interior's expenses

Chairman of the parliamentary budgets and financial disclosure committee Adnan Abdulsamad said the committee recommended that the interior ministry's hospitality expenses be sent to the public prosecution over suspicions of public funds squandering. He said the committee listened to all parties from the interior and finance ministries, State Audit Bureau and financial auditors over what was mentioned in an Audit Bureau report and by the investigations committee at the interior ministry. In other news, the National Assembly's office held a meeting under the chairmanship of Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem. Assembly supervisor MP Nayef Al-Mirdas said the office decided to invite the President of the Central System for the Remedy of Illegal Residents' Status to attend the meeting to be held Feb 5.

## Liquor warehouse busted in Jleeb

By Hanan Al-Saadoun and Agencies

**KUWAIT:** Police busted a warehouse containing homebrewed liquor ready for sale in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh, and arrested three Asian men who ran the place. Tips were received about three people storing liquor for sale in Jleeb and Hasawi, so a team was formed to raid their place. A total of 2,120 liquor bottles were found in the warehouse. The suspects were sent to concerned authorities.

Smuggling foiled

Air customs officers of the inspection and storage department foiled an attempt to smuggle 10,000 tramadol tablets from Southeast Asia that were hidden in photo albums. The boxes were marked as containing wooden boards. Detectives were asked to identify the importer, who was later arrested and taken to concerned authorities. Separately, Shuwaikh customs officers foiled an attempt to smuggle one million boxes of tobacco and paan that arrived at Shuwaikh Port in a container from a Gulf country. Its papers indicated the shipment was plastic material. Officers became suspicious about the container that arrived 90 days ago, and when searched, the drugs were discovered.

Fight

An employee at an Ahmadi cafe

became angry with the owner and exchanged blows with him. The owner ended up with a bruised face and eyes, while the employee suffered scratches. Both were taken to Adan Hospital, then to the police station.

Family feud

Two Syrian men - one elderly and one in his 30s - fought after the latter divorced the daughter of the former and wanted to take his child, a girl, from her mother. The father attacked his ex-son-in-law with a glass to his head. Police are investigating.

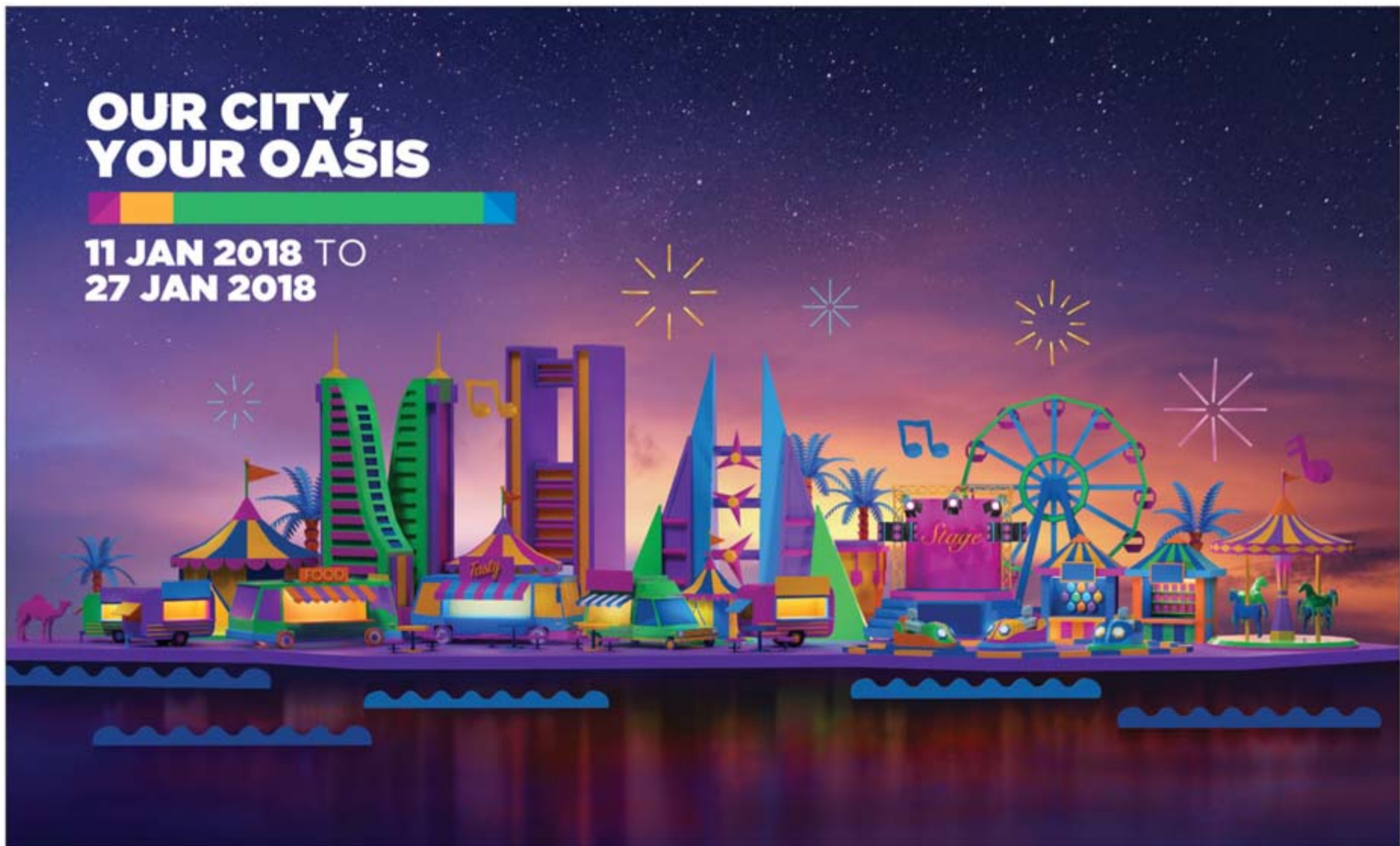
Generators' thief caught

A citizen caught a thief who used to steal generators and handed him to police with the stolen goods. The citizen noticed a person leaving a camp with a generator, who threw it and fled on being seen, so

he chased him and found him in a pickup truck loaded with three generators. He was able to block him and called police. Separately, forensics officers went to Zour to investigate the theft of valuable items from three trucks including a transmission handle, computers and speedometers.

Pedestrian mugged

An Egyptian man, 36, told police that his brother was attacked and is being treated in hospital. Police went there, and the victim told them that unidentified persons stopped him near a co-op and asked him change for KD 20, then snatched the money from him. He attempted to resist them, but they beat and dragged him for over 50 m, leaving him with a fractured pelvis, besides bruises and cuts.



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Rohingya girls sold in India

## Exiled Maldives leader accuses China of 'land grab'

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MOSUL: A picture taken in the city of Mosul shows a body of an alleged Islamic State group jihadist. For three years, jihadists made life in Iraq's Mosul impossible. Now, six months after their defeat, even their corpses are polluting everyone's existence as no one wants to move them. Amid the rubble-strewn alleys overlooking the River Tigris, unburied human remains are rotting. —AFP

# IS corpses poison life in Mosul

## Unburied human remains decaying

MOSUL: For three years, jihadists made life in Iraq's Mosul impossible. Now, six months after their defeat, even their corpses are polluting everyone's existence as no one wants to move them. The rare few who dare to venture into Mosul's historic centre do so with their nose and mouth firmly covered with masks or scarves to keep out the stench. Amid the rubble-strewn alleys overlooking the River Tigris, unburied human remains are rotting. They are the bodies of Islamic State group jihadists, residents and the civil defense say, pointing to their Afghan robes, long beards, and sometimes even suicide belts.

Here and there, on a wall or on a road sign, are scribed the words "Cemetery for the people of Daesh," using an Arabic acronym for IS. The jihadists seized second city Mosul in July 2014, imposing their rigid interpretation of Islam on inhabitants and dispensing brutal punishments for those who did not obey. Iraqi forces declared victory against IS in the city in July 2017, after months of fighting that killed hundreds of civilians and caused tens of thousands to flee. But six months on, the putrefying bodies of jihadists killed in the battle are preventing some residents from returning home. Othman Ahmad, an unemployed 35-year-old, said he would not

go back to living in the Old City with his wife and two children as long as the corpses remained.

### 'Awful smell'

"We're scared with all these bodies and this awful smell," he told AFP, in an alley not far from his former home, now barely recognizable after the destruction. Not far off, Abu Shaker, 60, said he was terrified the bodies might lead to "germs and epidemics". But civil defense teams say it is not their job to remove the corpses of IS fighters. Their mission, which ended on January 10, was to extract the bodies of civilians from the rubble so their families could bury them. For months on end, during and after the battle, they retrieved the remains of men, women and children and carried them away in black body bags. There is no official death toll for civilians killed in the battle for Mosul, but the United

Nations and a monitoring group have said hundreds were killed.

Extracting the bodies was gruelling work, as rescue teams could not enter the Old City's narrow alleyways with their vehicles or heavy equipment. "To dig, we'd use light tools and our bare hands, so getting bodies out took a lot of effort and time," the civil defense's Lieutenant-Colonel Rabie Ibrahim said. Whenever they were alerted, his colleagues said, civil defense members dashed out to search the ruins, tackling the mounds of broken concrete that now covers the Old City. To avoid having to bury unidentified bodies, they only searched in the company of relatives able to identify those they had lost.

### 'Before it rains'

As for the bodies of Iraqi and foreign jihadists, it is

the city council's responsibility. "We have already brought 450 out of the rubble, but there are hundreds more," city council head of services Abdel Sattar al-Habbu said. Those bodies have been thrown into mass graves, without any rites. Removing them is slow, he said, because the jihadists stole and destroyed most of their equipment. And some bodies still carry undetonated explosives that the security forces did not defuse. But time is pressing, said Hossam Eddine al-Abar, of the Mosul region's provincial council. "The bodies have to be moved before it rains and the Tigris rises, taking with it the bodies rotting on its banks," he said.

If the river became contaminated, it would be impossible to treat its water as filtering and purifying stations around the city have been destroyed, either by the jihadists or in the battle to retake the city. A doctor, who asked to remain anonymous, said no case of contaminated water had been reported so far. But the rotting bodies "pollute the air and water and could soon cause diseases", he said. Ahmad Ibrahim, a gastroenterologist, said the river's entire ecosystem could soon be contaminated if nothing was done. "These diseases can develop now, or they can appear in coming years," he said. —AFP

“ Cemetery for the people of Islamic State ”

## Kenyan women protest political gender gap

NAIROBI: Hundreds of mostly female activists marched in Kenya's capital Nairobi yesterday to protest repeated failures to apply laws that women must hold at least a third of government seats. According to Kenya's 2010 constitution, women must have at least a third of seats in parliament and a third of appointed positions. But successive parliaments and governments have fallen short of the target. "The women of Kenya are tired of being treated like second class citizens and now stand together to ensure that we take our rightful place at the decision-making table," said Wangechi Wachira, an organizer of the protest from women's rights organization the Centre for Rights Education and Awareness (CREAW).

President Uhuru Kenyatta won re-election last year and has so far named an all-male cabinet, although vacancies remain. "Out of the possible 13 positions that remain, the president must by law ensure at least nine go to women," said Wachira. Waving placards and chanting, the 500-strong crowd accused Kenyatta of making unconstitutional appointments. "Implement Article 10, Article 27 and Article 81 (b) now. Women need to be free and not fearful," read the banners, referring to various clauses of the constitution against gender discrimination.

Parliament, too, remains a mostly male domain, in spite of Kenya's progressive constitution. Efforts to pass a law that would force the dissolution of parliament if the one-third threshold is not met has been repeatedly stymied by male lawmakers. There are 76 female MPs in the current parliament, equivalent to just over a fifth of the 349 seats. Kenya's upper house, the Senate, fares better but still falls short with only 21 female senators instead of the 23 demanded by the constitution. Wangechi charged that parliament is "improperly constituted and operating outside the law, a fact that parliament has conveniently chosen to ignore." —AFP

## Philippine volcano rains ash, violent eruption feared

LEGAZPI: A giant mushroom-shaped cloud shot up from the Philippines' most active volcano yesterday, turning day into night as it rained ash on communities where tens of thousands have fled after warnings of an impending eruption. "Hazardous eruption imminent," the state volcanology agency concluded in its latest bulletin, saying Mayon volcano could blow up within days after two weeks of activity.

Fine ash and sand fell on Legazpi, a city of about 200,000 people, and nearby areas after the midday explosion turned the area into virtual nighttime, forcing motorists to switch on their lights and use windscreen wipers, an AFP video stringer said. The ash column rose several kilometers above the volcano, blotting out the sun in a largely agricultural region some 330 kilometers (205 miles) southeast of Manila.

"I had to stop because my helmet had filled up with ash," local housewife Girlie Panesa, 39, told AFP as she parked her motorcycle by the roadside in the nearby town of Ligao. She asked bystanders for water to wash the cement-grey ash off her visor, saying she plans to ride home despite the hazardous conditions because her teenage daughter was alone in their house. "We expect the explosions to continue," Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology director Renato Solidum told a news conference in Manila. "There is a possibility of a dangerous eruption, the start of which we are already witnessing," Solidum added.

He advised local officials to evacuate more areas around the crater, expanding the danger zone from six kilometers to eight kilometers. He also warned aircraft to steer clear of the area due to the danger



CAMALIG, Philippines: A giant mushroom-shaped cloud rises into the air from the Mayon volcano, seen from the highway in the town of Camalig, near Legazpi City yesterday. —AFP

of jet engines sucking in ash which could gum up turbines, potentially causing a catastrophic crash. The Civil Aviation Authority of the Philippines (CAAP) said it shut down Legazpi airport until further notice, disrupting several domestic flights, while warning off other aircraft from the region. "CAAP advised pilots flying near the area to exercise extreme caution, as ash from volcanic eruption can be hazardous to the aircraft," it said in an advisory.

More than 40,000 people had fled in the past week, the civil defense office in Manila said yesterday. Solidum said superheated volcanic rocks and ash rolled down the volcano's flanks while the ash

column was shooting up, threatening surrounding communities. Mayon, a near-perfect cone, rises 2,460 meters (8,070 feet) and is considered the most volatile of the country's 22 active volcanoes. There have been 51 previous eruptions in recorded history, the last one in 2014. In 1814 it buried the town of Cagsawa, killing more than 1,000 people. The Philippines is part of the Pacific "Ring of Fire" of islands that were formed by volcanic activity. The most powerful explosion in recent years was the 1991 eruption of Mount Pinatubo, about 100 kilometers northwest of Manila, which killed more than 800 people. —AFP

International

# Lured with a happily-ever-after dream, Rohingyas sold in India

## Single women 20,000 rupees; Married women 15,000 rupees

**NUH:** At 15, Raheema left her home in Rakhine state in Myanmar, crossed two international borders and was sold to be married to a man in India just a few years younger than her father. "He had asked the agent if I was married before. I was single so he bought me for 20,000 Indian rupees (about \$300). Married women go for 15,000 rupees," Raheema, who gave only her first name, told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. "He was only slightly younger than my father... He would beat me up with electrical wires and not let me leave, saying he had bought me," said Raheema, who now lives in a settlement in northern India housing Rohingya Muslims who have fled Myanmar.

Raheema's husband let her leave last year after five years of abuse. She was five months pregnant with their second child. In a burgeoning refugee crisis, about 660,000 Rohingyas have fled Myanmar's western Rakhine state across the border to Bangladesh since late August, when Rohingya militants attacked security posts and the army launched a counter-offensive. They join tens of thousands of Rohingya Muslims already in Bangladesh, while pockets of Rohingya communities are dotted across South Asia, having escaped discrimination and persecution in Buddhist-majority Myanmar.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) has said the new arrivals - the majority of them women and children - are at risk of human trafficking, as officials and aid workers struggle to cope with the influx. Cases of men and women enslaved in bonded labor or trafficked for marriage have also started to emerge in India after they managed to escape or were rescued and found their way to Rohingya settlements like the one in Nuh.

Rohingya started to migrate to India years ago and there are now close to 40,000 Rohingyas Muslims living in the country. Raheema left her home in Myanmar, "surrounded by tall blades of grass and paddy fields" to join her father in a refugee camp in Bangladesh in 2012. "There was no food at home and my mother thought I would be better off if I joined my father," said Raheema, now 22.

"But my aunt at the camp sold me to the agent who told her he would get me married in India." "I was numb to the idea of marriage. I just followed the agent and reached Kolkata. I didn't know any Indian language, but I thought I will be safe," she said in fluent Hindi, from her home in Nuh in the northern Indian state of Haryana.

### Safety lessons

Bangladesh's chaotic refugee camps are fertile territory for agents like the one who bought and sold Raheema. The promise of marriage is a typical way for traffickers operating in the camps to lure girls. "Marriage is big for young girls and

parents are agreeing to it because they see better economic stability (for their daughters)," said Iffat Nawaz, spokeswoman for aid and development organization BRAC. In December, BRAC volunteers started visiting young girls at the refugee settlements in Cox's Bazar to give them information and support on how to stay safe among so many strangers.

"Many of these girls have never been around so many men. They are meeting a lot of new people," said Nawaz. The girls are trained over 12 sessions on signs they need to look out for - inappropriate touching, offers of money or food and shelter, and ways to differentiate between genuine humanitarian workers and traffickers. "There are enough incidents of girls going missing... They are being trafficked to India and Nepal. We launched this program to reduce that risk," Nawaz said.

### Identity

Across the border in India, cases like Raheema are gradually emerging. Hasina Kharbhih, founder of anti-trafficking charity Impulse NGO Network that works in India, Bangladesh and Myanmar, said the group was working on reuniting 15 Rohingya girls in India with their families. "These girls were trafficked and sold in India for sexual slavery or for marriage six to eight years ago. They are at government-run shelters now," she told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. "We have not succeeded in sending any of them back home as we



BARUIPUR, India: A Rohingya refugee carrying a baby stands at a temporary shelter near the village of Baruipur, some 55km south of Kolkata. —AFP

are unable to trace their families in Myanmar." Kharbhih also received five cases in the last six months of families in Bangladeshi refugee camps looking for girls they say were trafficked to India.

Campaigners say there are more cases of girls sold in India, but there are challenges in identifying them. "It's because of the language issue - it is difficult to identify them as Rohingya or Bangladeshi as the language is very similar," said Adrian Phillips of Justice and Care, an anti-human trafficking NGO. About 17,000 Rohingya refugees and asylum seekers are registered with UN refugee agency UNHCR in India and many, like Raheema, use the UNHCR's letter acknowledging their application for a

refugee card as proof of identity. Officials at UNHCR, however, said neither they nor their partner organizations had recorded cases similar to Raheema's. "Based on information available with UNHCR, there is no record of a pattern of trafficking for marriages in the Rohingya refugee community in India," said UNHCR's Ipsita Sengupta by email. Raheema now lives with her two children in a slum in Nuh, in a hut made of tin and cardboard with plastic sheeting for a roof. She shows the small space she has created for a clay stove to cook food. She is in touch with her mother, who is still in Myanmar. "I work as a maid servant here and earn 1,200 rupees," she said. "But who will feed me if I go back to my mother?" —Reuters



## Girls trafficked, sold for sexual slavery or for marriage

### News in brief

#### Hamas 'rocket scientist'

**MANILA:** The Philippines said yesterday it would deport an elderly Iraqi man described as a scientist for Hamas and accused of helping the Palestinian militant group lob missiles at Israel. Iraq tipped off the Philippines about the presence of Taja Mohammad Al Jabori, who was arrested on Sunday, national police chief Ronald Dela Rosa told reporters. However, the arrest was due to visa problems rather than any evidence of militant activity, the police chief emphasized. "He's an illegal alien, his visa is expired so he has to be deported right away," Dela Rosa said. "He admitted being a member of Hamas. He's a chemist and he has been responsible for improving the rocket technology of Hamas in firing their missiles from their area towards the other side, for Israel." The suspect will be deported to Iraq.

#### IS militants nabbed

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Malaysian police have arrested two suspected militants with links to the Islamic State (IS) group, who were allegedly planning attacks on entertainment outlets and national police headquarters, officials said yesterday. One of the suspects, an Indonesian construction worker, had previously wandered around Kuala Lumpur with a knife in an unsuccessful attempt to attack Buddhist monks in revenge for atrocities against Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar, police said. Hundreds of suspected extremists have been arrested in Muslim-majority Malaysia in recent times, as fears grow that IS is encouraging would-be militants to launch attacks in a country that has never before suffered a major assault. The latest arrests took place in separate police operations in January and December, with a Malaysian teacher from a religious school detained as well as the construction worker.

#### Islamists in brothel hunt

**JAKARTA:** A hardline Indonesian Islamist group crashed a child's birthday party as it rampaged through a community on the hunt for clandestine brothels, police said yesterday. The drama unfolded on Friday when dozens of members of the Islamic Defenders Front (IDF) stormed into a house they believed was being used for prostitution on the island of Madura in East Java province. The group yanked two suspected sex workers from the home and attacked its owner until she fainted, police said. The angry mob then proceeded to storm into other nearby homes, including one hosting a kid's birthday party. "They attacked the house in a frenzy and also assaulted local residents," police spokesman Frans Barung Mangera said. "They were basically playing police" by trying to fight crime, he added. He would not confirm a report that the radicals grabbed some of the women who had brought their children to the party.

#### Kim Jong-Nam suspects

**SHAH ALAM:** The trial of two women accused of murdering the half-brother of North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un resumed in Malaysia yesterday, as a defense lawyer complained of missing evidence like the victim's phone. Indonesian Siti Aisyah and Vietnamese Doan Thi Huong, handcuffed and in bulletproof vests, were brought back to the court under heavy police guard after a seven-week break. The women, in their 20s, are accused of killing Kim Jong-Nam on February 13 last year with the nerve agent VX at Kuala Lumpur International Airport in a hit that stunned the world. The pair, who were arrested days after the assassination and face death by hanging if convicted, pleaded not guilty to the murder when the trial began on October 2.

## Events since US decision on Jerusalem

**JERUSALEM:** Below are the main developments since the controversial decision by US President Donald Trump to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital:

### Shockwaves

In a speech from the White House on December 6, 2017, Trump says recognizing Jerusalem as the Israeli capital marks the start of a "new approach" to solving

the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. "It is time to officially recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel," he says, breaking with the policies of his predecessors and outraging Palestinian leaders. He orders preparations to relocate the American embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas says Trump's moves "deliberately undermine all peace efforts" and says Washington can no longer play the role of peace broker. The US initiative prompts a wave of criticism around the world, while Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu hails Trump's move as "historic". On December 7, Palestinians clash with Israeli security forces and a general strike is broadly followed in the occupied West Bank and east Jerusalem.

### 'Rage'

On December 8, Palestinians are called to follow a "day of rage" in Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza Strip. In their thousands they face off against Israeli soldiers and police. Two Palestinians are killed and dozens wounded in clashes. Demonstrations are held in several Arab and Muslim countries. At the United Nations, envoys from Britain, France, Germany, Italy and Sweden say Trump's move is "not in line" with UN Security Council resolutions and is "unhelpful in terms of prospects for peace in the region". US ambassador Nikki Haley says Trump has not taken a position on the region's borders. On December 9, two members of the Palestinian Islamist movement Hamas die in Israeli air force raids in response to rocket fire from the Gaza Strip. Abbas's Fatah party urges

Palestinians to "keep up the confrontation and broaden it to all points where the Israeli army is present" in the West Bank. Meeting in Cairo, Arab foreign ministers say the United States has in effect "withdrawn itself as a sponsor and broker" of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

### East Jerusalem

On December 13, Muslim leaders call on the international community to recognize east Jerusalem as the capital of a Palestinian state, at a summit of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation in Istanbul. On December 15, four Palestinians are killed in clashes with Israeli forces as tens of thousands demonstrate against Washington's recognition. A total of 18 Palestinians and one Israeli have been killed in violence since Trump's declaration. —AFP

## Tokyo snowstorm disrupts road, rail and air transport

**TOKYO:** A rare snowstorm hit Tokyo yesterday, snarling train services, forcing the cancellation of scores of flights and prompting hordes of workaholic Japanese to heed official advice to head home early. Snow began falling yesterday morning, with as much as 10 cm (4 inches) predicted for central Tokyo by the time it is expected to stop early today. By 7:00 pm, 16 cm had fallen in central Tokyo as the snowfall intensified, national broadcaster NHK said.

Train services were curtailed and some highways were closed, as icy roads were causing traffic accidents. Around 250 flights from Tokyo's Haneda airport were cancelled. "It's really a pity the flight was cancelled earlier in the day, as I've travelled here using paid holidays," one woman told the NHK. "I never thought I'd see snow in Tokyo," said another woman. About 50 cars got stuck and unable to move on the "Rainbow Bridge" on Tokyo's

waterfront. About 200 passengers were evacuated from the "Yurikamome" train carriages that were unable to go up a slope due to the snow, NHK said.

A looming low pressure system and cold front just off the coast of Japan's main island of Honshu was expected to bring low temperatures and more snow throughout the day and night, the Japanese Meteorological Agency said. The Japanese capital, which is on roughly the same latitude as the U.S. city of Raleigh, North Carolina, often sees snow at least once a year, but this time it is expected to accumulate, rather than quickly melt as it usually does.

The government issued heavy snow warnings for the area around the capital, just two weeks after hundreds of people were trapped overnight in a train in northern Japan by heavy snow. NHK offered detailed recommendations for coping with the weather, including wearing boots with heavy treads, heading home early and not walking with hands in coat pockets in case of slips and falls. It showed people how to walk like penguins. Trains to the suburbs were packed full by the unusually early hour of 4:00 pm and long lines formed at supermarkets. —Reuters



TOKYO: A man rides his bicycle on a street during a snowfall in Tokyo yesterday. —AFP

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## International

# UKIP, its chief and texts from a lover: UK anti-EU party in chaos

## UKIP leader refuses to resign

**LONDON:** The United Kingdom Independence Party, which transformed British politics by securing a referendum on EU membership, was close to meltdown yesterday over the fate of its leader whose lover made racist comments about Prince Harry's fiancée Meghan Markle. Under Nigel Farage, UKIP became a significant force in British politics by convincing former Prime Minister David Cameron to call a national vote and then campaigning successfully for Britain to leave the bloc.

But since Farage quit after Brexiters won the referendum, UKIP has descended into chaos, partly as its main objective - severing direct ties with the EU - is now the official policy of both the Conservative and Labor parties. Farage, a fan of US President Donald Trump who has lambasted traditional politicians for failing voters, dismissed speculation that he may be plotting to create a new political party to ensure a full break with the EU. "No thoughts of a new party whatever some may speculate," Farage told Reuters. Asked if he would return to frontline politics, he said: "Doubt it."

Farage declined to comment on the confusion inside UKIP, where leader Henry Bolton has refused to resign since his 25-year-old lover, Jo Marney, made offensive comments about Markle and black people in text messages to a friend. Marney who began dating Bolton just after Christmas, described US actress Markle, whose father is white and mother is African-American, as a "dumb little

commoner" and said "her seed with (sic) taint our royal family", according to the texts printed in a Sunday newspaper. Marney also described black people as ugly. She later apologized for the text messages and Bolton said they were ending the "romantic element" of their relationship.

### Charisma bypass

Without the charisma of Farage, a former metals trader who charmed the media, UKIP has suffered. His first successor, Diane James, resigned after just 18 days and her successor, Paul Nuttall, quit after UKIP won 1.8 percent of votes cast in last June's national election. Bolton lost a vote of confidence from the party's national executive committee on Sunday but he insisted that he would not step down. He has said the texts from his lover about Markle were "abhorrent, unwise and offensive."

UKIP's deputy leader, Margot Parker, resigned in protest at Bolton's refusal to go, the BBC reported. Led by Farage, UKIP won nearly four million votes - 12.6 percent of those cast - in the previous national election in 2015 on its anti-EU platform, projecting it to the forefront of British politics even though it only managed to win one seat in parliament. Its popularity prompted Cameron, who once dismissed the party as being full of "fruitcakes, loonies and closet racists", to hold the referendum and played a major role in securing the vote to leave the EU.—Reuters

## Leader's lover made offensive comments about Meghan Markle



**STRASBOURG:** European commission member in charge of Brexit negotiations with Britain, Michel Barnier (left) shakes hands with European MP and former leader of the anti-EU UK Independence Party (UKIP) Nigel Farage prior to a debate as part of a plenary session at the European Parliament in Strasbourg. —AFP

## Catalan ousted leader a candidate for president as Spain seeks his arrest

**BARCELONA:** The speaker of the Catalan parliament yesterday proposed the region's ousted leader Carles Puigdemont as president of Catalonia, as Spanish prosecutors sought a European warrant for his arrest. Roger Torrent said Puigdemont's candidacy to once again head Catalonia's regional government is "absolutely legitimate", even though the secessionist leader faces criminal proceedings over his role in Catalonia's independence drive.

In a major blow to the central government in Madrid, separatist parties once again won an absolute majority in the Catalan regional parliament in a snap election in December. Puigdemont wants to be invested from Belgium, where he fled in late October after the Catalan parliament voted to declare independence. He now faces arrest if he returns to Catalonia over his role in the independence drive. The Madrid government has ruled out his being allowed to rule from outside the country and even his separatist allies—the leftwing ERC party of Puigdemont's former deputy Oriol Junqueras—are cool in private to his bid to rule from abroad.

Spanish prosecutors yesterday sought a European arrest warrant for Puigdemont as he arrived in Copenhagen in his first trip outside of Belgium since he fled to the country. The prosecution service asked Supreme Court Judge Pablo Llarena to re-issue an arrest warrant for the secessionist leader, sacked by Madrid after the Catalan parliament declared independence, and urge Denmark to hand him over, a judicial source said. Llarena had dropped a European arrest warrant for Puigdemont and four of his deputies who fled to Belgium in early December, saying it would complicate the overall probe into the region's leaders—but warned they would be arrested if they return.

He is not obliged to agree to the request to re-issue the warrant. Puigdemont and the rest of his ousted government have been charged with rebellion, sedition and misuse of public funds over their separatist push. Danish broadcaster TV2 released an image on its website of Puigdemont being surrounded by reporters after his plane landed in Copenhagen Airport. On his Twitter feed, Puigdemont confirmed his arrival in the Danish capital, where he is due to take part in a debate at the University of Copenhagen about the secession crisis in the region later on.

### 'Illegal'

Three other separatist lawmakers are already in custody in Spain over their role in Catalonia's separatist push, including Junqueras, his former deputy. The parliamentary vote to choose a new Catalan leader is due to take place by the end of January. The Catalan parliament's legal experts have said that any presidential contender has to be physically present, but Puigdemont insists he has the legitimate mandate of the people to rule. Spanish Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy reiterated Saturday that governing Catalonia from abroad would be "illegal" and has warned Madrid would maintain its direct control over the region and will take the matter to court if Puigdemont sought remote rule.

Madrid's direct rule has proven very unpopular in a region that had enjoyed considerable autonomy before its leaders attempted to break away from Spain. Catalonia's separatist push has sparked Spain's biggest constitutional crisis since the country returned to democracy following the death of longtime dictator Francisco Franco in 1975 and has deeply worried the country's EU partners. Having been in Belgium for three months without a residence permit, he would also have to leave, albeit briefly, to conform with EU residence laws. —AFP

## Congolese forces kill six while dispersing anti-Kabila protest

**KINSHASA:** Congolese security forces shot dead at least six people and wounded dozens more as they fired tear gas to disperse a protest against President Joseph Kabila organized by the Catholic Church on Sunday, a UN peacekeeping mission in the country said. Kabila's refusal to step down at the end of his mandate in December 2016 has triggered a series of street protests in which scores have been killed in Kinshasa. It has also emboldened armed rebel groups in different parts of the country.

A Reuters witness saw police and paramilitary troops fire volleys of tear gas and shoot into the air on Sunday outside the Notre Dame cathedral in the capital Kinshasa. Florence Marchal, spokeswoman for the UN mission (MONUSCO), also said 57 people were wounded and dozens of arrests had been made across the country. As well as Kinshasa, protests erupted in the central Congolese diamond-mining town of Mbuji-Mayi, in the eastern cities of Goma, Lubumbashi and several other places.

A police spokesman did not respond to a request for comment. The instability has stoked fears that the vast, mineral-rich Democratic Republic of Congo could slide back into the wars that killed millions in the 1990s, mostly from hunger and disease. "I marched today for a simple reason: I want to bring up my children in a country that respects human rights," protester Pascal Kabeya, a 40-year-old market trader, told Reuters where a few hundred had gathered in a suburb of Kinshasa. "Kabila has done his two terms. He should leave now and give a chance to someone else".

### 'We will use force'

The chief of police for Kinshasa city, General Sylvano Kasongo Kitenge, had warned in a statement overnight that the protest was banned and that "no attempt to disturb public order will be tolerated anywhere in Kinshasa." Kasongo, surrounded by several armed police, visited the road leading to Notre Dame where a protest was happen-

## Government workers wake to shutdown as US Senate vote looms

**WASHINGTON:** Hundreds of thousands of federal workers woke up yesterday with the US government still shut down and the Senate expected to try again to restore federal funding, if only temporarily, and work on resolving a dispute over immigration. Amid uncertainty about whether federal employees should report to work in the morning, senators were set to vote at midday on a funding bill to get the lights back on in Washington and across the government until early February.

Support for the bill was uncertain, after Republicans and Democrats spent all day on Sunday trying to strike a deal, only to go home for the night short of an agreement. Markets remained calm yesterday morning as world stocks and US bond markets largely shrugged off Washington's standoff even as the dollar continued its pullback. US stock futures edged lower.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said late Sunday that an overnight vote on a measure to fund government operations through Feb 8 was canceled and would be held at 12 pm yesterday. Up until yesterday, most federal workers were not directly affected by the shutdown that began at midnight on Friday. Many still awaited notification on whether they are "essential" employees or not, determining whether they must report to their offices. Even late Sunday, the federal Office of Personnel Management provided little guidance. It said on its website that "federal government operations vary by agency."

The Department of Defense published a memo on its website detailing who does and does not get paid in a shutdown and saying that civilian employees were on temporary leave, except for those needed to support active-duty troops. The Department of Interior led by Secretary Ryan Zinke, offered no guidance on its website, which still had a



**KINSHASA:** People look on as protesters burn tyres during a demonstration calling for the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) to step down on January 21, 2018 in Kinshasa. —AFP

ing. "Mass is over, the priests should now go home, and everybody else should go home. If you refuse, we will use force and shoot tear gas, let that be very clear," he told them. The violence echoed that of New Year's Eve, when Congolese forces killed at least seven people in the capital during a protest by Catholic activists.

Under a deal mediated by the church between Kabila and his opponents, the president was to step down at the end of last year, paving the way for an election early this year. But he reneged on the deal and the poll has been repeatedly delayed - it is currently loosely scheduled for the end of 2018. Diplomats from the United States, British and Swiss embassies had all put out statements encouraging the Congolese to march to pressure Kabila to respect

the deal. "We applaud Congolese citizens exercising their constitutional right to assemble peacefully in support of the full implementation of the (agreement)," the US and British embassies said in a joint statement.

"Those who do not protect these rights must be held accountable." Congo's influential Roman Catholic Church has emerged as a harness for opposition to Kabila, while his political opposition remains feeble and fragmented. "I ask the authorities ... and all in this beloved country to put their best effort towards avoiding ... violence," Pope Francis said of Congo's crisis while in Peru on Sunday. Kabila, who has been president since his father was killed in office in 2001, blames the electoral delays on the logistics of voter registration.—Reuters



**WASHINGTON:** A shoe shine stand inside the US Capitol displays a sign that reads, closed due to lapse in appropriations yesterday in Washington, DC. On day 3 of the government shutdown, lawmakers are convening to try to resolve their differences and reopen the government. —AFP

"Happy Holidays from the Zinke Family" video near the top of the site. The department oversees national parks and federal lands. The State Department website said: "At this time, scheduled passport and visa services in the United States and at our posts overseas will continue during the lapse in appropriations as the situation permits." The US government has not been shut down since 2013, when about 800,000 federal workers were put on furlough. That impasse prevented passage of a needed funding bill centered on former Democratic President Barack Obama's healthcare law. The problem this time focused on immigration policy, principally President Donald Trump's order last year ending an Obama program called Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), which gave legal protections to "Dreamer" immigrants.

The "Dreamers" are young people who were brought to the United States illegally as children by their parents or other adults, mainly from Mexico and Central America, and who mostly grew up in the United States. Trump said last year he would end DACA on March 5 and asked Congress to come up with a legislative fix before then to prevent Dreamers from being deported.—Reuters

## Exiled Maldives leader warns over China, radicalism

**COLOMBO:** Exiled Maldives opposition leader Mohamed Nasheed accused China yesterday of seizing land in the politically-troubled Indian Ocean archipelago and undermining its sovereignty. Nasheed, on a visit to the Sri Lankan capital Colombo where his Maldivian Democratic Party activists are based, also warned of the rise of radical Islamists in the holiday paradise. Nasheed said Chinese interests had leased at least 16 of the nation's 1,192 scattered coral islands and were building ports and other infrastructure.

The 50-year-old said the increased Chinese presence could threaten the Muslim-majority nation of 340,000 and the wider Indian Ocean region. Nasheed called the Chinese action a "land grab". "This is colonialism and we must not allow it. We want other countries (in the region) to join us and speak the same language (against Chinese expansion). We are not against any country, not against direct foreign investment, but we are against relinquishing our sovereignty." Nasheed said 80 percent of the Maldives' foreign debt was owed to China and it could end up handing over more land and infrastructure as it may not be able to repay the loans.

Nasheed, who wants to contest this year's presidential election, said he would renegotiate contracts with China if successful. Nasheed in 2008 became the Maldives' first democratically elected president but was ousted in an alleged coup backed by religious extremists in February 2012. In 2013 he stood again for the presidency but was defeated by Abdullah Yameen. In 2015 he was jailed on terrorism charges which he says were politically motivated, and has lived in exile in Britain for two years after Maldives authorities let him travel there for medical treatment.—AFP



International

# Another Rohingya 'leader' killed in Bangladesh camp

## Bangladesh delays Rohingya refugee return

**BALUKHALI:** Attackers yesterday killed a Rohingya representative in a Bangladesh refugee camp, the second such death in three days as tensions mount over the planned repatriation of some 750,000 refugees to Myanmar. Sources said the dead man Yusuf Ali was a camp leader at the Balukhali camp on the border with Myanmar. Mohammad Yusuf, a leader in the neighboring Thaingkhali camp, was shot dead last Friday. Yusuf Ali, 60, was stabbed to death, district police chief Iqbal Hossain said. Another police official described him as a Rohingya "majhi" or camp leader.

The Dhaka Tribune described the earlier victim, Mohammad Yusuf, as a pro-repatriation leader. His wife Jamila Khatun, 35, said some 20 armed and masked men stormed their home and shot her husband in the head. "He shouted 'Oh Allah!' and they shot him again in the mouth. He fell down," she said. "They spoke Rohingya. They were saying to my husband: 'Why did you put our name on the list?' They were furious," she added. She did not say which list the attackers were referring to. Bangladesh authorities have been trying to draw up a list of Rohingya, among nearly one million in camps on the border, who could be sent back to Myanmar.

Bangladesh has been besieged with an influx of more than 680,000 Rohingya since Myanmar's military launched the latest crackdown on the Muslim minority last August. Following an agreement with Myanmar, Bangladesh authorities had wanted to start the repatriations on Tuesday but have delayed the operation-saying they need more time to prepare. Local media and a Rohingya leader have linked the

killings to fears of being sent back. Police have rejected any such connection. Hundreds of Rohingya have taken part in protests against repatriation in recent days. Local authorities in Cox's Bazar yesterday prevented hundreds of them from holding a rally at one large camp.

### Return delayed

Meanwhile, the repatriation of hundreds of thousands of Rohingya Muslims who fled violence in Myanmar will not begin as planned, Bangladesh said yesterday, with authorities admitting "a lot of preparation" was still needed. Bangladesh had been due to start the huge process on

January 23, after agreeing a two-year timeframe with Myanmar. But Bangladesh's Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner Mohammad Abul Kalam announced yesterday there was much more work to be done. "We have not made the preparations required to send back people from tomorrow. A lot of preparation is still needed," Kalam said.

## 2nd such death in three days as tensions mount



Since August last year around 688,000 Muslim Rohingya have escaped over the border into Bangladesh in the wake of a military-led campaign in Rakhine state that the UN says amounted to "ethnic cleansing". They poured into ill-equipped and overcrowded camps, bringing with them harrowing tales of rape, murder and torture at the hands of Myanmar's feared army or Buddhist mobs. After a global outcry, which included loud criticism of Myanmar's civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi, the two countries agreed earlier this month that the refugees would be returned to Myanmar in a process they said would take around two



**UKHIA:** A Rohingya refugee man carries bamboo, used as a building material, at Thankhali refugee camp in Bangladesh's Ukhia district yesterday. — AFP

years. Rights groups and the UN have said any repatriation must be voluntary.

There are reports that many Rohingya settlements have been burned to the ground. Bangladesh has sought to assure the international community that only those wishing to go back to their homelands in Rakhine would be sent back and that the process would involve the UN's refugee agency. But yesterday refugee chief Kalam said transit centres still needed to be built, and work remained to be done on the "rigorous process" of approving lists of those enti-

led-and willing-to return to Myanmar. "Without completing this, we cannot send these people back all of a sudden. This work is ongoing," he said. He gave no revised start date but said two sites near the border had been identified for possible transit sites. Bangladesh was "very keen" for the process to begin as soon as possible, he said, but added much work was outstanding on Myanmar's side including housing reconstruction and safety arrangements. "Neither side is ready for the real movement to begin now," Kalam said.—Agencies

## Three dead; busy market struck by bomb in Thailand

**YALA:** A motorcycle bomb killed three civilians and wounded two dozen others yesterday at a bustling morning market in Thailand's insurgency-hit south, the first such attack on a "soft target" in the Muslim-majority region for months. A rebellion against Thai rule in the country's culturally distinct "Deep South" bordering Malaysia has left nearly 7,000 dead—the majority civilians since 2004. The death toll in 2017 from the insurgency was 235, the lowest in 13 years of conflict as peace talks edged forwards and the Thai junta boosted its security lockdown on the region. But yesterday's bomb in Yala town at a packed market popular with Buddhists and Muslims may indicate that militants are once more aiming attacks at civilian targets.

At least two bodies lay slumped over debris in the narrow alleyway, surrounded by chunks of torn corrugated roofing, destroyed motorbikes and market stalls. "The suspects parked the motorcycle in front of a stall selling pork in downtown Yala... it detonated 10 minutes later," the policeman told AFP, requesting anonymity. "Three civilians were killed. It's the first big attack in downtown Yala in two years." Two of the dead were Buddhists—the other was Muslim—while 24 people were wounded, according to an official at Yala hospital.

It was not immediately clear if the bomb deliberately targeted the pork stall, and potentially its Buddhist customers. An army spokesman for the region confirmed the toll and blamed "insurgents", saying the motorbike laden with explosives fits their modus operandi. "The bombing shows the insurgents never stop trying to indiscriminately destroy lives and property," Pramote Prom-in said, adding the attack aimed to undermine faith in "the state security system". But later the regional army chief instead blamed "powerful local families" intent on disrupting the peace for financial gain—without naming his chief suspects.

### 'Sign of things to come?'

Thailand, which colonized the ethnically Malay south roughly a century ago, has for decades been confronted by fighters seeking more autonomy, but the conflict flared



**YALA:** A Thai forensics unit scours the aftermath of a motorcycle bombing which killed three civilians and wounded others at a market in the restive southern Thai province yesterday. — AFP

up into its bloodiest phase in 2004. Rights groups have accused both the insurgents and security forces of widespread human rights abuses, with civilians trapped between the two sides.

The shadowy network of militants almost never claim attacks and rarely talk to the media. Their cells, which operate from remote communities and the forested Malaysia border zone, had in recent months stepped back from targeting civilians including teachers and other perceived collaborators with the Thai state. Talks between the Thai state and an umbrella group claiming to represent the rebels have rumbled on inconclusively for years. But the recent slackening of violence had been read as a sign of confi-

dence building between the sides—although the main rebel group the Barisan Revolusi Nasional (BRN) has disowned the discussions. Yesterday's attack could mark a dangerous new shift in tactics. "Over recent years the insurgents haven't targeted civilians outright," Don Pathan, a Thailand-based independent analyst said. "If it was the work of the insurgents, then it's a sign of things to come a stern message to the authorities that they will resort to hitting soft targets." Pathan speculated the market blast could also be "retaliation" for a specific incident in a conflict defined by tit-for-tat operations by insurgents and security forces. Last May a large car bomb struck a supermarket in neighboring Pattani province wounding scores of people.—AFP

## Hong Kong engulfed in smog; fears grow

**HONG KONG:** Hong Kong's famous skyline was engulfed in smog yesterday, with residents urged to stay indoors. The winter months regularly bring worse air quality to Hong Kong and other parts of the region due to wind direction and weather conditions. But as acrid air shrouded the city's skyscrapers, harbor and surrounding hills, residents said they were afraid for their health. "It feels stuffy and airless. It's more difficult to breathe," said Elsa Choi, 32. "I'm not sure if masks could filter out (the particles). I won't go outside as much," Choi added. The air quality in Hong Kong yesterday was categorized as "unhealthy" on the World Air Quality Index.

Readings of damaging fine particles known as PM 2.5 hit an average concentration of 198 micrograms per cubic meter. The World Health Organization recommends a maximum average exposure of 25 micrograms per cubic meter in a 24-hour period. In Beijing, where pollution has

reached hazardous levels in the past, the average reading was 25, categorized as "good". The government said that pollution in Hong Kong was higher than normal and that the risk to health was "very high", as it warned residents to avoid outdoor activities. Schools were urged to take "appropriate measures" to safeguard students' health.

The environment bureau blamed the smog on a mix of light winds, preventing dispersion of pollutants, and sunshine which it said worsens the problem. But campaigners said authorities should not simply look to the weather. "We know that there is a weather factor but we also know that roadside air pollution comes from traffic," said Patrick Fung of NGO Clean Air Network, who said there should be traffic controls on high pollution days.

Fung added that few people in the densely packed city could go about their daily routine without being close to the clogged roads. A clean air plan was introduced in 2013, and the environment bureau has said roadside pollutants have dropped by up to 74 percent in the past 20 years. But the number of days where pollution readings were categorized as a high health risk in 2017 was almost double the number in 2016, according to bureau statistics, although it was an improvement on 2014 and 2015.

Campaigners have questioned the speed at which authorities are implementing



**HONG KONG:** A passenger (left) stands on the upper deck of a commuter ferry as smog engulfs residential and commercial buildings in Hong Kong yesterday. — AFP

change and encouraging a drop in fossil fuel use. In February last year the government was slammed by environmentalists, lawmakers and manufacturers for axing a tax waiver on electric cars as a way to fight congest-

tion. Resident Susane Yip, 40, said the smog would also put off tourists who want to capture the city's epic harbor views. "I hope the government can devote its efforts to solving this problem," Yip said.—AFP

### News in brief

#### Indian farmer crushed

**NEW DELHI:** An Indian farmer was crushed to death under his tractor as finance company officials drove away with it over \$1,400 in unpaid debts, police said yesterday. Police are hunting five loan recovery agents who could be charged with murder in a case that highlights the debt crisis faced by the country's farmers. The 45-year-old farmer scuffled with the loan agents and fell off the tractor as it was being driven out of his field in the Sitapur district of Uttar Pradesh state on Saturday. The farmer had borrowed 500,000 rupees (\$7,800) last year to buy the tractor but failed to make repayments totaling \$1,400, police said. "He tried to stop them by clinging to the tractor but fell off, fell under the wheels and died on the spot," police officer Mohammad Jawed Khan told AFP, adding that the agents and the tractor were missing. Police are investigating the role of senior officials at the financier Larsen & Toubro. The company did not immediately comment.

#### Princess Eugenie engaged

**LONDON:** Britain's Princess Eugenie of York has got engaged. Buckingham Palace announced yesterday, lining up a second royal wedding this year at the church where Prince Harry will tie the knot. Eugenie, who is eighth in line to the throne, will marry her nightclub manager boyfriend Jack Brooksbank in late 2018, the palace said. Eugenie, 27, is the younger daughter of Queen Elizabeth II's second son Prince Andrew, the Duke of York, and his ex-wife Sarah. "The Duke and Duchess of York are delighted to announce the engagement of Princess Eugenie to Mr Jack Brooksbank," Buckingham Palace said. "Her Royal Highness and Mr Brooksbank became engaged in Nicaragua earlier this month. "The wedding will take place in the autumn of 2018 at St George's Chapel in Windsor, with further details to be announced in due course." The church in the grounds of Windsor Castle, west of London, is where Eugenie's first cousin Harry is set to marry US actress Meghan Markle on May 19.

#### Pope targets corruption

**LIMA:** Pope Francis took a tough stand against political corruption on Sunday, and wrapped up his Latin American trip with a mass at an air base before more than a million faithful. It was the second time since arriving in Peru on Thursday that the leader of the world's Catholics attacked the "virus" of graft. "There are exceptions. But by and large, Latin America's political culture is sicker than it is healthy," the pontiff told bishops earlier Sunday from across Peru, a country whose political parties and presidents have been plagued by dishonesty and kickbacks. "What is wrong with Peru, that when one finishes being president one ends up behind bars?" Francis wondered aloud. "(Ollanta) Humala, is in jail, (Alejandro) Toledo is in jail (living in US awaiting extradition); (Alberto) Fujimori was detained until just now; Alan Garcia, isn't sure if he's in or out: What is wrong morally?" he asked. Leaders of other Latin American nations have also been accused of graft.

#### Italy's 5-Star's program

**ROME:** The anti-establishment 5-Star Movement, leading opinion polls ahead of a March 4 election, has presented a 20-point program which makes no mention of a referendum on Italy's membership of the euro zone. 5-Star has steadily scaled back its commitment to the referendum that used to be one of its main policies. The plan frightened financial markets which saw it as a threat to the whole single currency project. 5-Star's moderate new leader, Luigi Di Maio, who was elected in September, presented the program at a party gathering in Pescara on the Adriatic coast, saying it would be the basis for negotiations with other parties after the election. "The political forces will have to tell us why they don't want to converge around this program, and we will ask them on the evening of March 4," 31-year-old Di Maio told reporters. 5-Star leads opinion polls with some 28 percent of the vote, about 5 points ahead of the ruling Democratic Party.

## Analysis

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The First Daily in The Arabian GulfTHE LEADING INDEPENDENT  
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## S Korea's 'Peace Olympics' meet backlash at home

South Korea's efforts to bring the North to its Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang next month are provoking a backlash among its own people, with accusations that Seoul risks turning the Games into a "Pyongyang Olympics". Many are fuming over what they see as exploitation of the South's own athletes for political purposes, and accusing President Moon Jae-In's government of making too many concessions to please its hostile, unpredictable neighbour.

Protesters burned an image of North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un in Seoul on Monday, along with the North's flag, even as a Pyongyang pop singer concluded a trip to the South to prepare for concerts at the time of the Games. Seoul has long sought to promote the Games as a "Peace Olympics" that would ease tension on the flash-point peninsula, where the North has carried out multiple missile launches in recent months, along with its most powerful nuclear test to date. Now it is scrambling to quell public anger.

In a flurry of sporting diplomacy, the two Koreas agreed this month that the North would attend the Games, the two would march together under a unification flag at the opening ceremony, and they would form a joint female ice hockey team - a deal approved by the IOC on Saturday. Under the terms, 12 North Koreans will be added to the 23-strong South Korean squad, with 22 of them - the same size as other countries' teams - chosen to take part in each game, including at least three North Koreans.

But the deal is being widely criticized for "robbing" Southern athletes of opportunities to compete at the Olympics in a bid to stage what many describe as a hurriedly-coordinated political show. A survey earlier this month found 73 percent of South Koreans saw no need for a joint team. Sports should be free from politics, Seoul's conservative Dong-A daily said in an editorial on Monday, and the team coach's ability to select the team had been compromised. "The South Korean government is focused on hosting peaceful Olympics, and says 'yes' to everything North Korea wants," it added.

## 'Free ride'

Joint marches at past sporting events in the 2000s were widely hailed in the South, where civilian contact with the North is prohibited. But sentiment has since hardened among many in the South in the face of Pyongyang's ever-accelerating weapons drive under Kim, which has seen it subjected to multiple sets of UN Security Council sanctions. Seoul media live-streamed every move of the visit on Sunday and Monday of the North Korean cultural delegation led by Hyon Song-Wol, the leader of Pyongyang's Moranbong girlband.

But the trip was met with largely frosty response on the Internet, where many asked: "Is this Pyeongchang Olympics or Pyongyang Olympics?" "The North is not only getting a free ride to the event we worked so hard to prepare but also parading this woman like a visiting queen doing us a favour," said one online user. Many now accuse the dovish president - who has long backed engagement with the North to bring it to the negotiating table - of pandering to Pyongyang.

"We don't find fault with President Moon Jae-In's effort to link the Olympics to his peace initiative for the Korean Peninsula, but the government must think about why its move faces increasing public disquiet," Seoul's major JoongAng daily said. The editorial, published on Monday, added: "No South Korean would believe that the nuclear conundrum will be solved if the government stages a 'joint hosting' of the Games."

Moon urged South Koreans to rally behind his efforts Monday "like protecting a candle in the face of wind". "We need wisdom and effort to sustain this momentum for dialogue, miraculously created by the Pyeongchang Olympics, even after the game is over," he told a cabinet meeting. The comments came a day after his office defended its gestures as "necessary" to forge peace and create a much-needed buzz over a Games that have failed to stir much excitement. "The Pyeongchang Olympics would not only achieve inter-Korea reconciliation but also offer a lead towards easing tension on the peninsula and forging peace," it said.

Kim and US President Donald Trump last year traded colorful personal insults and threats of war that heightened global fear of a conflict on the peninsula. Some countries questioned whether it was safe to send their athletes but such concerns have largely died down following the North's announcement it would take part, Moon's office said, adding: "Having the North participate in the Olympics is an investment for the future." —AFP



## Tribal feuds spread fear in Basra

Daud Salman and his family stayed put in their Iraqi village despite years of regular clashes between tribes, but when a stray bullet wounded his son, it was time to move. In the north of Basra province, "bullets talk," he said. Feuds between the region's half-dozen tribes often flare into pitched battles with assault rifles and machineguns, killing bystanders and driving a never-ending cycle of revenge attacks.

Security forces, fearing reprisals, rarely intervene. The region near Iraq's southern border with Kuwait has long been the scene of inter-tribal battles over business disputes, questions of honour or even football matches. But with security forces deployed to the country's north to battle the Islamic State group (IS), Basra residents caught in the crossfire say they feel abandoned. "Peaceful families that have no weapons can't live," said Daud, 41. The clashes have transformed residential areas into battlefields, he said.

It was during yet another gunfight that Daud's son Ali, 15, took a bullet to the shoulder as he stood in front of the family home. That finally prompted the family to move to Basra city, away from the tribal areas. Residents of the province's north say security forces are powerless to halt the clashes. In the absence of heavily armed military and federal police forces, "local police are reluctant... to get involved in these battles because there is nothing to protect them," said provincial council member Ghanem Hamid.

Even in situations where they could prevent the violence, police officers - many of whom hail from the tribes involved -

hesitate to intervene for fear of later reprisals. Haydar Ali, a 34-year-old engineer, suggested deploying soldiers and policemen from other provinces "who have no social relations or tribal ties that could affect their role". Residents have called on security forces to confiscate weapons, but regular raids have had little impact on the vast numbers of arms circulating in the province.

Tribes in Basra, the only province of Iraq with access to the sea, obtained a glut of weapons when the army of the late Saddam Hussein withdrew from Kuwait in 1991 in a hasty retreat. They further boosted their stockpiles following the US-led invasion in 2003, said Sheikh Abbas Al-Fadhli, who advises the provincial governorate on tribal affairs. The tribal disputes have a direct impact on Basra's economy.

Clashes in the oil-rich region, a base for several foreign companies and oil refineries, have caused many to suspend operations, said General Jamil Al-Shomary, an army commander in Basra. "A tribal fight can close down roads for three or four days," preventing people from reaching work, he said. "There have even been attacks against oil companies."

## 'Condemned by society'

Ali said putting an end to the violence would also require a change in mentalities. "Criminals and people who provoke tribal clashes need to be condemned by society before they're condemned by the courts," he said. Teacher Saadoun Jassim Al-Ali, 46, blamed "lawlessness and impunity" that had allowed instigators of clashes to remain at large. Sheikh Mohammad Al-



Iraqi soldiers control one of several checkpoints they set up along the main road between the area of Karmat Ali on the northern outskirts of Basra and the town of Al-Dayr as they search for weapons and wanted people involved in tribal conflicts in the north of the Basra province on Jan 13, 2018. —AFP

Zidawi, an elder of the Bu Zayd tribe, said "the wide availability of weapons" was to blame.

He is a member of a committee set up to mediate between tribes. In 2017, "it resolved 176 tribal disputes, including some that had lasted 15 years," he said. The committee organizes meetings between dignitaries from tribes involved in disputes. Families of slain tribal members spend hours wrangling over the "blood price" -

financial compensation for their bereavement - or the banishment of certain tribal members.

Kirk Sowell, a political risk analyst who publishes Inside Iraqi Politics, said the Hashed al-Shaabi paramilitary coalition set up to fight IS was complicating matters. "Many of the myriad of Hashed groups are turning into local mafias," he said. "Basra has both a major tribal violence problem and (a problem with) organized crime." —AFP

## Euro schism reopens in central Europe as EU pushes reform

On the euro zone's eastern flank, some Slovaks in the border town of Sturovo wish their country had never opted for the common currency and now head over the Danube to Hungary for the cheaper shopping. Unlike Slovakia, Hungary has stayed out of the currency club, but on its side of the river people in the historic town of Esztergom feel they might be better off with the euro - although not yet. With Germany and France stepping up efforts to reform the EU and make the euro zone more crisis-proof, supporters of European integration say the post-communist countries which are holding on to their national currencies should change their minds.

These countries, they argue, will otherwise be stranded on the European Union's eastern periphery as the euro zone becomes the bloc's inner core, pushing the pace of integration. Esztergom and Sturovo lie a short distance upstream from the castle town of Visegrad where central European leaders formed a loose alliance in 1991, shortly after the fall of communism. The four members of the Visegrad Group joined the EU in 2004 but so far only Slovakia has adopted the euro.

European officials play down any possibility of the other three - Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic - joining before the middle of the next decade, assuming they want to. Nationalist governments in Budapest and Warsaw say euro membership would curb their autonomy in running their economies which are growing nicely without the common currency. Prague has also shelved the idea.

But this month a group of Polish economists, including former central bank governor Marek Belka and ex-Warsaw stock exchange chief Wieslaw Rozlucky, urged the government to restart preparations for the euro as European integration advances. "Poland should take part in this process if it wants to have a real impact on the future of the continent. And also if it wants to permanently anchor itself in western Europe," they wrote in an open letter published in the newspaper Rzeczpospolita. Raising memories of Poland's Cold War past in the Soviet bloc, they offered stark alternatives: "Either we will be in the euro zone in the future or in Russia's sphere of influence." French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor

Angela Merkel laid out their ambitions at the weekend. "We want to consolidate and renew our cooperation with a view to moving ahead with a prosperous and competitive Europe, more sovereign, united and democratic," they said.

## Political Conflicts

Poland and Hungary are embroiled in political conflicts with Brussels over a variety of issues but argue their rejection of the euro on economic grounds. They say having the flexibility of a national currency helps to overcome tough times and warn against adopting the euro before the wealth and wage gap between the poorer east and more developed west narrows. Some economists share this view and public support for the euro has also waned in parts of central Europe.

Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki told the website money.pl that euro adoption was not on the agenda. "We have not changed our rhetoric with regard to this. This is not an issue today," he said. Hungary, run by right-wing Prime Minister Viktor Orban - Poland's closest ally in its battle with Brussels over judicial reforms and EU migrant quotas - has been similarly skeptical.

The issue of the pay gap with the Western euro members remains highly charged. Earlier this month National Bank of Hungary Governor Gyorgy Matolcsy expressed doubt that joining the monetary union would solve the problem. "The introduction of the euro is no guarantee of a successful catching up," he told the weekly Figyelő. The Economy Ministry takes a similar line. "As autonomous monetary policy has helped overcome the (financial) crisis, Hungary does not wish to enter the fixed exchange rate mechanism for now," it said in a reply to Reuters questions.

## Two Sides of the Bridge

So far five of the EU's 11 ex-communist members - Slovakia, Slovenia, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania - use the euro. According to an EU survey, Slovaks are content with this. The May 2017 Eurobarometer showed 80 percent in favor of the euro, which replaced the Slovak crown in 2009. But in Sturovo, where many residents are members of Slovakia's Hungarian minority, not everybody is so happy.

"Wages here are a disaster," said 33-year-old Zsuzsanna Konozsi, as she took her baby in a pushchair through the town. Konozsi works as a waitress in neighbouring Austria, where she earns one and a half times more than she would at home. "If I could turn back time, I would say let the Slovak crown stay, and not have the euro," she told Reuters. Eurobarometer shows living

costs are Slovaks' chief concern, along with health and social security. "Since we've had the euro, everything is more expensive. The economy may have got a boost... but not ordinary people," said Pal Varga, a security guard. "Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic are on a good path, they defend themselves. I think it is France and Germany dictating the pace in the EU," he added. The Eurobarometer also showed 55 percent of Poles and 70 percent of Czechs oppose introducing the euro. In Hungary, by contrast, 57 percent want it despite the government's stand.

EU data suggest Slovaks are better off with the euro. While prices rose a cumulative 10.3 percent between 2009 and 2016, average gross wages gained 22.5 percent. Life changed for local people when Slovakia introduced the euro. While it was mostly Hungarians going to Sturovo to shop before, now Slovaks come to Esztergom as it is cheaper for them following a fall in the forint's value. Across the bridge over the Danube, reopened only in 2001 after it was blown up in World War Two, Hungarians in Esztergom are more favorable to the euro.

"The euro would be good for us and also bad for us," said Amadeusz Sziklai, 53, dressed in a Russian-style fur hat as he sold shawls and hats from a stall one wintry morning. "There is lots to do before Hungary could join the euro in a way that it would be able to compete with western countries." Maja Abel, who runs a fashion boutique, said Slovaks could now easily afford clothes that her Hungarian customers struggled to pay for. She noted her mother lived on a pension of just 72,000 forints (230 euros) a month. "It would be very good if the euro were introduced in Hungary, but at this moment the country is not up to it," said Abel, 51.

## Inside or Outside

In Brussels, a European Commission spokesman said a two-yearly report assessing countries' progress towards qualifying for the euro will be published in May. Most member states are required to join once they have met the entry criteria, following a two-year wait in the European Exchange Rate Mechanism. But as Hungary and Poland are not even trying to join, early adoption remains highly unlikely if their eurosceptic governments win re-election this year and next.

European officials are worried about issues such as central bank independence, especially in Hungary. In its latest annual report, the European Central Bank repeated long-standing concerns about some National Bank of Hungary programs, which might conflict with a ban on central banks directly funding their governments. "The ECB will continue to closely monitor these operations," it said. —Reuters

News

## Prize camels keeping Saudi tradition alive, but no Botox please!

**AL-RUMAHIYA, Saudi Arabia:** The dromedaries paraded down a dusty racetrack as judges rated the size of their lips, cheeks, heads and knees. Crowds of men watched from the bleachers, hooting when the beasts representing their own tribe loped down the track. A dozen beasts have been disqualified from this year's Saudi "camel beauty contest" because their handlers used Botox to make them more handsome. "The camel," explained the chief judge of the show, Fawzan Al-Madi, "is a symbol of Saudi Arabia. We used to preserve it out of necessity, now we preserve it as a pastime."

Much is changing in Saudi Arabia: the country is getting its first movie theatres. Soon women will be permitted to drive. The authorities eventually hope to diversify the economy away from the oil that has been its lifeblood for decades. But as they seek to transform the conservative kingdom, the Saudi authorities are trying to smooth the path for reform by emphasizing traditional aspects of their culture. And for the bedouin of Arabia, nothing is more essential than the camel, used for centuries for food, transport, as a war machine and companion.

So, the authorities have ramped up the country's annual month-long camel festival, which was relocated last year from the remote desert to the outskirts of the capital. On a rocky desert plateau, the government has erected a permanent venue to host the headline events: Races and show competitions with combined purses of 213 million riyals (\$57 million).

The pavilion features an auction where top camels can fetch millions of riyals. There are food stalls and souvenir shops, a petting zoo featuring the world's tallest and shortest camels, a museum with life-size sand sculptures of camels, tents for tasting camel's milk and viewing



AL-RUMAHIYA, Saudi Arabia: Men lead camels during a beauty contest as part of the annual King Abdulaziz Camel Festival on Jan 19, 2018. — AFP

camel-hair textiles, and a planetarium showing how Arabs rode camels through the desert guided by the stars.

Organizers say this "heritage village" will expand in coming years as Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman - who is heir to the throne, defense minister and head

of oil and economic policy - takes the reins through a newly-created official Camel Club established by royal decree last year. Halfway through this year's festival, attendance is up about a third from last year, with about 300,000 people making the 1-1/2 hour trip from

Riyadh so far, said Fahd Al-Shemmari, a Camel Club board member. "The vision is for the (festival) to become a global, pioneering forum for all classes of people to come for entertainment, knowledge and competition." — Reuters

## Pence vows US embassy move...

Continued from Page 1

one by a high-ranking US official not to include talks with the Palestinians.

Israel has enthusiastically welcomed the vice president, with Netanyahu calling him a "dear friend" and praising what he described as the strongest ever ties between the two countries. Earlier yesterday, Pence was given a ceremonial welcome in a tent outside Netanyahu's office, with an honor guard and military band. In remarks afterwards, Pence said he was "hopeful that we are at the dawn of a new era of renewed discussions to achieve a peaceful resolution to the decades-long conflict that has affected this region."

Netanyahu again lauded the Jerusalem decision. "I've had the privilege over the years of standing here with hundreds of world leaders and (to) welcome them, all of them to Israel's capital, Jerusalem. This is the first time that I stand here where both leaders can say those three words, 'Israel's capital, Jerusalem,'" Netanyahu said.

Today, Pence, a devout Christian, will visit Jerusalem's Western Wall, one of the holiest sites in Judaism. Trump became the first sitting US president to visit the site when he travelled to Jerusalem in May 2017. The site is located in east Jerusalem, occupied by Israel in the 1967 Six-Day War and later annexed in a move never recognized by the international community. The city's status is perhaps the most sensitive in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the Palestinians' reaction to Trump's recognition was an illustration of the importance placed upon it.

Beyond refusing to meet Pence, Abbas has said the United States can no longer serve as mediator in negotiations and denounced Trump's peace efforts as the "slap of the century". The Palestinians were planning a general strike today to protest Trump's declaration. Unrest since the announcement has left 18 Palestinians dead, most of them killed in clashes with Israeli forces. One Israeli has been killed in that time.

In his speech to parliament, Pence said "we strongly urge the Palestinian leadership to return to the table. Peace can only come through dialogue." The 82-year-old Abbas said in Brussels that "we are keen on continuing on the way of negotiations because we believe it is the only way forward to reach a negotiated solution and peace between us and

Israel". He has however pushed for an internationally led process. Netanyahu appeared more interested in talking with Pence on other issues, including Iran, Israel's main enemy.

Pence dedicated part of his speech to Iran, saying the United States "will never allow" it to acquire a nuclear weapon and pledging to "work with Israel and with nations across the world to confront the leading state sponsor of terror." The US move to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital broke with decades of international consensus that the city's status should be settled as part of a two-state peace deal between Israel and the Palestinians.

Israel claims all of Jerusalem as its capital, while the Palestinians see the eastern sector as the capital of their future state. Israelis and Palestinians alike interpreted Trump's move as Washington taking Israel's side in the conflict - a view reinforced by the White House's recent decision to withhold financing for the UN agency for Palestinian refugees. In Jerusalem, Pence repeated Trump's view that the United States will support a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict "if both sides agree".

Abbas told EU diplomatic chief Federica Mogherini that the Palestinians were still committed to the stalled Middle East peace process and urged the bloc to take a more "political" role. In an interview with AFP on Sunday in Brussels, Palestinian foreign minister Riad Al-Malki said the EU recognizing the state of Palestine would be "a way to respond" to US President Donald Trump's declaration of Jerusalem as the Israeli capital.

"We truly consider the European Union as a true partner and friend, and therefore we call its member states to swiftly recognize the state of Palestine and we confirm that there is no contradiction between recognition and the resumption of negotiations," Abbas told reporters yesterday.

Abbas met Mogherini for one-on-one talks before joining the bloc's foreign ministers for lunch on the sidelines of their monthly meeting, after Netanyahu made a similar trip last month. Abbas said the Palestinians were still "keen on continuing on the way of negotiations" and committed to "fighting terrorism, violence and extremism locally, regionally and internationally".

Mogherini said the two sides needed "to show more than ever before their engagement with the international community" to work for peace. After Washington froze funding to the UN agency for Palestinian refugees, Mogherini told Abbas he could count on the EU to continue its funding. The EU and its member states are collectively the Palestinians' largest donors, Mogherini said, with nearly 359 million euros (\$439 million) in support given in 2017. — Agencies

## Turkey steps up assault on Kurd...

Continued from Page 1

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said a total of 22 Syrian civilians had been killed by Turkish strikes in the operation and two more by Kurdish fire. It said 54 Syrian combatants had been killed, including 19 Ankara-backed rebels, 26 Kurdish fighters and nine unidentified figures.

But Ankara has denied inflicting civilian casualties, with Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu accusing the YPG of sending out "nonsense propaganda and baseless lies". Observatory director Rami Abdel Rahim told AFP in Beirut that the clashes were the fiercest since the start of the offensive. Turkey-backed forces had also taken a key hill in Afrin, both he and Anadolu said. An AFP correspondent in the Turkish border village of Hassa saw more Turkish tanks heading towards Syria, enthusiastically cheered by locals.

In a sign of the risks to Turkey, rockets fired from Syria on the border town of Reyhanli on Sunday killed one Syrian refugee. One more person was killed in a similar attack Monday on the village of Kirikhan. The Syrian Democratic Forces, an umbrella group dominated by the YPG, said in a statement that the operation amounted to "clear support" for IS. Turkey's previous incursion into Syria during the war was the Euphrates Shield campaign in Aug 2016-March 2017 in an area to the east of Afrin, against both the YPG and IS.

Erdogan has warned those protesting against the operation will have to pay a "heavy price". Turkish police detained 24 people on suspicion of disseminating "terror propaganda" on social media. But as well as a complex military task, Turkey has to wage a sensitive diplomatic campaign to avoid alienating allies and provoking foes. Western capitals are particularly concerned that the campaign against the YPG will take the focus away from eliminating IS after a string of successes in recent months.

US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said Monday he was "concerned" about the offensive, saying the United States was in Syria with the aim of defeating the

jihadists. The European Union's diplomatic chief Federica Mogherini said she was "extremely worried" and would discuss the situation with Turkish officials. But Erdogan expressed impatience with US demands to set a clear timetable, saying the campaign would be over "when the target is achieved".

"How long have you been in Afghanistan? Is that over in Iraq?" he said, referring to the current US military presence in those countries which began with 2001 and 2003 invasions. Erdogan has previously indicated that once control is imposed onto Afrin, Turkey wants to head west to defeat the YPG in the town of Manbij.

Meanwhile, Russia and Iran - who have a military presence in Syria and are working with Turkey on a peace process - have also expressed concern. Erdogan insisted Turkey had discussed the operation in advance with Russia, and Moscow was in "agreement". A crucial factor will be whether the operation affects a Syrian peace conference to be held in the Russian resort of Sochi in late January. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said Monday that Kurdish representatives would be invited, without specifying who, and accused the US of encouraging separatism among Syrian Kurds.

Turkish Deputy Prime Minister Mehmet Simsek sought to play down long-term risks. "Our investors should be at ease, the impact will be limited, the operation will be brief and it will reduce the terror risk to Turkey in the period ahead," Simsek, who oversees economic affairs, said in Ankara. A senior Turkish official declined to give a timeframe but said the operation would "move fast", adding that Turkey believed there was some local support for its action in both Afrin and Manbij.

The Turkish-backed Free Syrian Army factions, which have come together under the banner of a newly branded "National Army", also want to see an end to YPG rule in Afrin. They accuse the YPG of displacing 150,000 Arab residents of towns including Tel Rifaat and Menigh to the east of Afrin, captured in 2016. "This is a historic moment in our revolution," Mohammad Al-Hamadeen, a senior officer in the FSA forces, told fighters in Azaz on Sunday as they prepared to join the ground offensive. "God willing, very soon we will return to our region that we were driven from two years ago." — Agencies

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## Sports

# Shiffrin prepares to bounce back in giant slalom in Kronplatz

## Shiffrin dominates start of the season with ten World Cup wins

MILAN: World Cup leader Mikaela Shiffrin will be looking to bounce back into winning mode ahead of the Winter Olympics in today's giant slalom in Kronplatz, Italy. Shiffrin has dominated the start of the season with ten World Cup wins but had mixed fortunes in nearby Cortina d'Ampezzo over the weekend despite a promising third place in Friday's downhill.

The slalom specialist finished seventh in the second downhill on Saturday in the Italian Dolomites and failed to finish Sunday's Super-G. But she is confident of laying the groundwork ahead of the Pyeongchang Olympics, starting on February 9, on the challenging Erta slope.

"Kronplatz is one of the more technical tracks on the circuit and reminds me of Squaw Valley. A ton of terrain and really fun to ski," said the American, the holder of six giant slalom wins on the World Cup circuit including Kranjska Gora, Slovenia and Courchevel, France this season.

Shiffrin has a 876-point lead over Tina Weirather of Liechtenstein in the overall standings but knows she will have competition with "a lot of girls skiing really fast in the giant slalom now". The 22-year-old from

Colorado leads the giant slalom standings by 55 points from France's Tessa Worley with Germany's Viktoria Rebensburg third a further eight points adrift.

Rebensburg—the Vancouver Olympic giant slalom winner—returns after a two-week flu absence which saw her miss Bad Kleinkirchheim in Austria and Cortina. Worley, a two-time world giant slalom champion, finished second behind Shiffrin in Slovenia and is looking for her first win of the season.

"It's really technical and I like it," said Worley, second behind Italy's Federica Brignone last year, of Kronplatz. Brignone won last year's first edition of the race and is hoping to compete despite a high fever keeping her out of Sunday's Super-G in Cortina.

Teammate Sofia Goggia returned home to Bergamo after the highs and lows of Cortina where she won the downhill only to crash out of the second downhill and the Super-G the following two days.

Hosts Italy have other injury problems but Manuela Moelgg, third last year, returns looking to add to her three podiums this season at Sölden, Killington and Courchevel. — AFP

“Kronplatz is one of the more technical tracks”

## Canada's Belchos looks to mend Sochi heartache in South Korea

SOCHI: After the heartbreak of missing out on the Winter Olympics in Sochi by the narrowest of margins four years ago, Canadian speed skater Jordan Belchos is all set to step it up a gear when he takes to the ice in South Korea.

The Toronto native missed the cut for Sochi by a few hundredths of a second and is still pinching himself after being selected to race for Canada in the 10,000m and the team pursuit at next month's Winter Games. "Last Olympics, I missed the Games by six hundredths of a second, so I remember that feeling, and I guess just the contrast to that is pretty amazing," he told Reuters from Canada's training base in Calgary. "It was unbelievable. If it had happened to anybody else, I would have been like, 'No way, that's insane.'" Belchos's misery at missing out on Sochi was compounded by confusion in the local media over whether he had qualified for the 10,000m.

"There was a news article released (saying) that I'd qualified (for Sochi), there was a couple I guess that didn't fully understand the rules," the 28-year-old said. "I had to tell these people, 'no, I'm not qualified'. People were congratulating me and I was like, 'No, no, I'm actually just going to miss it.' At a certain point I got sick of telling the same story. It was kind of a sad story. I made it my goal the next four years that I was going to use that to be better."

### STIFF COMPETITION

Belchos faces stiff competition in the 10,000m from his Canada team mate Ted-Jan Bloemen, the current world record holder, as well as from Dutchman Sven Kramer, one of the favourites to medal in South Korea.

"Ted and Sven Kramer, those guys are a little bit head and shoulders above the rest," he said. "But besides that I believe there's a lot of guys that have a chance. To go to the Games and to really challenge in the same distance, the 10,000m, would be the ultimate kind of finish for me."

Belchos was struck down by injury before and after Canada's Olympic trials for Sochi, but those experiences only strengthened his resolve. "So the June before Sochi, I crashed my bike and I had a bad concussion," he said. "And then I came back that summer and I got demoted from the national team to the national development team."

"And then in July (2014) I crashed and broke my kneecap while skating. So it was just like this whole series of events where nothing seemed to be easy. You get difficult things and if you let them beat you down they will, but if you use them in the right way they make you stronger. So there was this constant belief that all these negative things in some way are going to be good for me."

### TEAM DYNAMIC

Canada will send a strong team pursuit squad to the Games, and Belchos believes their camaraderie gives them an edge over the competition. "For sure the team pursuit is a big target. We have a really good team," he said. "I actually believe that a lot of our success can be attributed to the dynamic of the team because right now as it's kind of shaped, it's me, Denny Morrison, Ted-Jan Bloemen and Ben Donnelly, and those are three of my best friends."

"We train together all the time and we're always pushing each other. I just enjoy hanging out with those guys." Vincent De Haître is also part of the squad for the team pursuit, and Belchos believes the Canadians will challenge for plenty of medals on the ice at the Gangneung Oval.

"If you look at our team, you could find a medal contender in basically every single distance," he said. "That's pretty exciting. Obviously not everybody is going to win a medal, but if there's 14 events and seven win medals, that would be huge.—Reuters

## Czech Sablikova in race to be fit for Games

PYEONGCHANG: Czech speed skater Martina Sablikova has had injections and is still battling pain in her back which she hopes will not harm her chances at next month's Pyeongchang Winter Olympics.

The long-distance specialist has a problem with a disc in her back, which makes it difficult for her to completely stretch her leg and while she had painkilling injections, decided to miss the European Speed Skating Championships earlier this month to focus on the Games. "I want my back to get fully in order and I can tell myself in Korea that I've done all I could," she told Czech media when she announced her decision to skip the European Championships in Kolomna at the start of January. "After the last World Cup (in Salt Lake City), I consulted with doctors. I had a shot and we found out it had helped but I would need the shot to go closer to the nerve. Then it should be completely fine."

"Fortunately it has improved already." She has since improved enough to return to action at the ISU World Cup event in Erfurt at the weekend where she raced in the 1,500m and 3,000m, but said beforehand she was



CORTINA: File photo shows third placed Mikaela Shiffrin celebrates during the podium ceremony of the FIS Alpine World Cup Women's Downhill replacing Val d'Isere event in Cortina d'Ampezzo, Italian Alps. — AFP

still suffering pain.

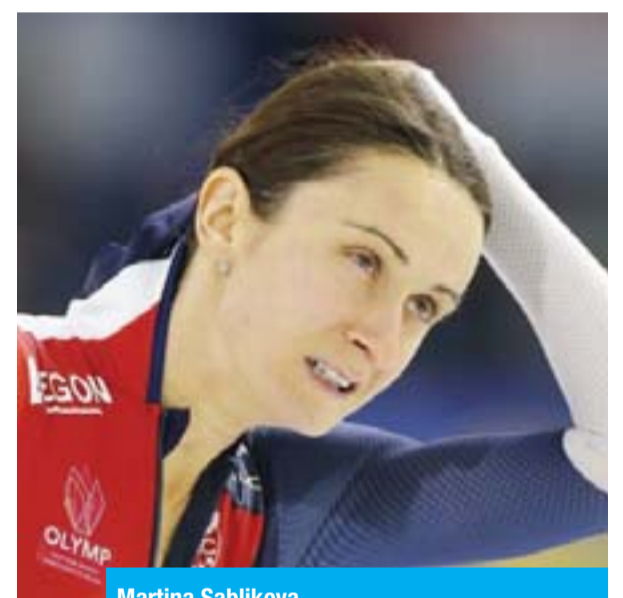
"I didn't know something could hurt like this," she said. "The pain is sometimes really unbelievable. One moment it is good, one moment not so much. I was just in Italy for three weeks where I trained for everything I should."

"Sometimes I went through the pain, but sometimes I almost didn't feel the pain. It depends. The worst is entering the turns... The pain is sometimes really, really unbelievable. It's a pain that I have to get through."

"When I go at a sharp tempo, then it is really hard to fight it, but so far it can be done." The 30-year-old from Nove Mesto Na Morave has won three Olympic gold medals, has held the world record in the 5,000m since 2011 and her rivalry with Dutchwoman Ireen Wust is one of the sport's most intense.

Wust beat Sablikova to gold in the 3,000 at the Sochi Games four years ago, but the Czech came back strong to win the 5,000 and defend the crown she had claimed for the first time at the Vancouver Games in 2010. In Korea, Sablikova will focus on the 1,000m and 3,000m, although her coach Petr Novak has not ruled her out of taking part in the 1,500m as well. "Martina had something blocked in her back, which has loosened, but some small problems have remained. As if you catch a cramp and it holds on you for a month and does not want to relax completely," he said.

"We are working on Martina's back to be at least 99 percent fine at the Games. I stay calm. Even in her current condition she would fight for medals in Korea."



Martina Sablikova

Novak added that Nikola Zdrhalova, in the mass start, and Karolina Erbanova in the women's 500m were both also medal contenders.

"I believe Martina and Karolina will be fighting for medal positions," Novak said. "Martina on both her distances and Karolina mainly in 500m. In the group race Nikola may be in the game too." — Reuters

## Dutch team player Blokhuijsen hopes for solo success

AMSTERDAM: Jan Blokhuijsen was part of the formidable Dutch speed skating squad that won gold in the team pursuit in Sochi and while he has come to be known as a real 'team player' he will be setting his sights on a first individual Olympic title in Pyeongchang.

Blokhuijsen has been a fixture on the speed skating circuit in the Netherlands since junior level and finished second in the Sochi 5,000 metres behind team mate Sven Kramer, who he will go up against over the same distance in South Korea next month.

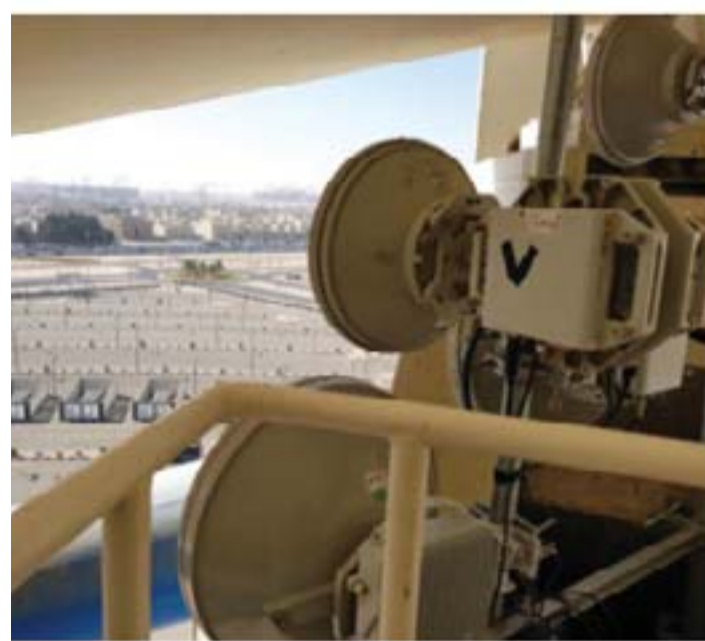
The 28-year-old got his first taste of Olympic success at the 2010 Vancouver Games, when he took a bronze medal in the team pursuit along with Kramer, Mark Tuitert and Simon Kuipers.

Four years later, Kramer, Blokhuijsen and Koen Verweij stormed to the top of the podium in Sochi, and the same trio will represent the Dutch in the team pursuit at the Gangneung Oval next month. "I think Jan is a real good all round skater," Arie Koops, the Dutch team's technical director, told Reuters. "Sometimes he is even close on the 1,500m, a distance which is a little bit hard for him. He will be there for the 5,000m because at the Olympics in Sochi he was also there for a medal, and that's also a possibility again I think in Korea."

The Netherlands has a strong professional speed skating circuit and the rivalries between individual skaters can make teamwork difficult, which enhances Blokhuijsen's reputation as a team skater. "The Dutch have a lot of (professional) teams," said former Dutch speed skater Bob de Jong, who is currently assistant coach of the South Korean national team. "They're always competing as well outside the skating rink. And during training, well, sometimes they help each other and sometimes they are absolutely not helping each other."

De Jong praised Blokhuijsen's professionalism and commitment to the sport. "I was training in another team and we got the same sponsor so we trained a little bit together," De Jong said. "I know he is really focused on his weight and focusing on his food level and energy level."

That focus helped Blokhuijsen overcome a broken ankle in May last year that could have thrown his preparations for the upcoming Games into disarray. Such is Blokhuijsen's importance to the Dutch team that Verweij called for him to be given a place in the Olympic squad when it looked like his participation might be in doubt. "It's simple. Sven Kramer, Jan Blokhuijsen and I know what to do on the team pursuit, so I think we should stay there," Verweij was quoted as saying by Dutch online newspaper NU.nl in early December. —Reuters



Al-Badran

## VIVA powers GCC Cup 2017 stadiums with WIFI in cooperation with Huawei

KUWAIT: VIVA, Kuwait's fastest-growing and most developed telecom operator, announced upgrading its last mile network with the latest Huawei's Super Dual Band, SDB "E-Band" technology to test and support WIFI experience in Kuwait. The project aimed to supply the best broadband user experience during the GCC Cup 2017 at Jaber Al-Ahmad Stadium and Kaifan Stadium.

VIVA has updated its backhauling bandwidth with the newest SDB microwave solution, through cooperation with its strategic partner, Huawei Technologies Kuwait. The solution caters extensive traffic generated by deploying innovative hyphenated WIFI broadband network. As a part of VIVA continuous leadership in Kuwait Information and Telecommunication market, VIVA targeted delivering the best internet user experience in stadium areas during the GCC Cup 2017.

Eng Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Badran, VIVA's CEO commented: "VIVA has always distinguished itself to be a market leader in technology and provide the customers with the most advanced solutions and technologies. VIVA is the first company in Kuwait to bring SDB solution in order to expand the capability of existed traditional backhauling systems up to 20Gbps transmission speed "E-Band" and to provide fiber like alternative solution. VIVA has used the new technology to avoid long time fiber deployment and to ensure extreme capacity availability in the stadium during the event period."

VIVA has successfully deployed its access network and commercialized its WIFI system in a week time to cover Jaber Al-Ahmad Stadium and Kaifan Stadium. The WIFI supports delivery of simultaneous video, digital services and data to large number of wireless devices. VIVA will utilize SDB to provide reliable mobile network performance by microwave backhaul, which supports both the evolution of 4.5G and the introduction of 5G in Kuwait. VIVA Chooses "SDB" solution to build long-distance and large-bandwidth microwave links which used to ensure optimal Point to Point transmission network maintaining Mobile Broadband services for consumers segment. SDB can be utilized in Business to Business "B2B" and Business to Government "B2G" applications to present enterprise speed capability use cases.

Sports

# Eagles rout Vikings to earn Super Bowl date with Patriots

## Patriots boost their record of Super Bowl appearances to 10

WASHINGTON: Defending champion New England booked a third Super Bowl trip in four seasons Sunday, edging Jacksonville 24-20 to reach an NFL championship showdown against the Philadelphia Eagles. Five-time Super Bowl champion Tom Brady's two fourth-quarter touchdown passes rallied the Patriots into Super Bowl 52 against an Eagles squad that routed Minnesota 38-7, humbling the Vikings' top-rated defensive unit. The Patriots boosted their record of Super Bowl appearances to 10 and could match Pittsburgh's record six Super Bowl triumphs on February 4 at Minneapolis, Minnesota.

"It's pretty crazy," Brady said. "It's pretty amazing to be on a team that wins these kind of games. It's so great."

Nick Foles, who took over as Philadelphia's quarterback last month after an injury to Carson Wentz, completed 26-of-33 passes for 352 yards and three touchdowns as the underdog Eagles humiliated the visitors. "This moment, it's unbelievable. It's humbling," Foles said. "The team was amazing. I'm a little speechless. It's amazing soaking this all in. We all believe in each other. Everyone was against us. We came in here and came out with an amazing victory."

It will be a rematch of Super Bowl 39 from 2005, when Brady threw two touchdown passes and the Patriots won 24-21 for their third title in four seasons, equal to the same run they could complete in two weeks. "Now we have to go to Minnesota and finish the job," said Patriots owner Robert Kraft.

The Eagles, whose two Super Bowl defeats also include 1981, last won an NFL title in 1960 before the Super Bowl era began.

Brady, who needed stitches for a right hand injury suffered Wednesday in practice, lost his favorite target, tight end Rob Gronkowski, to a second-quarter con-

cussion. But the 40-year-old quarterback completed 26-of-38 passes for 290 yards, 138 of them in the fourth quarter. "We said whatever it takes," Brady said. "That was a great second half. Just so proud of our team. Amazing."

### UNKINDEST CUT OF ALL

Brady finally addressed the Wednesday cut to his throwing hand that became a major pre-game concern. "It was just a pretty good cut. I dealt with it the best I could," Brady said. "I've had a lot worse. Wednesday, Thursday and Friday were a little scary."

I gained some confidence on Saturday and we did just enough to win." New England pulled within 20-17 on Brady's 9-yard touchdown pass to Danny Amendola with 8:44 remaining. Amendola returned a punt 20 yards to the Jaguars' 30-yard line, then made a diving catch and three plays

later leaped high and made an acrobatic tiptoe landing for a 4-yard touchdown reception to create the final margin.

"It means a lot. We worked so hard for this," said Amendola, who caught seven passes for 84 yards. New England's Stephon Gilmore batted down a fourth-down pass to halt the last Jaguars' drive. "We've got a lot of guys that fight and never give up, that know how to play situational football," Patriots coach Bill Belichick said. "I'm really proud of these guys."

### FOLES SHINES, EAGLES SOAR

Foles proved he can deliver in big games to doubters that wrote off the Eagles when Wentz went down. "I'm so happy for Nick," Eagles coach Doug Pederson said. "For everything he has been through and battled he has stayed true and stayed the course. We all believed in



PHILADELPHIA: Jake Elliott #4 of the Philadelphia Eagles kicks an extra point against the Minnesota Vikings during the first quarter in the NFC Championship game at Lincoln Financial Field on Sunday in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. — AFP

him." Case Keenum's 25-yard touchdown pass to Kyle Rudolph opened the scoring for Minnesota, but Patrick Robinson returned an intercepted Keenum pass 50 yards for a touchdown to equalize at 7-7.

Former Patriot rusher LeGarrette Blount ran 11 yards for an Eagles touchdown and Foles followed with touchdown passes of 53 and five yards to Alshon Jeffery and 41 yards to Torrey Smith.

Eagles defensive end Chris Long, who played on New England's 2017 Super Bowl champions, said they expected to shut down Minnesota. "We're not surprised at all," Long said. "We just keep grinding."

The Vikings, whose last Super Bowl was in 1977, would have been the first team to play a Super Bowl in its home stadium. Dome-based teams fell to 0-13 in outdoor conference championship contests. — AFP

## Magic stun Celtics, Pacers stop Spurs

WASHINGTON: Eifrid Payton scored 22 points, and the Orlando Magic snapped a 14-game losing streak in Boston by delivering an impressive 103-95 triumph over the Celtics on Sunday. Evan Fournier added 19 points as Orlando won for just the second time in the past 10 games and third time in the last 20. Aaron Gordon contributed 11 points and 13 rebounds. Kyrie Irving scored 40 points on 14-of-23 shooting but was unable to prevent Boston from going winless on a three-game homestand. Irving hit 5 of 7 3-point attempts and also had seven rebounds and five assists after a one-game absence due to shoulder soreness. Jaylen Brown added 17 points for the Celtics.

### NETS 101, PISTONS 100

Spencer Dinwiddie scored 22 points and hit the game-winning shot with 1.1 seconds remaining as Brooklyn blew a 15-point lead late in the third quarter but recovered to win at Detroit. Dinwiddie won the game when he took the inbound pass from Joe Harris after the Nets called the last timeout. He gained possession behind the 3-point line, curled around in front of the foul line, got Detroit's Ish Smith to leave his feet and released the 13-foot floater in the lane before Andre Drummond came over to provide help. Rondae Hollis-Jefferson added 21 points, eight rebounds and seven assists for the Nets. Tobias Harris led the Pistons with 20 points, and Stanley Johnson added 18.

### PACERS 94, SPURS 86

Victor Oladipo scored 19 points and Darren Collison added 15 as Indiana roared into San Antonio and beat the NBA's best home team. Thaddeus Young and Bojan Bogdanovic added 14 and 10 points, respectively, for the Pacers, who snapped a two-game slide and ended up 3-2 on the season-high, five-game road trip. Pau Gasol scored 14 points to lead San Antonio while Bryn Forbes and Tony Parker, who both came off the bench, added 12 each. LaMarcus Aldridge hit for 10 points and 10 rebounds while collecting his 20th double-double of the season, and Kyle Anderson also scored 10 for San Antonio, which has lost three of its past four games.

### LAKERS 127, KNICKS 107

Jordan Clarkson came off the bench to score a game-high 29 points and added 10 assists as Los Angeles routed visiting New York. Clarkson scored 33 points in his previous outing. He was supported on Sunday by Julius Randle,



BOSTON: Evan Fournier #10 of the Orlando Magic shoots the ball against the Boston Celtics on Sunday at the TD Garden in Boston, Massachusetts. — AFP

### NBA results/standings

San Antonio 86, Indiana 94; Detroit 100, Brooklyn 101; Boston 95, Orlando 103; LA Lakers 127, New York 107.

Eastern Conference				Western Conference					
W	L	PCT	GB						
Boston	34	13	72.3	-	Golden State	37	10	78.7	-
Toronto	31	14	68.9	2	Houston	32	12	72.7	3.5
Cleveland	27	18	60.0	6	Minnesota	30	18	62.5	7.5
Miami	27	19	58.7	6.5	San Antonio	30	18	62.5	7.5
Washington	26	20	56.5	7.5	Oklahoma City	26	20	56.5	10.5
Indiana	25	22	53.2	9	Portland	25	21	54.3	11.5
Philadelphia	22	20	52.4	9.5	New Orleans	24	21	53.3	12
Milwaukee	23	22	51.1	10	LA Clippers	23	22	51.1	13
Detroit	22	23	48.9	11	Denver	23	23	50.0	13.5
New York	21	26	44.7	13	Utah	19	27	41.3	17.5
Charlotte	18	26	40.9	14.5	LA Lakers	17	29	37.0	19.5
Chicago	18	28	39.1	15.5	Phoenix	17	29	37.0	19.5
Brooklyn	18	29	38.3	16	Memphis	16	29	35.6	20
Orlando	14	32	30.4	19.5	Dallas	15	31	32.6	21.5
Atlanta	13	32	28.9	20	Sacramento	13	32	28.9	23

who posted 27 points and 12 rebounds. Los Angeles won its second consecutive game without rookie point guard Lonzo Ball, who has a swollen left knee. The Lakers are 2-

8 this season without Ball. New York, 2-2 on a seven-game road trip, was led by Tim Hardaway Jr., Kristaps Porzingis and Michael Beasley, each scoring 17 points. — Reuters

## Russia challenge doping ban at sports court

GENEVA: Dozens of Russian athletes banned by the International Olympic Committee for life over doping began an appeal against their suspension yesterday at the world's top sports court. The week-long hearing at the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) includes appeals from 39 Russians who competed at the 2014 Winter Games in Sochi, which were tarnished by a vast, Moscow-backed doping scheme, according to multiple independent investigations. The mass hearing is an extraordinary session for CAS and forced the court to temporarily move from its small headquarters in Lausanne to a large conference centre in Geneva. The hearing began shortly before 10:00 am (0900 GMT), but none of the athletes were on hand yet, a source close to CAS said, explaining that the first session primarily concerned procedural issues.

Another three Russian biathletes have also appealed

against their IOC ban, but their cases will be heard later. Among the witnesses scheduled to testify is Grigory Rodchenkov, the former head of Russia's anti-doping lab (RUSADA). He was the key whistleblower who exposed the cheating programme that IOC president Thomas Bach has described as an "unprecedented attack on the integrity of the Olympics". But Rodchenkov will not testify in person. Instead, he will appear via video-link from the United States, where he fled after the sudden deaths of two senior ex-RUSADA executives.

Canadian lawyer Richard McLaren has also been announced as a witness. McLaren authored the report on Russian cheating for the World Anti-Doping Agency that read in part like a Cold War spy novel, and laid out the workings of the programme—from the use secret state agents to passing urine samples out of testing labs through mouseholes. But none of the testimony will be open to the public, in keeping with the court's standard practice. Those mounting appeals are some of Russia's most celebrated Olympians, like cross-country skier Alexander Legkov, who won 50km gold at Sochi, and double bobsleigh champion Aleksandr Zubkov—both of whom were later stripped of their titles.

Injecting further drama into the hearing is that fact that the 2018 Winter Games in Pyeongchang, South Korea,



GENEVA: Russian Speed Skater Olga Fatkulina (L) arrives at the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) yesterday in Geneva. — AFP

start on February 9 and 21 of the 42 banned Russians say they want to compete.

CAS has said it will deliver a decision between January 29 and February 2. But even if any of the Russians secure what would be a surprise victory on appeal, the road to Pyeongchang would still remain complicated. — AFP

## Rahm outlasts Landry to win CareerBuilders

LOS ANGELES: Spain's Jon Rahm birdied the fourth playoff hole to beat Andrew Landry and capture his second US PGA Tour title at the CareerBuilder Challenge in California. Rahm, projected to rise one spot to number two in the world when the world rankings are updated yesterday, had five birdies in his bogey-free five-under 67 on the Stadium Course in La Quinta to seize the clubhouse lead on 22-under par 266. But Landry, seeking a first PGA Tour title, rolled in an 11-foot birdie putt at the 72nd hole to cap a four-under 68 and force the playoff. Both players parred the first three playoff holes—although each had birdie chances to win.

Rahm finally broke through when they returned to the 18th for the third time in the playoff. After finding the fairway at each of the first three playoff holes he was in the right rough, but still reached the green in two. After he rolled in his birdie putt, Landry missed his from a similar distance on the other side of the hole. "It's an amazing feeling ... to play the way I did and give myself a chance," said the 23-year-old Rahm, who has four victories worldwide in the past year. "Obviously props to Andrew. To birdie 18 from the right rough, having to birdie it, that's a heck of an accomplishment. "Either one of us would have been a deserving champion," added Rahm, who defends his first PGA Tour title at the Farmers Insurance Open at Torrey Pines starting on Thursday.

"I never thought I was going to be at this point in my life right now," he said, adding that it was "hard to believe" that he would move past three-time major winner Jordan Spieth into second place in the world rankings led by American Dustin Johnson. Rahm, the highest ranked player in the field, opened the week in impressive style with a 10-under par 62. He couldn't maintain that pace, and after a third-round 70 was two strokes behind rookie Austin Cook heading into the final round.

He was tied for the lead at 20-under after rolling in an 18-foot putt for his third birdie of the day at the 10th, and kept the chasing pack at bay with back-to-back birdies at 13 and 14 that moved him to 22-under.

### PAR-5 PROBLEMS

Despite his impressive ball-striking, Rahm missed opportunities to give himself more of a cushion. At the par-five 16th he followed up an impressive tee shot with a second shot that left him short of the green. His third shot gave him seven feet for a birdie but he missed that—unable to pick up strokes at any of the Stadium Course's three par-fives.

In the meantime, Landry was putting together a round that included five birdies and a bogey. While Cook's bid for a second PGA Tour title was doomed by a pair of double-bogeys, a string of other players threatened the lead.

John Huh carded a six-under par 66 to head a group sharing third on 268 that also included Canadian Adam Hadwin (68) and American Martin Piller (70). Kevin Chappell's 67 included four birdies in a row from the ninth through the 12th and put him on 269, tied with fellow American Scott Piercy who carded a 70. Jason Kokrak birdied five straight holes on the back nine to get to 21-under but closed with a bogey and a double-bogey in a 69 that saw him tied on 18-under 270 with Sam Saunders (64) and Brandon Harkins (70). — AFP

## Sports

# Munro gets New Zealand home as Pakistan woes continue

## Southee finish with best New Zealand figures of three for 13

### SCOREBOARD

**WELLINGTON:** Completed scoreboard in the first Twenty20 between New Zealand and Pakistan in Wellington yesterday.

Pakistan	
Fakhar Zaman c Kitchen b Southee	3
Umar Amin c Kitchen b Rance	0
Mohammad Nawaz c Munro b Southee	7
Haris Sohail c Bruce b Kitchen	9
Babar Azam c Bruce b Munro	41
Sarfraz Ahmed st Phillips b Santner	9
Shadab Khan c Phillips b Santner	0
Faheem Ashraf c Bruce b Southee	7
Hasan Ali c Southee b Rance	23
Mohammad Amir c Southee b Rance	3
Rumman Raees not out	0
Extras: (w3)	3
Total: (for 10 wickets: 19.4 overs)	105

Fall of wickets: 1-4 (Fakhar), 2-4 (Umar), 3-15 (Nawaz), 4-22 (Haris), 5-38

(Sarfraz), 6-38 (Shadab), 7-53 (Faheem), 8-83 (Hasan), 9-90 (Amir), 10-105 (Babar) Bowling: Rance 4-0-26-3 (1w), Southee 4-0-13-3 (1w), de Grandhomme 2-0-11-0, Kitchen 1-0-3-1, Sodhi 4-0-25-0 (1w), Santner 4-0-15-2, Munro 0.4-0-12-1.

New Zealand	
M. Guptill c Nawaz b Rumman	2
C. Munro not out	49
G. Phillips b Rumman	3
T. Bruce c Fakhar b Shadab	26
R. Taylor not out	22
Extras: (fb1, w3)	4
Total: (for 3 wickets: 15.5 overs)	106

Fall of wickets: 1-3 (Guptill), 2-8 (Phillips), 3-57 (Bruce) Bowling: Amir 3-0-13-0 (1w), Rumman 4-0-24-2 (1w), Shadab 4-0-18-1, Hasan 2.5-0-28-0 (1w), Faheem 1-0-8-0, Nawaz 1-0-14-0.

Result: New Zealand won by seven wickets

**WELLINGTON:** Colin Munro ensured New Zealand continued a stellar home summer yesterday when they thrashed Pakistan by seven wickets with 25 balls to spare in the opening Twenty20 match in Wellington.

Munro was left unbeaten on 49 when a wide by Hasan Ali in the 16th over gave New Zealand victory as they chased down Pakistan's 105 in the clash of the world's top two ranked Twenty20 sides. It extended New Zealand's winning streak to 13 across all three formats in the past two months including five one-dayers against Pakistan and a series of Tests, ODIs and Twenty20s against the West Indies.

“We're not batting well up the order”

For Tim Southee, the stand-in captain after a late decision to rest Kane Williamson who has a minor injury, everything went according to plan. “Obviously winning the toss on that wicket and then coming out and taking early wickets was the plan and we were able to do that. We bowled exceptionally well,” said Southee who also paid tribute to Munro's role with the bat. “It was a great knock from Colin. He likes to get on with it and I think he played a mature innings and was able to hammer it home towards the end.” Pakistan captain Sarfraz Ahmed again had to defend a woeful performance by his top order batsmen, which also plagued them in the ODI series, and believed they were well short of a competitive total. “We're not batting well enough up the order. The new ball was swinging and bouncing, we didn't keep wickets in hand. They bowled very well with the new ball,” he said. “If we had a score of 140-150 it could have been a good match.”

After a wobbly start in which Martin Guptill went for two and Glenn Phillips was bowled for three, Munro and Tom Bruce (26) set up the New Zealand victory with a 49-run stand for the third wicket. After cautious-



**WELLINGTON:** New Zealand's Colin Munro plays a shot in front of Pakistan's wicket-keeper Sarfraz Ahmed during the first Twenty20 international cricket match between New Zealand and Pakistan at Westpac Stadium in Wellington yesterday. — AFP

ly lifting the score to 34 for two after eight overs, they took 23 off the next 12 balls to reduce the target to under six an over and they coasted from there.

Following Bruce's dismissal, Ross Taylor partnered Munro through to the end with a rapid 22 off 13 deliveries. Munro's 43-ball innings included three fours and two sixes and he was left a frustrating one-run short of being only the third player behind Brendon McCullum and Chris Gayle to score four consecutive half centuries in Twenty20 cricket.

Pakistan were in immediate trouble after being sent into bat and were four for 22 in the sixth over as Southee led a dismantling of the Pakistan top order. By the 15th over, Pakistan were seven for 53 and in danger of falling short of their current lowest score of 74 against Australia six years ago, when Babar Khan (41) and Hasan Ali (23) boosted the total with a 30-run partnership. Southee finished with the best New Zealand figures of three for 13 while Seth Rance took three for 26. — AFP

## Ruthless South Africa take aim at series sweep against India

**JOHANNESBURG:** South Africa have promised a ruthless approach as they seek to inflict an historic series sweep when they host India for the third and final Test at The Wanderers in Johannesburg tomorrow, says captain Faf du Plessis.

The Proteas can complete a first clean-sweep of a three-test series against the sub-continent side, having already secured wins in Cape Town and Pretoria earlier this month. A 3-0 series victory would not see South Africa take over from India at the top of the International Cricket Council's rankings, but would move them to within decimal points of doing so. With a four-test series to come against Australia in March, top spot would be tantalisingly close. “I don't think we'll make changes for the third test just for the sake of giving opportunities. We want to keep our foot on the gas and apply as much pressure as possible,” Du Plessis told reporters. “It doesn't happen a lot that you get the chance to beat a

team 3-0 and I would favour dominating India and being ruthless.

“We can use the ODIs and T20s to try and rotate players. We have an amazing opportunity as a team to win 3-0, and that makes us even more hungry to go where no team has gone before.”

South Africa will today hand a fitness test to in-form opening batsman Aiden Markram, who injured his thigh in the second Test. If he is ruled out, his replacement is likely to be Theunis de Bruyn, with Temba Bavuma already out for four weeks with a fractured finger.

India had high hopes of a first ever Test series success in South Africa when they arrived for the tour, but have fallen short in two hard-fought matches. Captain Virat Kohli, the only player to score a century in the series, was especially disappointed with their display in Pretoria on a wicket that was more suited to their game than South Africa's.

Another defeat would be devastating for him as skipper, and he believes his side can get the better of their hosts. “We have to believe that we are the best side (in the world),” he told reporters.

“We are not complaining about pitches, we are not complaining about conditions. We have come here to play. We have had equal opportunities to win in both games, and that's the positive we can take out of it.” — Reuters

## Warner to lead Australia in T20 tri-series, Smith rested

**MELBOURNE:** David Warner will lead Australia in next month's Twenty20 international tri-series against New Zealand and England as regular captain Steve Smith is given a break ahead of the crucial Test tour to South Africa.

Opening batsman Warner, the Test vice-captain, steps up to lead Australia in the T20 games which come a few weeks before the four-Test series in South Africa. “The South African series is a very important one and we have made no secret of our desire to improve our record away from home,” chief selector Trevor Hohns said yesterday.

“As such we wanted to ensure the players had the best possible preparation and that means playing the tour match prior to the first Test.” On the decision for Warner to captain, Hohns added: “Steve Smith has had a very big summer and will benefit from a short break both physically and mentally, before he leaves for South Africa.

“David is a very capable leader and has captained in Steve's absence before and done a fine job. “We wanted to ensure the T20 side had key leadership throughout this series and we know the team is in good hands with him at the helm.” There will be no other Test players in the T20 series and Glenn Maxwell returns to Australia's side after being passed over for the current one-day internationals against England. “We have selected a very strong batting line-



David Warner

up with some heavy hitters,” selector Mark Waugh said. “With some players currently injured and our frontline quicks heading to South Africa it gives a great opportunity to some of the young pace bowlers who have been selected to make their mark on the international stage.” Selected in the T20 squad for the first time are Sydney Sixers fast-bowler Ben Dwarshuis, Adelaide Strikers wicket-keeper Alex Carey and Hobart Hurricanes D'Arcy Short.

“Ben gives us good variety in the attack with his left-arm pace and has bowled particularly well with the new ball in the Big Bash League,” Waugh said. “Alex has impressed in every form he has played this year. He has been in great form in the BBL with both bat and gloves and

stood up to the challenge when he had to take the gloves for an ill Tim Paine in the ODI team. “D'Arcy's selection speaks for itself, he is the leading run scorer in the BBL and has also taken valuable wickets when handed the ball. “He is in outstanding form and we look forward to seeing what he can bring to this T20 side.”

Chris Lynn has also been included in the squad and is tracking well in his return from a calf injury. Australia play New Zealand and England from February 3-21.

Australia squad - David Warner (capt), Aaron Finch, Ashton Agar, Alex Carey, Ben Dwarshuis, Travis Head, Chris Lynn, Glenn Maxwell, Kane Richardson, D'Arcy Short, Billy Stanlake, Marcus Stoinis, Andrew Tye, Adam Zampa. — AFP

## Five things we learned in the Premier League

**LONDON:** Manchester City resumed normal service in the Premier League, putting their defeat against Liverpool behind them with a 3-1 victory against Newcastle as Alexis Sanchez closed in on a move to Manchester United.

Elsewhere, Arsenal showed a positive glimpse of life post-Sanchez while Chelsea notched their first Premier League win of 2018 and Tottenham dropped points against struggling Southampton.

Here are five things we learned from the Premier League this weekend:

### Arsenal rout offers hope for life after Sanchez

The street vendor selling Alexis Sanchez T-shirts at half-price outside the Emirates Stadium appeared to

have caught the prevailing mood about the Arsenal forward's impending move to Manchester United. While Sanchez produced plenty of memorable moments in north London, he departs a divisive figure. Having spent much of the past year in an apparent sulk over Arsenal's underachievement and the club's refusal to sell him, Sanchez was seen by some as more trouble than even his sublime skills were worth and, encouragingly for Gunners boss Arsene Wenger, his players seem liberated by the approaching end of the transfer saga. They crushed Crystal Palace 4-1 without Sanchez and vibrant displays from Alex Iwobi and Mesut Ozil suggested it won't be all doom and gloom without the former Barcelona star.

### Sane helps calm Man City nerves

Sergio Aguero's latest hat-trick saw Manchester City's record goalscorer grab most of the headlines following the Premier League leaders' 3-1 win at home to Newcastle. But it was no surprise that Leroy Sane received just as many congratulatory hugs from manager Pep Guardiola. Having dominated the match, City were faltering when Newcastle pulled a goal back against the run of play to make it 2-1. Fresh from los-

ing their unbeaten league run the previous week to Liverpool, it was a worrying time for Guardiola and his side. But the 22-year-old Sane calmed nerves at the Etihad with a superb run and cross that set up the decisive third goal for Aguero.

### Hazard inspires champions

An in-form Eden Hazard makes Chelsea tick. The 27-year-old Belgian had scored just one goal in his previous 11 games but his double on Saturday—the first bringing up a landmark century of career league goals, came in a 4-0 dismantling of Brighton. However, a cloud hangs over his future at Stamford Bridge, with Hazard yet to commit himself to a new contract against a background of apparent interest from Real Madrid. That uncertainty, together with the reported discontent of manager Antonio Conte over a lack of purchases, overshadows the club's 12-match unbeaten run.

### Martial times run perfectly

French forward Anthony Martial has not always been a firm favourite of manager Jose Mourinho and has had to bide his time among a clutch of hungry for-

wards vying for limited places in attack. But with Alexis Sanchez on the verge of arriving at Old Trafford, Martial, who scored the only goal in a 1-0 victory against Burnley, has chosen the perfect time to hit a purple patch, scoring three goals in his past three Premier League games to press his claim for a first-team starting berth. “(There are) no doubts that from last season to this season (there has been) a great improvement from Anthony and we need that,” Mourinho told Sky Sports.

### Kane is poacher supreme but Spurs stumble

Spurs striker Harry Kane has scored nine goals in his past five starts in the Premier League, with all nine coming from inside the box. His equaliser in the 1-1 draw against Southampton was his 33rd goal of a stellar season for club and country but Tottenham's inability to beat struggling Saints could cost them dear in their chase for a Champions League place, with a fiendish run coming up. Mauricio Pochettino's side are two points behind fourth-placed Liverpool, who have a game in hand. Their next three Premier League fixtures are against Manchester United, Liverpool and Arsenal. — AFP

Sports

# Magical Messi hailed by Betis fans after rolling back the years

## Barcelona thrashed the Andalusians 5-0

**MADRID:** It is easy to forget how talented Lionel Messi is when the Barcelona forward performs at such a consistently high level that you simply expect him to work wonders in every match. Occasionally, though, Messi has games which even by his own lofty standards are hugely impressive and, unfortunately for Real Betis, they ran into him at his best on Sunday.

Barcelona thrashed the Andalusians 5-0 at the Benito Villamarin, with Messi scoring twice and setting up a goal for Luis Suarez. "You have to enjoy Messi. We're living at the same time as him and we just have to enjoy him," Barcelona coach Ernesto Valverde said.

"I've faced him in the past and I know what he's capable of. Now I can enjoy him. It's spectacular to see him every day. He is the best player there is and the best there will ever be."

After a tight first half the Argentine forward stepped up a gear and single-handedly dismantled the Betis defence. Messi finished clinically in the 64th minute, firing across Antonio Adan to leave the goalkeeper with no chance after being played through to double Barcelona's lead following Ivan Rakitic's opener.

The No. 10's second goal was a work of individual genius, with Messi teasing two defenders before beating them with ease and casually slipping the ball past

Adan. Arguably the best was yet to come. In the final stages of the game the 30-year-old playmaker rolled back the years and embarked on a number of mazy dribbles, with Betis unable to get near him.

Twisting and turning in his own half to tie three Betis players in knots before escaping at speed on the break, Messi drew a standing ovation from an admiring Benito Villamarin. These were the kind of moves Messi made a decade ago, which have appeared less in his game during the past few years, but Messi demonstrated he still has them in his locker.

Another wonderful dribble and impudent flick to Suarez led to Barcelona's fifth goal, the Uruguayan gratefully hammering the ball home after Messi's run and pass. "In every game Messi leaves a special touch. This was another game which Leo has been spectacular in," Suarez said.

"People should feel privileged to be able to watch the best player in the world." Messi has scored 19 goals in 20 La Liga matches this season, the division's top scorer and the main reason Barcelona are 11 points clear of second-placed Atletico Madrid.

Under the circumstances, Barcelona's rivals might be tempted to follow Valverde's advice and the Betis fans' lead, sitting back and enjoying watching the world's best player strut his stuff. — Reuters



SEVILLA: Barcelona's Argentinian forward Lionel Messi (C) and Barcelona's Portuguese midfielder Andre Gomes challenge Real Betis' Spanish midfielder Fabian Ruiz (R) during the Spanish league football match between Real Betis and FC Barcelona at the Benito Villamarin stadium in Sevilla on January 21, 2018.

**“I've faced him in the past and I know what he's capable of.”**

## Senegalese end goal droughts in England

**PARIS:** Mame Biram Diouf and Oumar Niasse ended goal droughts in England on a profitable weekend for Senegalese across Europe. Diouf scored his first goal in 10 matches to clinch a 2-0 win for Stoke City over Huddersfield Town in a clash of Premier League strugglers. Niasse netted for the first time since November in the league to salvage a 1-1 draw for Everton against second-bottom West Bromwich Albion. Other Senegalese scorers included teenager Ibrahim Niane of Metz and Moussa Konate of Amiens in the French Ligue 1.

### ENGLAND VICTOR MOSES (Chelsea)

The Nigerian produced an eye-catching performance in a 4-0 win at Brighton. He was involved in Eden Hazard's early opener and then grabbed the last goal himself to wrap up the victory. The 27-year-old ran on to Charly Musonda's brilliant long pass to net his first competitive goal for the club this season.

### OUMAR NIASSE (Everton)

The Senegalese forward came on as a substitute and delivered for Sam Allardyce, scoring a fine equaliser in the 1-1 home draw with West Bromwich Albion. The goal was a welcome one for the 27-year-old-his sixth in the Premier League this season but his first since mid-November. MAME BIRAM

### DIOUF (Stoke City)

Diouf had gone nine games in all competitions without a goal before the game with Huddersfield but was eager to impress new manager Paul Lambert and he scored the second in their much-needed 2-0 win. The 30-year-old Senegalese forward's fifth league goal of the campaign was his first since the 2-1 win over Swansea on December 2.

### ITALY FRANCK KESSIE (AC Milan)

Inspirational Kessie, 21, scored twice to drag his team back from a goal down to a 2-1 win in Cagliari. Kessie got his first from the spot after 36 minutes, then six minutes later got the second from close range for his fourth goal of the season.

**JOEL OBI (Torino)/ALFRED DUNCAN (Sassuolo)**  
Nigerian midfielder Obi opened the scoring after 26 minutes but Torino had to settle for a 1-1 draw when Ghanaian midfielder Duncan set up Domenico

Berardi to equalise for hosts Sassuolo. It was Obi's third goal of the season and he was substituted on 73 minutes with Duncan, who was yellow carded in the first half, replaced three minutes from time.

### FRANCE IBRAHIMA NIANE (Metz)

Ligue 1's bottom club lost 3-1 away to reigning champions Monaco but it was a day to remember for Niane as the 18-year-old scored his first ever goal in France's top flight. Senegalese Niane has followed a well-trodden path from his homeland to eastern France. The academy where he started out has also sent the likes of Sadio Mané, Papiss Cisse, Diafra Sakho and Ismaila Sarr to Metz, and then beyond, in the recent past.

### GERMANY PIERRE-EMERICK AUBAMEYANG (Borussia Dortmund)

The Gabonese striker was again dropped by Borussia Dortmund for a 1-1 draw at Hertha Berlin amid speculation of a move to Arsenal. While his team drew in the capital, Aubameyang played a five-a-side game in Dortmund with friends, wearing a Borussia shirt bearing the name Ousmane Dembele, who boycotted training in August to force his sale to Barcelona. — AFP

## Depay grabs Lyon thrilling win over PSG

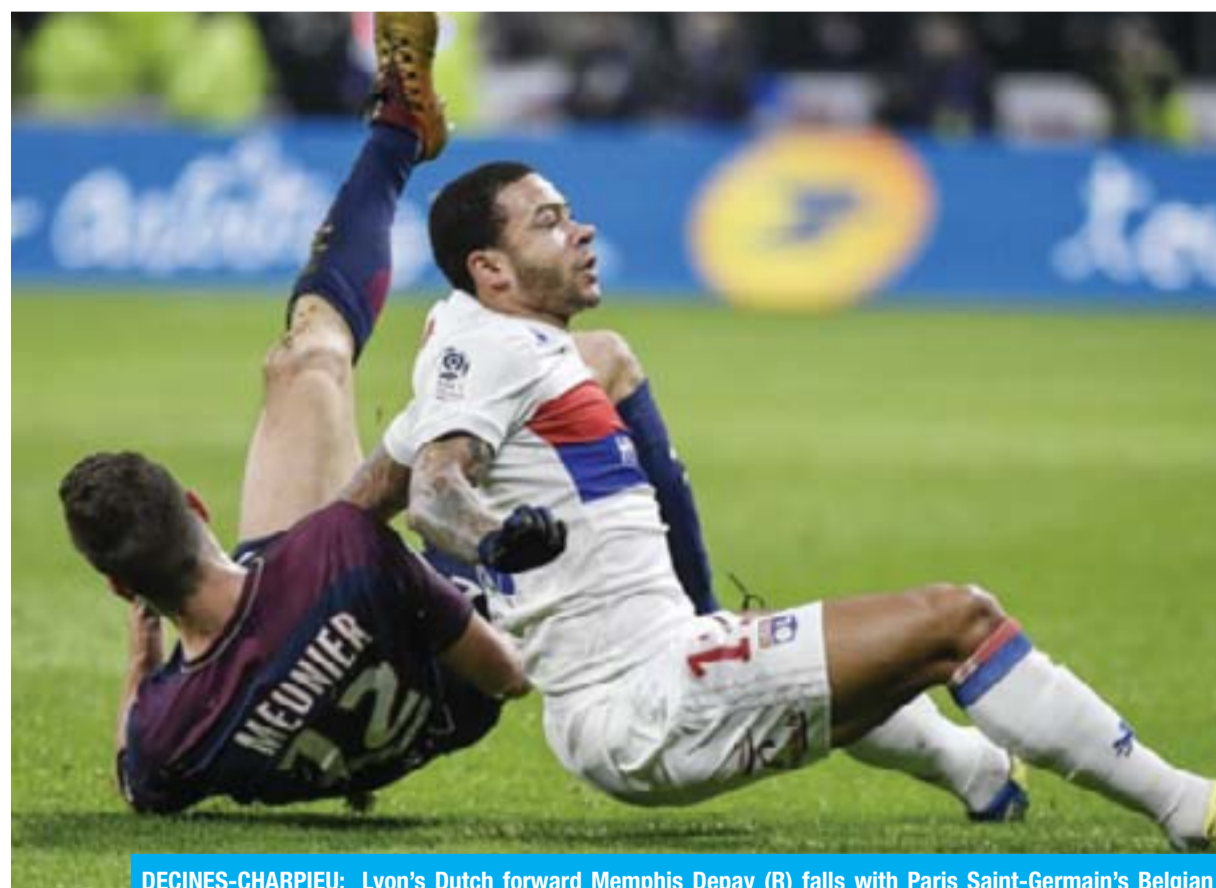
**PARIS:** Memphis Depay struck a dramatic late winner as Lyon beat 10-man Paris Saint-Germain 2-1 on Sunday to move within eight points of the Ligue 1 leaders. Nabil Fekir gave the hosts a shock second-minute lead at Groupama Stadium with a brilliant free-kick, but PSG snatched an equaliser on the stroke of half-time as left-back Layvin Kurzawa hammered home a stunning volley. PSG full-back Dani Alves was given a straight red card for dissent, and Lyon made their man advantage count deep into injury-time as substitute Depay picked out the top corner.

"At the start, I wanted to cross, but I saw that the keeper was on the side of the goal," Fekir told Canal+. "It's going to be difficult (to catch PSG), and the goal of the club is to take a Champions League place." PSG centre-back Marquinhos added: "Football is like that, they manage to shoot and score two goals."

Lyon retook second place from Marseille after inflicting only a second league defeat of the season on PSG, but Bruno Genesio's men would still need an unlikely collapse from the capital club to launch a title challenge. "We're happy with the result, especially with beating the leaders when we're aiming for second or third place," said coach Genesio. With Neymar missing due to a thigh problem, Kylian Mbappe returned to the away team's starting XI after scoring as a substitute in the midweek 8-0 thrashing of Dijon, when Neymar netted four times. Lyon caught the runaway league leaders cold with less than two minutes on the clock, as French international Fekir produced a moment of magic. Alphonse Areola was anticipating a cross when Fekir shaped to take a free-kick from the right-hand side, but the attacking midfielder whipped in a shot that flicked the inside of the post on its way past the stranded PSG goalkeeper. The 24-year-old has now scored 16 league goals this season from 19 appearances, while it was also the earliest PSG had conceded in a Ligue 1 game since May 2007.

### CAVANI LEFT WAITING FOR RECORD

PSG were rocked by Lyon's intense early pressing, but Edinson Cavani, looking for the goal he needed to break Zlatan Ibrahimovic's all-time club goalscoring



DECINES-CHARPIEU: Lyon's Dutch forward Memphis Depay (R) falls with Paris Saint-Germain's Belgian defender Thomas Meunier during the French L1 football match between Olympique Lyonnais and Paris-Saint Germain (PSG) at Groupama stadium in Decines-Charpieu on Sunday. — AFP

record after levelling the Swede's total of 156 on Wednesday, saw a long-range lob spin narrowly wide after home keeper Anthony Lopes's poor clearance. Mbappe, already bleeding from his head from an earlier challenge, had to be stretchered off and replaced by Julian Draxler after being flattened by some strong goalkeeping from Portuguese Lopes.

PSG levelled in first-half stoppage-time, though, as Kurzawa blasted home a magnificent left-footed volley off the crossbar from his fellow full-back Alves's dinked cross. Unai Emery's side were reduced to 10 men before the hour mark when Brazilian Alves was sent off for dissent after becoming incensed by a free-kick decision, with Marco Verratti perhaps lucky not to follow him after knocking the red card out of referee Clement Turpin's hand. Lyon almost retook the lead with 13 minutes to play as Rafael headed over from

close range, before Cavani was also booked for dissent as PSG continued to lose their heads.

Maxwel Cornet saw a low effort turned behind by Areola, but it was 69th-minute substitute Depay who provided the winning moment in style. The former Manchester United winger collected the ball just outside the area in the fourth minute of added time and planted a magnificent, curling finish into the top corner to score his ninth league goal of an up-and-down season. Earlier on Sunday, fourth-placed Monaco eased to a 3-1 victory over Metz in the principality. Brazilian left-back Jorge opened the scoring for the reigning champions on the stroke of half-time and Rachid Ghezzal added a second after visiting goalkeeper Eiji Kawashima was sent off. Ibrahim Niane pulled one back for bottom club Metz, but Rony Lopes put any thoughts of a comeback to bed with a late tap-in. — AFP

## Alexis, Henrikh on brink of blockbuster swap deal

**LONDON:** Alexis Sanchez is reportedly set to become a Manchester United player yesterday after a leaked image apparently showed the Chile international on the Old Trafford pitch in the club's famous red shirt.

The Arsenal forward was pictured on Sunday arriving at United's Carrington training complex ahead of his widely anticipated move, which will see midfielder Henrikh Mkhitaryan heading in the opposition direction. Earlier Sunday, Sanchez posted a video on Instagram showing him walking across an airstrip towards a private jet.

A picture that was posted on social media on Sunday evening appeared to show him taking a selfie in a United shirt with his name and No. 7 on the back — the shirt worn by club legends George Best, Eric Cantona and Cristiano Ronaldo.

Sanchez, 29, is set to become United's best-paid player, with his wages estimated at more than £500,000 (\$695,000, 567,000 euros) a week.

Arsenal boss Arsene Wenger and United manager Jose Mourinho both said they expected the two-way deal between the Premier League rivals to go through.

Wenger said Sanchez was absent from the Arsenal squad on Saturday because he was close to completing a deal that has been in the making since United out-bid Manchester City for the former Barcelona star.

"I expect soon or never," Mourinho said after his side's 1-0 win against Burnley. "I think it is so close, so close, so close that if it doesn't happen it's not going to happen." Former England captain Alan Shearer said City could rue missing out on Sanchez. — AFP

## Former England captain Armfield dies, aged 82

**LONDON:** Former England captain and Blackpool legend Jimmy Armfield has died at the age of 82 after a long battle with cancer. Armfield, who played 627 matches in 17 years for his only club and was part of the World Cup-winning squad in 1966, was diagnosed with cancer for a second time last year.

"Blackpool Football Club is deeply saddened to learn of the passing of its record appearance holder and vice-president Jimmy Armfield at the age of 82," said a statement from the club. Armfield captained Blackpool for more than 10 of his 17 years at the club and was capped 43 times for England, with 15 of those occasions as skipper.

He was one of two Blackpool players along with Alan Ball named in England's 1966 World Cup winning squad, although injury denied him an appearance at the tournament. Only players who were on the pitch in the final received winners' medals but that was rectified 43 years later when Armfield eventually received his medal.

Armfield had stints in management with Bolton and Leeds before moving into broadcasting where he spent more than 30 years working for the BBC. He was inducted into Blackpool's Hall of Fame in 2006 and Bloomfield Road's newly constructed South Stand was named in his honour in 2010. In a statement to the Blackpool Gazette, Armfield's family said he had "passed away peacefully surrounded by his immediate family." "Jimmy had two great loves, first and foremost was his family, to which he was devoted and loved dearly. The other was football, especially Blackpool, England and his colleagues at the PFA (Professional Footballers' Association)," it added. — AFP

## 12 Shiffrin prepares to bounce back in giant slalom in Kronplatz



## 13 Russia challenge doping ban at sports court



## 14 Munro gets New Zealand home as Pakistan woes continue



MELBOURNE: Serbia's Novak Djokovic plays a backhand return to South Korea's Hyeon Chung during their men's singles fourth round match on day eight of the Australian Open tennis tournament in Melbourne yesterday. — AFP

# Djokovic out, Federer into quarters

## Kerber to clash against American Madison Keys

MELBOURNE: Wounded 12-time Grand Slam winner Novak Djokovic was sent tumbling out of the Australian Open by Korean giant-killer Chung Hyeon yesterday, but ice-cool Roger Federer roared into the quarter-finals.

The Serb, who was returning from six months out with a right elbow injury, was clearly in pain as his hopes of a seventh Melbourne Park title were extinguished on Rod Laver Arena 7-6 (7/4), 7-5, 7-6 (7/3). He was keen not to take away from the glasses-wearing Chung's huge achievement after the 21-year-old followed up his win over fourth seed Alexander Zverev in the last round. "Congratulations. Amazing," said Djokovic, who also had an apparent hip or groin problem, screeching at times when stretching for the ball. "He was the better player on court today and he deserved to win." Djokovic said the injuries started troubling him at the end of the first set and a decision on where he goes from here would be made after talking with his medical team. Chung's reward is a last-eight clash with unheralded American Tenny Sandgren, who upset Austrian fifth seed Dominic Thiem 6-2, 4-6, 7-6 (7/4), 6-7 (7/9).

The Korean, ranked 58, described Djokovic as "my

idol". "I can't believe this, dream's come true tonight." Sandgren was also in a daze, becoming just the second man in the last 20 years since Frenchman Nicolas Escude to make the quarter-finals on his Australian Open debut. "I don't know if this is a dream or not," he said. "I knew I had to come out and play aggressive and take my chances and serve well and thankfully it worked out in the end."

For a composed Federer, it was business as normal. The Swiss defending champion swatted aside one-time training partner Marton Fucsovics 6-4, 7-6 (7/3), 6-2 to make the last eight for an incredible 14th time. He will now play fellow veteran Tomas Berdych, a semi-finalist in 2014 and 2015, who demolished Italy's Fabio Fognini 6-1, 6-4, 6-4. "We have had some good ones over the years

going back all the way to the Olympic Games in Athens in 2004," the 19-time Grand Slam champion said of the Czech. "Yeah, I'm looking forward to play against him. He seems in good shape."

Berdych, who is on his way back from back problems, lost to the five-time Australian Open champion in the third round last year and the odds are heavily stacked against him. Of the 13 quarter-finals Federer has contested in Melbourne, he has won the lot.

### RUNNING EVERYWHERE

World number one Simona Halep eased into the last eight 6-3, 6-2 over unseeded Naomi Osaka of Japan, delighted to be off court early after an epic and gruelling three-setter in the previous round.

While the win was easy, she continues to nurse a

troublesome ankle that she rolled early in the tournament. "I feel it but I'm trying not to think about it and give it everything," said Halep, who has never gone beyond the quarters before.

She will play sixth seed Karolina Pliskova, who beat fellow Czech Barbora Strycova in three tough sets. Germany's Angelique Kerber is the only Grand Slam champion left among the women, and she was given a big fright as she chases her second Melbourne Park crown after beating Serena Williams in 2016. After crushing Maria Sharapova in the last round, she came up against gritty Taiwanese veteran Hsieh Su-wei. At one point Kerber was serving to stay in the match, but she bounced back to win 4-6, 7-5, 6-2.

"Credit to her, she played unbelievable. I was running everywhere," said Kerber, who had a poor 2017 after starting the year as world number one.

The win set Kerber up with a clash against American Madison Keys, a semi-finalist in 2015 who has found a new lease of life under the guidance of former great Lindsay Davenport. Seeded 17, she flattened French eighth seed Caroline Garcia 6-3, 6-2 in just 68 impressive minutes.



## Injuries started troubling him at the end of first set

## Infantino, Coe face IOC snub

LONDON: The presidents of world soccer and world athletics are set to be snubbed by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) next month when the body is likely to again overlook them for membership, a source told Reuters yesterday.

Neither FIFA chief Gianni Infantino nor IAAF counterpart Sebastian Coe are expected to be proposed for IOC membership despite taking up their posts two and three years ago respectively, the source said.

For years, membership of the IOC for the heads of soccer and athletics was seen as almost automatic.

But the two international federations - among the Olympics' most popular sports - have been left out in the cold as they struggled with widespread corruption

and doping scandals which tarnished their images.

"My understanding is they will not be recommended," a source with knowledge of the membership procedure ahead of the IOC session in Pyeongchang, South Korea next month, told Reuters on condition of anonymity.

The IOC elects new members at its annual session with the list of proposed names being published a few days before the vote. Now, another snub of two of the world's biggest sports federations who held IOC seats for decades before their current leadership, will do little to mend ties that have been strained by the ongoing corruption and doping investigations.

The source said the IOC had discussed the matter of Infantino and Coe, and a final decision had yet to be taken but they were "unlikely" to be proposed for membership. Infantino was elected head of FIFA in February 2016 to succeed scandal-plagued Sepp Blatter and lead the federation out of its biggest graft crisis. Former double Olympic champion Coe took over

the IAAF in August 2015 against a backdrop of doping and corruption among the organisation's most senior officials, severely damaging the organisation's credibility. Coe's predecessor Lamine Diack is currently facing a bribery and embezzlement investigation in France while his son, Papa Massata Diack is banned for life from the sport. Coe triggered the ire of the IOC when the IAAF blocked Russian track and field athletes from competing at the Rio de Janeiro Olympics over the doping affair.

The IAAF banned the Russian athletics federation team, with only one athlete, who lived, trained and was tested in the United States allowed to compete in Rio. The IOC, however, left it to individual federations to clear Russians to compete in their sports at the Games.

Both Blatter and Diack were IOC members until 2015. Blatter's predecessor at FIFA, Joao Havelange, was an IOC member from 1963 to 2011. Diack's predecessor, Primo Nebiolo, also became an IOC member shortly after his election in 1999. — Reuters



Sebastian Coe



# Business

TUESDAY, JANUARY 23, 2018

**19** Macron hosts 140 CEOs in pre-Davos charm offensive

**20** Stocks shrug off US government shutdown

**22** Boubyan Bank net profits increase by 16% to KD47.6 million in 2017



## NBK reports KD 322.4m net profits for 2017

### Board proposes cash dividends of 30 fils per share and 5% bonus shares

**KUWAIT:** National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) reported net profits of KD 322.4 million (\$1,068.3 million) for the year 2017 compared with KD 295.2 million (\$978.2 million) in 2016, growing 9.2 percent year-on-year.

Total assets as of year-end 2017 reached KD 26.0 billion (\$86.3 billion) up 7.4 percent compared to year-end 2016, while total shareholders' equity increased by 5.0 percent to KD 2.9 billion (\$9.5 billion). Customer loans and advances reached KD 14.5 billion (\$48.1 billion) as of year-end 2017, 6.5 percent up from last year's levels. Customer deposits grew by 9.3 percent year-on-year to reach KD 13.8 billion (\$45.7 billion) as of year-end 2017.

Asset quality metrics remained strong with NPL/Gross Loans ratio at 1.42 percent as of year-end 2017, and NPL coverage ratio at 287 percent; reflecting NBK's resilient risk management approach.

NBK Board of Directors has proposed the distribution of 30 fils per share cash dividend, representing 30 percent of the nominal share value. The board has also proposed the distribution of a 5 percent bonus shares (5 shares for every 100 shares) for the year 2017.

Nasser Al-Sayer, NBK Group Chairman said "NBK recorded promising performance in 2017 demonstrating the resilience, quality and diversity of earnings in a global-challenging operating environment. The Group main-

tained its leadership in Kuwait while successfully strengthened synergies between its international operations to deliver an ultimate customer experience".

"The Group's net operating income grew by 10.4 percent year-on-year to KD 822.7 million (\$2,726.3 million), primarily driven by core banking activities as business volumes continued to grow thus ensuring NBK's successful strategy implementation," Al-Sayer added. Al-Sayer also added that "Credit growth in Kuwait remains solid supported by positive economic activity as the government's capital spending program remains intact. Kuwait's fiscal position is better than peers given the substantial buffers and strong sovereign ratings; creating room for acceleration in spending despite lower oil prices".

"The Group is committed to contributing positively to Kuwait's economic growth and remains fully supportive of the New Kuwait vision 2035. NBK's robust financial position, strong franchise, diversified business model in addition to its regional and global presence, has positioned the Bank as the country's foremost financial provider and the largest beneficiary of the growing government expenditure". "Additionally, and in line with our commitment to the economic development of Kuwait; NBK remains highly committed to its corporate social responsibility being consistently the largest contributor to the community year



after year," Al-Sayer highlighted. Isam Al-Sager, NBK's Group Chief Executive Officer said: "the solid results of NBK reflect a period of strong growth and robust operating performance. Given the Bank's adequate capitalization, stable funding and ample liquidity conditions; NBK continues to benefit from emerging opportunities locally and regionally, affirming the Bank's income diversification strategy and improved profitability trends".

"In the context of income diversification, NBK maintained its leadership position across business segments in Kuwait and further strengthened that position as Boubyan Bank continues to drive the growth on the Islamic Banking

front. The acquisition of a 58.4 percent stake in Boubyan Bank in 2012 was a long-term strategic move by NBK. We continue to see very positive momentum at Boubyan Bank, which contributed around 14 percent of the Group's profits in 2017." "On the other hand, NBK's International operations remained highly profitable contributing 28 percent of the Group's total profits. Our regional and international growth strategies continued to focus on Egypt and GCC countries while the improved synergies across other locations increases opportunities of cross selling and business optimization, which all supports more diversified assets, client base and income streams". "During the year, we transformed our representative office in China to a branch and received SAMA approval to open two new branches in Saudi Arabia", Al-Sager added.

In 2017, NBK issued \$750 million, 5-year senior unsecured debt in May as part of a \$3.0 billion Global Medium Term Notes (GMTN) program. Being three times oversubscribed, the issuance attracted sizable demand, especially from US investors. The issuance was priced at 29 bp above the yield on the respective Kuwait sovereign bond, the tightest spread amongst our regional peers. The issuance comes in line with the Bank's strategy of enhancing its funding profile by diversifying the funding sources and extending the liabilities' duration.

# 322.4

## Million KD Net Profit for the Year 2017

31/12/2017

Net Profit

**322.4**  
Million KD

Net Operating Income

**822.7**  
Million KD

Shareholders' Equity

**2.9**  
Billion KD

Total Assets

**26**  
Billion KD

Moody's Aa3    FitchRatings AA-    Standard & Poor's A+

# Ford Alghanim reveals the All-New 2018 Expedition and the New 2018 F-150 during the Kuwait Motor Show



Kuwait, January XX, 2018: Fans of SUVs and pick-up trucks are in for a treat at the upcoming Kuwait Motor Show. Ford Alghanim, the only authorized dealer by Ford Motor Company in Kuwait, revealed the much-anticipated All-New 2018 Expedition and the newly engineered 2018 F-150 pickup truck for the first time in Kuwait during the Kuwait Motor Show. Visitors will not only have the opportunity to be one of the first to view the new models during the Kuwait Motor Show in 360 mall until January 27th, but to also be one of the first to own them upon their arrival to Kuwait in early February.

## All-New 2018 Expedition

The new generation 2018 Ford Expedition made its debut at the Kuwait Motor Show, promising to redefine the full-sized SUV segment with its All-New design inside and out, its unique smart technologies, more power for drivers, and more expected towing capability than any other full-sized SUV. The new generation 2018 Ford Expedition is the smartest, most capable and most adaptable Expedition ever.



## Most capable Expedition ever

Powered by a second-generation 3.5-litre EcoBoost® twin-turbo engine with standard Auto Start-Stop plus a class exclusive new 10-speed automatic transmission, the all-new Expedition is the most powerful Expedition ever, offering up to 400 horsepower on Platinum models along with a whopping 610Nm of torque.

## New 2018 F-150

This F-150 version is even tougher, even smarter, and even more capable than ever – with the most advanced F-150 powertrain line-up ever that delivers best-in-class towing for the Middle East's pickup drivers. F-150 V8 has the first in class 10-speed Select Shift automatic.



The F-series is America's best-selling truck for 41 consecutive years and is a true testament to Ford's 100 year truck heritage and leadership. It was also awarded the 2018 Truck of the Year by Motor Trend.

"Ford Alghanim is committed to deliver the latest Ford products and service excellence to our customers in Kuwait, and working with Ford Middle East to bring the All-New 2018 Ford Expedition, the smartest, most capable and most adaptable Expedition ever, in addition to the New F-150, America's bestselling truck for 41 consecutive years," said Issam Salame, Director of Sales, Ford Alghanim. "We are excited to be part of this year's Kuwait Motor

Show with the latest 2018 lineup and are looking forward to welcoming our customers in Kuwait to the Ford Alghanim stand."

"We are happy to showcase the new 2018 Ford products including the much anticipated All-New 2018 Expedition & New F-150 to our customers in Kuwait, together with Ford Alghanim" said Mohammed Houssami, Regional Sales Director at Ford Middle East, during his visit to the show. "We commend



the entire team and leadership of Ford Alghanim on their commitment to deliver customer excellence and their continued drive to offer the latest Ford products to customers in Kuwait, as evidenced by their presence at the 2018 Kuwait Motor Show."

Located by the fountain at 360 Mall, the Ford Alghanim display treats Kuwait Motor Show and mall visitors to a spectacular array of different Ford vehicles; showcasing key nameplates such as the sporty Focus ST dressed in Race Red with matte black stripes and equipped with a sporty 2.0L EcoBoost engine mated to a 6-speed manual transmission. The legendary Mustang was accessorized specifically for the show featuring a one-of-a-kind matte metallic white. The sport utility vehicles (SUV) on display include the Ford



Explorer, offering safety and comfort for 7 passengers, along with the Ford Edge, the best mid-size SUV in its class and the New Ford Escape, with its unique exterior and interior features.

All customers interested in Ford vehicles are invited to visit the Alghanim Auto display at 360 Mall until January 27th, or the Ford Alghanim New Vehicle Showroom, Service and Spare Parts Center in the Shuwaikh Industrial Area, opposite from the Classical Car Museum and Sirbb Circuit.

Business

# Macron hosts 140 CEOs in pre-Davos charm offensive

## Campaign for a 'French Renaissance' kicks into overdrive

PARIS: President Emmanuel Macron's campaign for a "French Renaissance" kicks into overdrive yesterday as he welcomes 140 multinational business leaders before this week's jamboree of the rich and powerful in Davos.

The business-friendly president will host executives at the Versailles chateau near Paris for an event billed as a warm-up for today's opening of the World Economic Forum in the Swiss mountains. Several firms will use the conference to announce major French investments, with Facebook revealing Monday that it would pour an extra 10 million euros (\$12.2 million) into its artificial intelligence center in Paris.

Japan's Toyota is also due to reveal details of its 400-million-euro enlargement of its Onnaing car factory in northern France—which Macron will be visiting before the Versailles summit — with Les Echos newspaper reporting the move will bring 700 new jobs.

A former investment banker, Macron has vowed to shake the French economy out of its torpor. In his first months in office he pushed through reforms to the country's rigid labor laws and sharply cut wealth taxes and levies on capital gains. Economic growth has been forecast to rise to 1.9 percent in 2018 by the central bank, and Macron has also pledged to cut corporation tax to 25 percent by 2022 from 33 percent currently. A survey by the US Chamber of

Commerce and consultancy Bain & Company in November found a record 72 percent of US investors were optimistic about the French economy, up from just 30 percent in 2016.

But some executives are keeping their enthusiasm in check, saying the bigger challenges of cutting France's huge debt pile and its public spending—and pushing through the tax cuts for businesses—still lie ahead.

its eurozone partners," Didier Migaud, president of France's Court of Auditors, warned yesterday.

### 'Choose France'

Macron's predecessors have held similar gatherings of CEOs, but the scale of his "Choose France" conference goes far beyond those hosted by Francois Hollande or Nicolas Sarkozy.

The Socialist Hollande hosted 34 world business leaders in 2014, while rightwinger Sarkozy rolled out the red carpet for 25 in 2011. "We've taken advantage of the fact that economic leaders are coming to Europe by inviting 100 CEOs of the biggest world companies and developing 100 projects with them for France," a source in the presidency said. The bosses of Coca-Cola, Google, Siemens and Chinese e-commerce giant Alibaba, and the chief operating officer of Facebook, Sheryl Sandberg, are among those to have taken up the invitation.

While Macron has been given much of the credit for boosting France's standing on the international stage, foreign investment had already begun to pick up before his May 2017 election. But such investments have failed to make a significant difference on the jobs front, with France's unemployment rate still stuck at 9.7 percent—nearly twice that of Britain or Germany.

"Let's not call them reforms if it's not



DAVOS: People walk through the resort town of Davos as snow falls ahead of the World Economic Forum (WEF) 2018 annual meeting, yesterday in Davos. — AFP

really the case. These aren't revolutions, but the country has certainly changed direction," Philippe Brassac, head of French bank Credit Agricole, told Le Figaro.

In tax terms, France has also benefited little from the presence of tech giants such as Google and Facebook—a bone of contention for Macron, who is pushing for them to contribute more to state coffers. The Versailles conference comes the day before leaders from 60 countries and 1,700 busi-

nesses start descending on Davos for the world's most exclusive talking shop.

The 40-year-old French president himself takes to the stage in Davos tomorrow, where he is set to cut a contrasting figure to that of US President Donald Trump. While Trump campaigned on an anti-elitist platform that railed against globalization, Macron has defended globalization, though he will call for a more balanced form of it in his Davos speech. — AFP



### WEF opens in Davos today

"We're still waiting to see more clearly on government reforms," Pierre-Andre de Chalendar, CEO of the glass and building materials giant Saint-Gobain, told Le Figaro daily Monday.

France's deficit for 2017 is forecast to finally fall under the eurozone limit of three percent of GDP, for the first time in ten years. "Even with a deficit under the three percent limit, France still has one of the worst financial situations among almost all

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



KUWAIT: Gulf Bank held its Al-Danah daily draws yesterday announcing the names of its winners for the week of 14 January - 18 January 2018. The Al-Danah daily draws include draws every working day for two prizes of KD 1,000 per winner.

### The winners are:

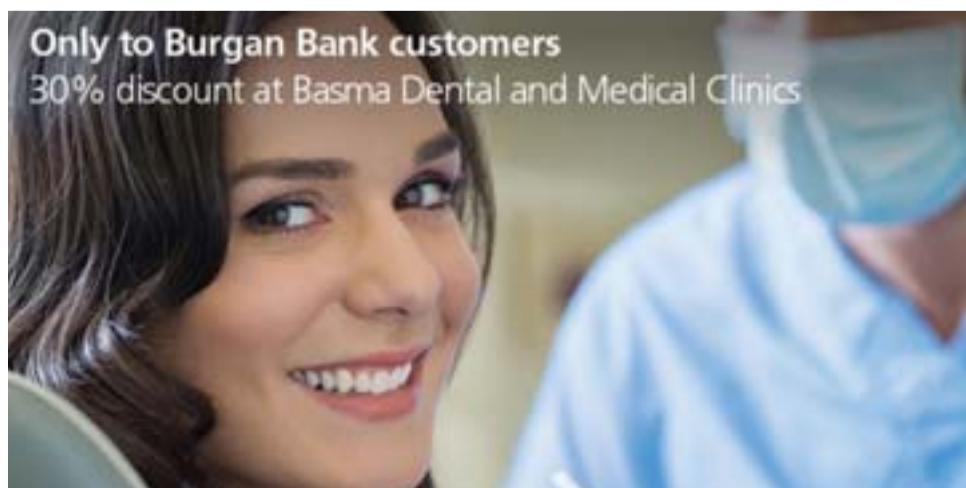
(Sunday 14/01): Sawzan Abdulhamid Abdulrazak Al-Dalkan, Haitham Abdelaziz Abdellatif Al-Subaih  
(Monday 15/01): Hasan Ali Hussien Al-Ali, Abdusattar Mohammed Mahdi  
(Tuesday 16/01): Zahra Mohammed Noubakht, Salah Abdulaziz Al-Sheikh Ali  
(Wednesday 17/01): Talal Mahmas Abdullah Ghalei, Badriya Amir Ahmad Ali  
(Thursday 18/01): Tamather Khalid Al-Ahmad

Al-Sabah, Khaled Rashed Abboud Theeb Al-Hajri

Gulf Bank's Al-Danah 2018 draw lineup includes daily draws (two winners per working day each receive KD1000). Al-Danah's first quarterly draw for the prize of KD200,000 will be held on 28 March, the 2nd quarterly draw for the prize of KD250,000 will be held on 27 June and the 3rd Quarterly Draw for the prize of KD500,000 will be held on 26 September. The final Al-Danah draw for KD 1 million will be held on 10 January 2019 where by the Al-Danah millionaire will be announced.

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

## Burgan Bank customers receive a discount at Basma Dental Center and Basma Medical Clinic



KUWAIT: Burgan Bank is pleased to announce that its customers can now save 30 percent on all medical services at Basma Dental Center and Basma Medical Clinic in Kuwait. Burgan Bank's customers can now benefit from the 30 percent discount on all skin care and dental treatments when using any of Burgan Bank debit or credit cards at

one of the leading dental and medical clinics in Kuwait. Basma Dental Center, situated in Bneid Al Gar and Maidan Hawalli and Basma Medical Clinic, located in Al Haddan Complex in Al-Mangaf, are the finest dental and medical centers in Kuwait and pioneers in providing all types of modern treatment using the latest technologies.

### NBK ECONOMIC REPORT

## Kuwait's November inflation inches up to 1.5%

KUWAIT: Consumer price inflation rose slightly to 1.5 percent in November, predominantly driven by price rises of some retail goods and services. Inflation remained subdued recently, held back by the ongoing deflationary pressures in housing rents and a slow pickup in food and beverage prices. However, price activity excluding housing rent, food and energy prices has been stronger, with inflation there rising to 3.4 percent year-on-year (y/y) in November. While headline inflation bounced back from a low in September 2017, it is still expected to end 2017 well below levels in recent years. We expect inflation to average 1.5 percent for 2017, down from 3.5 percent in 2016.

Prices in housing services, especially rent, have continued to contract, though the pace has moderated. The housing services sub-index reflected the correction in rental rates after a general slowdown in the real estate market in 2015 and 2016. Prices in housing services contracted by 0.3 percent y/y in November, a vast improvement from August's 2.3 percent y/y decline. Based on the recovery in real estate sales activity, especially in the residential sector, rental rates are expected to continue to stabilize in the coming months. Food price inflation is on the mend as global food prices show a steady pick-up. Inflation in local food prices picked up to 0.5 percent y/y, com-

pared to October's 0.4 percent y/y. The annual change in local food prices in 2016 and 2017 oscillated around zero, as global food prices remained largely deflationary. With global food price inflation already on the rise, 2018 could see higher local food inflation though not before mid-2018.

November's price pick-up was largely driven by a rise in retail goods and services. On the back of

These four sectors, along with transport related costs, contributed to around 85 percent of the annual price increase in November.

Inflation in services excluding housing has been somewhat higher recently, possibly reflecting a recovery in consumer spending activity. Inflation in services ex-housing remained steady at 3.0 percent y/y in November. The ongoing easing in trans-



improved consumer spending, the price of furnishing products, such as carpeting, and services related to household maintenance, has made a noticeable contribution to inflation over the last year. Along with accelerating prices in clothing and footwear and in recreation and culture, there was significant price increase in personal care products.

port costs and deflation in some personal care costs were offset by a pickup in consumer expenditure on recreation and spending on cultural activities. Meanwhile, services overall have stabilized on the back of moderating housing-related services. Keeping pace with October, inflation in services as a whole remained at 0.8 percent y/y in November.

## Hedge fund trade in oil becomes very crowded

LONDON: Hedge funds added to their record bullish positions in petroleum in the week to Jan. 16, continuing the recent wave of buying, but the extra long positions were almost entirely confined to US crude rather than Brent or refined fuels. Hedge funds and other money managers increased their net long position in the six most important futures and options contracts linked to crude and fuels by a total of 41 million barrels.

The net long position in Brent, NYMEX and ICE WTI, US gasoline, US heating oil and European gasoil contracts has surged by a massive 1,130 million barrels since the end of June 2017.

Since the start of the year, however, most of the increase has come from WTI rather than Brent or refined fuels, according to position data released by regulators and exchanges.

Total net long positions in petroleum have risen by 109 million barrels in the two most recent weeks, with WTI accounting for 87 million barrels. The remainder has mostly come from US gasoline, where hedge funds have boosted their net long position by almost 15 million barrels.

Net positions in Brent, US heating oil and European gasoil are near record

highs but have changed little since the start of the year.

There is an element of catching up in the position-building in WTI, which has traded at a large and persistent discount to Brent since July and was shunned by portfolio managers until recently.

The hedge funds' net long position in WTI increased from 455 million barrels to 542 million barrels between Jan 2 and Jan 16 compared with only a minor increase in Brent. As a result, the net position in WTI has now risen by 385 million barrels since the end of June, comparable to the increase of 371 million barrels in Brent.

WTI position-building has corresponded with a narrowing of the prompt Brent-WTI premium, which has fallen from a high of almost \$6.50 per barrel towards the end of last year to less than \$5.30. But across the petroleum complex as a whole, hedge fund positions look increasingly stretched, with fund managers holding almost 10.5 long positions for every short one. Experience suggests such lopsided positions, either long or short, are normally followed by a sharp reversal in prices when some portfolio managers attempt to realize their profits.

OPEC and non-OPEC ministers have sought to validate the bullish narrative by insisting they remain committed to tightening the oil market through 2018 and plan to continue their cooperation in 2019. Many hedge fund managers are betting OPEC will risk tightening the market too much and cause prices to overshoot before eventually correcting, rather than tighten it too little and allow prices to fall back. This seems a fair assessment of OPEC's strategy in the short term - even if it risks creating more price instability later in 2018 and in 2019. — Reuters

## For Rent

In a Luxurious and Privileged Compound at Abou Halifa Region Facing the National Park and the Sea

Duplex & Triplex Villas

- 3/4 Bedrooms + 3/4 Bathrooms
- + Big Salon + Separate pool
- All Master Bathrooms is Marble

Volleyball Court / Basketball Court / Hotel Lobby  
Pools + Jacuzzi / Billiard / 213 Car Parking Areas

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# 2019 Corvette ZR1 “Star of the 2018 Kuwait Motor Show”

## Chevrolet Alghanim new cars and international displays steal the spotlight!

- **Corvette ZR1: Most powerful Chevrolet ever made**
- **Bolt EV: Most advanced, fully electric vehicle**
- **Showcasing 2019 future models, and 2018 special editions**

Ensuring an unprecedented experience when visiting its display of vehicles, Chevrolet Alghanim stood out at the Kuwait Motor Show 2018 with the unveiling of Chevrolet’s most powerful car ever, the 2019 Corvette ZR1, as well as its most advanced electric vehicle, the Bolt EV, and the Tahoe RST, held under the patronage of His Excellency Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah al-Mubarak al-Sabah, and in the presence of the US Ambassador to Kuwait, Mr. Lawrence R. Silverman, government officials and representatives from General Motors (GM).

Aiming to attract the youth and automotive fans, Chevrolet Alghanim presented an interactive and unique car displays which also included a display of the 2019 and 2018 models of its best-ever lineup. The exclusive unveiling and the new cars are all a reason not to miss out on the Chevrolet Alghanim display at the Show where visitors can explore and enjoy the generous lineup of the latest Chevrolet models.

Standing out as the unchallenged star of the show, the 2019 Corvette ZR1 is simply a supercar that pushes Corvette’s performance legacy with the highest power, greatest track performance and most advanced technology in its production history. The ZR1’s LT5 6.2L V-8 engine advances Corvette’s supercharging legacy, which began with the 2009 sixth-generation ZR1 and continued with the 2015 seventh-generation Z06. The LT5 delivers the highest output ever for a Chevrolet production vehicle, thanks in part to a new, more-efficient intercooled supercharger system that offers 52% more displacement than the Z06’s LT4 supercharger.

The unveiling of the Corvette ZR1 was supported by the Kuwait Corvette Club, which attended in support of the latest achievement of Corvette which is sure to attract all sports cars enthusiasts in Kuwait.

And for the environmental conscious, the Bolt EV positions itself as a game changer in the electric vehicle space in the world. Packed with innovation, the Bolt EV leads in its segment with performance, and is one of the most affordable and practical long-range electric vehicles on the market today. The Chevrolet Bolt EV can achieve 520 kilometers of range on a single charge, with the ability to store 150 kilometers worth of range in just a 30-minute charge.

As for SUV lovers, the Chevrolet Tahoe RST is the most powerful production Tahoe to date. Its showcase is certain to fuel the passion for performance Chevrolet shares with its local fans. Aside from the cosmetic enhancements, the Tahoe RST packs an advanced powertrain deeply rooted in Chevrolet’s performance range. Sharing the same 6.2L V8 in the Camaro SS and Corvette Stingray, it’s coupled with General Motor’s latest 10-speed transmission which made its debut on the Camaro ZL1 earlier this year.

The rich and diversified lineup from Chevrolet Alghanim also enables customers to own the best-in-class vehicles that meet the needs of every segment of the population, from families, young drivers to sports enthusiasts and those looking for a vehicle that reflects their unique lifestyles. With their advanced features, reliability and competitive value, Chevrolet Alghanim continue to register high demand in the Kuwaiti market, as is the case globally.

### Special editions:

Known as the king of the desert, the Silverado introduces its Street Edition, targeting the youth, and maintaining its position as the most selling pickup in its class in Kuwait for the last two years. The Silverado Street Edition comes with a standard 5.3-liter EcoTec3 V8 engine that delivers 355HP. It is coupled with available features such as 22-inch chrome wheels, a special paint job, the Street Scene 4-part body kit and the Retrax Bed cover.

As for the Malibu Sport Edition, it comes with a 2.0-liter turbocharged engine that delivers 250 HP. The Malibu Sport Edition comes with the sport accessory package, and features 11 available active safety technologies that keep drivers and passengers safe on the road, and an 8-inch touchscreen with navigation.

The Trailblazer Black Edition showcases an aggressive body kit in black to match its high



performance, off-road capabilities and advanced technology. The Trailblazer comes with a 3.6-liter V6 engine tuned to offer better performance and improved fuel economy, which produces 275 horsepower, the most powerful in its class. Inside, the Trailblazer boasts a 7-passenger seating and is newly designed dashboard and front console with a contemporary feel. The car ensures maximum comfort in its front sports design, 18-inch alloy wheels, LED Daytime Running Lights, as well as a 7-inch Chevrolet MyLink touchscreen with Apple CarPlay compatibility.

### Latest models introduced:

Introduced in Kuwait for the very first time, the all-new 2018 Equinox provides customers with standard features that raise the bar for base models. The car’s 1.5-liter turbocharged engine delivers 170 HP and is equipped with the 7-inch Chevrolet MyLink touchscreen and Passive Entry and Push Button Start (PEPS) feature. With 17-inch alloy wheels, the 2018 Equinox comes with enhanced safety features that include a rear sensor and four airbags. Customers can choose to opt to upgrade the features of the car with the 2.0L turbocharged engine that delivered 252 HP.

As for the all-new 2018 Traverse, the newly introduced car is for the go-getters, adventure seekers and the family that’s always in motion. The midsize SUV comes with a standard 3.6L V6 engine with 310 HP, the 7-inch Chevrolet MyLink touchscreen, 18-inch alloy wheels, 8-passenger seating, and an impressive power and safety features to prevent collisions and ensure the driver and passengers enjoy every moment of their journey.

The Kuwait Motor Show continues until January 27th, 2018, and Chevrolet Alghanim invites all to visit its massive display in the main hall of 360 Mall to enjoy these exceptional vehicles and participate in fun activities for a chance to win valuable prizes!

### Chevrolet Complete Care:

All customers who purchase a Chevrolet from Yusuf A. Alghanim & Sons benefit of the Chevrolet Care Program, which entails new levels of post-sale support and trust. The Chevrolet Care is an exceptional customer service that is based on four main pillars: competitive and transparent service costs (especially for four-wheel drive vehicles), scheduled service appointment booking with same day delivery, quality service by certified technicians and 3yr/100,000km warranty with 24x7 roadside assistance for 4 years.

Customers can take advantage of the limited summer offer to own the car of their dreams by visiting any of Chevrolet Alghanim showrooms at the following locations: Shuwaikh, Al Rai (Safat Alghanim), Sharq and Fahaheel.



## Business

# Boubyan Bank net profits increase by 16% to KD47.6 million in 2017

## Bank to distribute 7% of shares in cash, 5% as bonus shares

**KUWAIT:** Boubyan Bank continued its journey of success it started seven years ago, by recording KD 47.6 million in net profits for the year 2017, with a growth rate of 16%, compared with the past year, while the earnings per share amount to 18.71 fils, compared with 16.94 fils for the year 2016. The bank recommended the distribution of 7 percent of shares in cash and 5 percent as bonus shares.

Al-Fulaj, Boubyan Bank's Chairman, commented on these positive results by stating: "By the Grace of Allah, the Almighty, then the efforts of our human resources, the trust of our shareholders and customers, we managed to continue our journey towards recording good growth rates which highlight the success of both our strategy and our expansion plans in the domestic market."

"Despite the economic and geopolitical circumstances in the region, the bank managed to overcome such obstacles and to maintain the same profitability growth rate achieved over the past years," he added.

Al-Fulaj stressed that the Bank would follow the same strategy in 2018 and continue its expansion plans in the Kuwaiti market in order to increase its market share through the innovative banking products and services presented to its customers.

### Growth of all main indicators

Adel Abdul Wahab Al-Majed, the Bank's Vice Chairman and CEO, stated that all of the Bank's main indicators witnessed a remarkable growth until the end of the past year where the total assets increased to KD 4 billion at a growth rate of 14 percent while the operational revenues increased to hit KD 126 million at a growth rate of 22 percent in addition to the increase in customers'

deposits by 15 percent, amounting to KD 3.4 billion. He further added that the total equity of the bank increased to KD 375 million compared with KD 345 million last year and that there was a notable increase in the financing portfolio up to KD 2.9 billion at a growth rate of 14 percent in addition to the continuous growth of the bank's customer base.

Al-Majed stated as well that the market share, in financing, increased generally to approximately 8 percent in the meantime, while the share of the retail finance increased specifically to approximately 11 percent. Besides, the bank recorded outstanding growth rates in the corporate credit portfolio which stood at 15 percent. This was achieved by attracting a number of operational companies known for their financial and economic creditworthiness while continuing to maintain the highest standards of credit quality, studying and diversifying risks.

### Expansion of branches & technology services

Furthermore, Al-Majed stressed the continuity of the Bank's plans to expand in the local market by opening new branches which have now reached 40 branches with a plan to open more branches during the current year.

He went on to add: "In line with our domestic geographical expansion to be closer to our clients, we are continuing our investment in services and e-banking products which placed us ahead of other local banks. We are doing that in order to cater for the needs of our clients."

"Customer service has always been our recipe for success, as we have always taken into account that all our customers are special and that they deserve the best because meeting their aspirations and ambitions should



Mahmoud Al-Fulaj

be up to the level of their expectations when they chose us. In other words, by choosing us, customers should be rewarded with special care and attention," Al-Majed emphasized.

### Outstanding ratings

Dwelling on ratings, Al-Majed stated that upgrading the various ratings and evaluations of the bank by specialized global institutions highlighted the success of the domestic expansion of the bank which positively affected the bank's operational revenues and profitability.

Al-Majed referred to the most recent Fitch report which upgraded the bank's Viability Rating "VR" from BB+ to BBB-, while affirming deposits' rating at A+. Accordingly, Boubyan Bank's Viability Rating from Fitch is considered the second highest rating among all Kuwaiti Banks. The report stated that the VR upgrade reflects Boubyan Bank's improving franchise, effective strategy implementation and higher-than-peers earnings and profitability.

Fitch's report further referred to the domestic leadership of the bank's business model in the local market, which is supported by the provision of innovative Fintech services to retail clients, adding that the bank has a competent management team that is highly experienced in local banking.

Fitch has also pointed out that Boubyan Bank's strategic objectives were proven to be consistent, sustainable, articulated around domestic- and organic-led growth, and that the management demonstrated an effective strategy implementation record. The report also referred to the quality of the bank's finance portfolio which is ranked among the portfolios with the least non-performing loans in the banking industry with a high coverage ratio.



Adel Abdul Wahab Al-Majed

### A remarkable award-winning year

Al-Majed noted that 2017 was the most remarkable year in terms of the awards won by the bank due to the bank's successful journey over the past years, that was closely monitored by international institutions which based their assessments on results, thus, awarding the bank a number of local, regional and international awards.

The bank received the Best Digital Islamic Bank Award Worldwide from Global Finance for the third year in a row in addition to being named the Best Performing Islamic Bank Globally from the World Islamic Banking Conference (WIBC) held annually in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

The bank was also named the Best Islamic Bank in Kuwait by Global Finance due to its achievements whether in terms of high profitability rates or the increase of its market shares. Additionally, the bank received the first place award, for the seventh year in a row atop all Islamic Banks in customer service from Service Hero, the international consumer-driven customer satisfaction index, in addition to being named the Best Private Sector Institution in Customer Service in Kuwait for the 2nd time.

The bank was equally excelling in terms of nationalization of manpower which was evidenced by winning the Best Private Sector Institution Award, for the fourth year in a row, in the field of manpower nationalization by the GCC.

Al-Majed further stated: "This kind of awards once more reiterates our bank's superb competitive abilities, and its ability to provide its customers with the highest levels of services and the best products customers may seek, whether they are existing customers or potential customers targeted in the Kuwaiti market."

## Adeeb Ahamed honored with Hurun Hospitality Achievement Award

**MUMBAI:** The Hurun Real Estate Leadership Summit and Excellence Awards, marking the achievements of the real estate sector in India, were held at the Four Seasons, Worli on Thursday. The gala event hosted some of the most successful real estate entrepreneurs with various sessions and panel discussions on understanding real estate landscape of India.



Adeeb

In recognition of his contribution to the hospitality industry, Adeeb Ahamed, Managing Director, Twenty14 Holdings was presented the Hurun Industry Achievement Award in Hospitality & Retail Real Estate 2017. Established as a research unit in 1999 Hurun Report Inc. has grown into a leading publishing group, whose yearly rich list is widely recognized as the foremost authority in tracking the rapid changes amongst high net worth individuals worldwide.

Adeeb has made a mark for himself on the global level, engaged in various sectors including hospitality, organized retail and financial services. Twenty14 Holdings, the hospitality arm of Abu Dhabi-based conglomerate Lulu Group International, led by Adeeb was founded in 2014 to capitalize on the growth in the global hospitality industry. The company currently has assets worth more than \$650m spread across the UK, Middle East and India.

In India, the group marked its entry into the hospitality sector with the acquisition of a hotel in Kochi in 2015, which is under renovation. Since then Twenty14 Holdings has invested in two other properties in Bengaluru, that are under various stages of development. With the first phase of development already underway in Kerala and Karnataka, the group is on the lookout for investment options in other major cities across India.

Twenty14 Holdings recently acquired the Waldorf Astoria Edinburgh - The Caledonian in Scotland for \$120m and has also made a £110m agreement with property developer Galliard Homes to create a luxurious five-star hotel at 1-5 Great Scotland Yard, the former headquarters of London's Metropolitan Police. The firm co-owns the landmark Sheraton Oman Hotel in Muscat and owns the Steigenberger Hotel Business Bay in Dubai and three properties in India.

Other winners of the evening include Abhishek Lodha of Lodha Developers, Niranjan Hiranandani of Hiranandani Developers, Irfan Razak of the Prestige Group and Anand Pirama of Pirama Realty.



## Realty India Expo at Crowne Plaza on January 26, 27

**KUWAIT:** Times Realty India's Expo scheduled for 26 and 27 January at Crowne Plaza in Kuwait will showcase a wide range of options for Indian realty investors, especially at a time when the Indian realty market is poised for a major turnaround in development.

Property developers from across India will provide multiple investment opportunities in the midst of economic development sweeping the country amidst RERA and GST implementation. Indian realty sector is slated to grow at 30 percent over the next decade for a market size of around \$180 billion by 2020 from \$93.8 billion in 2014. Key factors attributed for the upswing include emergence of nuclear families, rapid urbanization and rising household income.

India requires 110 million housing units by 2022 with an investment tag of \$2 trillion, according to a recent joint survey by NAREDCO and KPMG. India is ranked fourth in developing Asia for FDI inflows as per the World Investment Report by the United Nations Conference for Trade and Development. Indian real estate has attracted \$32 billion in private equity so far. The global capital flow into Indian real estate in 2016 stood at \$5.7 billion.

On the realty sector front, residential supply level home launches dipped by 78 percent last year and RERA regulations have put pressure on new supply creation as developers are keen on completing existing projects. Institutional researches indicate that 7-year down cycle will end in 2017 and the market is set for turnaround in growth in 2018. Moreover, Indian government's policy push by way of a slew of incentives for affordable housing should further the sector's all-round revival.

Residential property prices are static and marginally inched high in select metros where demand exceeds supply level. The weighted average prices fell by an average



of 3 percent across cities with Pune witnessing the highest decline of 7 percent YoY followed by Mumbai at 5 percent YoY. Markets high on built units such as Hyderabad and Ahmedabad saw prices move up by 3 percent and 2 percent respectively.

With lending rates at 8.35 percent and price remaining static, the time is just appropriate for fence sitters to plunge into housing investment, according to property consultants monitoring the price movements in the market. Moreover, with a fierce competition among HFCs and banks, certain banks have started waiving EMIs for specified period on condition that EMI payments are regular. With the fiscal sops from the government for affordable housing sector, there is huge scope for homebuyers to invest in housing.

For real estate investors, leased commercial properties are now available for investment with a yield of 7-8 percent per annum at select cities. In fact select developers are offering retail investors an opportunity to invest in commercial property with minimal income. Commercial property loans are available for investors looking to increase portfolio in real estate investment. This is apart

from loans available for investors while investing in developed plots.

Retail investors are in for bonanza as REITs will provide an investment opportunity worth up to \$77 billion through REIT-eligible commercial - office and retail properties across India's top seven cities by 2020.

The budget has provided significant benefits for housing sector. The holding period for long-term capital gains tax has been reduced from three to two years. The base year for cost inflation index has been shifted from 1.4.1981 to 1.4.2001, which will significantly reduce the capital gains tax liability while encouraging the mobility of assets at the same time. The budget has also clarified that for joint development agreement while constructing projects, the liability to pay capital gains tax will arise in the year the project is completed.

Advantage NRIs: With the proliferation of property management companies and the developers targeting NRI segment gearing up to provide property management services, NRIs are in an advantageous position while investing in real estate back home. Moreover, demand for rental housing is perking up in major cities across India.

## KAICO: 'Drive Success Drive' Mazda 6 sedan & CX9 SUV in 2018

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Automotive Imports Co (KAICO), the leading automotive and auto products distributor in Kuwait, offers exclusive promotions to customers, as part of its continuous efforts to provide more advantages to customers and ensure that a high level customer service is performed.

KAICO provides a set of exclusive advantages to cus-

tomers on 2018 MY Mazda CX9 SUV & Mazda3 sedan cars, the advantages include, a 1 years golden comprehensive insurance, a 5 years Extended warranty, a 5 years free service package and a 3 years free 3rd party insurance & free car registration.

KD2000 Minimum Trade In could be the solution you need! This limited offer is valid for Mazda6 sedan.

Commenting on this offers, Nader Salmeh, Divisional manager -vehicles @ kaico commented, "It is with great pleasure that we launch this exciting offers and we aspire to continue to develop new offers that provide customer satisfaction to thank them for their continuous loyalty in previous years and providing "Mazda , drive your Ambition in 2018" as they are our main motivation."

### Mazda CX-9

The powerful engine of the elegant new 2018 Mazda CX-9 is the best feature of this luxury SUV. It is real fun driving this fashionable vehicle that combines a sports car aesthetics and SUV versatility. One of the most important features demanded by drivers in Kuwait is a powerful and strong air conditioning system.

The beautiful and eye-catching Mazda CX-9 definitely provides a very cool atmosphere inside the vehicle no matter of the heat outside. The athletic proportions of the Mazda CX-9 are highlighted by the sleek cabin, strong and stable lower body featuring large 20-inch wheels, and a confident, well-planted stance. The interior has a range of superior, genuine materials such as aluminum comes togeth-

er to create an atmosphere of style that satisfies all senses.

Mazda6: Mazda6 features a 2.5-liter four-cylinder that delivers 184 HP and 185 lb. ft. of torque. This engine mates to a fine shifting Sport mode six-speed automatic geared for both acceleration and performance. However, the six-speed transmission performed very efficiently, changing gears at a very low rpm when in normal mode, with the primary aim to preserve fuel. Every aspect of the vehicle is engineered to maximize driving dynamics and efficiency: from body construction and engine technology, to the chassis and transmission. Skyactiv technology is just one of the ways Mazda makes driving better. In summary, Mazda6 is athletic, looks great and delivers good economy. Mazda6 is a frontrunner in the mid-size division.

## Technology

# The start-up nation: Macron's France lures US and UK tech

## One of the most exciting tech scenes in Europe

**PARIS:** France was an unlikely choice of location for Mark Heath's new start-up, given that the American's mastery of the French language is, by his own cheerful admission, "atrocious". But the fast-talking New Yorker is among a growing crowd of British and American entrepreneurs drawn to France by an optimistic mood under President Emmanuel Macron and political worries at home.

"Every man has two countries-his own and France," said Heath, quoting his favorite old expression. "That saying has new wind in it these days, especially with the way things are going geopolitically." Heath is set to launch his company Talaria at Station F, the cavernous Parisian train depot that has been transformed into the world's biggest start-up hub. The 35-year-old fell in love with France while serving a NATO stint with the US air force. He enrolled in a French business school last year, and is now developing a telecoms cable for financial markets.

Aside from wanting to learn French, he picked Paris over Silicon Valley because of a tech scene fast becoming one of the most exciting in Europe. Anglophone entrepreneurs have long regarded France with trepidation, not least because other European countries were seen as happier to do business in English. Yet Station F took more applications from US and UK start-ups last year than any other countries, surprising even its director Roxanne Varza.

"What we're starting to realize is that it may also be the political climate that is making these start-ups look for a new place," said Varza, herself an American. President Donald Trump's anti-immigration tirades have rattled start-ups reliant on international talent, she said, while some British firms are grasping for a European foothold as Brexit looms.

### 'So long, fish and chips'

A vast glass and concrete structure filled with modern art and MacBooks, Station F is emblematic of Macron's vision for a dynamic new France. Funded by telecoms billionaire Xavier Niel, the 3,000-desk "campus" opened in June shortly after Macron's election,

with Facebook and Microsoft among companies nurturing its start-ups. Macron has said he wants France itself to "think and move like a start-up", swiftly moving to reform its complex labor regulations.

That has already tempted back some French entrepreneurs who previously turned their backs on home. In a blog post titled "So long and thanks for all the fish and chips", Frenchman Jean Meyer said Macron's reforms had prompted him to move his dating app Once from London back home to France. "I have lost track of the number of developers, marketing managers or data scientists who refused to join us following the Brexit vote," he added, saying the labor reforms were the icing on the cake.

Yet much of what is drawing tech firms to Paris predates Macron. State investment bank Bpifrance, set up in 2013, has played a leading role in developing the sector, and it was Macron's predecessor Francois Hollande who set up new visas for start-ups entrepreneurs. And tech firms say it is long-term factors, such as universities that produce talented engineers, that really make France attractive.

Yet investment firm Atomico credited Macron with fuelling higher optimism in France than anywhere else in its 2017 State of European Tech report, not least thanks to his planned tax cuts. Britain remained the biggest recipient of venture capital funding at \$5.4 billion (4.4 billion euros) with France behind on \$2.1 billion-but France closed the most deals, it noted.

### Admin woes

"The amount of support given to entrepreneurs is certainly in my perception much stronger than we could possibly get in the UK," said Tom Pullen, a 41-year-old Londoner who launched his consultancy Innovinco in Paris last year. "Here we're sure to remain inside the single market," added Pullen. "For a start-up business like mine which is targeting large corporations - it will necessarily make things easier."

But for Zahir Bouchaala, another Brit who has moved into Station F, it would be an overstatement to say that doing business in France has changed overnight. "It was



**PARIS:** This file photo taken on June 29, 2017 in Paris shows France's President Emmanuel Macron (R) posing next to head of Station F Roxanne Varza during the inauguration of the world's biggest start-up incubator Station F. —AFP

a lot simpler to open and maintain a company in the UK," admitted the 35-year-old software developer, though he too is positive about the mood under Macron.

Station F has a large office connecting entrepreneurs with officials to explain complex regulations,

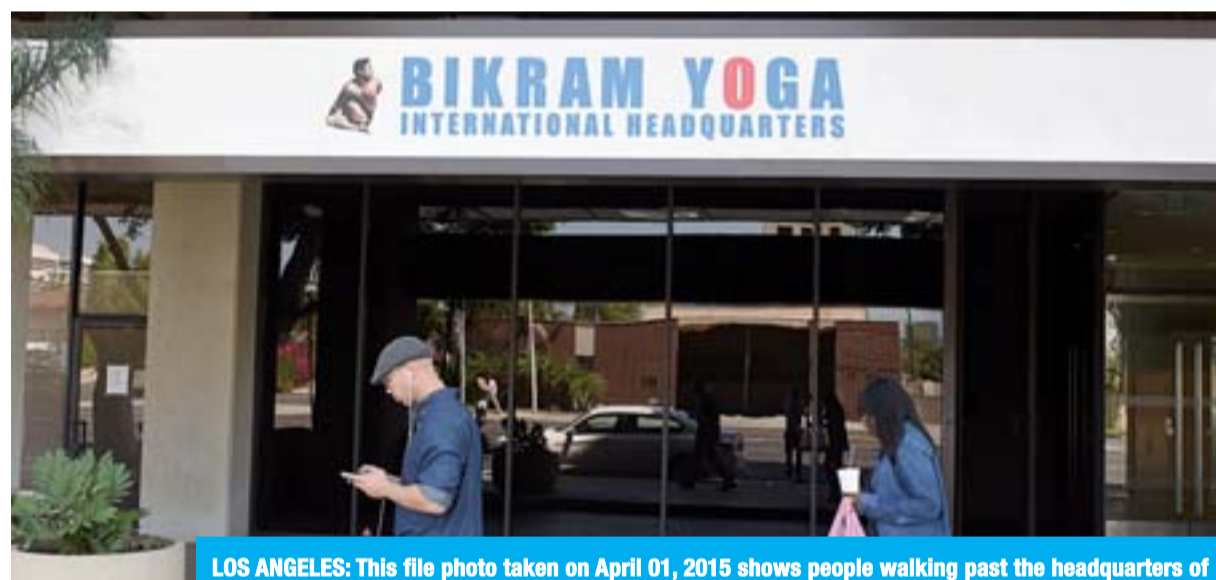
from patents to social security. Even so, Bouchaala is grappling with a bewildering stream of paperwork on everything from pensions to healthcare, now that his firm Bevolta has grown into a team of 10. "France is still a country that is employee-focused more than boss-focused," he said. "Even in the start-up world." —AFP

## Study finds bikram no healthier than any other yoga

**PARIS:** Practiced in rooms heated to 40 degrees Celsius (104 degrees Fahrenheit), bikram yoga is no better for your health than other, cooler forms of the ancient discipline, scientists said on Friday. Proponents claim the hot, humid workout, which puts sweaty participants through a series of 26 poses, burns more calories than yoga performed at room temperature, and is better at flushing out toxins. Others have pointed to potential dangers such as dehydration and heat stroke.

A study published in the journal *Experimental Physiology* found that yoga was beneficial regardless of whether it was done in a hot room or at ambient temperature. Both forms reduced changes in the lining of blood vessels that can lead to heart disease, and appeared to delay the progression of plaque build-up in arteries that can cause heart attacks or stroke. The findings highlight yoga's effectiveness "in the absence of a heated practice environment, in improving vascular health," the study authors wrote.

The findings were important, they added, "given the increased propensity toward heat intolerance in ageing adults." The team enrolled 52 "sedentary but apparently healthy" adults aged 40-60 for the trial. They were divided into three groups, two of which did yoga three times a week for 12 weeks, and a third "control" group which did none. One of the yoga groups exercised in a room heated to 40.5 C, the other at 23 C. "The heated practice environment did not seem to play a role in eliciting improvements in vascular health with bikram yoga," said study co-author Stacy Hunter of Texas State University. —AFP



**LOS ANGELES:** This file photo taken on April 01, 2015 shows people walking past the headquarters of Bikram Yoga. —AFP

## Amazon pulls clothes bearing offensive slogan

**LONDON:** Children's clothes bearing the slogan 'Slavery gets s\*\*t done' have been pulled from sale by online retail giant Amazon.com Inc after criticism from shoppers and anti-slavery groups. A range of products featuring the slogan, from mugs and bags to T-shirts modeled by young children, were listed by third-party sellers and have been removed from sale, Amazon said.

"All Marketplace sellers must follow our selling guidelines and those who don't will be subject to action including potential removal of their account," an Amazon spokesman said in a statement. "The products in question are no longer available." While the slavery-themed products are no longer available to buy on Amazon's UK website, bags bearing the slogan were still on sale

on the U.S.-based Amazon.com on Monday.

The sale of such items by a major retailer trivialises the global drive to end modern slavery, said charities Anti-Slavery International (ASI) and International Justice Mission (IJM) UK. "If it is meant to be funny, it fails miserably," Jakub Sobik of ASI told the Thomson Reuters Foundation by phone. More than 40 million people were living as modern slaves last year - either trapped in forced labor or forced marriages - according to the United Nations International Labour Organization (ILO) and human rights group Walk Free Foundation.

"Children the same age as those modeling the T-shirts will be forced to work long hours for no pay in desperate conditions where starvation, beatings and sleep deprivation are common," said David Westlake, chief executive of IJM UK. "Rather than trivializing slavery, companies and the global community must recognize the vast injustice of modern slavery and work together to end it for good." he added. —Reuters

## FDA's tobacco stance faces test with IQOS device

**WASHINGTON:** In a decision expected to test the Trump administration's approach to tobacco regulation, US health advisers will vote this week on whether to allow Philip Morris International Inc to sell its novel IQOS tobacco device and claim it is less harmful than cigarettes. The sleekly packaged little tube would not look out of place in an Apple store. It is designed to heat tobacco but not burn it. Most of the harmful chemicals in tobacco are released when tobacco is burned.

The advisers to the Food and Drug Administration will discuss the product on Wednesday and Thursday and recommend whether it should be cleared. The FDA is not obliged to follow the recommendations of its outside advisers but typically does. If cleared, IQOS would become the first product to carry a modified-risk claim and could help advance the FDA's proposed new approach to reducing the dangers of smoking. For decades, US

health agencies have worked to help Americans quit cigarettes to avoid the risks of lung cancer and other disease. National smoking rates have declined to near historic lows of around 15 percent. But in July, newly appointed FDA Commissioner Scott Gottlieb proposed reducing nicotine levels in cigarettes to "non-addictive" levels while increasing development of lower-risk alternatives. The policy assumes that some percentage of the population will be unable or unwilling to give up nicotine.

To make the new strategy succeed, the agency needs a stable of vetted, reduced-risk alternatives to cigarettes on the market. Philip Morris is one of the few companies that can finance such a long and expensive development process. It has spent close to \$3 billion on reduced-risk products. "If this application fails, it will be clear that this is an expensive, wasteful, regulatory dead end," said Clive Bates, a tobacco expert who runs the consulting firm Counterfactual and advocates for alternative nicotine products. Bates and others argue that if Philip Morris cannot win FDA clearance for a modified-risk product, no one will be able to.

Other companies have submitted modified-risk products for FDA review. 22nd Century Group Inc, which genetically engineers tobacco plants to have lower nicotine levels, seeks

clearance for its "Brand A" very low nicotine cigarettes.

### The claim

IQOS is used by nearly 4 million people in 30 markets outside the United States. It consists of a small pen-like holder containing a heated tobacco stick, and a charger. It looks similar to an e-cigarette, but uses real tobacco rather than nicotine-laced liquid. Philip Morris says that IQOS contains up to 95 percent fewer harmful or potentially harmful chemicals than the cigarette smoke produced from burning tobacco. If approved, the product would be marketed by US partner Altria Group Inc. The hurdles for success are high.

To sell a new tobacco product, a company must demonstrate that it significantly reduces the risk of disease and does not encourage more smoking or delay quitting. To date, the FDA has determined that only eight products meet that standard, all of them smokeless tobacco pouches made by Swedish Match AB. The agency has granted no company the right to specifically claim that their product is less risky than cigarettes. Tobacco control activists say companies like Philip Morris cannot be trusted to make reduced-risk claims. They point to the industry's previous promotion of "light" and "low-tar" cigarettes as

safer alternatives despite evidence showing they were not.

Others argue that things have changed. Since 2009, the tobacco industry has had to answer to the FDA under federal law. New technology, including e-cigarettes and heat-not-burn products, may help smokers quit or shift those who cannot quit onto a less harmful substitute, they say. "Many of my friends in the tobacco control movement are still fighting the tobacco wars of the 1980s," said Scott Ballin, an independent health policy consultant and long-time anti-tobacco activist. "We are beyond that now."

The FDA's Gottlieb favors an approach to treating addiction that makes available less harmful versions of addictive substances, including nicotine and opioids. These products, he argues, can help minimize damage to those unable to quit. Mitch Zeller, head of the FDA's tobacco division, refers frequently to a "continuum of risk" for nicotine products, with nicotine gums and lozenges on one end and cigarettes on the other. The FDA would like to shift smokers unable to quit nicotine from high-risk to low-risk products. "What we have developed is an offering on the continuum of risk," said Ruth Dempsey, Philip Morris' director of scientific engagement. "We believe it is better than cigarettes." —Reuters

## Facebook: Social media may not be good for democracy



**SAN FRANCISCO:** Facebook Inc warned yesterday that it could offer no assurance that social media was on balance good for democracy, but the company said it was trying what it could to stop alleged meddling in elections by Russia or anyone else. The sharing of false or misleading headlines on social media has become a global issue, after accusations that Russia tried to influence votes in the United States, Britain and France. Moscow denies the allegations.

Facebook, the largest social network with more than 2 billion users, addressed social media's role in democracy in blog posts from a Harvard University professor, Cass Sunstein, and from an employee working on the subject. "I wish I could guarantee that the positives are destined to outweigh the negatives, but I can't," Samidh Chakrabarti, a Facebook product manager, wrote in his post. Facebook, he added, has a "moral duty to understand how these technologies are being used and what can be done to make communities like Facebook as representative, civil and trustworthy as possible." Contrite Facebook executives were already fanning out across Europe this week to address the company's slow response to abuses on its platform, such as hate speech and foreign influence campaigns.

US lawmakers have held hearings on the role of social media in elections, and this month Facebook widened an investigation into the run-up to Britain's 2016 referendum on EU membership. Chakrabarti expressed Facebook's regrets about the 2016 U.S. elections, when according to the company Russian agents created 80,000 posts that reached around 126 million people over two years. The company should have done better, he wrote, and he said Facebook was making up for lost time by disabling suspect accounts, making election ads visible beyond the targeted audience and requiring those running election ads to confirm their identities. Twitter Inc and Alphabet Inc's Google and YouTube have announced similar attempts at self-regulation.

Chakrabarti said Facebook had helped democracy in ways, such as getting more Americans to register to vote. Sunstein, a law professor and Facebook consultant who also worked in the administration of former US President Barack Obama, said in a blog post that social media was a work in progress and that companies would need to experiment with changes to improve. Another test of social media's role in elections lies ahead in March, when Italy votes in a national election already marked by claims of fake news spreading on Facebook. —Reuters

What's On

# ACK achieves AARU Membership



As part of ACK's strategic direction, vision and mission the college is proud to announce that it has joined the Association of Arab Universities as an Associate Member. ACK underwent an inspection visit in December 2017 by the committee of AARU chaired by Prof. Sultan Abu Orabi Al Adwan Secretary-General of the AARU. The AARU committee examined closely ACK's profile, administration,

infrastructure, facilities, policies and regulatory.

The infrastructure, laboratories and scientific equipments were judged to be of high quality. The committee defined points of excellence in ACK academic programs in the fields of Engineering, Business Administration and Aviation that are required by the Kuwaiti labor market in particular and the Gulf and Arab markets in general, in addition to the Cultural

diversity of ACK faculty staff. The committee believes that all points of excellence qualify the ACK to become a university in the near future.

The Association of Arab Universities is a non-governmental organization that has an independent legal character. It was established in 1964 upon a resolution issued by the Arab League. The Association seeks to achieve cooperation amongst Arab universities and

institutes of higher education to promote quality assurance and accreditation. On the other hand it seeks to achieve cooperation with counterpart associations and institutions to raise the level of higher education, to promote joint research projects, to support and encourage mutual students' activities. The AARU coordinates the efforts of all members at international assemblies and conferences.

# TEC's 'The Golden Age' circus kicks off at Entertainment City



The Touristic Enterprises Company (TEC) announced the official launch of The Golden Age Circus, a contemporary circus spectacle developed for TEC and Kuwait in partnership with the internationally renowned Cirque Madona Bouglie. Taking place at Entertainment City in Doha, the show will be running from January 20th until March 31st.

A unique and artistic circus show, The Golden Age Circus has been created and imagined exclusively for Kuwait, and is being debuted for the first ever for Kuwaiti audiences. This contemporary extravaganza

seamlessly blends together the classical arts of the traditional circus with innovative, modern acts, combining acrobatics, music, dance, drama, comedy, horse shows, and much more to create a one-of-a-kind entertainment experience. To bring this electrifying experience to Kuwait, TEC partnered with Cirque Madonna Bouglie, a celebrated modern circus that combines traditional circus arts with elements of innovation and modern technology, to create unique contemporary shows.

The show will feature more than a dozen interna-

tional circus performance acts, from clowns and acrobats, to stunt bikers and various equestrian displays. Within that context, the Golden Age teams features more than 75 artists and crew members are coming together from more than ten countries from around the world. Open to audiences of all ages, the Golden Age Circus will include one show a day during weekdays, from Monday to Thursday, and two shows during the weekends, on Friday and Saturday. The circus is also set to feature a special limited-run show during February's National Day celebrations.



## Al Sayer holds blood donation campaign



Al Sayer Holding Corporate Excellence Department organized blood donation campaign at Lexus Center Shuwaikh in cooperation with Central Blood Bank (CBB) Kuwait as part of corporate sustainability and community interest. 80+ employees voluntarily participated, who showed greater care towards such noble cause.

According to Nehad Al Haj Ali, DGM Corporate

Excellence "There are many people who are in urgent need of blood and by donating your blood you can contribute to a new life. Donating blood offers a satisfying experience that you are the reason behind someone's life. We thank all employees for their great support to make this campaign a successful one"

Al Sayer Holding encourages everyone to participate due to the great benefits of donating blood. After you

donate the blood, new cells regenerate. The entire body gets to freshen up and most of the health problems come to an end. So donating the blood can result in a much healthier body which increases your life span.

Adding to that, Blood is not only required in case of accidents or injuries but sometimes a patient may need plasma or platelets as well. In this case, if sufficient amount of blood is available in the blood bank, the

patient can be treated without any problem. We encourage people to give blood on a regular basis so that patients can receive the treatment at the right time. To facilitate knowledge sharing educational brochures were also distributed highlighting the importance of blood donations listing various health benefits.

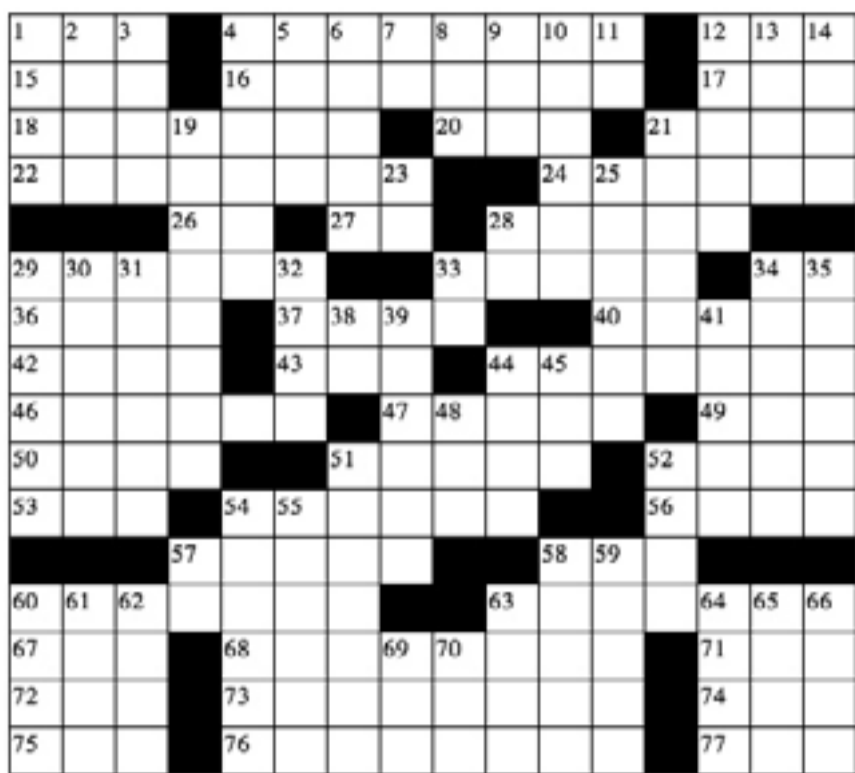






Stars

CROSSWORD 1816



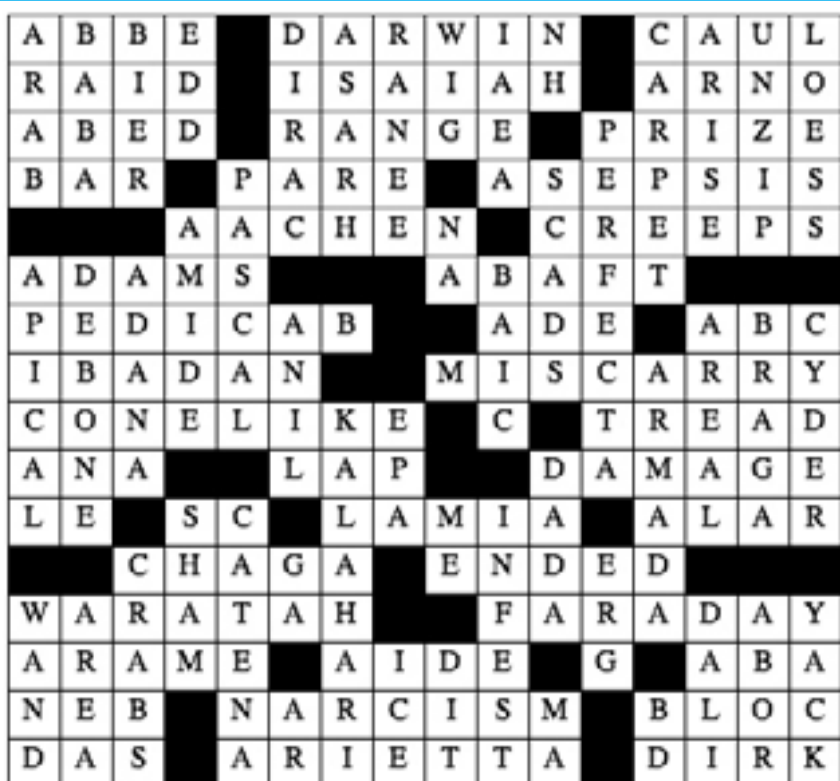
ACROSS

1. (Irish) Mother of the ancient Irish gods.
4. Port city on southeastern Honshu in central Japan.
12. An infection of the sebaceous gland of the eyelid.
15. Light informal conversation for social occasions.
16. Lacking gonads.
17. 10 hao equal 1 dong.
18. Duct through which urine is discharged in most mammals and which serves as the male genital duct.
20. A prominent rock or pile of rocks on a hill.
22. In an active manner.
24. Apathy and inactivity in the practice of virtue (personified as one of the deadly sins).
26. A colorless odorless gaseous element that give a red glow in a vacuum tube.
27. The blood group whose red cells carry both the A and B antigens.
29. An archaic name for Easter or Passover.
36. Lie adjacent to another.
37. A small cake leavened with yeast.
40. Indigo bush.
42. Tall New Zealand timber tree.
43. An undergarment worn by women to support their breasts.
46. A special loved one.
47. Property that is leased or rented out or let.
49. (Irish) The sea personified.
50. Belonging to some prior time.
53. Last or greatest in an indefinitely large series.
56. (prefix) Outside or outer.
60. Small buffalo of Mindoro in the Philippines.
67. Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
68. Having deserted a cause or principle.
71. A flat wing-shaped process or wing-like part of an organism.
72. The federal agency that insures residential mortgages.
73. Not worn away by exposure.
74. Either of two folds of skin that can be moved to cover or open the eye.
75. Any of various dark heavy viscid substances obtained as a residue.
76. A river in northeastern Brazil that flows generally northward to the Atlantic Ocean.
77. Of or relating to a member of the Buddhist people inhabiting the Mekong river in Laos and Thailand.

DOWN

1. Largest known toad species.
2. A lawman concerned with narcotics violations.
3. Assist or encourage, usually in some wrongdoing.
4. A name for the Old Testament God as transliterated from the Hebrew YHWH.
5. A cruel wicked and inhuman person.
6. Sluggish tailless Australian arboreal marsupial with gray furry ears and coat.
7. In operation or operational.
8. Headdress that protects the head from bad weather.
9. A rapid bustling commotion.
10. 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.
11. A silvery ductile metallic element found primarily in bauxite.
12. Relative darkness caused by light rays being intercepted by an opaque body.
13. A sock with a separation for the big toe.
14. A Hindu theistic philosophy.
19. A substances that colors metals.
21. Made of grain or relating to grain or the plants that produce it.
23. A soft silvery metallic element.
25. An attendant who carries the golf clubs for a player.
28. A toxic nonmetallic element related to sulfur and tellurium.
30. (psychology) Characterized by avoidance or withdrawal.
31. A shrub or tree of the genus Rhus (usually limited to the non-poisonous members of the genus).
32. A French abbot.
33. Informal terms for a mother.
34. Feel bitter or indignant about.
35. The arrangement of the hair (especially a woman's hair).
38. A colorless and odorless inert gas.
39. When dried yields a hard substance used e.g. in golf balls.
41. Of a pale purple color.
44. An account describing incidents or events.
45. A fatal disease of cattle that affects the central nervous system.
48. The compass point that is one point south of due east.
51. A public official who investigates by inquest any death not due to natural causes.
52. A collection of objects laid on top of each other.
54. Give a spanking to.
55. Doglike nocturnal mammal of Africa and southern Asia that feeds chiefly on carrion.
57. A hard gray lustrous metallic element that is highly corrosion-resistant.
58. A unit of dry measure used in Egypt.
59. English monk and scholar (672-735).
61. Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
62. A flat-bottomed volcanic crater that was formed by an explosion.
63. Gully or streambed in North Africa and the Middle East that remains dry except during rainy season.
64. A sudden numbing dread.
65. English essayist (1775-1834).
66. Panel forming the lower part of an interior wall when it is finished differently from the rest.
69. Bulky grayish-brown eagle with a short wedge-shaped white tail.
70. A state of southwestern India.

Yesterday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Aries, this year will bring your love and family life to the fore; you may be pleasantly surprised by some gossip you hear. This period of time is marked by thoughtless behavior, getting involved in things without thinking. You will have the innate need to streamline and simplify your lifestyle; you will have an opportunity to mix business and pleasure. You will be noticed for your accomplishments and there could be an award associated with this. Relationships are pleasant and easy right today and tonight. Enjoy dinner in an unusual setting; musical entertainment will be especially appealing. You should sit back and enjoy the new relationship you are building with yourself through physical and spiritual evolution, aries.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Taurus, you desire to streamline and remove clutter from your emotional, spiritual and physical life. This could involve taking items to the trash, a charity outlet or maybe even cutting someone loose that may create negative energy. Your surroundings could seem unfamiliar and uncomfortable just now. Now is the time to spend time with like-minded people that relate to your way of thinking. You wonder if there is something you're missing when it comes to finding true love; friends are wonderful but sometimes not enough. Your sense of making things happen through organization and encouragement will serve you and others well. Allow art to transform your thoughts and take you to exciting new places this evening, taurus.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Gemini, your old ways have served their purpose; you will replace them with new healthier routines and choices. Your emotions may seem overpowering and much deeper than usual. Starting over will be easy regarding a new romance and other aspects of your life. Your spirit is strong and getting stronger. You could have a strong desire to change behaviors and routines; focus on making them positive and they will be long lasting. You could feel anxious if your affectionate feelings are not returned. Your comfort level will be reached by surrounding yourself with like-minded people with similar goals. You will be more inclined to look inside and keep what you find to yourself later this evening, gemini.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Cancer, you will long to streamline and eliminate clutter from your physical, mental and spiritual life. You always seem to be in search of something new. You could find yourself searching for universal love and support that most people don't even realize exists. Your intelligence and cutting-edge foresight will be appreciated and complimented today. This could be the day for uncovering unexpected knowledge. You may be treated badly by a rude person who constantly interrupts your verbal and mental flow. Separate yourself from those you dislike; there is a good reason you are not fond of them. Your quiet contemplation will come to the rescue of a sensitive situation. You know what you are capable of; have a grateful heart tonight, cancer.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Leo, you could have a difficult time deciding what to do about an opportunity at work which conflicts with an issue at home. If you have been assigned to a project you have no confidence in perhaps you should voice your concerns to the boss. Sometimes we make our very best decisions when we are put under extreme pressure. Try not to lose something that would immensely improve the quality of life just to keep peace; you know how to debate but even better you know how to persuade. Keep your impetuous nature under control. You will want to form new routines and discover new favorites. Events may occur that upset you and threaten to throw you off course. Take a deep breath, put your feet up and enjoy an old movie with a loved one, leo.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Virgo, you will struggle with having respect for rules and regulations that seem to serve only a few. You may find yourself publicly defending like-minded people who have gotten into hot water for their views. Watch your words and actions closely as there are many who consider you an example to be followed. You will feel the pull of doing something spur of the moment and without the least bit of planning; watch you don't push yourself into a bad situation. New hobbies and habits will surface during the new cycle you have entered; make them positive if you can because they will be with you for some time to come. You could share a meal with someone to night who has some gossip you will want to hear and keep to yourself, virgo.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Libra, the new day brings energy and a positive attitude! You want to start with a clean slate and you will find new and exciting prospects before you leave your mind open to new challenges. You could discover a new healthy drink to replace an old, unhealthy one; this may seem small to some, but very important to you. You could feel as though you're being attacked when someone criticizes some of your new habits and practices. You have a reputation for getting things done; your assistance will be requested by a well known person. You may see something in a magazine that inspires you to replicate it at home. You will radiate confidence as you move forward with a new diet and exercise plan; you long to feel good again! You are well on your way, libra.



Scorpio (October 23-November 18)

Scorpio, this new cycle brings with the vibration of opportunity for making things happen; your attitude and choices are all that matter now, make sure they are positive. You will feel an acute sense of what is going on in business and finances. Your efforts will pay off handsomely as the stars are aligned to support what you do. Your easygoing manner will be more encouraging than a pushy one. Some of your suggestions could be ill-received by several of those around you; you may not favor much today. You could feel drawn to trying things a new way regarding your routine! Someone you spend time with today will be a comfortable companion who likes your quirky way of looking at things. Your spirits are high when dining on something exotic, scorpio.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Sagittarius, you have entered a cycle of wearing your heart on your sleeve; in other words, you will make no attempt to hide your feelings or opinions. People pay attention when you make strong statements. Try to reign in your fiery passions as you go through this time. You may have a tendency to create new behaviors that you will exhibit for a long time to come; channel this energy wisely. The door has opened for working with clean slates; fresh starts at work and home are prominent here and could include all facets of each. A choice later today could confuse or anger you due to the sensitive nature of it. There could be an invitation to a gathering or party that could create a major problem for you; seriously consider what this could cost, sagittarius.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Capricorn, you consider friends, honor and duty to be your source of security now. You strongly desire a different path, new attitudes and intuition tells you the time is now. You put others needs ahead of your own in some instances. You will be at odds with someone close and feel closed away from your current situation in life. Never fear, you will regain your direction and be better for the detour. Pressure from someone concerning personal issues sparks sensitivities and could cause serious damage to the relationship. It will take time and effort to return to normal. Let your mind wander and release built up tensions that lower your energy. Tonight, will bring a new experience for you and a nice companion, capricorn.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Aquarius, you have entered a period of being outspoken regarding your feelings and plans. You may have a tendency to be hasty and irresponsible, perhaps you may be running from something that is not even there! There will be an opportunity to start over with a project that has seemed hopeless. Someone offends you by making comments on your private life that are hurtful; this person is bitter about something you said. Try to hold your temper later today when a meeting takes an unexpected turn. Your ideas will be revisited at a later day when appropriate. Music will soothe you this afternoon and into the evening. You will receive news about a family member that could include you; plans made long ago could become important again, aquarius.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Pisces, others may see you as being stressed out and nervous. You could feel rattled and disoriented when making decisions or just as you go through your day; stop and take a deep breath as you stretch arms and legs. A need for attention from your lover could be prominent now or this could be a desire to call all the shots and have everything your way because things would run smoother. You could attend a luncheon or early dinner with enjoyable guests and wonderful food; whatever this is will be pleasant. The day will flow together in perfect synchronicity and at the end of the day your spirits could rise. You may finally reach a decision about a side business you have considered awhile; enjoy what you do and do well, pisces.

Wordsearch Puzzle

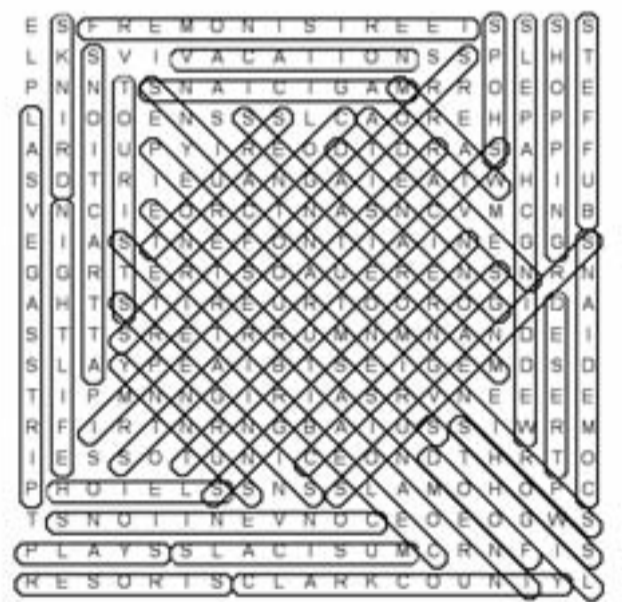
Les Misérables

Find and circle all of the names and items from the novel Les Misérables. The remaining 47 letters spell a secret message.



- |               |                  |                |             |
|---------------|------------------|----------------|-------------|
| ARGOT         | FACTORY          | MARIUS         | REVOLUTION  |
| AZELMA        | FANTINE          | MAYOR          | RUE PLUMET  |
| BARICADES     | FRANCE           | MERCY          | SEWERS      |
| BISHOP MYRIEL | FRANCIS          | MONTFERMEIL    | SOLDIERS    |
| BREAD         | FRENCH           | NOVEL          | STUDENTS    |
| CONVENT       | GAVRDOCHE        | PARIS          | SUICIDE     |
| CONVICT       | GORBEAU HOUSE    | PATRON-MINETTE | THE SEINE   |
| COSETTE       | INNKEEPER        | PRISON         | THENARDIER  |
| DOLL          | INSPECTOR JAVERT | RECONCILIATION | VICTOR HUGO |
| ENJOURAS      | JEAN VALJEAN     | REDEMPTION     | WEDDING     |
| EPONINE       | JUNE REBELLION   |                |             |

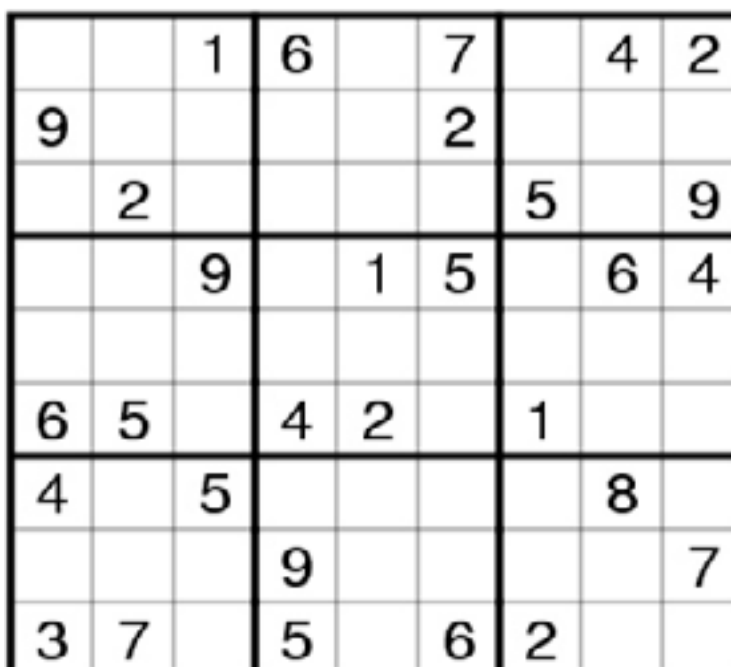
Las Vegas



- |              |                 |             |                  |
|--------------|-----------------|-------------|------------------|
| ATTRACTIONS  | ENTERTAINMENT   | NEON SIGNS  | SINGERS          |
| BUFFETS      | FOOD            | NEVADA      | SOUVENIRS        |
| CASINOS      | FREMONT STREET  | NIGHTLIFE   | SPRING MOUNTAINS |
| CELEBRITIES  | HOTELS          | PERFORMERS  | SUNNY            |
| CLARK COUNTY | IMPERSONATORS   | PLAYS       | TOURISTS         |
| COMEDIANS    | LAS VEGAS STRIP | RESORTS     | TOURS            |
| CONCERTS     | LIGHTS          | RESTAURANTS | TRIBUTE ACTS     |
| CONVENTIONS  | MAGICIANS       | SHOPPING    | VACATION         |
| DESERT       | MARRIAGES       | SHOPS       | WARM             |
| DINING       | MUSICALS        | SHOWS       | WEDDING CHAPELS  |
| DRINKS       |                 |             |                  |

The hidden message is: ELVIS PRESLEY IMPERSONATOR

Daily SuDoku



Yesterday's Solution





## Lifestyle | Music &amp; Movies

## 'Scandal,' the show that Twitter built, bows out

ABC's prime-time political soap "Scandal" launched mid-season with little fanfare in the spring of 2012, to tepid reviews and disappointing ratings. Following the exploits of Emmy-nominated Kerry Washington as Washington, DC crisis manager Olivia Pope and her team of problem-solving "gladiators," the show didn't immediately take off and it looked destined to be strangled at birth. As it nears its finale six years on, however, it bows out as a bona fide hit that changed the way we watch TV, ushering in the era of live-tweeting shows, known as "double-screening."

Its army of vocal Twitter fans, who also call themselves "gladiators," helped ratings for "Scandal" soar more than 50 percent to 12.7 million an episode by 2014. Much of its success was driven by the goodwill it engendered as an intriguing Washington, DC political story of sex, murder and double-dealing starring a strong black female character. But its pioneering showrunner, "Grey's Anatomy" creator Shonda Rhimes, has been credited with the insight that stars and producers live-tweeting episodes along with fans makes a difference in ratings.

From the earliest days, she would diligently connect with her Twitter followers, who have expanded during the show's lifetime from 350,000 to 1.7 million. "Gladiators: 'Scandal' would not have the opportunity to be on magazine covers without all of you watching. Thank you for making it happen!" she would tweet, giv-

ing fans a feeling of belonging that they'd never had before.

## 'I was very skeptical'

Rhimes would offer personal insights into production and the scriptwriting process and, most importantly, rope in the cast to post their own thoughts in real-time. It is a common tactic these days but no one was really doing it—certainly on a regular, reliable basis—before Rhimes. By the second season, "Scandal" was drawing 119,000 tweets per episode and ratings began to climb, particularly among the millennial age group that advertisers covet. The show is in its final run of 11 episodes after returning last week from a mid-season break and finishes for good on April 19. Tony Goldwyn, who plays ex-president Fitzgerald "Fitz" Grant, Pope's longtime love interest, told journalists at a recent set visit in Hollywood how the cast had embraced Rhimes' ground-breaking strategy.

"It completely transformed my perception of social media. I was very skeptical and judgmental about it, and just thought... it was irrelevant to me," said Goldwyn ("Ghost," "The Belko Experiment"). The 57-year-old actor figured that no one would be interested in his opinions but was staggered when thousands of people began following him and responding to his tweets.

"It's kind of like being in a Broadway theater with 1,000 people there and you're talking to them," he said. "I was really awed by the impact

of it and the fact that you can literally communicate one-on-one with people or a group." Other networks have begun to catch up but "Scandal" still finished ninth across broadcast stations last year in the social media charts, with 5.2 million interactions.

## 'Yearning for connection'

The cast makes sure to live-tweet for audience in both the east and west coast time zones, said Cornelius Smith Jr, who plays White House communications director Marcus Walker. "It's a lot of fun and it's a really different kind of way to communicate and connect. I think people are really yearning for connection in this world, especially today," he told reporters. Jeff Perry, who plays vice-president Cyrus Beene, joked that the only negative reaction to the live-tweeting had come from other actors in Hollywood.

Though they can be full of praise, he said that "a little more often they're (annoyed) at us. 'You guys made that work and now I have to tweet all the time.'" Social media aside, "Scandal" has an equally important reason to be proud of its reputation for pioneering TV — its commitment to diversity. All the characters in the most powerful roles are women, and the show has always been committed to reflecting the racial diversity of modern-day America.

"When we first aired most of the questions I received centered around the fact that there had not been a black woman as the lead in a television



(From left) File photo shows Actors Joshua Malina, Darby Stanchfield, and Joe Morton, Executive Producer Betsy Beers, actors Cornelius Smith Jr, Tony Goldwyn, Kerry Washington, Bellamy Young, and Scott Foley, and Creator/Executive Producer Shonda Rhimes of the television show 'Scandal' speak onstage during the Disney-ABC portion of the 2017 Winter Television Critics Association Press Tour at Langham Hotel on January 10, 2017 in Pasadena, California. — AFP

drama in my lifetime," said Washington, 40. "It was not something I grew up seeing... and that is certainly not the case now. You'd be hard-pressed to find a network that does not have a show with a woman of color at its center." — AFP



This file photo shows Chinese rapper PG One (center) performing during a promotional event for the movie "Spiderman: Homecoming" in Beijing. — AFP

## Bad rap: Chinese fans fear crackdown on hip hop

Chinese music fans are bracing for a crackdown on hip hop after a rapper was apparently dropped from a popular singing program, as reports emerged that the government had soured on the often-provocative genre. Hip hop is a late arrival to China's cultural scene but hometown artists have steadily gained fans, getting a major boost over the past year thanks to singing-contest reality programs showcasing their talent. But rappers have recently raised hackles with vulgar or edgy lyrics, and fans fear hip hop has become the latest target of an escalating crackdown on content deemed potentially threatening to the ruling Communist Party.

On Friday social media began circulating a government order apparently issued to Chinese broadcasters banning them from giving air time to "artists with tattoos, hip hop music" and other performers who are "in conflict with the party's core values and morals". Popular portal Sina.com said the directive came from Gao Changli, a top official with the government agency that oversees the media. The order has not been officially released. But a rapper known as GAI, who has nearly four million followers on China's Twitter-like Weibo platform, was suddenly absent from Friday's airing of the popular reality show "Singer". GAI is now no longer featured as one of the contestants, prompting online speculation that he was a casualty of the new rules. "This is a sign that hip hop will be banned," said one of many comments on Weibo.

## 'Cultural regression'

"Although some of it is rubbish, hip hop itself is not wrong. Its core spirit is still positive... Hip hop has just emerged and now it is being rudely banned. Isn't this cultural regression?" Other postings ridiculed the government's media watch-

dog agency. "How many examples of fine culture and excellent works have had their value twisted by the hands of this idiotic agency? I'm ashamed of your behavior," said one. Chinese hip hop entered the national spotlight last year with the debut season of the wildly popular "The Rap of China", an internet-based reality-show rapping competition.

The show, which finished its first season in September, accumulated nearly three billion online "views". But China's emerging hip hop subculture seemed destined to run afoul of the Communist Party, which has dramatically tightened its grip on free expression under President Xi Jinping. In an ongoing crackdown on expression, the media, internet and the arts, vulgar or provocative content is out, while patriotic and "harmonious" content code for pro-party propaganda is in. Last summer a rapper from the southwestern city of Chengdu known as "Fat Shady" drew attention with a song called "Stupid Foreigners", a profanity-laced rant against foreigners living in China.

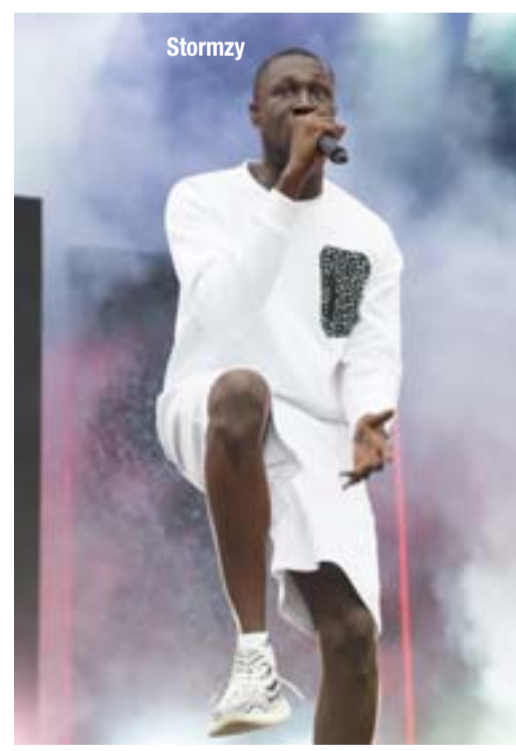
Two weeks ago PG One, one of China's best-known rappers, apologized after he came under fire from official media. They highlighted lyrics from one of his songs in which he boasts obscenely about forcing himself on a woman and appears to promote drug use. There is now rising online speculation over whether "The Rap of China"—which vaulted several contestants to fame and helped them land recording contracts—would be allowed back for a second season. Predictions of the show's demise have been fuelled by reports that the latest installment of a nationwide concert tour based on the program was cancelled over the weekend in the central city of Wuhan, with organizers blaming unspecified "unavoidable factors". — AFP

## Stormzy, J. Cole and DJ Khaled to headline Wireless 2018

Stormzy, J. Cole and DJ Khaled will headline Wireless Festival 2018. The British grime star — who is riding high on the success of his multiple award-winning album 'Gang, Signs & Prayers' — and the US rappers will top the bill at the annual music extravaganza held at Finsbury Park in London between July 6 and 8. Now in its 13th year, the north London event prides itself on paying homage to the hottest and forthcoming acts on the grime, electronic R&B and pop scene, and much more.

Joining 'Big For Your Boots' hitmaker Stormzy on July 7 are the likes of US trap giants Migos, BRIT Award-nominated J Hus, and 'Unforgettable' hitmaker French Montana. J. Cole has Post Malone, PartyNextDoor and special guest Big Sean and Wretch 32 and Mabel on July 6. Giggs will join 'Wild Thoughts' star DJ Khaled as his special guest, along with artists including Rae Sremmurd, Lil Uzi Vert, 'Bodak Yellow' star Cardi B, Rick Ross to wrap up the three days on July 8.

It will be Khaled's first performance outside North America and the only place to see him in the UK in 2018. Last year saw The Weeknd close the festival with a bang as fireworks exploded from the stage while he belted out his popular track 'The Hills'. The 'Starboy' hitmaker rounded off the three-day event with hit after hit from his 'House of Balloons' mixtape as the crowd went wild for his incredible voice. Tickets are on sale now form — www.wirelessfestival.co.uk



Indian police officials stand guard in the premises of City Gold Motera theatre with a notice board written in regional gujarati language which says 'City Gold Motera theatre hereby informs that here we are not displaying poster or trailer of the controversial film "Padmaavat", in Ahmedabad yesterday. — AFP

## Indian states seek last-ditch film ban amid violent protests

Indian state governments made a last-ditch attempt yesterday to ban a Bollywood film about a mythical Hindu queen which has sparked violent protests by radical groups. The Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh governments asked India's top court to retract a ruling ordering states to show the film "Padmaavat", which is due to hit screens on Thursday. The urgent petitions, which the Supreme Court will hear on Tuesday, were lodged a day after Hindu extremists set fire to buses and blocked roads in Gujarat state. In Rajasthan state, women carrying swords marched in Chittorgarh against the movie. In Noida, near the capital New Delhi, activists burned toll booths on a major highway after a rally.

Protesters claim the film falsely depicts a romance between 14th century Hindu queen Padmavati and Muslim ruler Alauddin Khilji. The producers deny this and insist the movie portrays her respectfully. The Supreme Court on Thursday overturned a ban on the release of the film which had been imposed by several states, including Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, saying it violated creative freedoms. The states have asked the court instead to rule that individual state governments should be allowed to

block the release on law and order grounds. A caste-based group called the Rajput Karni Sena, which has been leading the violent protests, has threatened to attack cinemas showing the film, including with swords.

Its leaders claim that hundreds of women are ready to perform a mass self-immolation if the movie showing goes ahead. In January last year members attacked the film's director Sanjay Leela Bhansali and vandalized the set during filming in Rajasthan. The leader of the group also offered 50 million rupees (\$769,000) to anyone who "beheaded" lead actress Deepika Padukone or Bhansali. Protesters attacked another set near Mumbai in March, burning costumes and other props. The movie stars Shahid Kapoor as Maharawal Ratan Singh, the husband of Padmavati, and Ranveer Singh as Khilji who leads an invasion to try to capture the queen. Protesters maintain it distorts history, even though experts say the queen is a mythical character. Earlier this month the film censor board cleared "Padmaavat" for release subject to five changes. — AFP

## Ed Sheeran's Rudimental tracks to be released

Ed Sheeran has a stockpile of songs recorded with Rudimental which could be released this year. The drum and bass band — comprised of Piers Agget, Amir Amor, Kesi Dryden and DJ Locksmith — recently made a comeback with "These Days", but have revealed they are looking to dust off the old tracks, which were made with the 'Perfect' hitmaker when they did 'Lay It All On Me' in 2015. Kesi told The Sun newspaper: "We are good friends and we get in the studio now and again. "There is music that is yet to be heard. I think one, two or even a few songs will surface in some form at some point this year." Meanwhile, the 'Waiting all Night' hitmakers previously teased their new record will see the four-piece go in an "exciting new direction".

The foursome have kept a relatively low-profile, apart from their collaboration with James Arthur, 'Sun Comes Out', last year. Speaking previously to BANG Showbiz Piers teased: "I can't wait to share the new album with everyone. "This album is going to be an exciting new direction for us." As for Ed, he looks set to be stepping back from the

music scene, following the announcement he's engaged to childhood sweetheart Cherry Seaborn. After the pair have children — which Ed previously admitted he wanted to do before he turns 30 — the 26-year-old singer/songwriter's ambition for music will "go to zero". He said: "My ambition is going to go to zero as soon as I have kids. I am going to be like 'I do not care anymore as I have another life to take care of.' "It is totally understandable because you have children and your ambition shifts to be like 'I want to be a good father.'" The 'Galway Girl' hitmaker also admitted that his passion for his career is already taking a nose dive, as he has already achieved "far more" than he thought he would, and doesn't know where to go from here. He added: "To be honest my ambition is dwindling a little bit because I have achieved far more than I thought I ever would. I do not know what to do next. I feel like when you play a stadium you cannot play any bigger than that because what do you do? Sell 15 million albums? What do you do on your next album?" — Bang Showbiz



## Shakira to play rare gig in London

Shakira is bringing her 'El Dorado Tour' to the UK. The 'Hips Don't Lie' hitmaker will perform at The O2 in London on June 11 during her European run. The last time the 40-year-old Colombian beauty played the 20,000-capacity arena was in 2010, for her 'The Sun Comes Out World Tour' Sharing her excitement about returning to the British capital this summer, the blonde beauty said: "I can't wait to be onstage in London again singing along with all of you, all of your favorites and mine. It's going to be fun! The road to El Dorado starts now!" Shakira was forced to reschedule dates on her 'El Dorado World Tour' after suffering a haemorrhage in her vocal cord late last year.

The 'Waka Waka' singer was due start the run

of dates in Germany on November 8, but was forced to pull out of the opening show on doctor's orders, to avoid further damaging her voice. Now the Cologne show will take place on June 5, and Shakira's dates in the US, which were due to kick off in January, have been pushed back to August. The American shows commence on August 5 in Chicago, Illinois, before the Latin beauty heads to a further 18 cities. Shakira said the unfortunate injury has made her realise that her vocals have a "purpose", and she is extremely thankful to her fans for supporting her. Tickets for the UK date go on sale to the general public from 9am on Friday. A full list of the tour dates can be found at shakira.com

Lifestyle | Features

# No end to eyesores at Taj Mahal as repair work drags on

Tourist Muskan Mahuwakar pictured the Taj Mahal as a dazzling vision of symmetry and beauty but upon reaching the monument, she-like thousands of other visitors-was disappointed to find it covered in scaffolding, its once white marble now yellowing due to pollution. Building restoration at India's most popular tourist attraction is now into its fourth year, with work yet to even begin on its imposing dome. "It's disappointing not to get a perfect frame of this immaculate structure," Mahuwakar, a history student, told AFP on her first visit to the Taj, as nearby cleaners armed with colorful plastic buckets and large mops desperately tried to scrub some lustre back into the stained stone.

Other restoration teams scale the facade, blocking views to the ornate Islamic carvings engraved on its walls. The interruption to the serenity of visiting one of the seven modern wonders of the world. "The repair has been going on for so long. Of course, old monuments need to be conserved, but we must find solutions that are quick and effective," Mahuwakar said, casting a dejected look at the scaffolding around. Pollution and old age are taking their toll on the 17th century mausoleum, nestled on the south bank of the Yamuna river in Agra, but critics warn that even the options authorities are using to try to fix, may be exacerbating the problem.

Mudpacks have been applied in stages to draw out stains but critics say the process is as damaging as bleaching the fine stone. Authorities reject this, but admit they are concerned about how to proceed with handling the fragile central dome. There are fears this inevitable work risks damaging the unmistakable feature of the Taj and will put off tourists.

### 'Taj Mahal is Dying'

Experts warn that iron scaffolding risks leaving irrevocable scars on the fine marble. But bamboo frames are inadequate for such heights, leaving few options for those charged with executing the daunting task. "We have to clean the dome, but the challenge is how to erect the scaffolding," Bhuvan Vikrama, the government arche-



Tourists visiting the Taj Mahal near scaffolding installed for the conservation work at the monument in the Indian city of Agra.



Indian laborers work amid scaffolding during conservation work at the Taj Mahal in Agra. — AFP photos

ologist overseeing restoration efforts, told AFP. "The structure is almost 400 years old, so we can't put any extra load on it. In righting the wrong, we should not wrong the right." It remains unclear when work will begin or for how long the central dome will be encased in scaffolding.

Fodor's Travel, a publisher of tourism guidebooks, has advised readers to avoid the Taj until at least 2019 lest visitors be disappointed. The number of local tourists is also being capped to 40,000 a day in a bid to reduce wear and tear on the monument to love, which was built by Mughal emperor Shah Jahan for his beloved wife Mumtaz Mahal, who died giving birth in 1631. Currently

daily visitor numbers average 10,000-15,000 but can be much higher at weekends, going up to around 70,000. According to government figures, nearly 6.5 million people-mainly from India-visited the historic complex in 2016.

Anyone wanting to see the main crypt, which houses marble graves inlaid with semi-precious stones, will also have to pay for a pricier ticket. But critics warn that restoration is only half the solution, pointing to the industrial factories across the river that near continuously belch out noxious fumes, leaving the air thick with smog. This toxic haze from this and from dung and garbage burning in and around Agra is responsible for discoloring

the Taj, experts say. Efforts to curb these pollutants, including banning motor vehicles within 500 meters of the building, have failed to clear up the air. M C Mehta, a lawyer, said his battles in court to shift polluting industries-including a huge crematorium-had fallen on deaf ears. "No one wants to take hard decisions," Mehta told AFP. "The Taj used to be surrounded by lush greenery, but now there is nothing. Taj is in the last stage of cancer. It is dying, it is gasping for breath." — AFP

## Turkish Airlines International CIP Lounge Continues to Charm Customers!

'Hospitality Redefined'. Travel opens the mind and while one is on their way to discovering new routes or revisiting old memories, the journey to that desired destination should be as memorable too. In this case, not all transit stops are welcoming. Fortunately, Turkish Airlines layover or transfer passengers have a different story to tell.

The Turkish Airlines lounge in Istanbul serves up their renowned taste of world-class refinement and promises an exclusive experience that leaves one feeling special. Giving passengers the rest they deserve, Turkish Airlines' Lounge Istanbul was voted the "World's Best Business Class Lounge" in 2015 and 2017, and "World's Best Business Class Lounge Dining" for the third consecutive year according to the 2017 Skytrax survey results, a widely acclaimed global airline passenger survey organization. As the global carrier always aims to offer its passengers the best experience in-flight and on the ground, it has recently refurbished its world-renowned lounge at its Istanbul hub, geographically positioned as a unique meeting place between Europe and Asia.

There are 18 lounges under the Turkish Airlines brand. Istanbul Ataturk Airport, houses three lounges - the Flagship lounge called 'Lounge Istanbul' and 'Lounge Istanbul - Arrival' dedicated to international passengers on arrival terminal and 'Lounge Istanbul - Domestic' while the 11 lounges located in different airports in Turkey serves the domestic passengers. Turkish Airlines also has branded lounges in some capitals such as Moscow, Nairobi and Washington, DC and has plans to announce several other Turkish Airlines branded lounges throughout the world. When flying internationally with Turkish Airlines, Business Class passengers and Economy passengers with Miles&Smiles Elite Plus membership can make use of the lounges.

Considered one of the top rated lounges in the Star Alliance network, the Turkish Airlines Lounge comes with a wide range of unmatched services. It is a place of quiet relaxation, a place to shower and revive, a place to snack, dine or watch food presentations, a spot for children to play and/or an arcade full of exciting and challenging electronic diversions. These are all integrated into a space that reflects both Ottoman and Seljuk architectural roots with different activities available in each colonnaded section. The vast range of activities and services transforms pre-flight or connecting time into its own special experience that is unique to Turkish Airlines.



**Convenience at its Best:** Turkish Airlines Business Class passengers will pass through private entries - E2 gate for International flights, CIP Lounge Entrance for Domestic flights - from the transfer hub in Istanbul Ataturk Airport, avoiding any entrance queues. Check-in proceedings at Ataturk Airport are made in the counters where passengers are welcomed with flowers and chocolates.

Business Class passengers are also entitled to carry more baggage and earn more miles from the Miles & Smiles program and from Turkish Airlines' advantageous Frequent Flyer Program as well. There is additionally a private Transfer Desk and security service at Ataturk Airport for transfer passengers.

Safe and secure personal baggage storage areas are available with individual lock combinations in the CIP Lounge to ensure peace of mind while exploring the lounge's many intriguing features.

**Enter a New World:** Designed to impress, the overwhelming two-floor 6,000 square meter Istanbul Lounge reflects Turkey's rich cultural heritage, decorated with porticos - a fascinating element of both Ottoman and Seljukian architecture. The various sections of Turkish Airlines' Lounge Istanbul are home to all sorts of activities and experiences to deliver a privileged experience to its guests of all ages. Open 24 hours, entertainment comes in a variety of shapes and colors to keep everyone pleasantly occupied.

As one enters the dome shaped rooms, they are greeted by a library filled with the latest editions of novels and diverse genre of reading material along with snooker

tables, an indoor golf simulator, a Scalextric track through Istanbul's prettiest areas, and a cinema theatre to catch up on the latest block busters. Passengers can alternatively take advantage of unlimited internet access with the free computers and Wi-Fi connection while also keeping up-to-date on current events with a newspaper in hand.

For those travelling with children, rest assured they will not be bored throughout their time at the lounge - the children's play area is equipped with video games, PlayStation 4 consoles, and an interactive and intense competition of small cars racing around Istanbul's most important landmarks. Parents can enjoy a stress free experience as the play corners are overseen by a Turkish Airlines dedicated supervisor.

### Recuperating the Senses

If one is hoping to get a refreshing start before the next flight, Turkish Airlines Lounge makes it possible to recover and recuperate in quiet ease. Guaranteeing nothing less than hotel comfort, travelers have the opportunity to recover from travel fatigue by relaxing in one of the private suites, indulge in a massage to revive from exhaustion in the dedicated massage room or one of the comfortable chairs of Lounge Istanbul and freshen up with a shower after long flights or during connections.

### Catered to Excellence - Dining

Having repeatedly received the 'World's Best Business Lounge Dining' award according to this year's Skytrax Survey, the center of the lounge carries the hallmark of Istanbul to every city it is located in. While basking in the ambience, travelers can savor exquisite snacks and meals from Turkish and world cuisine that holds something to suit every palate. The gourmet dining experience surprises you with a wide variety of international and Turkish cuisines, such as Turkish, pide (Turkish pizza), kofte (meatballs), pasta/tortellini, Chinese noodles, and a confectionery pastry shop with fresh juices and soft drinks.

Seekers of a haven that assures serenity, will find a Tea Garden in the bottom floor that provides an assortment of Turkish and traditional teas and pastries while enjoying a live piano performances among 150-year old real olive trees. Being aware of its responsibility as a leading airline within the global aviation community, Turkish Airlines is determined to persistently carry out its mission moving forward with an unparalleled service concept, superior quality, trustworthiness and reliability.



## Landmark Group reiterates employee happiness through 'Helping Hands' initiative

Landmark Group, the Middle East's leading retail and hospitality conglomerate, has introduced the 'Helping Hands' initiative between January 18 and 28 where the company's senior leadership visited Landmark outlets across the UAE to lend their retail staff a 'Helping Hand' and were assigned with a specific job for the day.

The initiative is part of Landmark Group's Happiness Movement launched in 2017 impacting 40,000 employees across the GCC and aims to drive overall employee engagement and wellbeing to create a positive and happy working environment. In an effort to come together as one organisation, senior leaders were assigned a 'Retail Buddy' and spent the day in different stores reporting to the store manager as retail frontline staff.

Nisha Jagtiani, Group Director and Chief Happiness Officer, Landmark Group, said: "Through our Happiness

Movement, we are aiming to become the region's happiest workplace by embedding values of togetherness, positivity and a sense of belongingness. 'Helping Hands' is an initiative that is very close to our hearts as it is a way to support and connect with our retail colleagues who are the true backbone of the Group."

The 'Helping Hands' initiative was rolled out to all Landmark over 10 days. All 40,000 employees from offices, outlets and warehouses were simultaneously engaged irrespective of the country they were based in or the tasks they perform. Driven by a Happiness team at the Landmark Group headquarters, the Happiness Movement has identified ambassadors across its businesses to drive the initiative being rolled out. The campaign reflects the group's culture of creating exceptional value for all its people which has been integral to its success in the region.



Lifestyle | Awards



The cast winner of Outstanding Performance by an Ensemble in a Drama Series for "This Is Us," pose in the press room at the 24th Annual Screen Actors Guild Awards at the Shrine Exposition Center on Sunday in Los Angeles, California. — AFP photos



Actor Gary Oldman accepts the award for Best Actor.



Gary Oldman, with actress Kristen Bell, poses with the trophy for Best Film Actor in a Leading Role in the press room.

# 'THREE BILLBOARDS' WINS BIG AT FEMALE FRIENDLY SAG AWARDS



Nicole Kidman accepts the Outstanding Performance by a Female Actor in a Television Movie or Limited Series award for "Big Little Lies" onstage.

Black comedy "Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri" won three prizes Sunday at the Screen Actors Guild awards, in a ceremony that paid tribute to women in the wake of a sexual misconduct scandal. The film, which had previously triumphed at the Golden Globes, is now a hot favorite at the Oscars alongside "The Shape of Water" which won best movie at the Producers Guild Awards on Saturday. Frances McDormand won outstanding performance by a lead actress for her role as a mother seeking to avenge the rape and murder of her daughter in "Three Billboards."

Judi Dench ("Victoria and Abdul"), Sally Hawkins ("The Shape of Water"), Margot Robbie ("I, Tonya") and Saoirse Ronan ("Lady Bird") were all nominated. With a Golden Globe already under her belt, McDormand is now a clear frontrunner for an Academy Award for Best Actress, while 59-year-old Briton Gary Oldman appears to be in line for Best Actor for his turn as wartime leader Winston Churchill in "Darkest Hour."

An emotional Oldman, who beat off the likes of Timothee Chalamet ("Call Me by Your Name") and James Franco ("The Disaster Artist"), quoted the British statesman in his acceptance speech, saying: "We make a living by what we get but we make a life by what we give." The awards are a bellwether for the Oscars in March, as its members represent about 1,200 of the roughly 6,000 voters for the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

Oscar nominations will be announced on Tuesday. "Three Billboards" also won best ensemble, the event's most prestigious award, while Sam Rockwell took home the best supporting actor statuette for his role as a police officer in the film. "To all the women in this room trying to make things better it's long overdue," he said.

### Women dominate

This year's ceremony came as Hollywood is engulfed in the worst sexual misconduct scandal in its history. In the aftermath of Saturday's second "Women's March" which brought together hundreds of thousands of people in the United States — between 300,000 and 600,000 in Los Angeles alone—all SAG statuettes were being presented by actresses, including Halle Berry, Dakota Fanning, Lupita Nyong'o and Emma Stone. Allegations ranging from harassment to rape have sparked the downfall of numerous powerful industry players, starting with movie mogul Harvey Weinstein and including actors Kevin Spacey, Jeffrey Tambor and Louis C.K. as well as filmmaker Brett Ratner.

The actors guild has been keen to back the Time's Up movement created by 300 influential women in Hollywood to fund the defense of victims of sexual abuse, as well as the #MeToo movement against sexual misconduct. But unlike at the Golden Globes, where all actresses dressed



Frances McDormand gestures with the cast as 'Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri' after they received the award for Outstanding Performance by a Cast in a Motion Picture.

in black, sequins, sparkles, feathers and an air of Tinseltown glam were back on the SAG red carpet.

### Being more thoughtful

In the television category, family drama "This Is Us" won best ensemble while Sterling K. Brown won in the male actor category. He told AFP that while he was previously sensitized to racial injustice and the hardships faced by sexual minorities, the Time's Up movement had "made me realize there are some things that I had not registered—things that might be funny for you might not be for others." "It's not always about maliciousness. Sometimes it's just thoughtlessness and we all have to learn to be a bit more thoughtful," he said. Nicole Kidman meanwhile won outstanding performance by a female actor in a TV movie or miniseries for "Big Little Lies" while Alexander Skarsgard, who plays her violent husband, won the equivalent category for men.

"How wonderful it is that our careers today can go beyond 40 years old. Because 20 years ago, we were pretty washed up by this stage in our lives," said Kidman,

50. "That's not the case now. We've proven, and these actresses and so many more are proving that we are potent and powerful and viable. "I just beg that the industry stays behind us, because our stories are finally being told. It's only the beginning." Kidman said. HBO's "Veep," starring Julia Louis-Dreyfus as hapless former president Selina Meyer, won best ensemble in a comedy series and best actress for Louis-Dreyfus, who is battling cancer and could not attend.

William H. Macy meanwhile picked up best actor in a comedy series for "Shameless." "I think it's a glorious way to make living, especially in this day and age, when so many people can't recognize the truth or don't think it's important," said Macy. SAG nominations are the second major announcement in Tinseltown's glittering awards season, which climaxes with the Academy Awards in March. While far less flashy than the Globes, the SAG awards are seen as more of an indicator of Oscars glory. — AFP



Frances McDormand receives the award for Outstanding Performance by a Female Actor in a Leading Role.



Actor Sam Rockwell accepts the Outstanding Performance by a Male Actor in a Supporting Role award for 'Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri' onstage.



"Veep" members pose with their trophy for Best Comedy Ensemble in the press room.



Allison Janney accepts the Outstanding Performance by a Female Actor in a Supporting Role award for 'I, Tonya' onstage.

Lifestyle | Awards



Actor Matt Walsh (center) and castmates from 'Veep' accept the Outstanding Performance by an Ensemble in a Comedy Series award onstage.



Actor Sterling K. Brown, winner of the awards for Outstanding Performance by a Male Actor in a Drama Series and Outstanding Performance by an Ensemble in a Drama Series for 'This Is Us,' poses with his trophies in the press room.



Sterling K. Brown accepts the Outstanding Performance by a Male Actor in a Drama Series award for "This Is Us" onstage.

# Winners

Here is the full list of winners at the 24th Screen Actors Guild (SAG) Awards hosted Sunday in Los Angeles: Motion Picture Awards

- Outstanding Performance by a Cast: "Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri"
- Outstanding Performance by a Male Actor in a Leading Role: Gary Oldman, "Darkest Hour"
- Outstanding Performance by a Female Actor in a Leading Role: Frances McDormand, "Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri"
- Outstanding Performance by a Male Actor in a Supporting Role: Sam Rockwell, "Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri"
- Outstanding Performance by a Female Actor in a Supporting Role: Allison Janney, "I, Tonya"
- Outstanding Performance by an Ensemble in a Drama Series: "This is US"
- Outstanding Performance by an Ensemble in a Comedy Series: "Veep"
- Outstanding Performance by a Male Actor in a Drama Series: Sterling K. Brown, "This is Us"
- Outstanding Performance by a Female Actor in a Drama Series: Claire Foy, "The Crown"
- Outstanding Performance by a Male Actor in a Comedy Series: William H. Macy, "Shameless"
- Outstanding Performance by a Female Actor in a Comedy Series: Julia Louis-Dreyfus, "Veep"
- Outstanding Performance by a Male Actor in a Television Movie or Miniseries: Alexander Skarsgard, "Big Little Lies"
- Outstanding Performance by a Female Actor in a Television Movie or Miniseries: Nicole Kidman, "Big Little Lies"
- Lifetime Achievement: Morgan Freeman —AFP



Morgan Freeman accepts the Life Achievement Award onstage.



Actor Rita Moreno (left) listens to honoree Morgan Freeman accept the Life Achievement Award onstage.



Actor William H. Macy accepts the Outstanding Performance by a Male Actor in a Comedy Series award for 'Shameless' onstage.



Actor Alexander Skarsgard accepts the Outstanding Performance by a Male Actor in a Television Movie or Limited Series award for "Big Little Lies" onstage.



(From left) Actress Uzo Aduba, SAG AFTRA EVP Rebecca Damojn, actors Morgan Freeman and Tasha 'Taystee' Jefferson attend the 24th Annual Screen Actors Guild Awards show.



Actresses Susan Sarandon and Geena Davis



Actress Tracee Ellis Ross



Actress Holly Hunter



Actress Sydelle Noel



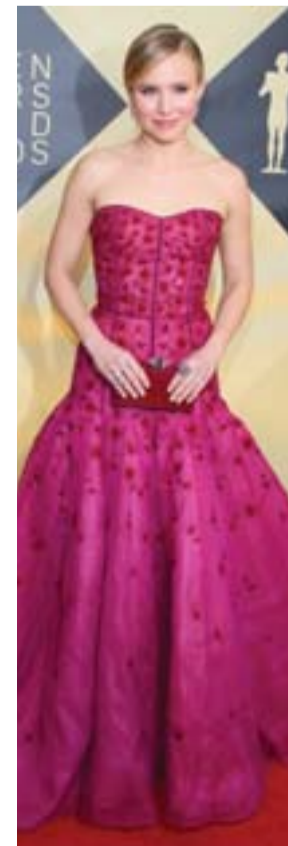
Actress Britt Baron



Dave Franco and Actress Alison Brie



Actress Laura Gomez



Kristen Bell



TV personality Giuliana Rancic



TV personality Renee Bargh

# Lifestyle

TUESDAY, JANUARY 23, 2018



With a crown on his head, Marcio Mizael Matolias sits next to his dog - called Humana - on a throne in front of his sand castle, despite the 40-degree heat that punishes bathers on a sunny summer afternoon on the beach of Barra da Tijuca in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. — AFP photos



With a crown on his head, Marcio Mizael Matolias, 44, works on his sand castle.



Marcio Mizael Matolias reads a book inside his sand castle, where he lives on the beach of Barra da Tijuca in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

## On a Rio beach, a man's home is his castle

With a crown on his head, Marcio Matolias carefully retouches his sandcastle, sculpting and smoothing with a shovel as bathers cool off nearby in the suffocating January heat. They say a man's home is his castle and Marcio has lived in his—albeit made of sand—on a beach in Rio de Janeiro for the last 22 years. In Barra da Tijuca, a wealthy beachside neighborhood west of Rio, neighbors and friends call him “The King.”

requires constant upkeep. He retouches a turret here, adjusts a majestic gate there. He sprinkles water on the walls to keep them firm in the baking heat, which on a recent afternoon reached 40 C (104 F).

Despite the idyllic setting, inside space is tight—about three square meters (32 square feet). Marcio, single and with no children, lives with a pile of books and some golf clubs, his passions after fishing. His bed? A sleeping bag on the ground. His bathroom? The firemen's station about 30 meters away, where he can use the bathroom and shower for less than a dollar. Marcio believes he has everything he needs. The only problem is the unbearable summer heat. “The sand retains the heat, so sometimes I cannot sleep here and I go to sleep in a friend's house. But the truth is I prefer to stay here, even if I have to sleep outside by the sea.”

### Tourist attraction

Marcio came south to Rio from his humble hometown of Duque de Caxias to seek his fortune, but could only afford to live on the street. All that changed when one day a friend taught him how to build a sandcastle. “I learned a lot from reading and I think my castle is a mixture of styles, between Niemeyer and Gaudi,” he said of his royal palace, buttressed with sandbags and logs. The mayor's office never gave him a problem, he said. “I became a tourist attraction in some way, and also a social service,” he said, gesturing to his bookstand on the nearby promenade.

He doesn't ask for money, only that people exchange what they take. To make a living, Marcio put a box for donations at the entrance to his sandcastle. But, throughout a recent afternoon, of the score of people who stopped to take pictures, nobody left a coin. Marcio doesn't appear to care. “They often rob the box. I used to get angry. I wanted to sleep with a stone in my hand to stop it, but I started living with that paranoia, and I don't

want that. I do this for pleasure,” he said.

### Work in progress

From time to time, a shopping center pays him to make one of his magnificent sand sculptures for special events. Marcio would like his works not to be so ephemeral. Rain can destroy in a few minutes the 10 or

“ I don't have any bills and I live very well here ”

20 hours' work it takes him to carefully complete one of his fairytale castles. An optimist by nature, Marcio hopes to be able to realize his great dream next year, to make sculptures using other materials, at a friend's place. Meanwhile, he doesn't seem to tire of endlessly carving his fragile palace with a knife or a shovel. Like his hero Gaudi's Sagrada Familia cathedral in Barcelona, the largest unfinished basilica in the world, Marcio's creation is a perpetual work in progress.—AFP



People take photos in front of the sand castle.

He gladly assumes the role and poses willingly for passers-by, scepter in hand, on his throne outside his meticulously-sculpted home.

It seems a precarious existence but Marcio, 44, can never see himself living another way. “People pay exorbitant rents to live in front of the sea. I don't have any bills and I live very well here,” he told AFP, waving a hand at the white sand and the islands sparkling on the horizon. It



With a crown on his head, Marcio Mizael Matolias, 44, poses for a portrait.



Marcio Mizael Matolias, 44, smiles next to his crown and his sand castle.



With a crown on his head, Marcio Mizael Matolias, 44, speaks with children who are interested in his sand castle.