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# Saudi billionaire Alwaleed released after 'settlement'

## Top broadcaster, other tycoons also freed as anti-graft probe winds down

conspiracy theories

### Big Yes!



By Badrya Darwish  
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Lately in Kuwait, the news is dominated by stories of expats (wafedeen). At the top of the hour is the dispute between Kuwait and the Philippine government over the treatment and rights of domestic helpers and laborers. Of course, I second Philippine President Duterte's zealous defense of his citizens. I salute his courage. The man has a history of patriotism and fighting corruption, especially the drug cartels, which are a massive power in the Philippines.

Back in Kuwait, we've been hiring Filipina domestic workers for more than 30 years. Why, for God's sake, hasn't there been in the course of all these years a single, proper comprehensive study to understand the problems and challenges which domestic helpers and employers face. The problems go both ways, although the latter face less.

There are problems, of course, but overall, domestic labor benefits Kuwait and its people, and let's face it, they contribute greatly to our daily lives. So let's give them their rights and respect and dignity. Maybe the rules in the ministry protect domestic workers now with the new domestic labor law, but the law is not widely implemented. Helpers are supposed to get a salary every month, a day off per week, no more than 12 hours of work per day, one month of salary for each year worked as indemnity and a decent place to live and food to eat. And it goes without saying they deserve humane and respectful treatment as human beings who are just doing their job.

How can this be accomplished? Is it too difficult for the government to set up a special organization tasked with monitoring the implementation of this law? And don't laugh at me and say: "What? You want an organization to watch over the maids?" I say: "Yes! Big Yes!" Because every single household in Kuwait has at least one or two domestic helpers. So it is an issue - a major issue - and we cannot close our eyes to it.

Let's explain how this organization can work: First, every new arrival to Kuwait should be given at least basic information on how to contact her embassy, the organization overseeing the law, what are her basic rights and responsibilities and what she can do if she's unpaid, abused or in need of help.

Second, there needs to be regular follow-up in three-month or six-month intervals with helpers - especially those who are new arrivals - to ensure that they are being treated fairly. We have so many qualified young men and women who can be trained to act as social workers to follow up and ensure the health and wellbeing of all domestic workers.

The municipality sends inspectors to restaurants to ensure food is safe for consumption. Can't we send inspectors at least to look after the welfare of the people who are working inside our homes, serving our food and taking care of our children? Doesn't that seem like an important thing to do?

RIYADH: Saudi Arabian billionaire Prince Alwaleed bin Talal, one of the kingdom's top international businessmen, was released from detention yesterday, more than two months after he was taken into custody in a sweeping crackdown on corruption. His release came hours after he told Reuters in an interview at Riyadh's opulent Ritz-Carlton hotel that he expected to be cleared of any wrongdoing and be freed within days.

A senior Saudi official said Prince Alwaleed was freed after he reached a financial settlement with the attorney general. "The attorney general has approved this morning the settlement that was reached with Prince Alwaleed bin Talal, and the prince returned home at 1100 am (0800 GMT)," the official told Reuters, without giving details of the terms.

The decision to free him, and the release of several other well-known tycoons on Friday, suggested the main part of the corruption probe was winding down after it sent shockwaves through Saudi Arabia's business and political establishment. The Ritz-Carlton is set to reopen for business next month, sources at the hotel have said. Its website lists rooms as available from Feb 14.

Outside Prince Alwaleed's Riyadh palace, dozens of cars lined the entrances as a huge Saudi flag flapped

above. Guards cracked jokes and drank coffee. His office said the prince was out visiting family, but declined to give any details. Prince Alwaleed had been confined at the Ritz-Carlton since early November, along with dozens of other senior officials and businessmen, part of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's plan to reform oil superpower Saudi Arabia and consolidate his position.

The attorney general said earlier this week that 90 detainees had been released after their charges were dropped, while others traded cash, real estate and other assets for their freedom. The authorities were still holding 95 people, he said. Some are expected to be put on trial. An official Saudi source said on Friday that several prominent businessmen had reached financial settlements with the authorities, including Waleed Al-Ibrahim, owner of regional television network MBC, who was released. Terms of his settlement were not revealed.

Ibrahim held a family gathering at his residence after his release, three MBC employees told AFP on condition of anonymity. The staff also received an official email congratulating them on his freedom. The Financial Times reported earlier Friday that authorities had ordered Ibrahim to hand over his controlling stake in MBC to secure his release. Authorities have so far not comment-



Prince Alwaleed bin Talal

ed on his case. Saudi authorities have said they expect to raise some \$100 billion for the government through such settlements - a huge windfall for the state, which has seen its finances squeezed by low oil prices. Some private analysts think that target will be hard to hit, given

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## Ambulance bomb kills 95 in Kabul

KABUL: An explosives-packed ambulance blew up in a crowded area of Kabul yesterday, killing at least 95 people and wounding 158 others, officials said, in one of the biggest blasts to rock the war-torn city in recent years. The Taliban-claimed assault - the second carried out by the militant group in the Afghan capital in a week - triggered chaotic scenes as terrified survivors fled the area scattered with body parts, blood and debris, and hospitals were overwhelmed by the large number of wounded.

It came as both the insurgents and the Islamic State group have escalated their attacks on Kabul, one of the deadliest places in Afghanistan for civilians. An AFP reporter saw "lots of dead and wounded" civilians in the Jamuriate hospital, which is meters away from the blast and where medical staff struggled to treat the bloodied men, women and children lying on the floor in corridors. Health ministry spokesman Waheed Majroh told AFP

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KABUL: Afghan volunteers carry bodies at the scene of a car bomb in front of the old interior ministry building yesterday. —AFP

## Pressing Syrian offensive, Turkey urges US pullback

AZAZ, Syria: Turkey yesterday urged the United States to withdraw personnel from a Kurdish-held town in northern Syria after Washington told Ankara it would stop arming a Syrian Kurdish militia that Turkey is fighting. As Turkey's offensive in Syria entered its second week with new air strikes and artillery, Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said it was "necessary for them (US) to immediately withdraw from Manbij", where Washington has a military presence.

Turkey launched operation "Olive Branch" on Jan 20 against the Syrian Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) militia in its western enclave of Afrin, supporting Syrian opposition fighters with ground troops and air strikes. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has threatened to expand the offensive against the YPG to Manbij, east of Afrin. Relations between NATO allies Ankara and Washington have worsened since Turkey launched an operation, with the United States urging

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## Govt grapples with 1.8m loose laborers

KUWAIT: A government source has admitted that the correction of the population structure in Kuwait is not possible, according to a report in Al-Rai daily yesterday. He said the solutions proposed by a higher committee that was formed in 2014 to remedy the demographic imbalance remain only on paper, describing the process as "very difficult". The source said it is not possible to rectify the defect the country is suffering from due to the inability of the state to contain marginal and loose labor, and this is consid-

ered the core of the problem, especially since their numbers are over 1.8 million.

The source said all recommendations and results related to correcting the structure that were reached by the higher committee to study the population structure or other committees will face the obstacle of marginal and loose laborers who are in the country for years, adding that the great majority of these residents are not known and cannot be located.

He said inspection campaigns against residency violators remain the only possible solution currently to eradicate the problem, adding that chasing hundreds of thousands of violators is not easy and needs large manpower and a long period.

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# Iraq eager to boost cultural, media ties with Kuwait: Minister

## Kuwaiti media delegation's visit reflects Iraq's care for Kuwait

**BAGHDAD:** Iraqi Minister of Culture, Tourism and Antiquities Firyad Rawanduzi said that the joint cultural and media activities contributes to bridge relations between Iraq and Kuwait. Rawanduzi made his remarks on Thursday during a meeting with the Kuwaiti media delegation visiting the Capital Baghdad, adding, "media and culture can play an important role in improving the relationship between the two nations." He said that the year of 2018 will witness a remarkable growth in mutual cultural activities, as many of the Iraqi cultural delegations will visit Kuwait in the next few months. He stressed the importance of activating the social relations between Kuwaiti and Iraqi people, noting to the historical depth of this relationship, which based on common history and neighborhood.

The Iraqi minister appreciated the visit of the Kuwaiti media delegation, stressing that it has reflected Kuwait's interest in Iraq in the post-Saddam Hussein era. The Kuwaiti delegation ended its visit to the Iraqi capital Baghdad, where they met with a number of government officials and heads of political parties to consider the Iraq reconstruction conference to be hosted in Kuwait in mid-February. The Kuwaiti delegation includes Kuwait Times Editor-in-Chief Abd Al-Rahman Al-Alyan, Secretary of the Kuwaiti Journalists Association Adnan

Al-Rashed, KUNA Deputy General Director for the Editorial Department and Chief Editor Saad Al-Ali, Undersecretary of the External Media at the Ministry of Information Faisal Al-Mutallqem and Editor-in-Chief of the daily newspaper, Al-Anbaa. It also includes Hassan Al-Sayegh from the Premier Diwan and other renowned journalists and media figures. The conference for rebuilding Iraq is due on February 12-14 in Kuwait. It will bring together a number of donors, regional and international organizations namely the United Nations, the European Union and the World Bank.



**Media, culture play key role in improving ties**

**Successful mission**

The Kuwaiti media delegation's visit to Baghdad reflected Iraqi government and people's care towards Kuwait, and the journalists' mission was successful by all standards, Rashed, who is also the visit's coordinator, said on Friday. "The mission comes as an extension to the Kuwaiti official efforts exerted to boost and enhance bilateral ties with Iraq," he said. The visit included meetings with local senior officials in the cabinet, parliament, media institutions, and political parties, he added.

Rashed thanked Iraqi Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Information, as well as the Iraqi Embassy in Kuwait, Iraqi Journalists' Syndicate (IJS), and Iraqi media institutions that intensively followed up on the



**BAGHDAD:** A group photo of members of the Kuwaiti media delegation, including Kuwait Times Editor-in-Chief Abd Al-Rahman Al-Alyan (right), with Iraqi Minister of Culture, Tourism and Antiquities Firyad Rawanduzi (center). — Photo by Mustafa Al-Bader

Kuwaiti delegation visit. The Kuwaiti media figures met the Iraqi Premier, Parliament Speaker, Vice Presidents, Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Defense, Interior, Planning, Industry, Oil, and Culture, along with other senior officials.

During the meetings, they tackled the security and political stability in Iraq, as well as discussing preparations for the upcoming Iraq's reconstruction conference, and means of attracting Kuwaiti investors to boost Iraqi trade and industry. — KUNA

## Diplomats hosted at Azayez farm



**KUWAIT:** Sheikh Ali Al-Jaber Al-Sabah hosted diplomats at his Azayez farm in Al-Abdali on Friday. Several ambassadors, Foreign Ministry officials and other dignitaries attended the annual gathering. —Photos by Joseph Shagra



Local

# New study to reintroduce railway project to investors: Minister

## KD 5.3 billion expected cost for public private partnership project

By A Saleh

**KUWAIT:** Minister of Public Works and State Minister for Municipality Affairs Hussam Abdullah Al-Roumi said another study will be conducted to reintroduce the railway project to investors. He said a technical financial study is being prepared to lay down the implementation mechanism by which the total cost of the project will be reduced through its execution by the roads authority, like Jaber Bridge, while partnership should be during operation and maintenance stages.

Roumi, responding to a question from MP Osama Al-Shaheen, said the expected cost for introducing and executing the project with public private partnership is KD 5.3 billion. The government will be committed to pay the total cost of the project, with annual payments of KD 177.5 million for 30 years. He said the project is not finalized yet, so the roads authority decided to restudy it due to the large financial commitments over a long period.

On June 5, 2016, the decision of the higher committee for the public pri-

vate partnership projects decided to approve the feasibility studies of the project, the minister said. On Feb 7, the committee agreed to start by offering the project for investment, he added.

**Nine percent**  
STR, a firm specialized in hotel research, said the hotel sector in Kuwait saw a nine percent increase in



### Nine percent increase in hotel occupancy

occupancy during 2017, reaching 56.7 percent. They said the average room price dropped by 4.7 percent to reach KD 62.1, compared to a rise in the average return of a hotel room by 3.7 percent to reach KD 35.23. They said these results are due to a rise in demand, which saw an increase estimated at 12 percent. The growth is

expected to continue after the recovery of oil prices. Meanwhile, the hotel sector in the Middle East witnessed a drop in 2017 of 1.1 percent in occupancy rates at 65 percent, while prices dropped by 4.5 percent.

**Labor cities**  
Sources said the international advisor for the labor cities project is preparing the project's specifications, as five companies and international conglomerations have been qualified to participate in tenders for the South Jahra project. They said the specifications will be submitted to the bidding committee before submitting it to the higher committee and the start of receiving offers. The project aims at reducing the presence of laborers in families' residential areas and improve the standard of living of the workers by charging reasonable rents.

**Chamber of Commerce**  
The financial and economic affairs committee will hold a meeting today to discuss a proposed law to regulate the work of the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry in the pres-

ence of the chamber's president. The meeting comes on the heels of committee rapporteur MP Saleh Ashour receiving an answer to his question from Deputy Premier and State Minister for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh that the government sent a proposed law with regards to the chamber in a decree no. 97/2010, and it is still at the National Assembly.

**Automated link**  
An official source at the Manpower Public Authority said the labor need estimation department completed the automated link with the traffic department with regards to issuing records that shows the historic register of private cars in companies and establishments. The source said the automated linkage is being made with the Agriculture Public Authority with regards to all farming licenses, be it in the plant or animal sectors.



Hussam Abdullah Al-Roumi

## Kuwait donates \$2.4 million to UN agencies

**NEW YORK:** The State of Kuwait announced late Friday voluntary donations amounting to \$2.397 million for aid programs of the UN agencies. According to a statement by the Permanent Representative of Kuwait to the United Nations, the contribution was delivered to several UN programs including the UN Central Emergency Response Fund, (CERF), UN Development Program (UNDP), UN Human Settlements Program, UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), UN Environment Program (UNEP), and UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. Moreover, the Kuwaiti aid will also fund the UN Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), the UN Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture, the UN housing fund, and the UN Fund for Drug Abuse Control, it added. Separately from the abovementioned sum, the Kuwaiti permanent mission delivered \$900,000 to the bureau of the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), \$100,000 for the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and \$50,000 to the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), the statement added. — KUNA

## KFH holds coffee festival in collaboration with Cofe App

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Finance House (KFH) held in collaboration with Cofe App the first-of-its-kind coffee festival in Kuwait at Al-Hamra tower. This comes as part of the bank's endeavors to support the Kuwaiti youth activities, while encouraging the entrepreneurship that plays a

key role in boosting the national economy and revitalizing the private sector market.

This festival, that brings together all the coffee specialists and lovers under one umbrella, contributes in opening new horizons for visitors to get acquainted with the success stories of the Kuwaiti entrepreneurs, while paving the way for establishing relationships with suppliers and industry pioneers and specialists.

KFH team is accessible to visitors at a booth where free coffee is offered to Hesabi account holders. KFH attaches special interest to the youth segment and provides them with unprecedented discounts and offers to meet their expectations.



KFH booth at the festival.



Huge visitors' turnout.

## KRCS chief stresses Kuwait's humanitarian aid to affected people

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) Chairman Hilal Al-Sayer yesterday underlined the significance of development projects for people affected by natural disasters. Upon arrival in the Philippines today to launch a Kuwaiti humanitarian project there, Sayer said that the Kuwait-funded humanitarian initiatives mirror Kuwait's bright image worldwide.

He said he was in the Philippines in order to open a Kuwaiti humanitarian village in Samar in Visayas Province, east of the Philippines, which was hit by typhoon in November 2013 and left thousands of people dead and caused stupendous damage nationwide.

The Kuwaiti Humanitarian Village is home to 297 housing units, he said, quoting His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah as having announced a bountiful donation of \$10 million in emergency relief aid to typhoon-hit people in the Philippines. It took a couple of years to complete the humanitarian project, with relevant international safety criteria having been met, the KRCS chief boasted. The KRCS was in the forefront of the societies which had immediately responded to calls for humanitarian and relief aid to the Philippines, he pointed out. — KUNA

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## Local

## Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: A bird looking for food during a low tide at a beach in Doha. —KUNA photo

# Zain strategic partner of 10th Int'l Invention Fair Middle East

## Under the patronage of His Highness the Amir

**KUWAIT:** Zain, the leading telecommunications company in Kuwait, announced its strategic partnership of the 10th International Invention Fair Middle East. The event is held under the patronage of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and runs from 28-31 January 2018 in Arraya Ballroom at the Courtyard Marriott Hotel. Zain will be participating in the opening ceremony through its own booth, which will serve as a platform for all visitors wishing to know more about the company's latest offerings and promotions.

Zain's support of this major event since its inception is part of the company's Corporate Sustainability and social Responsibility strategy, which aims at supporting the scientific arena and contribute to the further development of the scientific field in Kuwait and the region. The Invention Fair Middle East brings together a large number of local, regional, and international inventors who jointly exchange knowledge and experiences.

Zain's Corporate Communications and Relations Director Waleed Al-Khashti noted that the private sector role is important in supporting such scientific activities and encouraging the Kuwaiti youth by raising the level of performance and refining skills to reach international levels. He also pointed out that the company was one of the first supporters of the International Inventions Fair in the

Middle East since previous years. Khashti appreciated the pioneering role of the scientific club and the participation of Kuwait in the scientific and international forums. He added that Kuwait has no less experience and knowledge in its scientific level than its counterpart in the world, and it is capable of being the first in the world in the field of scientific inventions when it is provided with sufficient support from the private sector.

The International Invention Fair is one of the most significant and largest specialized exhibitions of inventions in the Middle East, and is considered as the second largest exhibition of its kind in the world. The event is part of the International Exhibition of Geneva, and offers an opportunity for inventions from different cultures to be exhibited and the strengthening of relationships among inventors and investors.

Zain is keen on encouraging Kuwaiti and Arab talents, especially Kuwaiti inventors, in the fields of science and innovation side by side with international experts. Zain supports such areas as it believes it offers a valuable opportunity for young inventors to benefit from the expertise and knowledge of international inventors. The company will continue to foster young talents, believing that the current generation of youngsters holds the keys to the future development of Kuwait.



KUWAIT: Chairman of Kuwait Science Club Talal Al-Kharafi (center) with Zain's representative Ahmed Abul during the press conference to announce the launch of the exhibition.

## UNESCO chief lauds Amir for boosting development

**PARIS:** The UNESCO chief on Friday lauded His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah for his remarkable role for boosting development and culture in the Middle East. Director General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Audrey Azoulay, praised His Highness' humanitarian role during a meeting with the State of Kuwait's Ambassador to France Sami Al-Suleiman. The Kuwaiti envoy handed over to the UNESCO chief an invitation from Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah to partake in the planned international conference for reconstructing Iraq. She expressed her keen readiness to partake in the event, due in Kuwait on February 12-14. The two sides discussed UNESCO's support for education and culture in war-stricken regions in Iraq. —KUNA



PARIS: Director General of UNESCO Audrey Azoulay (Right) meets with Kuwait's Ambassador to France Sami Al-Suleiman. —KUNA

## Kuwait chronicles relics buried in seabed

**KUWAIT:** The National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL) is currently cooperating with a team of Polish experts to locate and chronicle relics submerged in Kuwait's territorial waters, the council said in a statement on Friday. The council indicated that the work is in line with the Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage, adopted on November 2, 2001, by the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

The convention is intended to protect "all traces of human existence having a cultural, historical or archaeological character" which have been under water for over 100 years. This extends to the protection of shipwrecks, sunken cities, prehistoric art work, treasures that may be looted, sacrificial and burial sites, and old ports that cover the oceans' floors. NCCAL's statement indicated that the task is according to Law 10/2017, approving the Paris convention for protecting the submerged treasures—published by the official gazette on May 7, 2017.

Kuwait has little experience with respect of exploring, preserving and salvaging such relics from the seabed, thus the task warrants training Kuwaiti archeologists on diving and dealing with the antiquities deep in the waters. Moreover, competent authorities need to survey the sea depths, drawing maps of locations concealing such treasures and coordinating with other authorities to minimize any negative impact on the marine life. According to the Amiri Decree 11/1960, any project in the marine environment requires advance reference to the NCCAL before execution. —KUNA



KUWAIT: Experts conduct a survey of submerged relics off Failaka island. —KUNA photos

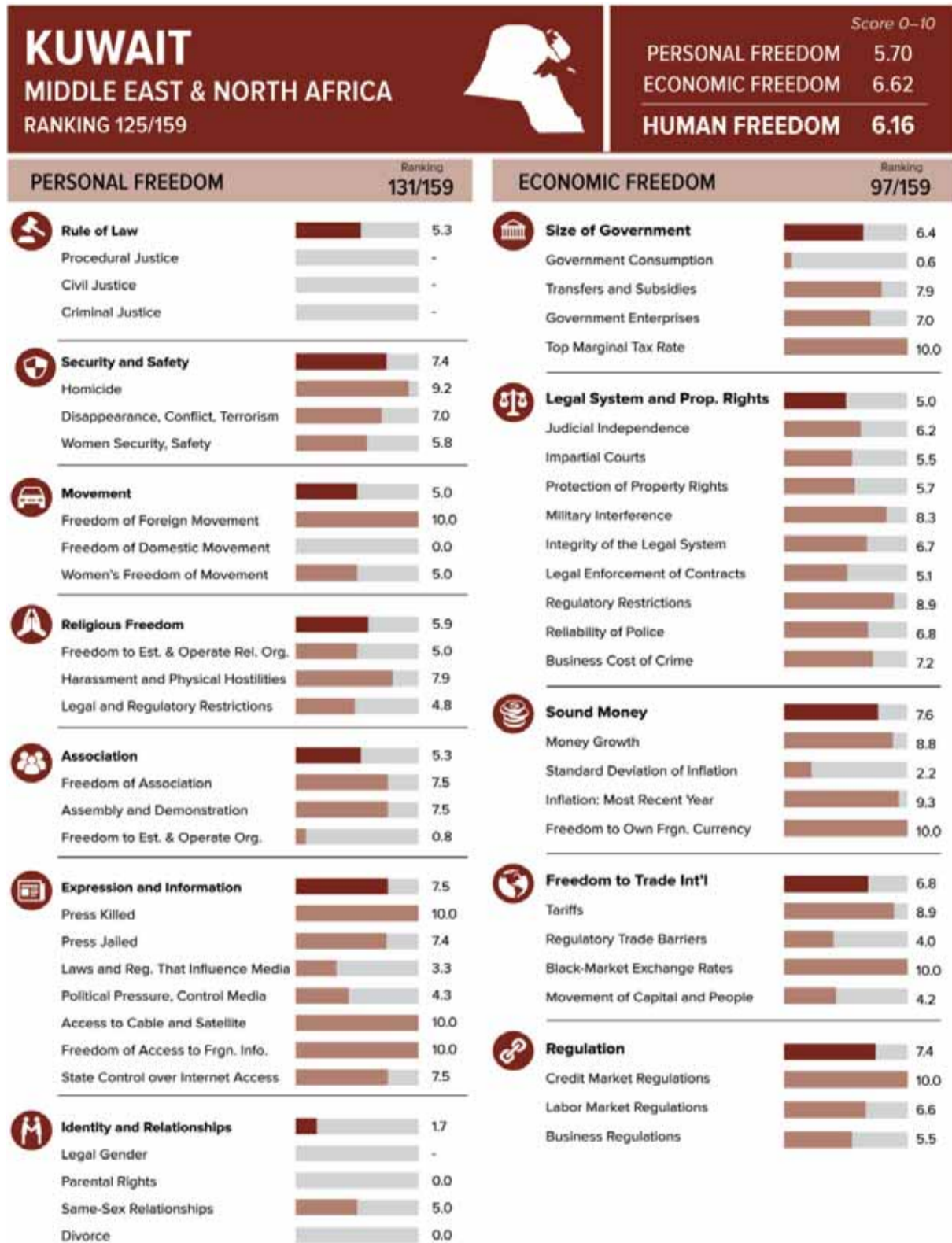


Chronicle antiquities' location off Failaka island.

Local

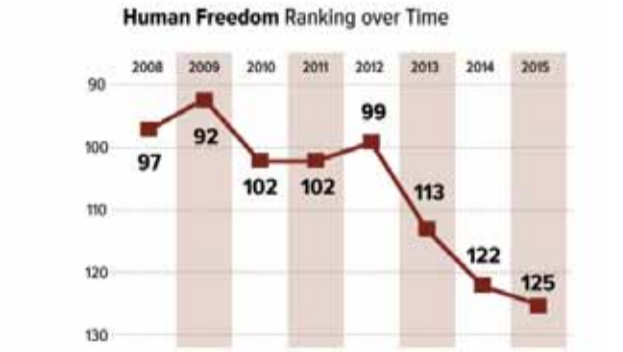
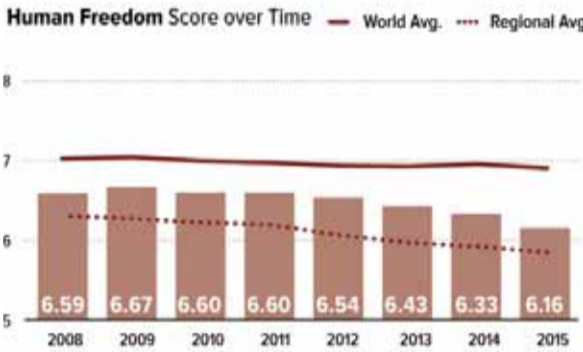
# Kuwait down three spots in Human Freedom Index report

Ranks 125th out of 159 countries



**KUWAIT | MIDDLE EAST & NORTH AFRICA**

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
<b>HUMAN FREEDOM</b>	6.59	6.67	6.60	6.60	6.54	6.43	6.33	6.16
<b>ECONOMIC FREEDOM</b>	7.03	7.10	6.95	6.93	6.93	6.81	6.81	6.62
<b>PERSONAL FREEDOM</b>	6.15	6.23	6.25	6.27	6.15	6.06	5.86	5.70
<b>Rule of Law</b>	6.2	6.2	6.2	6.2	5.8	5.8	5.2	5.3
<b>Security and Safety</b>	8.8	8.5	8.7	8.4	8.4	8.4	8.2	7.4
<b>Movement</b>	3.3	5.0	5.0	3.3	3.3	5.0	5.0	5.0
<b>Religious Freedom</b>	6.3	6.8	6.5	6.7	6.7	6.6	6.5	5.9
<b>Association</b>	4.8	4.8	4.8	5.8	5.8	5.8	5.8	5.3
<b>Expression and Information</b>	7.0	6.4	6.4	6.5	6.4	6.0	6.1	7.5
<b>Identity and Relationships</b>	2.5	2.5	2.5	3.8	3.8	1.7	1.7	1.7



**KUWAIT:** Kuwait dropped three spots in the Human Freedom Index 2017 report, compared to a year before. Kuwait finished 125th out of 159 countries profiled in the report, its worst ranking since the annual report's first edition in 2008. Kuwait scored 5.70 out of 10 in personal freedom, 6.62 in economic freedom, and 6.16 in human freedom. Kuwait ranked 131st in the personal freedom rank, 97th in economic freedom and 125th in human freedom in the report which was co-published recently by the Cato Institute, the Fraser Institute, and the Liberales Institut at the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom.

The top 10 jurisdictions in order were Switzerland, Hong Kong, New Zealand, Ireland, Australia, Finland, Norway, Denmark, and, tied at 9th place, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom. Selected countries rank as follows: Canada (11), Sweden (13), Germany (16), the United States (17), Japan (27), South Korea (29), France (33), Italy (35), Chile (37), South Africa (68), Mexico (73), Indonesia (78), Turkey (84),

Kenya (89), Malaysia (97), India (102), United Arab Emirates (116), Russia (126), China (130), Nigeria (133), Pakistan (141), Zimbabwe (146), Saudi Arabia (149), Iran (154), Egypt (155), Venezuela (158), and Syria (159).

Out of 17 regions, the highest levels of freedom are in Western Europe, Northern Europe, and North America (Canada and the United States). The lowest levels are in the Middle East and North Africa, Eastern Europe (Moldova, Russia, and Ukraine), South Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa. Women-specific freedoms, as measured by seven indicators in the index, are strongest in

five European regions (Central Europe and the Baltics, Western Europe, Northern Europe, Eastern Europe and Southern Europe) and North America and are least protected in the Middle East and North Africa, South Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa.

Countries in the top quartile of freedom enjoy a significantly higher per capita income (\$38,871) than those in other quartiles; the per capita income in the least-free quartile is \$10,346. The report finds a strong correlation between human freedom and democracy. Hong Kong is an outlier in this regard.

The findings in the report suggest that freedom plays an important role in human well-being, and they offer opportunities for further research into the complex ways in which freedom influences, and can be influenced by, political regimes, economic development, and the whole range of indicators of human well-being.

The Human Freedom Index presents the state of human freedom in the world based on a broad measure that encompasses personal, civil, and economic freedom. Human freedom is a social concept that recognizes the dignity of individuals and is defined here as negative liberty or the absence of coercive constraint. Because freedom is inherently valuable and plays a role in human progress, it is worth measuring carefully. The Human Freedom Index is a resource that can help to more objectively observe relationships between freedom and other social and economic phenomena, as well as the ways in which the various dimensions of freedom interact with one another.

## Four arrested in suspected money laundering case

**KUWAIT:** Four Egyptians were arrested with \$7 million, after they agreed to sell \$5 million to a citizen for KD 730,000 in a suspected money laundering case. A security source said a citizen received an offer from an Egyptian friend to buy \$20 million in cash (not forged) for KD 730,000 for each \$5 million. The citizen went to Farwaniya police authorities and told them about the offer, and he was told to go along with the deal. He told the Egyptian man to deliver the dollars in Jabriya, where five Egyptians appeared with two bags. Police converged on them and arrested four of them, as the fifth escaped. The suspects are being questioned to find out where the rest of dollars are being kept.

**Attempted suicide**  
An Indian man was rushed to Adan Hospital and was saved after he stabbed himself in the abdomen with a pair of scissors and tore his intestines. Interior Ministry authorities opened an investigation to find how this happened, as the man is being held at Fintas police station. Policemen heard the Indian's cries, so they responded and found him bleeding from the abdomen. He was transferred to hospital in a critical condition. Doctors operated on him and removed the pair of scissors from the abdomen. Attempted suicide charges were filed on the orders of the Ahmadi prosecutor.

**Driving under the influence**  
Hawally police arrested three military officers for being drunk and behaving recklessly in Salmiya. The officers attacked a policeman while he was arresting them, as one of them was taking pictures. When their car was searched, three bottles of cologne were found. The three were charged with insulting a public employee, driving under the influence and misuse of a phone.

**Officer questioned**  
The supervision and inspection department at the interior ministry summoned an officer to question him over inquiring about the travel history of a citizen without any legal merit. The citizen told the department about the



officer's actions.

**Fugitive caught**  
Capital police arrested a citizen sentenced for four years in jail for money laundering. He is also wanted by state security. The citizen was stopped late at night and claimed he did not have an ID, so he was identified through a fingerprint. He was sent to concerned authorities.

**Addicts arrested**  
A royal family member and a Kuwaiti citizen were arrested after being found sleeping in their car under the influence of drugs. They had 12 narcotic pills and four bags of chemical. Both were taken

to the Drugs Control General Department (DCGD). Police found the two in a car that was running with them inside, seemingly unconscious. Policemen kept knocking on the window until they woke up and were found in an abnormal condition, and seemed unsteady when they left their car.

**Physical assault**  
Sulaibiya police received a complaint from a bedoon claiming someone punched him in the face and broke his jaw. The bedoon submitted a medical report of his injuries. Police summoned the suspect for questioning. — Translated by Kuwait Times from the Arabic Press

## Kuwait, Italy to enhance military cooperation

**KUWAIT:** The State of Kuwait and the Republic of Italy have examined plans for boosting military cooperation between the two friendly countries. According to a statement by the Ministry of Defense issued on Friday, ranking Kuwaiti and Italian military officers have recently held cooperation talks in Italy. The Kuwaiti side, headed by the assistant chief of staff and head of the joint supreme committee, Staff Brigadier Mohammad Al-Kandari, held discussions on defense cooperation with Italian military chiefs, headed by the assistant chief of staff for planning and defense policies, Major General Lorenzo D'Addario. The two days of discussions, held in the Italian capital Rome, were part of the 10th session of the Italian-Kuwaiti Military Committee. The two sides examined plans that would be executed later, with aim of enhancing the defense relations between the two friendly countries. — KUNA

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**Fatal crash**  
A man died and another was injured when their vehicle collided with a water tanker on Salmi road. The two were trapped in the vehicle. The victim's body was handed to the coroner while the injured man, a Kuwaiti, was rushed to Jahra Hospital.



New tactical nukes in US arsenal raise risks

## Echoes of history as Kurds feel let down by the West

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CALIFORNIA: Photo shows a young woman as she receives a flu shot at a Walgreens pharmacy in San Francisco, California. —AFP

# Modern medicine infected by virus of mistrust

## Scientists scramble for ways to shore up credibility

**PARIS:** A rising tide of suspicion amplified by social networks has eroded public trust in modern medicine, leaving scientists and health officials scrambling for ways to shore up its credibility, experts say. Especially in rich nations, faith has waned in vaccines that have saved millions from the ravages of polio, tetanus, small pox, influenza and many other once rampant and deadly diseases. "The level of confidence is not what it was twenty years ago," French immunologist Alain Fischer said. "It is crumbling."

The scale of scepticism is startling. A survey conducted by the British Academy of Medical Sciences last year found that only 37 percent of Britons trusted evidence from medical research. Two-thirds cited friends and family as more reliable. A quarter of 1,500 parents polled in the United States in 2017 believed that vaccines can cause autism in healthy children, despite a complete lack of credible evidence. One-in-ten had refused to give their offspring at least one vaccine. In France, meanwhile, more than 40 percent of adults have expressed doubt about vaccine efficacy or safety. These opinions have consequences. Whooping cough, measles and mumps-communicable diseases that had effectively disappeared-have all seen a resurgence in the United States in the last decade because the number of parents refusing to inoculate their toddlers rose above the threshold needed to ensure what scientists call "herd immunity." In France, health authorities were forced to take action: as of this year, any child that has not been vaccinated for 11 specific diseases will not be admitted

to kindergarten or school. Many factors account for this upsurge in mistrust, experts say.

### Victim of success

Most damaging, perhaps, are a series of scandals involving inadequately vetted drugs, poor oversight by health officials, and attempted cover-ups. France was profoundly shaken a blood scandal in which nearly 4,000 people were infected with the HIV virus in the 1980s after receiving contaminated blood transfusions. In 2010, off-label use of a diabetes drug called Mediator was shown to cause fatal heart problems. And last fall, thousands of severe malformations in newborns were attributed to the epilepsy medication Valproate.

Similar scandals relating to EpiPens for anaphylaxis and cancer drugs, as well as price gouging, and concerns about the over-prescription of opioids has shaken public confidence in doctors and 'Big Pharma'. In a recent survey in Britain, 82 percent of doctors and 67 percent of adults

agreed that clinical trials funded by drug companies were often biased to produce a positive outcome. A medical misstep of another kind was the publication in 1998 by The Lancet, a respected medical journal, of research that drew a causal link between vaccines and autism in children. When it was later revealed that evidence underlying this claim had been falsified, the study was withdrawn and its author Andrew Wakefield barred from the profession.

But the damage was done. Vaccines and other medicines are also a victim of their success. "We no longer see the diseases, just reports about possible side-effects," said Cornelia Betsch, a researcher at the University of Erfurt in Germany who has written extensively about vaccine policy. "That leads us to over-estimate the risks of vaccination, and under-estimate the risks of the diseases." At the same time, the underlying logic of vaccines seem counter-intuitive, said Eric Oliver, a political scientist at the University of Chicago. "Injecting septic substances into my body to prevent disease is not a natural idea," he told AFP.

"That leads us to over-estimate the risks of vaccination, and under-estimate the risks of the diseases." At the same time, the underlying logic of vaccines seem counter-intuitive, said Eric Oliver, a political scientist at the University of Chicago. "Injecting septic substances into my body to prevent disease is not a natural idea," he told AFP.

### Confirmation bias

Our brains can also be tricked into seeing causal links between rare events that, by coincidence, happen at the same time. "Many children are diagnosed with autism at the age of two-about the same age they get their MMR vaccines," Oliver noted, using the abbreviation for measles, mumps and rubella. Add the "echo chamber" of the internet and social networks, and a perfect storm of mistrust begins to form.

"Social media have rapidly become the main information source for many users," said Walter Quattrocchi, a researcher at the Laboratory of Computational Social Science in Lucca, Italy who has studied the spread of fake news and conspiracy theories. Facebook now counts more than two billion monthly active users. When it comes to conspiracy theories, the tendency to gravitate towards what one already believes-known as "confirmation bias"-plays a crucial role. "Users happily embrace false information as long as it reinforces their preexisting beliefs," Quattrocchi said.

The increasingly blurred boundary between verifiable fact and subjective assertion that defines what some call the "post-truth" era doesn't help. A 2014 tweet from Donald Trump, said Quattrocchi, is a textbook example. Now President of the United States, he wrote on Twitter then: "Healthy young child goes to doctor, gets pumped with massive shot of many vaccines, doesn't feel good and changes - AUTISM. Many such cases!" He later tweeted that childhood vaccinations were acceptable, but not in "1 massive dose." —AFP



## In rich nations, faith has waned in vaccines

extensively about vaccine policy. "That leads us to over-estimate the risks of vaccination, and under-estimate the risks of the diseases." At the same time, the underlying logic of vaccines seem counter-intuitive, said Eric Oliver, a political scientist at the University of Chicago. "Injecting septic substances into my body to prevent disease is not a natural idea," he told AFP.

## German leftist rebels fight to sink Merkel power pact

**BERLIN:** Germany's Angela Merkel hopes to form a new government by late March, half a year after inconclusive elections, but if there is one man who may yet torpedo the plan, it's a 28-year-old Young Socialist. Kevin Kuehnert has burst onto the German political scene as the passionate leader of a guerrilla campaign against another grand coalition or "GroKo" government which now spells the greatest threat to the veteran leader. The Berlin university student heads the youth wing of the Social Democrats (SPD), Germany's second biggest party, which has reluctantly agreed to once again negotiate a role as junior partners to Merkel's conservatives.

To Kuehnert and other like-minded youth wing members such a power pact would spell a betrayal of the over 150-year-old labor party's cherished ideals that could consign it, after a string of election defeats, to the dustbin of history. While SPD leader Martin Schulz has made his peace with the idea of playing second fiddle to "Mutti" Merkel, Kuehnert and other next-generation politicians are doing their best to derail the plan. In his fiery speech at an SPD party congress last Sunday, Kuehnert said that repeated tie-ups with Merkel's party over recent years were "an endless loop ... that we have to break". He urged party comrades to bite the bullet, go into opposition and "be a dwarf today so we can be a giant again one day".

With the mood in the party glum and fragile, the plan to negotiate another loveless left-right alliance was backed with a dangerously thin margin, by 56 percent of the 600 party delegates. Now Kuehnert's rebel alliance hopes to bomb the GroKo plan at the end of coalition talks, expected several weeks from now, when the party's 440,000 rank-and-file members get to have the final word in a vote. If the young activists, and other internal critics, succeed with their #NoGroKo campaign, this would likely spark snap elections in Europe's biggest economy, and probably the end of the Merkel era. —AFP

## Now defeated, the Iraqi most feared jihadists await their fate

**BAGHDAD:** Their names spread terror across the Islamic State group's cross-border "caliphate", but senior jihadists now languish in Iraqi prisons, subjects of mockery for the populace they ruled. Once boasting nicknames like the Black Box and the Butcher of Mosul, the defeated IS commanders now draw vitriol on social media while news outlets have published selfies taken by Iraqi soldiers of them being captured or marched handcuffed in prison uniforms.

Following the jihadist group's ouster from second city Mosul last July, Iraqi forces went on the hunt for IS fighters who had fled the battlefield. Researchers estimate they have since put behind bars some 20,000 suspected members of the group. The search involved digging through the rubble of war-torn Mosul and hunting through the tunnels and hideouts the jihadists had created during their three-year reign.

It was in Mosul's Old City, near the Al-Nuri mosque where the self-proclaimed "caliph" Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi made his only public appearance, that the elite Counter-Terrorism Service found the senior commander nicknamed the "Black Box of IS"—a moniker that came from his lynchpin role in the organization. Nizam Eddin Al-Rifai had sent gunmen and suicide bombers in a desperate bid to repel government troops, said Sabah Al-Noman, spokesman for elite units that spearheaded the Mosul offensive. But in the end he had no choice but to surrender. Cornered by government soldiers, he left his underground hideout bare-chested, his unkempt beard matching his white hair.

Time was finally up for the notoriously hardline head judge of the "caliphate" which at its height ruled over roughly seven million people in Iraq and Syria. The 60-year-old Mosulite is still under interrogation, Noman said, adding that he could still give up valuable information about IS. Rifai's position made him the group's



MOSUL: Graphic picture taken in the city of Mosul shows a body of an alleged Islamic State group jihadist. —AFP

third in command, according to security sources speaking on condition of anonymity. He also had the symbolically important role of "teaching theology to Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi," the jihadists' self-proclaimed "caliph", they said.

### 'Terrorized all of Mosul'

Another infamous IS member, Mufti Abu Omar (whose real name is Ezzedine Taha Ahmed), spread terror far beyond Mosul through the group's propaganda efforts. In one gruesome video, he appeared in military uniform. Sporting a kalashnikov rifle he ordered young people, suspected of being gay, thrown from the roof of a building to their deaths. That clip and others earned the 62-year-old Iraqi the nickname "Butcher of Mosul". Today, he is in the hands of the country's security forces, who nickname him "White Beard"—facial hair he trimmed as he tried to disguise himself as troops approached.

He escaped, like many jihadists, by mingling with the flood of civilians fleeing the battle-scarred city centre. He hid in a house in the city's east, never leaving for fear of being recognized, provincial council security official Mohammed Ibrahim said. "A neighbor saw him and informed the security forces," he said. Today, the

"Butcher" is a subject of derision and hatred on social media. "He terrorized all of Mosul by stoning people to death," wrote one user. "Today the people of Mosul should take him to a public place and beat him with their shoes."

### 'Cubs of the caliphate'

Some of those now detained were among the wave of foreigners who flocked to IS. While his comrades enforced IS rule, Abu Hamza Al-Beljiki was preparing for the future. According to investigators, he was in charge of the "cubs of the caliphate" about sixty children aged eight to 13 who received intensive fitness and weapons training. Abu Hamza is the nom de guerre of Tarik Jadaoun, a Belgian fighter with Moroccan roots, who joined the group in 2014. After appearing in videos calling for attacks in Europe, he earned the moniker "the new Abaaoud", after his compatriot Abdelhamid Abaaoud, one of the organizers of the November 2015 attacks in Paris. Currently detained and awaiting trial, he faces charges under Iraq's terrorism law, that have already seen several Europeans receive the death penalty. According to statements by Iraqi justice officials, he made a detailed confession to his jailers. —AFP

## International

# Echoes of history as Kurds feel let down by the West

## New chapter in a century of betrayal by world powers

PARIS: As Turkey presses its offensive against Kurdish fighters in Syria, many Kurds feel let down, not for the first time, by Western powers. Often described as the world's largest people without a state, the ethnic group from the mountains in the heart of the Middle East has been a key ally in the fight against the Islamic State group.

Backed by the Western-led military coalition against the jihadist group, Kurdish peshmerga forces have been praised for being vital and brave foot soldiers in the battle in Syria and Iraq. Now, with Turkey invading a Kurdish enclave in Syria with tanks and artillery, many in the community are looking for pay-back, but have been left bitterly disappointed. "Before, with the Islamic State, everyone needed us to do the dirty work, but now we've been abandoned," Ismail Akgul, a 55-year-old Kurdish trader living in Paris, told AFP.

The diaspora in Europe is particularly sensitive about what are perceived as half-hearted interventions by their adopted countries, France, Germany or Britain. After NATO member Turkey launched its assault last weekend on the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) militia, which it views as a terror group, European nations urged restraint, but said little else in public. "We have the feeling of being dropped by the international community," Agit Polat from the CDK-F Kurdish organization in France said, after taking aim at the "unacceptable and complicated silence" of the West.

“The world's largest people without a state”

### 'Always the same'

The Kurds are a Muslim but non-Arab ethnic group in the Middle East and are thought to number 25 to 30 million people across an area that spans Iraq, Turkey, Iran, Armenia and Syria. They have never had their own homeland defined by national borders, but the creation of Kurdistan remains a dream for many in the long-persecuted community. Some hoped the current turmoil in the Middle East would bring it closer.

But the Turkish offensive on the Afrin enclave has left them with a familiar feeling: that a new chapter in a century of betrayal by world powers is being written. Few have forgotten the treatment of the Kurds in Iraq by previous US governments: they were encouraged twice to rebel against Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein, only to be abandoned and slaughtered in their thousands. And the collapse of the Ottoman empire and the settlement at the end of World War I was meant to lead to the creation of Kurdistan under the 1920 Treaty of Sevres. But it was never ratified and subsequent agreements made no mention of the Kurds.

Today the community is as fragmented as ever, in control of territory in Syria and Iraq. Up to 15,000 ethnic Kurds are expected at a protest in Germany while thousands more are expected in Paris. "It's not the first time that we're left on our own like that," said trader Akgul, with tears in his eyes. "In all the wars, it's the same. We don't trust anyone anymore." —AFP



BEIRUT: A Lebanese Kurd holds a placard bearing a portrait of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, and reads in Arabic 'Erdogan the official sponsor of the Islamic State', during a protest near the Turkish embassy, against the ongoing Turkish military campaign in the Kurdish-held Syrian enclave of Afrin. —AFP

## UK ministers show a united front to calm eurosceptics

LONDON: Britain's Brexit, finance and business ministers displayed a united front on Friday with a letter seeking to reassure eurosceptics worried over the country's path out of the European Union. Publication of the letter late Friday followed a speech by Brexit minister David Davis, in which he admitted there were "different views" within the government over Britain's departure from the bloc. Davis joined forces with finance minister Philip Hammond and business secretary Greg Clark to assert that Britain will continue to follow EU rules for a "strictly time-limited" transition period after it leaves the bloc.

"During the implementation period, we are clear that the UK's and the EU's access to one another's markets should continue on current terms," the trio wrote. Pro-Brexit MPs have expressed concern at proposals to continue following European Union rules after Britain leaves in March 2019 in return for market access, while having no policymaking power. The ministers sought to allay such fears by saying the transition period of around two years was only intended to give people, businesses and public services time to get ready for the full EU exit.

### 'New allies'

The show of unity presented in the joint letter comes after Prime Minister Theresa May rebuked Hammond for saying Britain would stay closely aligned to the bloc. On Thursday the finance minister raised eurosceptic hackles in Davos when he expressed hope that the British and EU economies would move only "very modestly, apart". On Friday, Hammond told Sky News television that Britain needed a "middle way" to protect businesses and jobs outside the customs union, but refusing to "sever our trade links" with the EU.

Davis conceded in his speech that in politics, there were "different views", adding: "There will be arguments about the tactics but they will change, the options available to us will change throughout the course of the negotiations." In his speech on Friday,



MIDDLESBROUGH: Britain's Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union (Brexit Minister) David Davis takes a trip along the River Tees after delivering a speech outlining the UK's ambitions for an implementation period after Brexit, during a visit to PD Ports at Teesport. —AFP

the Brexit minister said Britain would negotiate its own trade deals during the transition period and seek to sign them, even if they could not come into effect until afterwards.

He laid out the ultimate prize at the end: "For the first time in more than 40 years we will be able to step out and sign new trade deals with old friends and new allies around the globe." Davis conceded that Britain would continue to accept the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice (ECJ) during the transition. The ministers' joint letter also reaffirmed that as part of the transition EU citizens will continue to be able to move to Britain without restrictions, although a "regulation scheme for new arrivals" will be introduced.

### Opposition within Westminster

Tensions are rising in the British government as the EU prepares to approve guidelines next week for talks on the terms of the transition period, intended to ease the divorce. David, Hammond and Clark said they wanted negotiations on the implementation period to be finished by the end of March, which will be followed by discussions on Britain's future trading relations.

trying to address the issues. "Technology should always give people new opportunities, not remove them," Ma said. But when IBM President Ginni Rometty admits that "100 percent of jobs will be somehow affected by technology," it might be a tough sell. It's not just about jobs. "People want to trust technology, as long as they know who is behind it," said Neelie Kroes, now a member of the Open Data Institute, after having been for years the European commissioner in charge of digital issues.

In recent months, US-based Uber, which connects individuals with drivers through an application, found itself in the hot seat after several murders perpetrated by its chauffeurs, notably in the United States and in Lebanon. "You have to remember that the rating of a driver evaluates his driving but cannot predict if he is a serial killer," Uber director Dara Khosrowshahi told a panel at this week's economic gathering in the Swiss resort of Davos. "In this situation, who is responsible, the individual or the platform?" wondered Rachel Botsman, an expert on the issue and author of the

book "Who Can We Trust?"

Uber is the best known example of a fast-growing company with a bruised reputation: accused of bad working conditions and sexual harassment it has faced chaotic legal proceedings and massive data piracy, which have sapped the firm. "For a long time, the answer of many digital companies has been to say: we are only the software, the platform, but technology now penetrates every aspect of our lives, our trades, our homes, our relationships," said Zvika Krieger, who leads digital projects for the World Economic Forum, the organizer of the Davos meeting. "Our response is no longer audible," he said.

### 'Too slow'

In Davos, there was also concern about Internet giants hovering up huge amounts of personal data, sometimes illegally and sometimes sharing it with authorities. "The danger is that we are too slow and that the world is destroying us while we are still asking who really owns our data," said German Chancellor Angela Merkel during her Davos speech. In the same way, atti-

But London is yet to set out precisely what it wants and, as a survey of Conservative MPs published this week showed, there appears to be significant differences on crucial elements of the transition. Almost three-quarters oppose the continuation of freedom of movement during the transition period, according to the survey by the Mile End Institute and The UK in a Changing Europe research units. Continued ECJ jurisdiction after March 2019 is opposed by 63 percent, the study said.

Jacob Rees-Mogg, who spearheads a group of more than 50 Brexit-supporting MPs in May's Conservative Party, warned that staying closely aligned to the EU risked making Brexit a "damage limitation exercise". "The British people did not vote for that. They did not vote for the management of decline," he said in a speech Thursday, accusing ministers of being "timid". The high-level disagreements come at a difficult time for May, with several MPs criticizing her for a lack of ambition in her domestic program, and reports suggesting a growing number of Conservative MPs back the idea of a leadership challenge. —AFP

tudes towards social networks and search engines are changing.

"The main question is whether Facebook and Google are technology companies or editorial companies, it is a question that remains unresolved," said Martin Sorrell, CEO of the British advertising giant WPP. Amid the mistrust, Davos heard unique proposals from the digital world, which mostly rejects too much oversight by governments, believing it would stifle innovation.

Marc Benioff, the outspoken CEO and founder of Salesforce, a major cloud services company, called plainly for more regulation of the sector. "We're the same as any other industry," Benioff told CNBC in Davos. Much like "financial services, consumer product goods, food-in technology, the government's going to have to be involved," he said. Observers hailed what they saw as a change of heart by the titans of tech. "Regulatory authorities in Europe have been complaining for years that big digital companies are not responding when they're called," said WEF's Zvika Krieger. "Let's say they're picking up the phone now." —AFP

### News in brief

#### Rising anti-Semitism

BERLIN: German Chancellor Angela Merkel warned of rising anti-Semitism in her country on International Holocaust Remembrance Day, calling the need to protect Jewish buildings "shameful". It is important to remember the millions of Holocaust victims because "anti-Semitism, racism and the hatred of others are more relevant" recently, Merkel said in her weekly podcast yesterday. "It is inconceivable and shameful that no Jewish institution can exist without police protection, whether it is a school, a kindergarten or a synagogue," she said. The chancellor also reaffirmed her support of creating the position of anti-Semitism commissioner in the next German government, if her party can finalize tortuous negotiations to forge a coalition.

#### Gazan unearths graves

BEIT HANUN: When Abdul Karim al-Kafarnah went to check the rainwater gushing down a hole in his garden he was in for quite a shock—hidden steps led him down to an ancient grave complex. The 24-year-old lives in the Beit Hanun district of the Gaza Strip by the Israeli border which suffered intensive bombardment during the 2014 conflict between the Israeli army and Palestinian militants. The family home was destroyed and the surrounding plots heavily churned up, leaving extensive craters in the ground. The flash-flooding earlier this week led him to one particular spot, where, on removing a large stone, he found a staircase leading four meters (13 feet) down into an ancient tomb. "I discovered the place where the water was falling in," he told AFP.

#### Iran Guards, IS clash

BEIRUT: Iran's Revolutionary Guards clashed with Islamic State militants in the western part of the country yesterday, according to Sepah News, the official news site of the Guards. A team of 21 Islamic State fighters crossed Iran's western border and were placed under surveillance before the Guards, the most powerful military force in the Islamic Republic, attacked them yesterday morning, Sepah News reported. Most of the militants have been arrested, the report said, but there was no mention of the number of people killed or wounded in the clash. Last June, Islamic State attacked the Iranian parliament in Tehran and the mausoleum of the Islamic Republic's founder Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, killing at least 18 and wounding dozens.

#### 'Stabbed in the face'

CAIRO: Assaults yesterday stabbed and seriously wounded Egypt's former anti-corruption chief who was also a top aide to a barred candidate for a March presidential election, his lawyer said. Ali Taha said that Hisham Geneina was attacked by three men who "stabbed him in the face and beat him, breaking his legs," near his Cairo home. He was admitted to hospital for treatment. Geneina was sacked by President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi as head of the Central Auditing Authority in 2016 after he was accused of exaggerating the cost of corruption. Yesterday he was on his way to a court hearing to contest his dismissal. A security source, speaking on condition of anonymity, confirmed Geneina had been wounded but said it happened during "a dispute with three young men following a car accident". Geneina was top campaign aide to Sami Anan, a former armed forces chief of staff who this month announced he intended to stand against Sisi in the March election.

## 'Job-killing' robots, AI under scrutiny

DAVOS: "Artificial intelligence and robots will kill many jobs." It's a depressingly blunt statement for anyone to make, but even more so as it is the prediction of Jack Ma, CEO of the Chinese online sales giant Alibaba. The rise of AI—its huge potential and fears over its potentially negative consequences—is just one of the big issues discussed at the World Economic Forum in Davos, along with breaches of personal data and fake news. But it is probably artificial intelligence and the ability of machines to not only interact with, but manipulate human beings that raises the most suspicion.

Aware of growing governmental and public distrust, the giants of tech are

## International

# New tactical nukes in US arsenal raise risks, experts, critics warn

## New nuclear policy could trigger another arms race

WASHINGTON: The Pentagon is set to unveil President Donald Trump's nuclear policy next week, and critics are already warning it could trigger another arms race and raise the risk of miscalculations that might spark an atomic conflict. A leaked draft version of the Nuclear Posture Review indicates the Pentagon is calling for the development of a new type of low-yield nuclear bomb that is designed to be used on the battlefield, rather than to level a city.

These so-called tactical nuclear weapons have a limited explosive strength though still are staggeringly powerful compared to conventional weapons. Underpinning the Trump nuclear doctrine is the concern that America's nukes are so powerful that adversaries don't believe they would ever be used. The draft policy says Russia's own low-yield nukes, within easy striking distance of Europe, provide "a coercive advantage in crises and at lower levels of conflict."

"Correcting this mistaken Russian perception is a strategic imperative," the document states. Any weapon with an explosive blast of 20 kilotons or less is considered low-yield. To put that in perspective, one kiloton is the same as 1,000 tons of TNT; the bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki at the end of World War II were about 15 and 20 kilotons respectively, so they would be considered low-yield today.

But America already has a massive nuclear arsenal at its disposal, including 150 B-61 nukes stored across multiple European countries that can be configured for low-yield options. Hans Kristensen, director of the nuclear information project at the Federation of American Scientists, said US military strategy does not need a new type of weapon. "If you really wanted to use weapons in a limited low-yield scenario, they are there. You don't have to have another one," he said.

### Escalate to de-escalate

Given the state of Russia's military forces and the country's financial problems, Moscow fears it would be quickly outmatched in a conventional conflict with the West. To compensate, it has an "escalate to de-escalate" strategy in which it would deploy lower-yield bombs as part of a limited first use of nuclear weapons. The Pentagon's nuclear policy draft, which euphemistically calls low-yield bombs "supplements", states that increasing such weapons would help deter Russia and other nations.

"These supplements will enhance deterrence by denying potential adversaries any mistaken confidence that limited nuclear employment can provide a useful advantage over the United States and its allies," states the policy, which was obtained by the Huffington Post. Kristensen said he could envision a scenario where a US president

was "less self-deterred" from using a nuclear weapon if he thought it would only have limited effects on a civilian population.

The proposed policy says the Defense Department and the National Nuclear Security Administration will develop a low-yield submarine-launched ballistic missile for deployment and, in the longer term, develop a sea-launched cruise missile. America currently has an estimated arsenal of about 7,000 nuclear warheads, second only to Russia, which has a few hundred more. The new missile types wouldn't add to the stockpile, but rather would reconfigure existing warheads. Critics, including Democratic lawmakers, worry not just about developing new weapons but of the cost of overhauling America's nuclear arsenal. Already, the price tag is more than \$1 tril-



### Draft calls for low-yield bombs 'supplements'



WASHINGTON: Members of the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists talk about why they moved their Doomsday clock 30 seconds closer to the end of the world in Washington, DC. Mounting concerns about the possibility of a nuclear war along with US President Donald Trump's "unpredictability" have pushed the symbolic "Doomsday Clock" to two minutes before midnight, the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists said. —AFP

ion over 30 years. Congressman Adam Smith, the top Democrat on the House Armed Services Committee that oversees the Pentagon, blasted the new policy. "The administration's recommendations will not increase our security," Smith said. "They will instead feed a nuclear

arms race, undermine strategic stability by lowering the threshold for nuclear use, and increase the risk of miscalculation that could precipitate a nuclear war," Matthew Costlow, a defense analyst at the National Institute for Public Policy, said fears are being overblown. —AFP

## Gyrating Russian trainee pilots spark 'civil resistance'

MOSCOW: Dancing in their underwear and caps to the tune of the Benny Benassi hit "Satisfaction", the air cadets had little idea their video would prompt outrage from authorities and then a wave of solidarity across Russia. In the clip that went viral, 14 teenage students at the Ulyanovsk Civil Aviation Institute gyrate, suggestively suck bananas and smack their behinds to the tune of the 2003 pop smash.

The video racked up more than two million hits after it appeared on social networking sites last week, provoking the wrath of the head of the institute, who said the "immoral parody" had "humiliated the profession". "They will never find work," Sergei Krasnov promised in the media in the region 550 miles to the east of Moscow.

But the clip has generated dozens of other parodies featuring nurses, grandmothers and even cats-becoming a symbol of resistance against a Russian state that promotes itself as a champion of traditional values in the face of Western decadence. The Federal Air Transport Agency released a statement demanding the "strictest disciplinary measures" against the cadets, calling for them to undergo psychological examination. Sergei Morozov, governor of the Ulyanovsk region, called the clip an "insult" and formed a commission to investigate possible infractions of civil aviation regulations.

### Thrusting in solidarity

Stunned by the severity of the punishment facing the trainees, some Russians decided to show their support for the adolescents by filming themselves dancing to "Satisfaction" in the same stripped down attire and with the same suggestive choreography. In less than a week, 50 similar videos appeared online, where they have been widely shared. From Saint Petersburg to the island of Sakhalin off Russia's far east, electricians, jockeys, emergency services staff, television stars and students have been thrusting in solidarity.

Almost one in two Russians have seen the original video, according to a survey published by the Russian Public Opinion Research Center on Thursday, with 35 percent of those believing it to be a symptom of moral decline but 43 percent seeing it as a harmless joke. "This is an example of civil resistance" when faced with a state which seeks to control private behavior, said political commentator Andrei Kolesnikov in the liberal New Times. And he predicted the cadets would get off lightly ahead of a presidential election in March: "Nobody needs such a spicy scandal during Vladimir Putin's triumphal march to the renewal of his powers."

### 'Homeroetic subtext'

Sociologist Victor Vakhshstein compared the "moral panic" sparked by the video to the outrage following Pussy Riot's anti-Putin "punk prayer" in a Moscow cathedral in 2012, which saw members of the female protest group sentenced to prison. Only in the case of the Ulyanovsk teens, there was no political message. "They just wanted to bring a bit of fun into their very regimented lives as air cadets," he said. For Natalia Zorkaya, an analyst at the independent pollster Levada, the reaction from the authorities was connected to the "homeroetic subtext" they saw in the video. "Homophobia is very present in the spheres of politics and media in Russia and this powerful ideological discourse also influences local authorities," she told AFP.

"(But) young people already live in another reality and they won't accept the imposition of traditional Russian values, a religious vision of morality." She said young people were "less afraid than their elders," pointing to the thousands of adolescents who took to the streets when called by Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny last year. —AFP

## 5 key themes of a week in Davos

DAVOS: It began with blinding snowfall, warmed up as France's president auditioned for "leader of the free world", and ended in another chill with US President Donald Trump drawing boos and hisses. Here AFP recaps five key themes that emerged over a week of meetings at the World Economic Forum (WEF) in the Swiss Alpine village of Davos, which closed on Friday:

### The Trump Show

Every year, the WEF features hundreds of panels and thousands of delegates debating everything from the benefits of meditation to how to avert the next pandemic. But Trump grabbed the headlines before, during and after the event as he became the first US president to attend Davos since Bill Clinton in 2000. It shaped up to be a story of stark contrasts given the chasm between Trump's protectionist rhetoric and the Davos elite's commitment to open borders and a liberal world order. Trump struck some "America First" notes in a 15-minute speech ending the forum, while also assuring the world's corporate movers and shakers that "America First" does not mean America alone. The 1,500-strong audience, primed for a much more severe tongue-lashing, seemed content to leave it at that. But Trump then complained to WEF chairman Klaus Schwab of "how nasty, how mean, how vicious and how fake the press can be". Cue the booing from some in the hall.

### Currency chaos

If Trump meant to find some kind of balance between his domestic gallery and a skeptical foreign audience, his finance minister upended decades of consensus underpinning the gargantuan flows of money that grease world trade. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin sent the dollar spiraling to three-year lows against the euro by telling reporters in Davos that a weaker greenback was good for US trade. Trump insisted that Mnuchin had been misquoted, and the treasury chief tried to walk back the comment. But the damage was done, as European governments rebuked the violation of US commitments made in various economic fora, suspecting another attempt by the Trump administration to bend world trade to its advantage.

### Darling of Davos

If some of the noises from Team Trump were jarring for the Davos crowd, the "Merkron" harmony was music to their ears. Separate speeches at the WEF by French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Angela Merkel

## New party gives voice to Russian speakers in Cyprus

LIMASSOL: Muscovite pensioner Svetlana Bogomilova emerges from a Russian grocery store into the Mediterranean sunshine near the Limassol beachfront in Cyprus. "It is very convenient here," the retired teacher said as a family with a pushchair strolled by chatting in Russian. "There is everything you could need." Across the European Union's most easterly member it is easy to spot the influence of the island's sizeable Russian-speaking community.

In the seaside city of Limassol the main magnet for those coming to Cyprus from the former Soviet Union-posters promote concerts by Russian stars while adverts in Cyrillic offer elite flats. Money from the former Soviet region has helped spark a mini-

building boom, and the number of new arrivals just keeps on rising. Now, beyond the newspapers, schools and radio station blaring the latest Russian pop across the island, there is a striking new addition.

Two Russian-speaking businessmen have launched a political party they hope will help shake up the island, raising eyebrows in a country with deep ties to Moscow. Russian investor Alexei Voloboev insists he never dreamt of getting involved in the insular world of Cypriot politics when he became a citizen 10 years ago. But he says the rise of an ultra-nationalist party at 2016 legislative elections changed that. Last year the former restaurant and radio station owner registered Ego o Politis (Me the citizen) - a party he hopes will attract Cypriots and get the largely disenfranchised Russian community involved.

### 'We can change something'

"We have provided a breath of fresh air for the Russian-speaking community," Voloboev told AFP at the party's still empty headquarters in the capital Nicosia. "We have shown that we can change something here, if we want." There are no exact figures on the number of Russian speakers



DAVOS: US President Donald Trump delivers a speech during the World Economic Forum (WEF) annual meeting on Friday. —AFP

were acclaimed as defending a rules-based order and stepping into a global leadership void created by Trump's election and Britain's Brexit vote. If Merkel has been hampered by protracted coalition talks following an election setback, Macron is walking tall on the international stage and was hailed as the week's standout star, the "darling of Davos". For The New York Times, Macron in particular "laid claim to the mantle of leader of the free world" with his hour-long speech on Wednesday, which mixed English and French as he called for a reboot to globalization to stave off populism.

### Tech loses its shine

"Davos is a good place to announce that their days are numbered," billionaire investor George Soros said, describing tech giants such as Facebook and Google as monopolies that could be manipulated by authoritarian regimes to subvert democracy. Every year Silicon Valley decamps en masse to the Swiss Alps, and its visionary leaders are usually guaranteed a warm reception from politicians keen to harness their companies' potential to transform productivity and shake up old business models.

But the anti-tech backlash has begun and was on brutal display this time, with Davos audiences warned of the dangers to free societies of fake news on social media, and threats to a free press from Google and Facebook gobbling up advertising revenue. More broadly, experts said that

intelligent robots and all-knowing online networks threaten to drag humanity into a nightmare of mind control and mass unemployment. "This will be decided by the people who own the data. They control not just the future of humanity, but the future of life itself," said Yuval Noah Harari, the Israeli author of bestselling books about technology and anthropology.

### Business and blizzards

The Davos crowd are used to snow and icy paths—the Swiss prefer not to grit the roads, to avoid environmental damage. Every year, there are lengthy queues at the conference cloak-rooms as delegates shed layers of clothing and switch from hiking boots to smart shoes and high heels. But the snowfall at the start of the week was the region's heaviest in two decades, after a winter that has already seen tourists trapped in some of Switzerland's ski resorts. The snow disrupted road and rail traffic from Zurich, the nearest city to Davos, and affected flights of VIP helicopters. Within the village, attendees trudged on foot rather than risk getting snarled up in long lines of shuttle buses and limousines. More snow was forecast for Friday night and Saturday. But Trump had already left, choppered away to Zurich and the waiting Air Force One after a series of meetings where his delegation blew a storm through the usual bonhomie. —AFP



LIMASSOL: Natalia Kardash, an editor at Vestnik Kipra a bi-monthly Russian newspaper, poses at her office in the Cypriot port city of Limassol. —AFP

who can vote in Cyprus. Voloboev says 1,000 people have already applied to join the party and says it will gain a base among some 35,000 Cypriot passport holders, while double that number are resident on the island. Others say the number is smaller-but it could still prove a sizeable chunk in a country with only 550,000 registered voters. The party is not fielding a candidate in a presidential election to be held on Sunday, but aims to run in

European Parliament elections next year. Its rise comes as alleged Kremlin meddling in Western democracies dominates global headlines.

But Voloboev and vice president Ivan Mikhnevich, an IT entrepreneur from Belarus, laugh off any suggestion they are doing Moscow's bidding as "anti-Russian hysteria". "If I wanted to build Russia then I would go back and live in Russia," said Voloboev. —AFP



International

# Macron speaks language of globalization reset at Davos

## French President urges 'redefining of capitalist order'

**DAVOS:** French President Emmanuel Macron waxed lyrical in French and English at the Davos business summit to urge a redefining of the capitalist order, saying globalization in its current form is in "crisis" and needs recalibrating to stave off populism. Using both languages to insist that "France is back" and "at the heart of Europe" even as Britain leaves the EU, Macron made his main pitch in English to say liberal reforms were necessary to ensure his country adapts to globalization.

But he balanced that out by switching to French to denounce excesses of fiscal and social dumping and urge a reset on how the world resolves such issues. In a much-awaited speech less than nine months after his election, Macron's 20-minute discourse on Wednesday, chiefly in English, saw him unveil his vision on how to deliver reforms "to make France more competitive" and "more flexible". Macron arrived at Davos having managed to push through sensitive labor and tax reforms in France while he is also out to reshape the country's higher education system.

"In France, we correct inequalities with taxes and norms but without preventing them. This has weakened our competitiveness," said Macron, who has vowed to drive down the overall tax take for most households. His address followed on from a "Choose France" charm offensive on Monday at the Versailles palace where the 40-year-old centrist bathed in the attention of 140 bosses from companies such as Facebook and Google, who announced major investments. Switching back to his native tongue, Macron also noted globalization "is going through a major crisis"

with some states engaging in a free-for-all for their own benefit. What was needed, he insisted, were "coordinated strategies" across the board. In terms of tax policy, "France was very misaligned compared with the rest of Europe as she was well above the European average", Macron said, pushing home his view that a high tax take means "talented people vote with their feet" and leave the country.

### Race to the bottom

Macron said in the current climate the "dynamic" was one of cutting tax rates and paring back social spending which threatened creating a "race to the bottom". Welfare benefits and the fiscal means to cover them, Macron said, "issues which stood at the heart of the state" but said in today's world "if you are looking for comparative advantage you are always pulled downwards" in terms of tax rates. At the same time, he urged companies to "renounce all-out tax optimization" strategies and called on nations to ensure that digital giants "pay taxes". Without global cooperation on tax, Macron said, "we shall never convince the middle classes that globalization is good for them."

### Globalization in its current form in 'crisis'

Expanding his theme, Macron regretted the lack of fiscal harmonization in the European Union with Ireland notably attracting foreign firms through ultra-competitive corporation tax. "In my country, if I do not make sense of this globalization then in five, 10, 15 years time it will be the nationalists, the extremes which win-and this will be

### 'Unravel'

true of every country," he warned. "We must also end this tendency to unravel social rights in order to adjust to globalization," said Macron, urging a minimum social security safety net for all. In terms of corporation tax, France has the highest rate in the euro-zone pending a cut from a



PARIS: President of Argentina Mauricio Macri (right), his wife Juliana Awada (left), France's President Emmanuel Macron (2nd right) and his wife Brigitte Macron (2nd left) pose with Chef Guy de Savoy prior to a dinner in Paris yesterday. —AFP

current 33.3 percent to 25 percent from 2022. Most of its EU neighbors have already introduced more competitive rates. Last Friday, Macron joined German Chancellor Angela Merkel in calling for the rate to be harmonized across the European Union.—AFP

## Kabul blast: The key moments in security of Afghan capital

**KABUL:** Taliban militants detonated a bomb hidden inside an ambulance in a crowded area of Kabul yesterday, killing at least 63 people and wounding 151 others, officials said. Both the Taliban and the Islamic State group have stepped up their attacks in Kabul since 2016, turning the city of some five million people into the one of the deadliest places in Afghanistan for civilians. Here are some of the key moments in the security of the Afghan capital over the last two years.

### First Islamic State attack

After carrying out multiple attacks across Afghanistan, IS claimed its first assault in Kabul in July 2016 as twin explosions ripped through crowds of Shiite ethnic Hazaras, killing at least 85 people and wounding more than 400. Since then IS has escalated its presence in the city, claiming nearly 20 attacks across Kabul in the past 18 months, and establishing cells including students, professors and shopkeepers evading Afghan and US security forces. The group's attack on Hazaras was the deadliest in Kabul in 2016, which brought new levels of carnage even to a city already grimly accustomed to atrocities. Other attacks included a truck bomb and ensuing fire that killed at least 64 people and wounded some 350 others on April 19, a week after the start of the Taliban's "spring offensive". And Taliban

militants launched an assault on the Kabul offices of CARE International, part of a wave of bombings in the city on September 5 that left at least 41 people dead and dozens wounded.

### The truck bomb

A massive truck bomb on May 31, 2017 killed more than 150 people and wounded hundreds in the city's fortified diplomatic quarter, the deadliest attack in Kabul since the US invasion began in late 2001. The bomb, which no group has claimed responsibility for, prompted authorities to develop a new plan to expand their ring of steel around the city and impose tight restrictions on large vehicles.

But the time consuming checks result in hundreds of trucks waiting hours before they can proceed, and officials are forced to acknowledge that with more than a hundred ways in to Kabul it is impossible to control all the entrances. Their point is proven just months later, when a suicide bomber on foot evades checkpoints to reach the "Green Zone" and blow himself up, killing at least five people and wounding dozens. Yesterday's attack was another chilling demonstration of the militants' ability to evade security and penetrate the heart of the city.

### Bloody end to 2017

The truck bomb was not the only notable Kabul attack of 2017. Among many smaller assaults which killed dozens of people were an attack on Afghanistan's largest military hospital in March which officially left at least 50 people dead, though security sources and survivors say the toll exceeded 100. Minority Shiites increasingly became targets as Sunni IS stepped up their assaults, with dozens killed in multiple attacks. The deadliest in which some 40 people were killed and dozens wounded—was one of three assaults



KABUL: An Afghan man holds a wounded child, after a car bomb exploded near the old Interior Ministry building, at Jamhuriat Hospital yesterday. —AFP

claimed by the Middle Eastern jihadist group in December alone. The parliament, the Supreme Court, and security installations as well as foreign forces in Kabul also came under attack in 2017, with civilians paying a disproportionate price. US President Donald Trump also announced his new strategy for Afghanistan in 2017, vowing in August that troops would stay there indefinitely. The Taliban responded with a wave of attacks across the country.

### No end in sight

Just four days into 2018 another suicide blast rocked Kabul, in an Islamic State-claimed attack which killed at least 13 people. Then the Taliban stormed the landmark Intercontinental Hotel in a complex assault in which witnesses told AFP the gunmen went from room to room targeting

foreigners for nearly 12 hours before being killed by Afghan security forces. Despite heightened threats in Kabul, visitors to the hotel described lax security ahead of the attack, which began late on January 20.

It was the start of another bloody week across the country, with an IS attack on a Save the Children compound in eastern Jalalabad city killing at least five people and forcing the charity to suspend operations. More security alerts were issued in Kabul yesterday, warning of attacks targeting places frequented by foreigners. Twenty minutes before yesterday's blast an AFP reporter saw police checking ambulances several hundred meters from the scene of the explosion. Ambulances-ubiquitous at the site of the dozens of attacks that rock Kabul each year—are rarely checked in the city.—AFP

## Deadly mudflows threaten residents as volcano erupts

**LEGAZPI:** Millions of tons of ash and rock from an erupting Philippine volcano could bury nearby communities due to heavy rain, authorities said yesterday, as tens of thousands flee over fears of a deadly explosion. The official Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) issued the warning as heavy rains lashed the area surrounding the Mayon volcano, which has been emitting flaming lava and giant clouds of superheated ash for the past week.

Rainwater could combine with the volcanic ash and rock to form deadly, fast-moving mudflows-called "lahars"—that could sweep away entire settlements, it said. "The important thing is to move out in case of heavy rains... this is a precautionary measure," Phivolcs chief Renato Solidum told AFP. The institute earlier said that 25 million cubic metres (about 883 million cubic feet) of ash and other volcanic material had recently been emitted by Mayon, settling on its slopes and elsewhere nearby.

It warned that this could result in lahars flowing into waterways, and called on officials to move residents near rivers to higher ground. An explosion of the 2,460-metre (8,070-foot) Mayon in August 2006 did not directly kill anyone but four months later, a typhoon unleashed an avalanche of volcanic mud from its slopes that claimed 1,000 lives. Phivolcs said Mayon had emitted fountains of lava on Friday but bad weather was preventing observation of the volcano's activity yesterday.

### Cement swept away

Residents living by a river in Daraga town in Albay province expressed fear of a repeat of the 2006 incident. "We are worried that lahar will flow again. We cannot sleep soundly at night. We sleep like chickens, waking up at the slightest rumble of the volcano," Virginia Tuscano, 47, told AFP as rain poured outside her home. "Back in 2006 the lahar flow was so powerful it was like waves sweeping away even homes made of cement." The mother-of-three said she had packed her bags and was ready to leave her home. Observers saw a shroud of steam covering the entire mountain as heavy rain met the hot lava and volcanic material on Mayon's slopes.

Steam could also be seen rising from the volcano's crater as rainwater entered its interior. Volcanic mudflows are a perennial problem during and after volcanic eruptions in the Philippines, which sits on the "Ring of Fire"—islands in the Pacific that were formed by volcanic activity. The government has already evacuated more than 84,000 people from a "danger zone" stretching as far as nine kilometers around Mayon over fears of a possible deadly eruption. Provincial disaster relief head Cedric Daep said he expects the number of people evacuated to increase as residents flee from areas threatened by lahar.

### Mixed blessing

However, the rains were also washing away the thick, choking carpet of ash that has covered many communities in the shadow of Mayon in the past week, Daep said. "The rains also washed away the ashes on grasslands. That means that cattle could now feed on the grasses which they could not do in the past days," he added. Mayon, located about 330 kilometers (205 miles) southeast of the capital Manila, is the most active of the country's 22 volcanoes—and one of the deadliest. Four foreign tourists and their local tour guide were killed when it last erupted in May 2013. In 1814, more than 1,200 people were killed when lava flows buried the nearby town of Cagsawa.—AFP



LEGAZPI: Mayon volcano glows as it emits lava cascading on its slopes, as seen from Legazpi City, in Albay province yesterday. —AFP

## News in brief

### 14 Mali soldiers killed

**BAMAKO:** Unidentified gunmen killed at least 14 soldiers in central Mali, an area targeted by a growing wave of attacks by Islamist militants, when they overran a military camp yesterday, two army officers said. The camp in the town of Soumpri, near the southern boundary of Mali's Timbuktu region, came under attack at around 6 am. "The provisional toll is 14 dead, 17 wounded and two enemies killed. The search is still on for those missing," one of the sources said. The second source said "around 15" soldiers had been killed. "The soldiers abandoned their position. The enemy carried away material," he said. Both sources asked not to be named as they were not authorized to speak to the media. Violence by militant groups, some with links to Al-Qaeda and Islamic State, is on the rise in West Africa's arid Sahel region. In Mali, attacks have grown more frequent and spread further south towards the capital, Bamako.

### Heavy snow hit China

**BEIJING:** Heavy snow continued to affect parts of China yesterday, closing highways, causing train and flight cancellations, and even interrupting a soccer match between Vietnam and Uzbekistan in a southern Chinese province. In central Hubei province, sections of more than 30 highways were closed due to icy conditions, the official Xinhua news agency reported. The three railway stations in Wuhan, Hubei's provincial capital, cancelled more than a hundred train journeys. By about noon (0400 GMT), 95 flights had been cancelled at the Wuhan Tianhe International Airport, stranding some 1,200 passengers. The airport at Nanning, capital of south China's Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, also cancelled many flights. In Changzhou city in southern Jiangsu province, the second half of the Under-23 Asian Cup final was interrupted for an hour on Saturday afternoon as snow covered the pitch. Vietnam, long seen as an underdog, had defeated Australia, Iraq and Qatar to face Uzbekistan in the final, cheered on by Vietnamese at home and at the Changzhou Olympic Sports Centre.

### Drone strike kills 7

**ADEN:** A drone strike yesterday killed seven suspected Al-Qaeda militants in southern Yemen, a security official said. The US military is the only force known to operate armed drones over Yemen. The official said the strike happened after midnight and targeted a car in Shabwa province. "All seven passengers, who were Al-Qaeda members, were killed," said the security source. The United States considers the Yemen-based Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula to be the radical group's most dangerous branch. A long-running drone war against AQAP has intensified since US President Donald Trump took office in January 2017. AQAP has flourished in the chaos of the country's civil war, which pits the Saudi-backed government against Shiite Houthi rebels.

### University students expelled

**YANGON:** Fourteen students have been expelled from a Myanmar university after staging a campus protest calling for more education funding, an activist said yesterday, sparking concern over eroding freedoms in the fledgling democracy. The four-day rally at Yadanabon University in Mandalay drew some 100 students before it was broken up by police on January 25. It was the first student protest under Aung San Suu Kyi's civilian administration, which took power in early 2016. Students were key drivers of political activism under the former military regime, which violently cracked down on dissent during its 50-year reign. Many had hoped Suu Kyi, a Nobel laureate and former political prisoner, would usher in a new era of freedom. But a rash of defamation cases and arrests of journalists, plus lingering censorship in the arts, have dampened optimism and triggered alarm that freedoms are backsliding. The latest case to draw rebuke was the expulsion of 14 students in Mandalay, who participated in the rally calling for more national spending on education.

## Analysis

Kuwait Times  
Established 1961  
The First Daily in The Arabian GulfTHE LEADING INDEPENDENT  
DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF  
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## WASHINGTON WATCH

## Pence's Middle East

By Dr James J Zogby

US Vice President Michael Pence's recent foray into Middle East politics has been nothing short of a disaster. Because he sees the world through the lens of right-wing Evangelical Christianity, he trampled on regional realities, leaving a mess in his wake.

One might have hoped that American political leaders had learned the dangers of an ideologically-driven foreign policy from the failed presidency of George W. Bush. Bush, whose world view was a mish-mash of Evangelical and neo-conservative doctrines, led the US into a disastrous invasion of Iraq. Guided by ideology, Bush saw that war as a necessary battle of good versus evil that would inevitably be won by the "good". As his Administration framed the war: the tyrant would be overthrown, America would be celebrated as the liberator of Iraq, democracy would take root, and then spread throughout the entire Middle East. To the true believer - it was that simple. Reality dictated otherwise.

What the ideologues hadn't factored into their simplistic vision were complex regional realities, in particular, the history and social make-up of Iraq's people and the ambitions of its neighbors. Within short order, the country descended into a sectarian civil war, Iran gained a foothold in Iraq becoming an emboldened regional force, and US troops became ground down in a long, deadly, and demoralizing war - with still unfolding consequences.

The real danger of seeing the world through a narrow ideological lens is that while the lens may be your own, the world being viewed through it is not yours to control. What you see may "fit" your understanding of the way "things ought to be", but the reality your lens filters out won't "behave" or go away just because you deny or don't acknowledge that it exists.

Pence's recent descent into Middle East's troubled waters displayed this same ideological blindness. His heterodox Christian faith celebrated President Trump's recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, because he sees Israel as the fulfillment of biblical prophecy and a necessary prerequisite for the "final days" leading to the second coming of Christ and the conversion of the Jews. At times Pence's visit to Israel appeared to be more of a religious pilgrimage than a diplomatic mission. His speech before the Israeli Knesset was filled with biblical references and theological imagery. He mentioned Abraham and David and spoke of the Jewish exile and their coming to the Promised Land (both of which he brazenly compared to the American experience). And he concluded with this:

"Israel is like a tree that has grown deep roots in the soil of your forefathers, yet as it grows, it reaches ever closer to the heavens. And today and every day, the Jewish state of Israel, and all the Jewish people, bear witness to God's faithfulness...It was the faith of the Jewish people that gathered the scattered fragments of a people and made them whole again...and it was faith that rebuilt the ruins of Jerusalem and made them strong again. The miracle of Israel is an inspiration to the world."

## Biblical Language

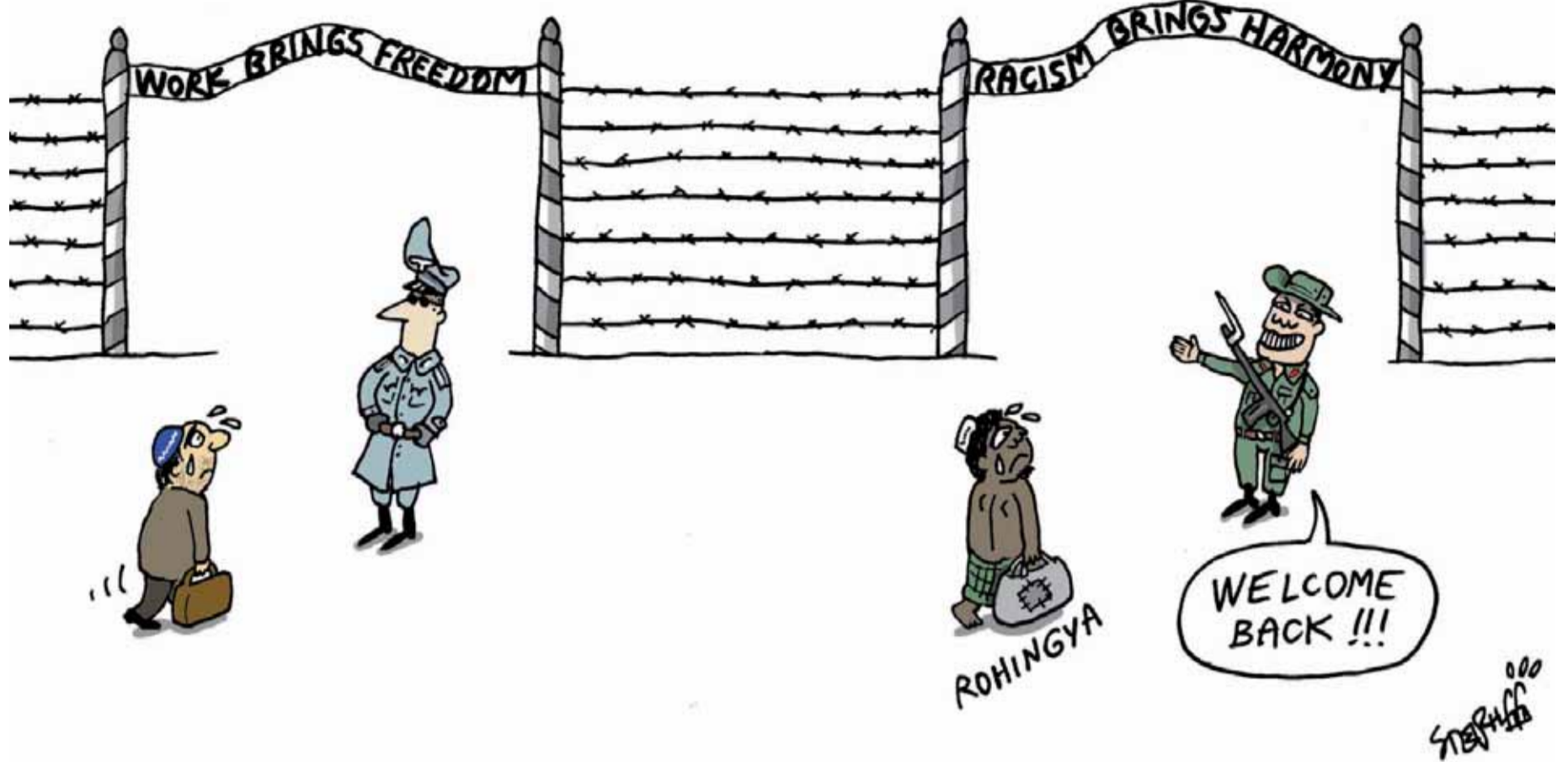
This almost breathless ecstatic testimonial wasn't all that Pence said. He made a not-so-oblique reference to the Trump Administration's hoped-for so-called "Israel-Sunni" alliance, saying "long-standing enemies are becoming partners...the descendants of Isaac and Ishmael are coming together in common cause as never before". In near biblical language, he pledged to "drive radical Islamic terrorism from the face of the earth." He also noted that the US has "redirected funding [from traditional aid groups that provide relief and reconstruction assistance to all groups impacted by war]...and, for the first time...providing direct support for Christian [whom Pence has referred to as "our fellow Christians"] and other minority communities" in Iraq.

What Pence's ideology did not allow him to see was that by his full-throated embrace of a biblically-inspired vision of Israel, he put the final nail in the coffin of a US-led peace process. Only once, in passing, did Pence even mention Palestinians. Because he could not see Israel doing wrong, he made no mention of the harsh occupation or settlement expansion. And Palestinian Christians, who refused to meet with Pence in protest of the US embassy move, were not included in Pence's beleaguered "fellow Christians" needing US support.

What Pence also wasn't able to factor into his distorted view of the region is just how irreconcilable his stance on Israel and Jerusalem are with the deeply held sensibilities of the Arab World's leaders and peoples. While Egypt's and Jordan's leaders met with the Vice President, they kept him at arm's length (and, in the case of Egypt, did their best to keep press away). What the US appears not to understand is that despite Arab leaders' concerns with Iran and extremism, they are not about to trample on Palestinians and their rights in Jerusalem in order to join forces with or normalize ties with Israel. In fact, Trump's embassy move and Pence's performance, if anything, have fueled extremist currents, emboldened Iran, and put the US' Arab World allies at risk.

Finally, a word about Pence's efforts to reprogram US aid toward Middle East Christians. While celebrated by Evangelical Christians in the US, this move has been criticized by the hierarchy of the Middle East Christian churches. While every religious community has suffered at the hands of ISIS, there is no doubt that Arab Christians and other regional minorities were singled out by the extremists for the harshest treatment. Nevertheless, the region's Christian hierarchy fear being too closely embraced by the US or singled out for special treatment since that would exacerbate sectarian tensions, putting them at greater risk in their own countries. In the end, the only group celebrating Pence's pilgrimage to the region is the far-right in Israel. He embraced their vision of a Jewish state in their "Promised Land" and ignored Palestinian rights. This uncritical support has already further emboldened them to accelerate their efforts to expand settlements, annex the occupied territories, and bury, once and for all, hopes for a just and lasting Israel-Palestinian peace - thus demonstrating, once again, how adherence to blind ideology can be a dumb and dangerous way to shape foreign policy.

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

AUSCHWITZ  
1942RAKHINE STATE  
MYANMAR  
2018

## China's development push worries non-profits

China's development push into poor countries is marginalizing the role of human rights bodies, green groups and other non-profits, making it harder for them to play their traditional role as a check on rampant development, advocates said. China has embarked on one of the biggest overseas development plans since America's post-war Marshall Plan, with more than \$100 billion of investments through its Belt and Road scheme to build highways, rail lines, ports and other infrastructure linking up Asia, Europe and Africa.

But unlike Western-backed lenders, where development financing often comes with social and environmental strings and strengthens the voice of non-profits, China-backed lenders are taking a more hands-off approach, according to interviews with NGO executives and a lender at the World Economic Forum. "The situation with China right now is obviously the one to watch," said Jennifer Morgan, executive director of Greenpeace International. "What are the standards they are setting in the loans or the financing that they are doing around the world?"

Kenneth Roth, executive director of Human Rights Watch, described China's approach as amoral and said it had eased the economic pressure that nations felt when aid or investment was "more conditioned on respect for human rights". China-backed institutions take a different approach to the World Bank and other Western-backed development lenders. For example, the World Bank has a strong bias against new coal-fired power stations on environmental grounds, but China's new Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), which is helping finance the Belt and Road plan, is less strident.

The AIIB's vice president for policy and strategy, Joachim von Amsberg, told Reuters at Davos that the Chinese-backed lender wanted to encourage transition to renewable energy but it did not want to "put on the front door the sign - 'No Coal.'" "We are not seeing every project as a lever into broader policy changes in our member countries," von Amsberg said. "That is a wel-

come addition to the world of development finance because I think it avoids the risk of overreaching, of trying to do too much with individual investment projects."

Financing through institutions such as the World Bank has long been used by rich countries as a way to push borrowers to improve their track record on social causes. As part of that push, non-profits have played the role of watchdogs, helping to change the course on issues such as dam development and speaking up for human rights. Advocates said the headwind had become stronger amid rising populism and as the United States under President Donald Trump took a more muted approach on issues like human rights or reversed policy, as it did on climate

Reuters, Chinese foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying told a briefing in Beijing: "The Chinese government has always asked companies that are going out to carry out operations in their host countries under a legal framework in accordance with the law and rules, and to positively fulfil their responsibility to society."

Some sovereign governments welcome assistance without a broader agenda. Bangladesh, for example, struck deals with China for billions of dollars worth of loans for various projects when President Xi Jinping visited in late 2016. "Anybody would prefer Chinese investment if the alternative is the World Bank," Moshir Rahman, economic adviser to Bangladesh's prime minister, told Reuters in an interview in Dhaka this month. "Unlike Western investors, they are not worried about how many people you put in jail."

## Common Ground

Some non-profits are looking for common ground to find areas that they can work on. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has been working with Beijing on projects for more than a decade, and taking Chinese expertise in areas such as agriculture to other parts of Asia and Africa, said Mark Suzman, chief strategy officer for the foundation. Suzman said the foundation was in discussions to see if Belt and Road projects in Southeast Asia could be used to work on malaria prevention in the Mekong delta, a disease where the Chinese have expertise. "We actually feel pretty optimistic that there is a win-win potential to it," Suzman said.

Last month the Chinese government circulated an article to the United Nations about its approach to human rights, laying out how Beijing was turning its "domestic governance philosophies into international consensus". "Peace and security are the most important human rights," wrote Li Baodong, vice minister for foreign affairs. "Development is of paramount importance. We have made fresh headway in increasing our say on human rights issues," he wrote. —Reuters

Non-profits  
have played  
the role of  
watchdogs

change. "Am I concerned about shrinking civic space and not having as much voice in governments in various countries around the world? Absolutely," Morgan said.

## No Strings Attached

Von Amsberg, who spent some 25 years at the World Bank before joining the AIIB in 2016, said the lender with 84 member nations held itself to high standards on environmental, social and governance norms, and denied it weakened civil society. In response to a question from

Left sticks by  
wounded Lula;  
'no Plan B'

Brazil's Workers Party and labor leaders insisted on Thursday that left-wing hero Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva would be their candidate in this year's presidential race, despite his failure to overturn a corruption conviction that will likely bar him. Political observers expect the Workers Party to back his candidacy for as long as it possibly can, as without the charismatic Lula on the campaign trail Brazil's second largest party in Congress faces oblivion.

"We are here to reaffirm Lula's candidacy for president of Brazil. We have no Plan B. He will be our candidate," party leader Senator Gleisi Hoffmann said at the country's largest labor union headquarters. The two-term former president, while popular, has slim chances of undoing Wednesday's ruling by an appellate court. His exclusion raises the prospect of a right-leaning reformer winning the Oct. 7 election and sticking to Brazil's austerity program.

Investors are betting it is game over for Brazil's most influential politician and early front-runner. Sao Paulo's stock market hit a new high after the decision and the currency strengthened from 3.20 to 3.14 reais to the dollar. But Lula accepted the Workers Party nomination, which has to be formalized at a party convention, and told a rally in Sao Paulo that he would "fight to the end" to appeal against his conviction. "I want to be candidate to win the elections and govern this country," he said to a crowd that chanted "Lula for president."

Workers Party leaders called for a civil disobedience campaign to oppose his exclusion from the elections and said they would resist any move to arrest Lula, whose

prison sentence was increased by the appeals court from nine to 12 years. "We need social confrontation to stop this coup. There has to be a rebellion by citizens," said firebrand Workers Party Senator Lindbergh Farias. With doubts about his ability to run, other parties will be reluctant to ally themselves with the PT, which could eventually be forced to back another candidate. "The 3-0 vote to condemn him and the increase in his sentence was a definitive shock to Lula's political life. It ends it," said Sergio PraAa, a political scientist at FGV think tank in Sao Paulo.

## Nobody Left on the Left

The exclusion of Lula from the 2018 election would not only leave the Workers Party orphaned but also the Brazilian left. "There is nobody else on the left with a real chance for victory, and certainly nobody from the Workers Party," PraAa said. "There is nobody left on the left." Still, some analysts said Lula, while out after the court verdict, was not entirely out, with consultancy Eurasia saying he has a roughly one-third chance of being able to run.

If Lula is ruled out, his party could ally itself with the center-left Democratic Labor Party (PDT), which stands to gain leftist backers for its candidate Ciro Gomes, a former governor of Ceara state. Another left-of-center option is environmentalist Marina Silva, who has won more than 20 percent of the votes in the last two presidential elections on an anti-corruption platform.

But she publicly supported the conviction of Lula for taking a bribe and his party is unlikely to join forces with her. The absence of Lula on the campaign trail is not expected to benefit far-right candidate Jair Bolsonaro, running second in polling and whose support is in part based on a fear of a Workers Party return to power. Instead it may open the field for more right of center candidates with clear market-friendly stances. —Reuters

Lula down - but  
not out - after  
graft verdict

The Brazilian appeals court that upheld a corruption conviction against former president Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva has dimmed his chances of running for office again but not killed them. The ruling issued Wednesday means Lula - the barrel-chested former steel workers union boss who rose to make Brazil the poster child of emerging economies and lifted millions out of poverty - could be disqualified from the October election he is strongly favored to win.

But the final decision on Lula's eligibility to seek another term at the head of the now economically struggling giant will not come until shortly before the vote - casting uncertainty over Brazil's future. Candidates must announce by August that they are officially in the race. On Thursday Lula's Worker's Party (PT) closed ranks the man who was Brazil's president for two terms, from 2003 to 2011.

"We are here to reaffirm the candidacy of Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva," said Senator Gleisi Hoffmann at a meeting of the party leadership in Sao Paulo. A poster on the door read, "In defense of democracy and of Lula. Without meaning to be arrogant," Lula said, "I want to tell you that I want to be the candidate, to win the elections. We're not lowering our heads!" Lula was due to travel to Ethiopia on Thursday to take part in a conference organized by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, but authorities rescinded his passport after a complaint was filed alleging he posed a flight risk, preventing him from leaving the country.

## Complicated re-election plan

As expected, three judges sitting in the southern city of Porto Alegre agreed Wednesday that Lula, 72, was guilty of corruption by being bribed with a posh seaside condo, even though Lula insists he never even got the keys to the place. The judges extended Lula's original prison sentence of nine and a half years, handed down in July, to 12 years and one month. The ruling was undoubtedly bad news for Lula, but the question is how bad. "It complicates his plans to run for the presidency this year but it doesn't finish them altogether," said market analysts Capital Economics. "The unanimous verdict is important since it reduces the avenues of appeal that are now open to Lula. That being said, it does not close them off completely."

Pro- and anti-Lula forces, who demonstrated in Porto Alegre but mainly in Sao Paulo, are at loggerheads over whether the court decision is fair. Lula's supporters say they smell a rat, and accuse the courts of acting with suspicious speed, and on the basis of slim evidence that came from a leak. His critics argue that he and the PT are rotten with corruption and that he deserves to go to prison. Lula has six other legal cases pending, also essentially for alleged corruption. "The issue of the condo is far from the most serious one," said one of the appeals court judges, Leandro Paulsen.

Lula's defeat in court will have a big impact on the presidential campaign and marks the start of what will probably be a long legal battle, with less than nine months to go until the election. "It is an unprecedented situation in Brazil," said Fernando Schuler of Inesper, a higher education institution focusing on business, economics and engineering. "Lula is the frontrunner in the election and his candidacy is by no means assured. It is a dramatic situation for democracy." —AFP

News

## 'Deportados Brand': Mexicans stand up to Trump with T-shirts

MEXICO CITY: Few people know gate "N" at Mexico City's airport but three times a week it is the arrival point for the latest group of Mexican immigrants deported by the United States. Waiting to meet them is Adan Jacome, Jacome, 45, goes to the terminal to offer the support of a group of immigrants also repatriated to Mexico, and who are the brains behind "Deportados Brand", a small T-shirt business which aims to reunite families and help deported Mexicans start over.

He is a much-needed helping hand for the many migrants who arrive in a practically foreign country but who must find work quickly, despite the stigma of having just been deported. Upon returning, "doors are closed to them, because people think they must have killed or robbed someone, or been on drugs", Jacome, who was deported to Mexico after living in Las Vegas for 16 years, told AFP.

Arrests of undocumented migrants have surged since US President Donald Trump took office one year ago. Law enforcers say they focus on criminal aliens but rights groups allege longtime residents with families and jobs are rounded up on minor infractions. "Deportados Brand", whose shirts bear slogans such as "We are all gate 'N'" and "F\*\*k Trump", was born almost by chance at the end of 2016, as Mexico waited with bated breath for Trump to take office after his election win.

Struggling to find work, the five-strong group sold traditional sweets in the street, then went on to create distinctive T-shirts to identify themselves. The first day they used them was Jan 20, 2017, the date of Trump's inauguration. People liked the shirts, said Gustavo Lavariega, another member of the group who was deported after 17 years in Washington state. He left four daughters behind. A few months later, fueled by the desire to express their feelings using the shirts, the group was screen-printing garments to sell.

## Pressing Syrian offensive, Turkey...

Continued from Page 1

restraint and fearing an impact on the fight against the Islamic State (IS) extremist group.

One of the issues marring relations was the US supplying the YPG militia - which has spearheaded the fight - with arms since last year in battles against IS. Manbij itself was retaken from IS by the Kurdish-led, US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces in 2016 as part of a push that would later recapture the city of Raqqa from the militants. The Turkish presidency said US National Security Advisor H R McMaster "confirmed" to Erdogan's spokesman Ibrahim Kalin in a phone call late Friday that Washington would no longer "give weapons to the YPG".

Ankara says the YPG is a "terrorist" offshoot of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) which is proscribed as a terror group by Ankara and its Western allies. "God willing we will crush them (terror groups) like a steamroller," Erdogan said yesterday during a speech in Istanbul. Turkish Prime Minister Binali Yildirim hit out at critics, explaining the "operation was not an option but a necessity".

### 'Cut ties with YPG'

Earlier this month, the US-led coalition fighting IS said it was working to create a 30,000-strong border security force in northern Syria. "The US must cut its ties with a terror organization. It must take back the weapons it has given," Cavusoglu said, adding Turkey "now wanted to see concrete steps taken". During their call, McMaster and Kalin agreed to coordinate closely in order to prevent misunderstandings.

The contact came just days after Washington and

**'In shock'**  
It was their way out of the uncertainty which mirrored that of the deported immigrants arriving at the airport. As well as Jacome, who lends them a cellphone and offers accommodation at the group's screen-printing facility, they are met by local officials and another organization which gives them a small green bag to keep their things in, instead of the sacks provided when they are deported. Although some manage a small smile, many new arrivals look as if they have just arrived on another planet.

"It's a very hard assimilation process. First someone arrives in Mexico and says 'I can't believe it, why did they deport me?' They didn't want to come back, they had a well-paid job, and that's where the anger comes from," said Lavariego, 42. Ana Laura Lopez, also 42 and one of the most familiar faces in the organization, had a similar experience when she was deported from Chicago after 16 years, leaving two sons.

She was heading to the airport to sort out her papers in Mexico - with the intention of returning to the US with a work visa - when she was picked up by immigration agents. Now, she cannot return to the US for 20 years. For her, "everything changed" when she arrived in Mexico. "I had just been robbed of the only opportunity I had, when I wasn't a criminal, when I had dedicated myself to working. I was in shock for several days," she recalled.

### 'A broken dream'

However, with the business going from strength to strength and winning fans on Facebook, her tone changes remembering the T-shirt design which best expresses her current feelings. "Intelligent here and there," it says in Spanish, in a design which mimics the logo of the Chicago Cubs baseball team. Although they're enjoying success in Mexico, the group's members see returning to their homes in the US as an increasingly difficult task, thanks to Trump's tough stance on immigrants. "It's a year that has lowered our hopes of returning home," says Lopez, at a protest in front of the US embassy in Mexico, during which they present the sacks given to deported migrants. "Every sack has a story. It's a broken dream, a separated family," she said. — AFP

Ankara bitterly contested each other's accounts of a telephone conversation between Erdogan and US President Donald Trump. A White House statement said Trump urged Turkey to "limit its military actions", but a Turkish official said this was not an accurate reflection of the leaders' call. There have been expressions of concern over the offensive from other Western allies including the European Union. German police yesterday ordered the dispersal of a protest against the offensive attended by over 15,000 in Cologne because of the presence of PKK symbols, banned in Germany.

### Syrian rebels 'take village'

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights monitoring group told AFP the fighting was concentrated in the northwest part of the Afrin region. Turkish forces and allied Syrian rebels had taken a village and were making progress, albeit "slowly because of bad weather", Observatory head Rami Abdel Rahman said. An AFP correspondent in the Syrian town of Azaz held by pro-Ankara fighters, east of Afrin, could hear sporadic artillery fire.

The Turkish military said "at least 394 terrorist organization members were neutralized" in the operation. It was not possible to independently verify the toll. The Observatory said 111 Ankara-backed rebels and Kurdish fighters have been killed between both sides since last Saturday. It said 38 civilians have been killed, mainly as a result of Turkish shelling, but Ankara strongly rejects such claims. Health workers in Afrin told AFP they feared the offensive would lead to a humanitarian "tragedy". "Medication and humanitarian aid necessary to help civilians will soon run out," said Khalil Sabri Ahmed, head of the main hospital in Afrin.

The UN children's agency UNICEF said at least 11 children were killed since the operation began. Turkey's AFAD emergency agency head Mehmet Gulluoglu said they were making plans for a camp to be established in Azaz "in the face of a possible refugee influx from Afrin". — AFP

## Ambulance bomb kills 95 in Kabul...

Continued from Page 1

that the toll "now stands at 95 dead, 158 wounded", shortly after the interior ministry warned that an earlier death toll of 63 could rise.

The blast happened in an area where several high-profile organizations, including the European Union, have offices. Members of the EU delegation in Kabul were in their "safe room" and there were no casualties, an official told AFP. The force of the explosion shook windows of buildings at least two kilometers away and caused some low-rise structures in the immediate vicinity to collapse.

The suicide bomber passed through at least one checkpoint in the ambulance, saying he was taking a patient to Jamuriate hospital, an interior ministry spokesman told AFP. "At the second checkpoint he was recognized and blew his explosive-laden car," Nasrat Rahimi said. Rahimi told a news conference that most of the victims were civilians. He said the Taliban-affiliated Haqqani Network was responsible and four suspects had been arrested. Twenty minutes before the blast an AFP reporter saw police checking ambulances several hundred metres from the scene of the explosion, as the drivers and patients stood on the street. Ambulances are rarely checked in the city.

The International Committee of the Red Cross in Afghanistan condemned the use of an ambulance in the bombing, saying on Twitter it was "unacceptable and unjustifiable". The Taliban used social media to claim responsibility for the attack, which comes exactly a week after its insurgents stormed Kabul's landmark Intercontinental hotel, killing at least 25 people, the majority foreigners.

Photos shared on social media purportedly of the blast - the deadliest in Kabul since a truck bomb ripped

through the city's diplomatic quarter on May 31, killing 150 people and wounding hundreds - showed a huge plume of smoke rising into the sky. Near the blast site civilians walked through debris-covered streets carrying wounded on their backs as others loaded several bodies at a time into ambulances and private cars to take them to medical facilities around the city.

The Italian NGO Emergency said 131 wounded had been taken to its hospital, with its coordinator Dejan Panic tweeting that it had been a "massacre". A photo posted on Emergency's Twitter account showed hospital staff treating injured people in an outdoor walkway next to a garden. A man told Ariana TV he had taken his wounded brother to Jamuriate and Emergency hospitals but had been turned away. "They are asking people with non-life threatening wounds to go to other hospitals," he said.

Aminullah, whose stationery shop is just meters from where the explosion happened, said the force of the explosion shook the foundations of his building. "The building shook. All our windows broke. The people are in shock in our market," he told AFP. A man told Tolo News he was passing the area when the explosion happened. "I heard a big bang and I fainted," he said, outside the Emergency hospital. "There were dozens of people who were killed and wounded. There were pools of blood."

The attack was condemned by the presidential palace as a "crime against humanity". There was international outcry too, with NATO, the US embassy in Kabul and British foreign minister Boris Johnson among those expressing horror at the latest attack. The offices of the High Peace Council, charged with negotiating with the Taliban which has been waging a more than 16-year insurgency in the war-torn country, are also near the blast site. "It targeted our checkpoint. It was really huge - all our windows are broken," Hassina Safi, a member of High Peace Council, told AFP. "So far we don't have any reports if any of our members are wounded or killed." A security alert issued yesterday morning had warned that the Islamic State group was planning "to conduct aggressive attacks" on supermarkets, shops and hotels frequented by foreigners. — AFP

## Govt grapples with 1.8m loose laborers...

Continued from Page 1

He said the state was able to control the entry and exit of new marginal laborers due to strict measures that were applied lately in not bringing in excess labor, in addition to reducing government cleaning and guarding contracts by 25 percent.

The source said the state's delay in implementing an

automated linkage between various state institutions contributed to the escalation of this problem and the increase in the numbers of marginal laborers, especially since some sectors have an illogically large numbers of workers, such as shepherding, fishing and agriculture, estimated unofficially at hundreds of thousands.

Meanwhile, the latest records issued by the central statistics department on Sept 30, 2017 showed an increase in the number of workers in the third quarter by an estimated 31,894 expats, compared to second quarter data last year that showed increased expat labor in the workforce at 29,192 workers, compared to 2,682 Kuwaitis.

## Saudi billionaire Alwaleed released...

Continued from Page 1

how many suspects have seen charges dropped. Allegations against Prince Alwaleed, who is in his early 60s, included money laundering, bribery and extorting officials, a Saudi official told Reuters in November. The prince's net worth has been estimated by Forbes magazine at \$17 billion. In his first interview since he was taken into custody, conducted hours before his release, Prince Alwaleed told Reuters that he had maintained his innocence of any corruption in talks with the authorities. He said he expected to keep full control of his global investment firm Kingdom Holding Co without being required to hand over assets to the government.

Asked if the attorney general was convinced of Prince Alwaleed's innocence, the senior Saudi official said: "I will not negate or confirm what he says. Generally this falls back to those who concluded the settlement, and for sure there is no settlement unless there are violations, and they are not concluded without the accused admitting it in writing and promising not to repeat it." The source declined to give further details, but confirmed that Prince Alwaleed would remain head of Kingdom Holding.

A Gulf banker who deals with Saudi Arabia said the authorities appeared keen to conclude the probe partly because foreign investors were concerned their assets or local business partners could be targeted in the wide-ranging crackdown. Prince Alwaleed's detention was par-

ticularly worrying for foreigners because of his international prominence as an investor in top Western companies such as Twitter and Citigroup, and in top hotels including the George V in Paris and the Plaza in New York, the banker said. "The government is signalling that it wants to move to a new phase now, away from the crack-down and into other economic reforms," the banker said.

Prince Alwaleed described his confinement as a misunderstanding and said he supported reform efforts by the crown prince. "There are no charges. There are just some discussions between me and the government," he said. The prince appeared greyer and thinner than in his last public appearance, a television interview in October, and had grown a beard while in detention. "I have nothing to hide at all. I'm so comfortable, I'm so relaxed. I shave here, like at home. My barber comes here. I'm like at home, frankly speaking," he said.

He granted the 30-minute interview, including a tour of his suite, partly to disprove rumors about mistreatment and that he had been moved from the hotel to a prison. The prince said he was able to communicate with family members and executives at his business during his detention. Prince Alwaleed showed off the comforts of his gold-accented private office, dining room and kitchen, which was fully stocked with his preferred vegetarian meals.

In the corner of his office sat tennis shoes, which he said he used regularly for exercise. A television played business news programs, and a mug with an image of his own face on it was perched on the desk. After being released, Prince Alwaleed said, he would stay in Saudi Arabia and would return to the challenge of juggling his global business interests. "I will not leave Saudi Arabia, for sure. This is my country." — Agencies



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## Sports

# US Gymnastics board resigning amid sexual abuse scandal

## Congress moves forward with probe of sex abuse in sports

**MICHIGAN:** The remaining directors of the US gymnastics governing body are resigning in the wake of this week's sentencing of the former national team doctor for molesting female athletes, USA Gymnastics said on Friday, complying with a demand by the US Olympic Committee.

The doctor, Larry Nassar, was sentenced on Wednesday to between 40 and 175 years in prison by a judge in Lansing, Michigan, following a week of blistering statements in court by his victims including Olympic gold medal-winning gymnasts Aly Raisman and Jordyn Wieber and other female athletes. He had pleaded guilty to sexual assault charges.

USOC CEO Scott Blackmun on Thursday said USA Gymnastics would be stripped of its standing as a governing body if all board members did not quit, with a new interim board put in place by the end of February. At least five of the 21 members already had resigned as a result of the scandal.

"USA Gymnastics will comply with the USOC requirements," Leslie King, a spokeswoman for USA Gymnastics, said in an email. The senior sports official at Michigan State University, where Nassar previously worked, announced his retirement on Friday. The departure of Athletic Director Mark Hollis came two days after university President Lou Anna Simon stepped down under pressure. Both said they were unaware of Nassar's abuse until it was reported publicly.

"Our campus, and beyond, has been attacked by evil, an individual who broke trust and so much more," Hollis told a news conference, referring to Nassar.

"I'm not running away from anything," Hollis added,

promising to cooperate with investigations into the matter. Michigan Attorney General Bill Schuette, whose office prosecuted Nassar, confirmed on Twitter that the office is investigating the university. U.S. Education Secretary Betsy DeVos announced her department was investigating the university and will "hold MSU accountable for any violations of federal law." "What happened at Michigan State is abhorrent," DeVos said. Nassar, 54, was sentenced for sexually assaulting girls under the guise of medical treatment.

### 'MORAL AUTHORITY'

Some critics who said the USOC could have caught Nassar sooner if it had acted on complaints made by athletes called the USA Gymnastics board resignations too little and too late. Several victims during Nassar's sentencing hearing blamed the USOC, as well, for the abuse.

"I don't think they have the moral authority to speak at all on this issue," John Manly, a lawyer who represents 120 of Nassar's victims including 2012 Olympic gold medalist McKayla Maroney, said of the USOC. "In fact, their board ought to resign and Scott Blackmun ought to resign, too," Manly added.

A USOC spokesman declined to comment on calls for that group's board and Blackmun to resign. USOC board member Susanne Lyons called the USA Gymnastics board resignations "a critical first step" to better protect athletes, but more work remained. A USOC investigation into how Nassar was able to abuse victims for years will include looking at whether any USOC officials themselves looked the other way.



## Michigan State University athletic director retires

## S Korea skating chief apologises for incidents

**SEOUL:** Korea's skating union has apologised for souring the mood ahead of February's Winter Games after a coach was banned for life for striking a short track athlete and a speed skater almost lost her spot at the Olympics due to an administrative error.

Kim Sang-hang, president of the Korea Skating Union (KSU), said in a statement that it would take steps to avoid further problems as South Korea prepares to host next month's Olympics in Pyeongchang.

The incidents sparked a huge backlash in Korea, with almost 200 online petitions calling for the KSU to be reformed or disbanded were lodged with the presidential Blue House. The KSU has seen more than its fair share of controversy over the years, with allegations of favouritism and athlete mistreatment prompting

the government to order a review of the governing body after the Sochi Olympics in 2014. "I sincerely apologise for the issues regarding the national skating team ahead of the Winter Olympics," Kim said in a statement. "We promise there will be no repeat of these problems and will come up with reform measures and implement them as soon as possible."

The KSU handed out a lifetime ban to the coach of Shim Suk-hee on Thursday after he admitted to physically assaulting the 20-year-old, who won gold, silver and bronze medals in Sochi. Public anger with the KSU grew when it emerged speed skater Noh Seon-yeong was told only last week that she would be unable to compete in the team pursuit in Pyeongchang because she had not been able to earn a spot in an individual event.

The KSU was criticized for failing to give Noh the chance to qualify but it blamed the oversight on miscommunication with the International Skating Union. Noh, who had been hoping to win gold to honour her late brother, former short track world champion Jing-kyu, who died of bone cancer in 2016, was surprisingly reinstated on Friday after two Russians who had qualified were dropped from the final list.— Reuters

## Swiss Feuz wins downhill in Garmisch

**GARMISCH-PARTENKIRCHEN:** Reigning downhill world champion Beat Feuz of Switzerland set down an Olympic marker yesterday with a thundering victory in Garmisch-Partenkirchen. The 30-year-old Swiss clocked one minute, 55.39 seconds in the downhill as Vincent Kriechmayr of Austria and Italy's Dominik Paris took joint second after they both finished at 0.18 secs back.

"I was completely at my limits at the end," said a delighted Feuz following his third downhill World Cup win this season. With the Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang beginning in two weeks, the Swiss now has a career total of seven downhill victories, with a further three in the Super-G, on the World Cup circuit.

Aksel Lund Svindal was first down the Kandahar course and held the lead until Feuz, fifth down the piste, shaved 0.28 seconds off his time on the lower section. Norwegian veteran Svindal, 35, eventually finished fourth. Last year's downhill winner in Garmisch, Hannes Reichelt of Austria, was 0.12 quicker than Feuz's time at the fourth time check, but failed to finish fifth at 0.43.

Likewise, Germany's Andreas Sander charged down the course and was leading until the final turn, but a mistake cost him



**LANSING:** File photo shows women from the Michigan based victim advocacy groups End Violent Encounters and Firecracker Foundation cheer for women as they leave the courthouse after the sentencing of disgraced doctor Larry Nassar in Ingham County Circuit Court on January 24, 2018 in Lansing, Michigan. — AFP

Congress also is investigating the matter. A House of Representatives investigation will examine allegations of sexual harassment by officials in other sports, including swimming and taekwondo.

Raisman, who was among the more than 150 accusers who recounted their stories in court, vowed to keep the pressure on sports organizations to see who else knew about Nassar's abuse. Nassar worked for the federation through four Olympic Games, but the allegations did not become public until 2016 in an investigative report by the Indianapolis Star.

"Everyone stood up for him," Raisman told the ABC program "The View." "My work, and the army of survivors, we're not done yet. We still have to hold these organizations accountable." Rachael Denhollander, the

first victim to publicly accuse Nassar in 2016, wrote in a New York Times opinion piece that anyone who protected Nassar should face consequences.

"The first step toward changing the culture that led to this atrocity is to hold enablers of abuse accountable," Denhollander wrote. The US House Energy and Commerce Committee, in announcing its investigation, said sports organizations "must have mechanisms in place to ensure complete oversight and prevent such abuses from occurring."

The House next week is due to vote on legislation passed by the Senate in November that would require amateur athletics governing bodies to report sexual-abuse allegations immediately to law enforcement or a child welfare agency.— Reuters



**GARMISCH-PARTENKIRCHEN:** Switzerland's Beat Feuz poses during the winner ceremony of the men's downhill at the FIS Alpine Skiing World Cup in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, southern Germany, yesterday. Switzerland's Beat Feuz won the competition, Austria's Vincent Kriechmayr and Italy's Dominik Paris placed second.— AFP

nearly a second and he crossed the line in eleventh place.

Olympic champion, Matthias Mayer of Austria, could only manage eighth. Local favourite, Germany's Thomas Dressen, who celebrated the first downhill win of his career in Kitzbuhel last weekend, came within 0.53 of Feuz's time to finish seventh. The racing continues on Sunday in the Bavarian Alps with the men's giant slalom.

Meanwhile, world champion Tessa Worley tuned up for the Olympic Games with her first World Cup success of the season at

Lenzerheide in Switzerland yesterday. The French star led after the first run and held on to beat German Viktoria Rebensburg by 0.07sec with Slovenia's Mate Hrovat third at 1.45s. Worley was registering her 12th overall World Cup triumph ahead of the Pyeongchang Games which get underway on February 9. US ski star and Olympic champion Mikaela Shiffrin, came seventh, almost two seconds off the winner. Shiffrin retained her massive lead in the overall World Cup standings with Rebensburg now just 32 points clear of Worley in the giant slalom.—AFP

## Special Olympics aim to smash down barriers

**LONDON:** Special Olympics chairman Timothy Shriver whose organisation celebrates 50 years in 2018 — dreams of a world in which nobody stands in the way of people with intellectual disabilities who want to take part in sport.

Shriver, whose mother Eunice Kennedy Shriver founded the Special Olympics, oversees a body that has around five million athletes with intellectual disabilities and holds 100,000 events around the world annually. Events to mark this year's anniversary include a "Global Day of Inclusion" at Soldier Field, Chicago, which hosted the first International Special Olympics Summer Games in July 1968. Timothy Shriver, nephew of assassinated US president John F Kennedy, says he hopes ordinary people will help turn the tide of prejudice and enable their goal to be achieved. "I think you can roll back prejudice significantly but not completely," he told AFP in a phone interview from his office in Washington DC.

"The goal is to have unified sports in every school and club round the world. Not most, not some, not a good number, but all. I would say sports clubs at the moment, there are probably perhaps four percent who do." "There is a long way to go but we live in an era when change can happen quickly and we think in our 50th anniversary it can happen."

Shriver, a teacher by profession, who became chairman of the Special Olympics in 1996, says when ordinary

people speak up the issue will gain momentum. "When the average person says that and the health centre opens up and doctors treat them (people with intellectual disabilities) and schools are open as well as communities to them and a job is within reach, once we get to that tipping point of the community then we have a chance. And that is what we are looking for."

### 'UNFAIR AND DEHUMANISING'

Shriver's organisation holds World Games every two years, alternating between summer and winter events, with the next competition in Abu Dhabi in 2019. The Special Olympics offer more than 30 Olympic-style individual and team sports from alpine skiing to volleyball.

Shriver describes the amount of prejudice that still exists as "astounding". "There are doctors who refuse to treat people with intellectual disabilities, healthcare institutions that say to mothers 'your child is hopeless', schools who don't have programmes and companies who say we won't hire people like you," he said. "It is infuriating, frustrating, unfair and dehumanising and this is why we exist, to oppose it and overcome it and end it. Until discrimination is ended we will not cease. That is the bottom line."

### 'GOOD WILL WIN'

Shriver, whose father Sargent is known as the architect of the "War on Poverty" in the 1960s and in 1972 was running mate to defeated Democrat presidential candidate George McGovern, is now pushing to reach the estimated 500,000 refugees with intellectual disabilities. Special Olympics Europe Eurasia held a forum, "On the Margins", in Amsterdam this week to draw attention to the issues facing refugees with intellectual disabilities attended by various UN bodies.

"When I had the chance to meet with Pope Francis I



**NEWARK:** File photo taken on June 15, 2014 shows Tim Shriver, Chairman of The Board of Directors, Special Olympics attends the 2014 Special Olympics USA Games Opening Ceremony at Prudential Center on June 15, 2014 in Newark, New Jersey.— AFP

told him we stand for anyone who has been excluded, is on the periphery, anyone society has said does not belong here," said Shriver.

"Our athletes say 'come and play with us'. It is our DNA, we are not experts on refugees, or indeed a lot of problematic issues like gender and race but we are experts on the idea of including people and no one is better at that than our athletes."

Shriver was a co-producer on the Steven Spielberg film "Amistad" about a revolt by African slaves on board a Spanish-owned slave ship and he believes there is a comparison between their leader, (Joseph) Cinque, and his athletes. "The hero is not the people who helped but the unjustly incarcerated slave," said Shriver. "He leads the rebellion, he leads and inspires the lawyers and challenges the constitution and wins his freedom.— AFP

Sports

# DeMarcus Cousins carried off court as Pelicans defeat Rockets

## LeBron scores 26 points as Cleveland rolled past Indiana

**LOS ANGELES:** Anthony Davis had 27 points and 11 rebounds, and the New Orleans Pelicans won their season-high fourth game in a row by holding off the Houston Rockets, 115-113, on Friday night at the Smoothie King Center in New Orleans. The Pelicans, who won for the seventh time in their last eight games, had won three consecutive games on four previous occasions, but each time lost as they tried to win their fourth in a row. With less than 10 seconds remaining, Pelicans All-Star DeMarcus Cousins was helped off the court after suffering a non-contact left leg injury. ESPN, citing league sources, reports that the Pelicans believe he has a torn ACL and will be out for the season. Cousins had his second triple-double in three games, finishing with 15 points, 13 rebounds and 11 assists.



**TRAIL BLAZERS 107, MAVERICKS 93**  
Damian Lillard and CJ McCollum combined for 49 points and Portland broke things open in the fourth quarter en route to a win over Dallas. Lillard scored 29 points and McCollum added 20 for the Trail Blazers (27-22), who won their fourth straight game and gave coach Terry Stotts his 250th career coaching victory. Ed Davis had a big game off the bench, scoring 15 points on 6-for-7 shooting, grabbing 13 rebounds and blocking three shots.

**Clippers 109, Grizzlies 100**  
Lou Williams registered 40 points, 10 assists and four steals to lead Los Angeles to a victory over Memphis. Milos Teodosic scored a career-best 18 points for the Clippers, who

halted a three-game slide. DeAndre Jordan contributed 15 points and nine rebounds, Blake Griffin had 14 points and eight boards and Wesley Johnson matched his career best of six steals. Mario Chalmers had 17 points and 10 assists, Jarrell Martin also scored 17 points and Dillon Brooks had 15 for the Grizzlies, who lost for the third time in the past four games.

**76ERS 97, SPURS 78**  
Joel Embiid had 18 points and 14 rebounds as Philadelphia stunned San Antonio. It was Embiid's fifth double-double in the last seven games. Ben Simmons scored 21 points on 10-of-11 shooting, Dario Saric added 15 and Justin Anderson had 12 for the Sixers, who moved three games above .500 and won for just the second time in San Antonio since 1986. Timothe Luwawu-Cabarrot also had 10. The Sixers had dropped 13 in a row in San Antonio and hadn't posted a victory since January of 2004. Randy Ayers was the Sixers' coach that season when he took over for Larry Brown.

**LAKERS 108, BULLS 103**  
Los Angeles used a series of late runs to down Chicago for its fourth straight victory without star rookie Lonzo Ball. Brandon Ingram scored 25 points for Los Angeles, which has



**NEW ORLEANS:** Anthony Davis #23 of the New Orleans Pelicans dunks the ball against the Houston Rockets on Friday at Smoothie King Center in New Orleans, Louisiana. — AFP

been without Ball for its last six games since he sprained his left knee on Jan. 13. Despite Ball's absence, the Lakers were able to overcome a hot 3-point shooting Bulls squad that rallied from two double-digit deficits. Chicago used the hot hand from outside to go on a 16-1 run in the fourth quarter as Nikola Mirotic and Denzel Valentine each hit a pair of triples to put their team ahead 92-90. Mirotic, who scored 18 points, and Valentine, who had 16, each made four 3-pointers. The Bulls made 17 of 36 from behind the arc.

**KNICKS 107, SUNS 85**  
Center Enes Kanter had 20 points and 10 rebounds for his 20th double of the season and Kristaps Porzingis added 19 points as New York ended a seven-game road trip with a win over Phoenix. Reserve Trey Burke tied a season high in his second straight 18-point game, Tim Hardaway Jr. had 15 points and Courtney Lee had 11 for the Knicks (22-28), who never trailed while breaking a three-game losing streak. — Reuters

### NBA results/standings

Dallas 93, Portland 107; San Antonio 78, Philadelphia 97; Cleveland 115, Indiana 108; Toronto 93, Utah 97; Phoenix 85, New York 107; Chicago 103, LA Lakers 108; Memphis 100, LA Clippers 109; Milwaukee 116, Brooklyn 91; New Orleans 115, Houston 113; Charlotte 121, Atlanta 110.

Eastern Conference				Western Conference			
W	L	PCT	GB	Golden State	39	10	79.6
Boston	35	14	71.4	Houston	34	13	72.3
Toronto	32	15	68.1	San Antonio	32	19	62.7
Cleveland	28	19	59.6	Minnesota	31	20	60.8
Miami	27	21	56.3	Portland	27	22	55.1
Washington	26	22	54.2	New Orleans	27	21	56.3
Philadelphia	24	21	53.3	Portland	27	22	55.1
Milwaukee	25	22	53.2	Denver	25	23	52.1
Indiana	26	23	53.1	LA Clippers	24	24	50.0
Detroit	22	24	47.8	Utah	21	28	42.9
New York	22	28	44.0	LA Lakers	19	29	39.6
Charlotte	20	27	42.6	Memphis	17	31	35.4
Brooklyn	18	31	36.7	Phoenix	17	32	34.7
Chicago	18	31	36.7	Dallas	16	33	32.7
Orlando	14	33	29.8	Sacramento	15	33	31.3
Atlanta	14	34	29.2				

## Chinese prodigy Li leads from McIlroy in Dubai

**DUBAI:** China's Li Haotong displayed his superstar potential as he outscored Rory McIlroy by four shots in the third round to take a one-shot lead into the final day of the \$3 million Dubai Desert Classic. Starting his third round yesterday trailing leader McIlroy by three shots, the 22-year-old Li put together a superb round of eight-under-par 64 to finish on 20-under after 54 holes.

Four-time major champion McIlroy came back to the course early in the morning to complete his second round and made five birdies in seven holes. However, he could not get going in the third round and found himself one-over at the turn. But a much better back nine gave him a third-round 68 and three-day tally of 19-under 197.

Frenchman Alex Levy had a hole in one at the fourth en route to a 65, and he is tied third at 17 under par with South African youngster Haydn Porteous, who also shot 65. England's Andy Sullivan made a big move with a 63 to rise to fifth place at 200.

Li made four birdies on either half of the golf course and never looked in trouble because of his impressive ball-striking. Even when he was not hitting it close, his short game saved him on a couple of occa-



**DUBAI:** Li Haotong of China plays a shot during day three of the Dubai Desert Classic at Emirates Golf Club yesterday, in Dubai. — AFP

sions, including a good up-and-down on the 14th hole.

"Played really solid. Especially had a couple up-and-downs and was quite happy to shoot eight-under on this course," said Li, who will become the first male Chinese player to crack the top 50 in the world rankings if he goes on to win.

"I just wanted to play by myself and play my game. I thought if I just stayed patient, I will play good. So just did that all day."

McIlroy, winner of the tournament in 2009 and 2015, is looking to become the second three-time champion here after Ernie Els.

A couple of loose drives resulted in a par on the par-5 third hole and a bogey on the par-4 eighth, and there was another dropped shot on the par-3 fourth hole. But the world number 11, who made a comeback to competitive golf after more than 100 days out last week in Abu Dhabi, fought back on the back nine. —AFP

## Tiger Woods makes cut with closing birdie at Torrey Pines

**LA JOLLA:** Tiger Woods birdied his final hole on Friday capping a back-nine rally that saw him make the cut in his return to the US PGA Tour at the Farmers Insurance Open. The 14-time major champion wrestled four birdies from his last nine holes on the North Course at Torrey Pines, carding a one-under par 71. That was just enough

to make the cut-his first since the Wyndham Championship in August of 2015 where he finished tied for 10th. Since then Woods has battled back trouble that sidelined him for all of 2016. He is playing his first official tournament since missing the cut here last year in an abortive comeback bid that ended with spinal fusion surgery in April.

"I was grinding my way around the golf course today," said Woods, who hit just three of 14 fairways and nine of 18 greens in regulation. "I fought hard. I was trying to post a number, which I was able to do." Woods was one shot outside the cut line when arrived at his final hole, the par-five ninth.

He was in the right rough off the tee and his second shot left him on the edge of the green, 75 feet from the pin. He nestled

his first putt a few feet from the cup and made that for the needed birdie-capping a 71 for a total of 143 and offering a big smile to cheering fans.

Woods was 10-shots off the 36-hole lead held by American Ryan Palmer, who carded a five-under par 67 on the North Course for 11-under 133. Spain's defending champion Jon Rahm, who could seize the world number one ranking from Dustin Johnson with a victory, carded a six-under 66 and was alone in second on 134.

Luke List carded a 66 to share third place on 135 with first-round leader Tony Finau, who carded a 70. Woods had opened the tournament on Thursday with a respectable even-par 72 on the South Course-scene of his 14th and most recent major title at the 2008 US Open. But he struggled off the tee all day-

sending his first drive at least 50 yards left. He laid up in the rough and two-putted for par at the par-five 10th from about 40 feet. But he couldn't get out of trouble at the par-four 13th, his fourth hole of the day, after another tee shot went left into a scrub hazard. An irked Woods took an unplayable lie, then missed the green. His chip rolled through the putting surface and he walked off with a double-bogey that put him two-over and outside the cutline.

### SOLID TURNAROUND

Woods responded with four birdies coming home. He gave his massive gallery-sent scampering several times by his errant drives-something to cheer about for the first time all day when he rolled in a 50-foot birdie bomb at the first hole.

## Second best no longer good enough for Irish: Murray

Slams with a stirring win in Dublin last year-but Murray still believes Eddie Jones's English side are a step up from them. "We have matured and progressed, not to the level England have, but we finished second last year and were pissed off," said Murray. "In years gone by we'd have said we had a decent Six Nations. We don't go on about wanting to be the best team in the world but we do not prepare just to give it a go. Those days are long gone."

Murray, whose world class halfback pairing with Johnny Sexton will be pivotal to Irish chances of dethroning England, says despite the lofty ambitions he has both at national and provincial level the death of his then Munster coach Anthony 'Axel' Foley made him take stock of the pressure he was putting on himself.

Foley, a robust backrow forward for Munster and Ireland in his playing days, was found dead aged just 42 due to a pulmonary oedema in his Paris hotel room on the day of a European Champions Cup match in 2016. "Axel's passing has had a massive impact on me and it will be the same for thousands of people with Dolores (Riordan the Cranberries singer who also hailed from Munster and was found dead in her London hotel room this month)," said Murray. —AFP

"It was nice to get one to fall in there and get something positive going into the back nine," Woods said. He got back to even par with a birdie at the fifth, a short par-five, where a solid drive trickled into the first cut of rough and his second shot left him off the green but his chip left him an easy birdie.

"My short game's been good all week," Woods said. "I'm just trying to get used to the firmness of the greens. We can hear the ball land from the fairway." Woods got up and down for birdie at the seventh, but was back outside the cut line after a bogey at the par-three eighth.

"I was just trying to get under par for the day," he said of his inward push. "I thought that would be a good, solid turnaround from being two-over at the turn." —AFP

## Sports

# Madushanka's hat-trick on debut seals title for S Lanka

## Fourth bowler in history to claim hat-trick on debut

### SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at close of play of final between Bangladesh and Sri Lanka yesterday at Mirpur, Bangladesh.

#### Sri Lanka win by 79 runs

##### Sri Lanka 1st innings

D Gunathilaka c Tamim Iqbal b Mehedi	6
U Tharanga b Mustafizur Rahman	56
K Mendis c Mahmudullah b Mashrafe	28
N Dickwella c S Rahman b Mohd Saifuddin	42
D Chandimal b Rubel Hossain	45
T Perera c Tamim b Rubel	2
A Gunaratne lbw Rubel	6
A Dananjaya c Mohd Mithun b Mustafizur	17
S Madushanka b Rubel Hossain	7
S Lakmal Run Out Mushfiqur Rahim	2
D Chameera Not Out	1
Extras 0b 5lb 2nb Open 2w	9
Total (50.0 overs)	221 all out
Bowling: Mehedi Hasan 10-0-53-1-5.30; Mashrafe Mortaza 7-0-35-1-5.00 (lw);	
Mustafizur Rahman 10-0-29-2-2.90 (lw) (Inb); Mahmudullah 4-0-18-0-4.50; Mohammad Saifuddin 4-0-15-1-3.75; Shakib Al Hasan 5-0-20-0-4.00; Rubel Hossain 10-0-46-4-4.60 (Inb).	

#### Bangladesh 1st innings

T Iqbal c Dananjaya b Chameera	3
M Mithun Run Out Thisara Perera	10
S Rahman c Gunaratne b Chameera	2
M Rahim c Tharanga b Dananjaya	22
Mahmudullah c Tharanga b Madushanka	76
M Hasan c&b Akila Dananjaya	5
M Saifuddin Run Out Asela Gunaratne	8
M Mortaza c Mendis b Madushanka	5
Rubel Hossain b Madushanka	0
Mustafizur Rahman Not Out	0
Extras 1b 4lb 0nb Open 6w	11
Total (41.1 overs)	142 all out
Bowling: Suranga Lakmal 9-2-29-0-3.22; Dushmantha Chameera 8-1-17-2-2.12 (lw); Thisara Perera 7-0-31-0-4.43; Shehan Madushanka 6-1-26-3-4.22 (2w); Akila Dananjaya 9-0-30-2-3.33 (2w); Danushka Gunathilaka 2-1-4-0-2.00 (lw).	

**DHAKA:** Shehan Madushanka became the fourth bowler in history to claim a hat-trick on debut as Sri Lanka crushed Bangladesh by 79 runs to win the tri-nation one-day international tournament in Dhaka yesterday.

The 22-year-old pacer claimed Bangladesh's last three wickets before finishing with 3-26 as Sri Lanka defended their modest score of 221 runs by bowling out Bangladesh for 142 in 41.1 overs.

Madushanka took the wickets of Rubel Hossain and Mashrafe Mortaza in the last two balls of his sixth over before he removed Mahmudullah Riyad in the next over to complete his hat-trick. He joined South Africa's Kagiso Rabada, Bangladesh's Tajjil Islam and teammate Wanidu Hasaranga who have also achieved the rare feat.

“The guys put their heart and soul in the practices”

Mahmudullah staged a valiant fight for Bangladesh with 76 off 92 balls but he lacked support from other batsmen, who missed the batting of all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan due to a finger injury he suffered in the game.

Medium pacer Dushmantha Chameera and spinner Akila Dananjaya claimed two wickets each for Sri Lanka. “We are over the moon... the guys put their heart and soul in the practices and then when they go in to the middle they put their heart and soul,” said Sri Lanka captain Dinesh Chandimal.

“They had the plans and they executed well, and credit goes to everyone who played the series.” Bangladesh captain Mashrafe Mortaza refused to use Shakib's injury as an excuse. “When he fell, we were



**DHAKA:** Sri Lanka cricketer Akila Dananjaya (L) celebrates after the dismissal of Bangladesh cricketer Mushfiqur Rahim during the final one day international (ODI) match in the Tri-Nations Series between Bangladesh and Sri Lanka in Dhaka yesterday.— AFP

sure he wouldn't be playing. We saw his hand. We knew it wasn't possible for him to bat. So we had asked the others not to think about it. I wouldn't use it as an excuse when chasing 220-odd runs,” he said.

“Everyone is disappointed in the dressing room. We expected to win having come this far,” he added.

Earlier, fast bowler Rubel claimed four wickets to help Bangladesh dismiss Sri Lanka for 221 runs on a sluggish pitch at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium. Hossain, who returned with the figures of 4-46, was

ably supported by fellow paceman Mustafizur Rahman (2-29) as the hosts made regular strikes after the visitors elected to bat first.

Upul Tharanga top-scored with 56 off 99 balls while skipper Dinesh Chandimal added 45. Wicketkeeper-batsman Niroshan Dickwella made 42. Sri Lanka will now play two Test matches against Bangladesh with the first Test beginning in the port city of Chittagong on January 31. The Test series will follow two Twenty20 internationals between the two teams. — AFP

## Stokes tops IPL bidding war despite court date

**BANGALORE:** England's star allrounder Ben Stokes topped the Indian Premier League auction yesterday selling for \$1.96 million despite a looming court case for assault. On a day in which the eight IPL teams spent over \$50m on talent, Stokes's deal with Rajasthan Royals came ahead of Indian batsmen Lokesh Rahul and Manish Pandey and Australian Chris Lynn, Mitchell Starc and Glenn Maxwell in the top prices paid. But England captain Joe Root and wicketkeeper Jonny Bairstow, and star batsmen Chris Gayle of West Indies and Hashim Amla of South Africa failed to attract bids. Veteran Sri Lanka pacer Lasith Malinga also went unsold but the franchises have the option of getting them back on the auction table Sunday. Rajasthan Royals, returning to the world's wealthiest cricket league from a two-year match-fixing ban, paid \$200,000 less than the record laid out for Stokes last year by Rising Pune Supergiant.

However, Stokes was delighted with the deal. “Buzzing to be representing @rajasthanroyals in this years IPL (IPL) and great to be playing alongside @josbuttler,” he wrote on twitter. Though Stokes's legal team has assured the IPL that he will be available for the full April 7-May 27 season, all eyes will be on his court hearing on February 13.

If he is stopped from playing the whole season then the Royal have the right to find a replacement for Stokes, one of the best performers last season, who attracted bids from several franchises. His new team are desperate for success. The Royals were inaugural IPL champions in 2008 under Australian legend Shane Watson, but were barred for two seasons with Chennai Super Kings in 2015 over a spot-fixing scandal. Stokes edged out Australian batsmen Steve Smith and David Warner as the highest-paid foreigner in the IPL. Smith and Warner were retained by their teams for



Chairman of Royals Challengers Bangalore Amrit Thomas.

\$1.9 million each to avoid the auction. India captain Virat Kohli secured a record \$2.7 million deal before the auction to stay with Royal Challengers Bangalore.

#### PUNJAB THWARTED

Rahul and Pandey came just behind Stokes in the bidding war. Sunrisers Hyderabad got Rahul and Kings XI Punjab picked Pandey for \$1.7m each. Among the Australian stars, Kolkata Knight Riders snapped up prolific-scorer Lynn for \$1.5m and left-arm pacer Starc for \$1.47m. Delhi Daredevils got all-rounder Maxwell for \$1.41m.

“Thanks for getting me on board. I am really excited to join the KKR family for this season,” Starc said in a video message on twitter. Among other top purchases, England pacer Chris Woakes was bought by Royal Challengers Bangalore for \$1.16m and Indian spinner Ravichandran Ashwin went for \$1.19 million to Kings XI Punjab.

Punjab were thwarted in several bids by the IPL's ‘right to match’ rule under which a player's former side can match the winning bid to claim him back. Punjab lost Indian opener Shikhar Dhawan to Sunrisers Hyderabad after bidding \$818,000 and South Africa skipper Faf du Plessis to Chennai who will have to equal their \$250,000 bid.

Sunrisers also used ‘right to match’ to steal Afghan leg-spinner Rashid Khan, 19, from Punjab after they made the highest bid of \$1.41m. A total of 578 players are up for auction, hoping for lucrative deals after the IPL recently signed a new \$2.5-billion media deal. Pakistan players are kept out of the league as sporting ties between India and Pakistan are frozen because of the tense political relations between the neighbours. — AFP

## India win after South Africa collapse

**JOHANNESBURG:** Ishant Sharma and Jasprit Bumrah sparked a dramatic collapse as India beat South Africa by 63 runs on the fourth day of the third and final Test at the Wanderers Stadium yesterday.

Dean Elgar and Hashim Amla shared a century second-wicket partnership which took South Africa more than halfway towards their target of 241 before Amla's dismissal for 52 started a collapse in which nine wickets fell for 53 runs.

Sharma and Bumrah claimed two wickets each to start the slide before Mohammed Shami ripped through the lower order, taking five for 28. Elgar was left to fight alone, carrying his bat for 86 off 240 balls.

The win ensured India stayed comfortably on top of the International Cricket Council Test rankings despite losing the series 2-1. South Africa would have drawn level on points if they had completed a clean sweep.

The hosts were looking comfortable as Elgar and Amla compiled a partnership of 119, although it took four hours and 50.4 overs of hard work on a difficult pitch. It was only the third century partnership of the series. But India hit back with the wickets of Amla and AB de Villiers in quick succession shortly before tea. Amla fell with the total on 124 when he clipped Sharma firmly towards midwicket and Hardik Pandya dived to his right to hold a good catch. Amla had faced 140 balls in making his second half-century of the match.

De Villiers started confidently with a boundary off Sharma but was out for six when he was squared up by a lifting delivery from Jasprit Bumrah which flew off the shoulder of his bat to Ajinkya Rahane at gully.

The same two bowlers struck again immediately after tea. South African captain Faf du Plessis was bowled by a ball from Sharma which cut back and kept low and the out-of-form Quinton de Kock was trapped leg before wicket first ball by Bumrah.

Vernon Philander batted brightly to make 10 before he pulled a ball from Shami onto his stumps, to be followed in quick succession by Phehlukwayo, Kagiso Rabada and Morne Morkel, all without scoring.

Phehlukwayo was bowled by Shami, Rabada was caught at first slip by Bhuvneshwar Kumar and Morkel was bowled by Shami. Elgar, having batted with unflappable concentration for more than five hours, tried to play some shots and keep the strike after being joined by last man Lungi Ngidi. He hit a six off Kumar before Ngidi was caught behind off Shami.

Conditions remained difficult for batting but there were none of the extreme bounces and deviations that prompted the umpires to halt play shortly before the scheduled close on Friday. But once the Elgar-Amla partnership was broken new batsmen were unable to play with any confidence. — AFP



**JOHANNESBURG:** South Africa's batsman Dean Elgar plays a shot during the fourth day of the third cricket Test match between South Africa and India at Wanderers cricket ground yesterday. — AFP

### SCOREBOARD

**JOHANNESBURG:** Scoreboard at close of play on the fourth day of 3rd Test between South Africa and India yesterday at Johannesburg, South Africa.

<b>India win by 63 runs</b>	38-1-3.17; Andile Phehlukwayo 3-0-15-0-5.00 (lw).
<b>India 1st innings: 187 all out</b>	
<b>South Africa 1st innings: 194 all out</b>	
<b>India 2nd innings</b>	
Murali Vijay b Kagiso Rabada	25
Parthiv Patel c Markram b Philander	16
Lokesh Rahul c Plessis b Philander	16
Cheteshwar Pujara c Plessis b Morkel	1
Virat Kohli b Kagiso Rabada	41
Ajinkya Rahane c de Kock b Morkel	48
Hardik Pandya c&b Kagiso Rabada	4
Bhuvneshwar Kumar c de Kock b Morkel	33
Mohammed Shami c de Villiers b Ngidi	27
Ishant Sharma Not out	7
Jasprit Bumrah c Rabada b Philander	0
Extras 5b 12lb 0nb Open 12w	29
Total (80.1 overs)	247 all out
Fall of Wickets: 1-17 Patel, 2-51 Rahul, 3-57 Pujara, 4-100 Vijay, 5-134 Kohli, 6-148 Pandya, 7-203 Rahane, 8-238 Shami, 9-240 Kumar, 10-247 Bumrah.	
Bowling: Vernon Philander 21.1-5-61-3-2.88; Kagiso Rabada 23-5-69-3-3.00 (lw);	
Morne Morkel 21-6-47-3-2.24 (2w); Lungi Ngidi 12-2-	
<b>South Africa 2nd innings</b>	
Aiden Markram c Parthiv Patel b Shami	4
Dean Elgar Not out	86
Hashim Amla c Pandya b I Sharma	52
AB de Villiers c Rahane b Bumrah	6
Faf du Plessis b Ishant Sharma	2
Quinton de Kock lbw Jasprit Bumrah	0
Vernon Philander b Mohammed Shami	10
Andile Phehlukwayo b Mohammed Shami	0
Kagiso Rabada c Pujara b Bhuvneshwar Kumar	0
Morne Morkel b Mohammed Shami	0
Lungi Ngidi c (Sub) b Mohammed Shami	4
Extras 7b 0lb 0nb open 6w	13
Total (73.3 overs)	177 all out
Fall of Wickets: 1-5 Markram, 2-124 Amla, 3-131 de Villiers, 4-144 du Plessis, 5-145 de Kock, 6-157 Philander, 7-157 Phehlukwayo, 8-160 Rabada, 9-161 Morkel, 10-177 Ngidi.	
Bowling: Bhuvneshwar Kumar 18-4-39-1-2.17; Mohammed Shami 12-3-28-5-2.24; Jasprit Bumrah 21-3-57-2-2.71 (lw); Ishant Sharma 16-3-31-2-1.94; Hardik Pandya 6-1-15-0-2.50 (lw).	

### Top ten buys on first day of IPL auction

**BANGALORE:** With more than \$60 million to spend, the eight Indian Premier League teams splashed out again yesterday for the 2018 season. Here are the top 10 buys by value:

- Ben Stokes (England - allrounder) Rajasthan Royals \$1.96m
- Manish Pandey (India - batsman) Sunrisers Hyderabad \$1.7m
- Lokesh Rahul (India - batsman) Kings XI Punjab \$1.7m
- Chris Lynn (Australia - batsman) Kolkata Knight Riders for \$1.5m
- Mitchell Starc (Australia - pacer) Kolkata Knight Riders \$1.47m
- Glenn Maxwell (Australia - all-rounder) Delhi Daredevils \$1.41m
- Rashid Khan (Afghanistan - spin bowler) Sunrisers Hyderabad \$1.41m
- Krunal Pandya (India - all-rounder) Mumbai Indians \$1.38m
- Sanju Samson (India - wicketkeeper-batsman) Rajasthan Royals \$1.25m
- Kedar Jadhav (India - all-rounder) Chennai Super Kings \$1.22m. — AFP

Sports

# Will Grigg stars with two goals as Wigan shock West Ham in FA Cup

## Swansea and Huddersfield play out to a 1-1 draw

LONDON: Will Grigg scored twice as third-tier Wigan knocked 10-man West Ham out of the FA Cup with a 2-0 win yesterday. Wigan have slumped down English football's ladder since winning the FA Cup in 2013 but the League One leaders rekindled memories of that run to Wembley as they reached the last 16 of this season's edition at the expense of David Moyes's Premier League side.

Northern Ireland striker Grigg made it five goals in as many Cup ties this season when he put Wigan ahead as early as the seventh minute with a towering header past England goalkeeper Joe Hart. To make matters worse for the Hammers they were a man down four minutes into the second half when Arthur Masuaku was sent-off, having appeared to spit at Wigan's Nick Powell.

Grigg made it 2-0 from the penalty spot shortly after the hour mark following Reece Burke's handball in the box. Elsewhere struggling Premier League sides Swansea and Huddersfield played out 1-1 draws with lower-division Notts County and Birmingham City respectively, leading to unwanted replays for teams whose priority is remaining in the top flight.

The Swans, bottom of the Premier League, took the lead when Luciano Narsingh scored just his second goal in 31 games for the Welsh club on the stroke of half-time. But fourth-tier County equalised in the 62nd minute through Jon Stead.

It was a similar story when a much-changed Huddersfield side, indicating manager David Wagner's preference for Premier League survival over a Cup run, took an early lead against Birmingham through a Steve Mounie header. Lukas Jutkiewicz, however, drew a Birmingham side battling to avoid relegation from the second-tier Championship level in the 54th minute.

Premier League Brighton were also on the verge of a replay until Glenn Murray's 90th-minute goal secured a 1-0 win over Championship side Middlesbrough. Nottingham Forest's FA Cup run ended just one round after they knocked out holders Arsenal courtesy of a 2-1 defeat by Championship rivals Hull.

The first of this weekend's all-Premier League ties saw Southampton beat Watford 1-0 as Jack Stephens marked his 24th birthday with a goal to ensure Javi Gracia's reign as Hornets manager started with a defeat.

Fourth-tier Newport County will hope to pull off a classic 'giantkilling' when they face eight-times winners Tottenham Hotspur at their Rodney Parade ground in south Wales later Saturday. Liverpool play West Brom at Anfield in the last of yesterday's ties. Chelsea face Newcastle in another all top-flight clash today when league leaders Manchester City continue their bid for an unprecedented 'quadruple' of major trophies away to second-tier Cardiff. — AFP



### Javi Gracia's reign as Hornets manager start with a defeat



SOUTHAMPTON: Southampton's German-born Portuguese defender Cedric Soares (L) nearly puts the ball in from a cross during the English FA Cup fourth round football match between Southampton and Watford at St Mary's Stadium in Southampton, southern England yesterday. — AFP

## Real Madrid roar back with big win at Valencia

MADRID: Cristiano Ronaldo scored two penalties as stumbling Liga champions Real Madrid hit back from their miserable start to 2018 with a rousing 4-1 win at Valencia yesterday to move within two points of recapturing third place in La Liga.

Ronaldo sent goalkeeper Neto the wrong way to slot in his 100th penalty for club and country in the 16th minute after the Portuguese was felled in the box following a lightning quick breakaway from a Valencia corner. He made no mistake again from the spot in the 38th after Karim Benzema had been pushed over in the area by defender Martin Montoya, stretching Madrid's lead and moving on to eight goals in the league this season, including four penalties. Valencia pulled themselves back into contention in the 58th minute when Santi Mina headed home from a corner while Real goalkeeper Keylor Navas denied Dani Parejo an equaliser with an impressive save with his foot.

Real had gone into the game on the back of being dumped out of the King's Cup by Leganes in midweek and were missing captain Sergio Ramos and midfielder Isco through injury but produced a gritty display, defending well and striking with intent on the counter-attack. Brazilian left back Marcelo made sure of the points with a thumping first-time left-foot strike in the 84th minute and Toni Kroos added the fourth, capping a second win in five league games for Madrid and their first away league victory since beating Getafe on Oct 14. Real remained fourth in the standings on 38 points, two behind Valencia and with a game in hand but they are 16 adrift of runaway leaders Barcelona, who host Alaves today. — Reuters



VALENCIA: Real Madrid's Brazilian defender Marcelo (R) vies with Valencia's Spanish midfielder Carlos Soler during the Spanish league football match between Valencia CF and Real Madrid CF at the Mestalla stadium in Valencia yesterday. — AFP

## Bayern roar back to floor Hoffenheim

BERLIN: Robert Lewandowski netted his 18th Bundesliga goal this season as runaway leaders Bayern Munich came from two goals down to thrash Hoffenheim 5-2 yesterday. Bayern have won 18 of their last 19 games and are 16 points clear in the table. However, a dreadful start left Bayern 2-0 down at home—the first time that has happened since January 1977 — after just 12 minutes.

Bayern's Joshua Kimmich brought down Serge Gnabry in the area with two minutes gone and the referee pointed to the spot. Gnabry, who returns to Bayern next season when his loan spell at Hoffenheim ends, had his penalty attempt saved by Bayern goalkeeper Sven Ulreich.

However, Mark Uth tapped home the rebound with three minutes gone. Bayern's fortunes dived further when Jerome Boateng's poor pass was snapped up by Gnabry who drove the ball into the bottom left-hand corner to stun home fans. However, Bayern were level with 25 minutes gone.

Lewandowski began the charge by tapping home Kimmich's shot and Boateng made amends by heading home to make it 2-2 at the break. Kingsley Coman gave Bayern the lead for the first time with an hour gone before Arturo Vidal headed home on 66 minutes. To compound Hoffenheim's misery, their ex-striker Sandro Wagner scored his first Bayern goal on 90 minutes to complete the comeback.

Arsenal-target Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang pro-

duced a poor display on his Borussia Dortmund return in their 2-2 draw against Freiburg whose captain Nils Petersen netted twice. Aubameyang was dropped for Dortmund's two previous games as his club reportedly rejected a second bid by Arsenal of 58 million euros (\$72m). The German club are reportedly holding out for 70 million euros for their top scorer. Dortmund went ahead when Shinji Kagawa volleyed home his second goal in as many games on nine minutes. Aubameyang, who headed over on 32 minutes, was booed by home fans whenever he went near the ball.

Freiburg drew level on 21 minutes when Petersen fired home at the near post. Petersen grabbed his second with a spectacular shot after pouncing on a Nuri Sahin mistake and lobbed Dortmund goalkeeper Roman Burki from 30 metres. However, Germany Under-21 left-back Jeremy Toljan spared Dortmund's blushes with a 93rd-minute equaliser. Dortmund are fifth in the table after their third straight draw.

Schalke reclaimed second spot from Eintracht Frankfurt, who beat Borussia Moenchengladbach on Friday, with a 2-0 win at VfB Stuttgart. Brazil centre-back Naldo gave the Royal Blues the lead before Morocco's Amine Harit slotted in a penalty.

Fourth-placed RB Leipzig were held to a 1-1 draw at home to second-from-bottom Hamburg, whose new head coach Bernd Hollerbach picked up a point on his first game in charge.

Portugal midfielder Bruma gave Leipzig the lead on nine minutes, finishing a counter-attack when Hamburg's Aaron Hunt lost the ball. However, Hamburg broke their run of four straight defeats when Filip Kostic hit their equaliser on 29 minutes.

Bottom-side Cologne were denied a fourth straight victory in their 1-1 draw against Augsburg. Milos Jojic curled in a superb free-kick on 40 minutes before Brazilian midfielder Caibui headed home an equaliser 22 minutes from time. — AFP

## Kuwait jet skiers win four trophies

DUBAI: Kuwait jet skiers won four trophies in Heat II of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) championship, which concluded in Dubai yesterday.

Rashed Al-Dawwas, of Kuwait, told KUNA he was thrilled to win the GP4 race and its trophy and leading the general standing of this category.

He said his teammate, Yusuf Al-Abdulrazzaq, came third in the GP1 category.

Abdulaziz Al-Najdi and Humoud Al-Mudhayan, also from Kuwait, won trophies of the 3rd and 5th places in the GP2 category, said Al-Dawwas.

He added that the races were tough and the jet skiers were talented. He said the next Heat would be held in two weeks "and we will continue achieving positive results, God willing." — KUNA

Live		Matches on TV	
		(Local Timings)	
<b>SPANISH LEAGUE</b>			
Leganes v Espanyol	beIN SPORTS HD 3	14:00	
Atletico de Madrid v Las Palmas	beIN SPORTS HD 3	18:15	
Sevilla v Getafe	beIN SPORTS HD 3	20:30	
Barcelona v Deportivo Alaves	beIN SPORTS HD 3	22:45	
<b>ITALIAN CALCIO LEAGUE</b>			
Spal v Internazionale Milano	beIN SPORTS HD 4	14:30	
Fiorentina v Hellas Verona	beIN SPORTS HD 1	17:00	
Napoli v Bologna	beIN SPORTS HD 4	17:00	
Torino v Benevento	beIN SPORTS HD 9	17:00	
Genoa v Udinese Calcio	beIN SPORTS HD 7	17:00	
Crotone v Cagliari Calcio	beIN SPORTS HD 8	17:00	
Milan v Lazio	beIN SPORTS HD 4	20:00	
Roma v Sampdoria	beIN SPORTS HD 4	22:45	
<b>GERMAN BUNDESLIGA</b>			
Bayer 04 Leverkusen v Mainz	beIN SPORTS HD 5	17:30	
Hannover v Wolfsburg	beIN SPORTS HD 5	20:00	
<b>FRENCH LEAGUE</b>			
LOSC Lille v Strasbourg	beIN SPORTS HD 6	17:00	
Girondins de Bordeaux v Olympique Lyonnais	beIN SPORTS HD 6	19:00	
Olympique Marseille v Monaco	beIN SPORTS HD 6	23:00	

## Cavani breaks PSG scoring record

PARIS: Edinson Cavani broke Zlatan Ibrahimovic's all-time goalscoring record for Paris Saint-Germain yesterday, tapping in his 157th goal for the club against Montpellier. The Uruguay striker had levelled the Swede's previous mark of 156 goals 10 days ago, and turned home Adrien Rabiot's cutback in the 11th minute at the Parc des Princes.

Cavani celebrated the record by throwing his shirt into the crowd, receiving a booking after shaking hands with the referee and having to take a new jersey from the bench. It was the 30-year-old's 27th goal for the Ligue 1 leaders in all competitions this season. He is PSG's top scorer this term with three more goals than world-record signing Neymar, who returned to the team for the first time on Saturday since being booed after taking a penalty that could have given Cavani the record in an 8-0 thrashing of Dijon on January 17.

Cavani has now scored 157 goals in 229 matches for the capital side since joining from Napoli for 64 million euros (\$79.5 million) in 2013, while Ibrahimovic managed 156 in 180 games during his four seasons in Paris before leaving for Manchester United in 2016. — AFP

**12** Special Olympics aim to smash down barriers



**14** Madushanka's hat-trick on debut seals title for S Lanka



**15** Will Grigg stars with two goals as Wigan shock West Ham in FA Cup



MELBOURNE: Denmark's Caroline Wozniacki (L) poses with the winner's trophy beside Romania's Simona Halep after their women's singles final match on day 13 of the Australian Open tennis tournament in Melbourne yesterday. — AFP

## Wozniacki wins Australian Open

### Takes Halep's world number one ranking

MELBOURNE: Caroline Wozniacki held firm to edge a brave Simona Halep in a classic Australian Open final yesterday, claiming a long-awaited grand slam title after two heart-breaking near-misses. In a captivating tussle played out in stifling humidity, the Dane hung tough in a nerve-shredding final set to win 7-6(2) 3-6 6-4 under the lights at a heaving Rod Laver Arena.

She swiped Halep's world number one ranking in the process, six years after losing it at the 2012 tournament at Melbourne Park, the restoration having taken a record amount of time. "I have to take a second to hug Daphne... it's a dream come true, and my voice is shaking, it's a very emotional moment," a teary-eyed Wozniacki said, cradling the Daphne Akhurst Memorial Cup at the presentation ceremony.

"I want to congratulate Simona. I know today is a tough day and I'm sorry I had to win." After closing it out when Halep netted a backhand, the overwhelmed Dane threw her racket away and collapsed onto the blue hardcourt as the packed terraces roared.

Following runner-up finishes at the 2009 and 2014 US Opens, it was third time lucky for the 27-year-old who

saved match points in her second round match against Jana Fett. Making the breakthrough in her 43rd grand slam appearance - only three players have needed more - Wozniacki will no longer be known as one of the game's best without a major success.

"Honestly, I think that's one of the most positive things about all of this," the second seed told reporters. "I'm never going to get that question again. I'm just waiting for the question, 'when are you going to win the second one?'" Top seed Halep was gallant in defeat and at the end of an exhausting campaign, she came back from a break down in the final set to push within two games of victory. But Wozniacki took full advantage of the fatiguing Romanian, claiming the last three games after some furious

all-court play.

"I was close again, but the gas was over in the end," said twice French Open runner-up Halep, all class after her third grand slam final disappointment. "I'm still losing and I'm still waiting," she added with a wry smile. "Maybe the fourth one will be with luck."

On a steamy evening, Wozniacki's edge in power told early as she roared to a 3-0 lead in the opening set before Halep could find her range. She wobbled when serving for the set at 5-3 when a holler-

ing fan broke her focus. But she was commanding in the tiebreak, closing it out swiftly with a blazing shot that all but knocked the racket out of Halep's hand. The world number one was on the

back foot and suddenly dizzy, and she called a medical timeout to have her blood pressure taken after holding serve to 3-2 in the second set.

She then began grabbing at her left thigh after points, but somehow found the energy to break Wozniacki with a swashbuckling forehand down the line. Nothing would come easy for Halep, who saved further break points in a nervous service game before claiming the set with a risky dropshot that Wozniacki failed to deal with.

Romanians in the terraces went ballistic at the breakthrough, but were silenced as Wozniacki feasted on her opponent's weakening second serve, a fiery return pushing her 2-0 ahead in the decider. The grind of a long fortnight came to the fore as both players threw away serve, but Halep nudged 4-3 in front when Wozniacki's forehand deserted her. It all looked grim for the Dane as a trainer strapped her leg at the change of ends, but she broke back before holding serve for the first time in three attempts. Sensing her moment as Halep served for survival, Wozniacki fired a searing forehand winner to edge a 16-shot rally for match point and then held on grimly until the Romanian finally buckled. — Reuters



### Ends long wait for first grand slam title

### Diabate's debut double helps Leicester into FA Cup last 16

LONDON: Fousseni Diabate scored twice on his Leicester City debut as the Foxes cruised to a 5-1 win at Peterborough United in the fourth round of the FA Cup yesterday. Any hopes third-tier Peterborough might create an upset lasted all of nine minutes, with Diabate's opening goal followed by two more from Kelechi Iheanacho that gave the Foxes a 3-0 lead at half-time.

Peterborough's Andrew Hughes pulled one back in the 58th minute but it was no

more than a consolation. Diabate, who arrived at the King Power Stadium from French Ligue 2 club Gazelec Ajaccio earlier this month, scored his second and Leicester's fourth in the 87th minute before Wilfred Ndidi made it 5-1 in stoppage-time.

But for the debutant's star showing, Nigeria international Iheanacho would have taken the headlines. "It's a lovely competition to play in. It was a good team performance," Iheanacho told BT Sport.

"I have been waiting for an opportunity to take my chance and this was it." Iheanacho and Diabate combined to break the deadlock, the former's pass allowing the 22-year-old to run into the box before finishing with his left foot.

Former Manchester City striker Iheanacho curled in Leicester's second and made it 3-0 when he volleyed home a Christian Fuchs cross. Hughes scored from a corner as Leicester conceded their first

goal of 2018 but that was merely a blip, Diabate making it 4-1 before Ndidi scored with the last kick of the match.

Peterborough may have bowed out, but several lower league clubs remain involved in the tournament. They include fourth-tier Newport County, who will hope the 'Magic of the FA Cup' comes to Rodney Parade when they welcome eight-times winners Tottenham Hotspur to south Wales later on Saturday.

Meanwhile Liverpool will look to reach the last 16 at the expense of West Bromwich Albion in an all-Premier League clash at Anfield with Southampton and Watford meeting at St Mary's. Chelsea face Newcastle in another all-Premier League clash on Sunday when league leaders Manchester City continue their bid for an unprecedented 'quadruple' of major trophies (Premier League, FA Cup, League Cup and Champions League) away to second-tier Cardiff. — AFP



PETERBOROUGH: Leicester City's Nigerian midfielder Wilfred Ndidi score their fifth goal during the English FA Cup fourth round football match between Peterborough United and Leicester City at London Road stadium in Peterborough yesterday. — AFP



## Business

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DAVOS: US President Donald Trump looks on as the Landwehr Fribourg band leaves the stage during the World Economic Forum (WEF) annual meeting on Friday in Davos.—AFP

# Trump warns Davos on unfair trade

## US says 'America First' doesn't mean 'America alone'

DAVOS: US President Donald Trump took his "America First" message to the world's elite on Friday, telling a summit of business and political leaders that the United States would "no longer turn a blind eye" to what he described as unfair trade practices.

Trump became the first sitting US President to address the annual conclave of the rich and powerful at the Swiss ski resort of Davos for 18 years, closing the summit with a mostly upbeat speech that declared the United States "open for business".

"Now is the best time to bring your money, your jobs, your businesses to America," he said, singling out tax cuts and curbs to regulation as boosting the investment climate. "The world is witnessing the resurgence of a strong and prosperous America."

He said he would always promote "America First", as he expected other world leaders to do on behalf of their own countries, but added: "America First does not mean America alone. When the United States grows so does the world."

But he swiftly turned to a theme of demanding tougher enforcement of trade rules, accusing unidentified countries of unfair practices, including stealing intellectual property and providing state aid to industry. "We will enforce our trade laws and restore integrity to the trading system. Only by insisting on fair and reciprocal trade can we create a system that works not just for the United States but for all nations," Trump said. "The United States will no longer turn a blind eye to unfair trade practices," he said. "We

cannot have free and open trade if some countries exploit the system at the expense of others."

His speech was mostly met by polite applause, although he drew some jeers and whistles during a question and answer session, when he attacked the news media: "It wasn't until I became a politician that I realized how nasty, how mean, how vicious and how fake the press can be," he said.

While he has a record of opposing trade agreements involving multiple countries, he said the United States would seek bilateral deals with individual states. That could include members of a Trans-Pacific trade agreement from which he has withdrawn, he said, adding he would consider negotiating with them collectively if it was in the U.S. interest.

Before his trip to Davos, Trump imposed 30 percent tariffs on imported solar panels, among the first unilateral trade restrictions made by the administration as part of a broader protectionist agenda.

### Weak dollar

The Trump administration's debut at Davos also caused

time, reflecting a more cautious approach by banks in the region. "This is not a problem of HSBC only, it's a problem of all international banks with a strong presence in the region. Each bank solves it in its own way," one of the sources said.

An HSBC spokesman said: "We never comment on market rumor and speculation", while a spokesman for the government of Qatar did not respond to a request for comment. When Riyadh launched its boycott, it said it would seek understandings with international firms to cut ties with Doha. Banks from the four Arab countries have pulled deposits from Qatar and reduced, though not ended, other business with it. While the Gulf allies have not publicly warned banks to avoid business in Qatar, bankers have told Reuters that it is clear close ties with Doha could hurt business relations. The UAE central bank has blacklisted some Qatari individuals and organizations and told its own banks to apply enhanced due diligence in their dealings with six Qatari banks.

This has made many foreign banks more cautious and in some cases prompted them to handle Qatari business from Europe or the United States, rather than regional headquarters in Dubai. When Qatar sold its last international bond in 2016, raising \$9 billion, HSBC took a leading role alongside JP

Morgan, Bank of Tokyo-Mitsubishi and Qatar National Bank. Qatar is now close to choosing which banks will run its latest bond issue, which could be for around \$9 billion, and has provisionally chosen some of them, bankers familiar with the process told Reuters.

Although HSBC decided not to undertake high-profile roles in major Qatari debt transactions after it was approached for the dollar bond in November, it is unclear whether the bank could still play a smaller part. Bankers said the move did not mean any disengagement from the country, where HSBC retains a branch. However, in another indication of its new approach, HSBC has not pitched for a "bookrunner" role on a separate \$3 billion loan refinancing by Qatar National Bank, the first such deal by a Qatari government-owned firm since the crisis began.

HSBC was one of the top banks in QNB's original loan and a banker close to the matter said the decision not to take a top role in the refinancing was a result of the political situation and a "repositioning" of its Qatari business.

### Competing demands

The Gulf's diplomatic rift is forcing banks to tread cau-

reously in order to maintain relations on both sides. Saudi Arabia is opening up to foreign investors as part of economic reforms pushed forward by its new crown prince, Mohammed bin Salman, including the sale of a stake in oil giant Aramco.

Banks compete to obtain top roles in public bonds not so much for the fees they yield, but rather to establish or strengthen relationships with the borrowers in order to obtain more profitable mandates on future transactions. Earlier this week Saudi Arabia said it had requested offers from banks to organize a range of its own international debt deals, including a bond and refinancing a \$10 billion loan. These plans have complicated matters for banks in the region as, depending on the timing, Saudi Arabia and Qatar could end up in direct competition for funds from international investors.

For HSBC, which was bookrunner last year on 42 bond deals in the Gulf Cooperation Council, which comprises Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman and Kuwait, this could present a particularly tricky juggling act. HSBC arranged \$14.8 billion of bond issuance out of a total of \$90.4 billion, the largest share of bond bookrunning for the GCC region in 2017, Thomson Reuters data shows. — Reuters

remarks had been taken out of context. "What I said was actually very even-handed and consistent with what I said before."

On Thursday, Trump said he ultimately wanted the dollar to be strong. US officials said there was no disagreement between Trump and Mnuchin, and the Treasury Secretary had been making a factual observation about the impact of a lower dollar, not announcing a policy preference to drive it down.

Despite Trump's tough trade talk, those in the audience mostly noted the upbeat tone of his speech.



## 'No daylight' between Trump, Mnuchin on dollar



## Business

# US trade commission blocks 300% tariffs on Bombardier CSeries planes

## Dispute strains trade US relations with Canada

WASHINGTON: A bipartisan US trade panel on Friday blocked the government's decision to impose nearly 300 percent punitive tariffs on airplanes manufactured by Canada's Bombardier, in a dispute that has inflamed relations with Ottawa.

The US International Trade Commission voted 4-0 that there was no injury to US manufacturers, which effectively forces President Donald Trump's Commerce Department to reverse course on the retaliatory measures designed to protect Boeing.

The failure to back up the Commerce Department was a rare move by the panel, but it will not release an explanation of its reasoning until March. Boeing filed a trade complaint after Delta Air Lines placed an order for 75 of the CSeries jets, which can seat between 100 and 150 passengers, and found a receptive ear in the Trump administration, which has ratcheted up adversarial trade actions. Although none of the planes have been delivered, the Commerce Department ruled that the aircraft benefited from unfair subsidies and were sold below cost, allowing Bombardier to have an advantage over Boeing.

"Today's decision is a victory for innovation, competition and the rule of law. It is also a victory for US airlines and the US traveling public," Bombardier said in a statement shortly after the vote. Canadian Foreign Minister Chrystia Freeland said Ottawa was likewise "very pleased" with the ruling.

"The government of Canada will always vigorously defend the Canadian aerospace industry and its workers against protectionist trade policies," she said in a statement. Britain's Prime Minister Theresa May described the decision as "good news for British industry."

"Bombardier and its innovative workforce play a vital role in the Northern Ireland economy," she wrote on Twitter. The ruling comes as freight talks are underway this week in Montreal to renegotiate the North American Free Trade Agreement between Canada, Mexico and the United States.

### 'Disappointed'

Shares in Bombardier jumped higher on the news, finishing up more than 15 percent in Toronto. Boeing said the company was "disappointed" with the decision by the commission,

which "did not recognize the harm that Boeing has suffered from the billions of dollars in illegal government subsidies" Bombardier received.

"Those violations have harmed the US aerospace industry, and we are feeling the effects of those unfair business practices in the market every day," it added.

A Boeing spokesman told AFP the company would review the commission's

## Decision termed victory for innovation



reasoned decision early next month before deciding future steps. The company could appeal the ruling in US federal courts. Bombardier argued that Boeing suffered no harm because it did not offer a comparable sized jet to compete for Delta's business. In addition, the Canadian firm has since struck a bargain with European manufacturer Airbus, giving the latter a controlling stake in the CSeries jets and allowing them to be manufactured duty-free in Alabama.

"With this matter behind us, we are moving full speed ahead with finalizing our partnership with Airbus," Bombardier said. "Integration planning is going well and we look forward to delivering the CSeries to the US market." "We are happy to see that the ITC concurred with our views," Airbus group CEO Tom Enders told AFP.



QUEBEC: In this file photo shows the bombardier aircraft CSeries on the tarmac in Mirabel, Quebec. — AFP

"We will carry on full steam with our C series project, focusing on addressing the needs of our airline customers and creating more and new, high-skill manufacturing jobs in the US." The aircraft case is one of several that have soured the Trump White House's relations with Canada, which last month lodged a wide-ranging complaint with the World Trade Organization, challenging US moves to impose punitive tariffs.

As tensions turned raw last year, the Canadian government

scrapped plans to buy 18 Super Hornet fighter jets, which are manufactured by Boeing. The ITC is an independent federal agency and its commissioners are balanced between Republicans and Democrats, although it currently has only four instead of the usual six members.

Unlike the Commerce Department, ITC investigations determine whether US industry is injured or threatened with harm by the imports in question. Both agencies have to rule in favor before punitive tariffs can take effect. — AFP

## Trump seeing the light on free trade? Perhaps

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump may have realized his "America First" policy risks leaving the US alone on trade, but analysts are skeptical his latest offer to rejoin a multilateral trade pact will bear fruit. Trump went to the free-trade bastion World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland and offered the possibility that the US would rejoin the Trans-Pacific Partnership. That came a year after one of his first official acts as president was to withdraw from the deal, and only days after the 11 remaining TPP countries agreed to proceed with the accord in the absence of the United States. That decision to go ahead without the US "really got under his skin," said Monica de Bolle of the Washington-based Peterson Institute for International Economics.

But Trump also plays to the crowd, which makes some wonder if he will follow through. In his speech Friday to a packed audience in Davos, Trump said the US would consider negotiating with its onetime TPP partners "either individually, or perhaps as a group, but only if it is in the interests of all."

### A 180 on trade?

In Davos the signal, although vague, was well received by the free-market loving audience, which included the who's who of the world's economic and political elite. The TPP was initially a US-led project that, while deliberately excluding Washington's rival China, would have accounted for 40 percent of global gross domestic product, one of the most important economic indicators.

Trump dumped the deal in the belief it would punish US workers by allowing companies to hire cheaper labor abroad. His first year in office has been marked by a huge increase in trade complaints against various countries, especially China.

"With President Trump and trade policy, the world has learned to have to 'wait and see.' There can sometimes be a large gulf between his words one day and his policy actions the next," Chad Bown of the Peterson Institute told AFP. Gregory Daco of Oxford Economics said he is not confident Trump is set to do "a 180 on trade."

Just before going to Davos he "took a much more protectionist stance," imposing import tariffs on washing machines from South Korea and solar panels from China, and there are a host of decisions looming on steel and aluminum from China, he noted. The hint of a possible change of heart could be the result of urging from the business community which benefits from free trade deals. Edward Alden, of the New York-based Council on Foreign Relations, told AFP that "the biggest story here is he is under pressure from business not to embrace" a radically protectionist trade policy agenda.

"Trump clearly received this message," Alden said. The business community certainly has ramped up its efforts to convince the administration to preserve the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which Trump also threatened to tear up. US, Canadian and Mexican officials will continue the latest round of talks to salvage the accord this weekend in Montreal. "I think there is a realization that you can't just be America First, and America alone, you have to be America with others," Daco said. But he cautioned, "I'm not that confident honestly" that Trump will follow through on the TPP offer. — AFP



DAVOS: US President Donald Trump delivers a speech during the World Economic Forum (WEF) annual meeting on Friday. — AFP

## Industrial strikes loom as talks with German union collapse

BERLIN: Germany's metalworkers' union said yesterday that it will intensify its campaign for better pay and conditions, threatening 24-hour "warning strikes" after talks with industry representatives fell apart. Production by the country's crucial metal and electrical engineering industries may be affected next week by the walkouts after the latest round of negotiations ended without a deal.

The main sticking point remains the powerful IG Metall union's demands for workers to have the option of a 28-hour week, with employers making up some of the salary loss.

"Obviously employers do not understand any language other than pressure," said Roman Zitzelsberger, the chief

negotiator for IG Metall, which represents more than 3.9 million workers. The union's boss Joerg Hofmann said up to 50 companies would be affected between Wednesday and Friday by the 24-hour strikes in selected sites across the country. In a statement, the regional employers' association Suedwestmetall warned against solutions that would inflame the situation and denounced the "disproportionate demands" of the union.

The full-day walkouts are a recent addition to the union's arsenal, which has never used them before. Europe's biggest union has also raised the prospect of staging its first open-ended strike since 2003. It mobilized more than 600,000 workers in a series of short warning strikes earlier this month, including at Volkswagen, BMW, Bosch and Siemens. The biggest hurdle in the talks is IG Metall's insistence that employers top up the salaries of some of the workers who choose to reduce their hours. Employers have slammed the demands as too costly and even discriminatory to staff already working part-time without additional compensation. They have also so far only offered a two-percent wage increase, rather than the six percent sought by the union. — AFP



STUTTGART: Roman Zitzelsberger (left), Baden-Wuerttemberg district manager of IG Metall metalworkers' union, and Joerg Hofmann, First Chairman of IG Metall, speak during a press conference after the termination of the fifth round of negotiations in Stuttgart yesterday. — AFP

## UK economy picked up at end of 2017

LONDON: Britain's economy grew 0.5 percent in the final three months of last year, official data showed Friday, picking up speed despite Brexit uncertainty.

However, the buoyant performance, propelled by the powerhouse services sector, was not enough to prevent the weakest annual growth for five years as a result of the so-called "Brexit effect".

"UK gross domestic product (GDP) was estimated to have increased by 0.5 percent in quarter four 2017, compared with 0.4 percent in quarter three," the Office for National Statistics (ONS) said.

The reading was in line with market expectations, boosted by the services sector, and was the best performance since the same quarter of 2016. However, the ONS added that British economic growth stood at 1.8 percent last year. That was the weakest annual rate since 2012 and marked a modest slowdown from 1.9 percent in 2016.

### 'Brexit effect'

Bank of England governor Mark Carney, speaking from Davos, admitted there was a short-term "Brexit effect" on economic activity. "What's happening in the UK is the Brexit effect in the short term," Carney told BBC Radio 4 from the sidelines of the World Economic Forum in Switzerland.

"Businesses in the UK ... are waiting to see what kind of relationships we will have with Europe and what kind of relationships we will have with the rest of the world." He added however that the economy could grow more strongly this year once those relationships are clear. Howard Archer, chief economic advisor at the EY ITEM Club research group, not-

ed that Brexit turmoil had taken its toll. "GDP growth was 1.8 percent in 2017. This was a significantly better performance than had been widely expected at the start of the year, given the major Brexit uncertainties that were expected to-and duly did-persist through the year" said Archer.

"Additionally, there was a major squeeze on consumer purchasing power." Nevertheless, GDP growth of 1.8 percent in 2017 was the slowest UK expansion since 2012 and it looks somewhat uninspired compared with markedly improved global growth.

Hargreaves Lansdown economist Ben Brettell added that activity was "uneven". "The overall picture is one of muddling through," Brettell said. "Growth still looks lackluster and somewhat unevenly distributed ... but it's certainly fair to say the economy has performed much better than many feared in the aftermath of the Brexit vote, boosted by the rising tide of a global recovery which has lifted all boats."

Many experts had predicted economic chaos in the event of a Brexit vote in the nation's 2016 referendum, but this has so far failed to materialize. Britons narrowly voted to leave the European Union, with departure scheduled for March 2019.

### Slow and uneven

The ONS added Friday that expansion was primarily driven by the services sector, which accounts for almost 80 percent of economic activity. But it also cautioned over patchy growth.

"Despite a slight uptick in the latest quarter, the underlying picture is of slower and uneven growth across the economy," said ONS head of GDP Darren Morgan.

"The boost to the economy at the end of the year came from a range of services including recruitment agencies, letting agents and office management. "Other services-notably consumer facing sectors-showed much slower growth. "Manufacturing also grew strongly but construction again fell," Morgan added. — AFP

## British PM hails Bombardier's trade victory over Boeing

LONDON: British Prime Minister Theresa May on Friday welcomed Bombardier's unexpected trade victory against US planemaker Boeing Co as good news for British industry.

The dispute between the two companies had put thousands of jobs at risk in Belfast, Northern Ireland, where Bombardier makes the CSeries CS100 and CS300 carbon wings. "I welcome this decision, which is good news for British industry," May said on Twitter. "Bombardier and its innovative workforce play a vital role in the Northern Ireland economy."

Britain's business minister, Greg Clark, also welcomed the news, saying in a statement that the British and Canadian governments had maintained all along that the case was unjustified.

"This is excellent news for the dedicated workforce in Northern Ireland and supply chain across the UK, who have a great future ahead," he said. "The decision by the International Trade Commission confirms what the UK and Canadian Governments working hand in hand has maintained from the outset, that this case is unjustified. We are pleased that the ITC have now recognized this." — Reuters

## For Rent

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+Big Salon + Separate pool  
All Master Bathrooms is Marble

Volleyball Court / Basketball Court / Hotel Lobby  
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## BAYAN WEEKLY MARKET REPORT

# Boursa Kuwait equities mixed amid random buying trends

## Traders look for clues from annual financial results

Sectors Weekly Trading Activity					Sectors Indices Performance				
Sector	Volume	To Market %	Value	To Market %	Sector	Last Week Closing	Previous Week Closing	Weekly Ch. %	Annual Ch. %
OIL & GAS	28,613,106	4.82%	1,222,170	1.79%	OIL & GAS	987.11	995.38	-0.83%	2.44%
BASIC MATERIALS	2,454,169	0.41%	1,265,109	1.85%	BASIC MATERIALS	1,288.72	1,312.38	-1.80%	2.74%
INDUSTRIALS	93,784,176	15.79%	9,707,854	14.21%	INDUSTRIALS	1,876.78	1,874.35	0.13%	2.03%
CONSUMER GOODS	2,331,234	0.39%	690,211	1.01%	CONSUMER GOODS	809.26	811.50	-0.28%	-1.60%
HEALTH CARE	79,306	0.01%	11,177	0.02%	HEALTH CARE	1,451.15	1,510.51	-3.93%	-3.93%
CONSUMER SERVICES	19,536,157	3.29%	2,409,643	3.53%	CONSUMER SERVICES	936.49	931.17	0.57%	3.92%
TELECOMMUNICATIONS	15,854,571	2.67%	5,650,196	8.27%	TELECOMMUNICATIONS	576.47	574.02	0.43%	3.24%
BANKS	109,311,084	18.40%	26,925,593	39.42%	BANKS	966.20	961.74	0.46%	5.87%
INSURANCE	88,151	0.01%	5,752	0.01%	INSURANCE	1,022.36	1,031.97	-0.93%	-7.56%
REAL ESTATE	177,769,170	29.93%	9,273,601	13.58%	REAL ESTATE	1,010.98	997.95	1.31%	8.35%
FINANCIAL SERVICES	144,078,237	24.26%	11,134,445	16.30%	FINANCIAL SERVICES	650.18	651.44	-0.19%	5.06%
TECHNOLOGY	62,775	0.01%	5,460	0.01%	TECHNOLOGY	488.33	480.48	1.63%	2.04%

**KUWAIT:** Boursa Kuwait ended last week with mixed performance. The Price Index closed at 6,651.91 points, up by 0.19 percent from the week before closing, the Weighted Index decreased by 0.16 percent after closing at 418.45 points, whereas the KXS-15 Index closed at 965.55 points down by 0.12 percent. Furthermore, the week's average daily turnover decreased by 12.88 percent, compared to the preceding week, reaching KD 13.66 million, whereas trading volume average was 118.79 million shares, recording a decrease of 13.74 percent.

The market indices' weekly closings fluctuated for the first time in this year, as the market witnessed a continued random purchasing operations on the small-cap stocks, in addition to the quick speculations that concentrated on the stocks of low price values, which was positively reflected on the Price Index performance to end the week's trading with some gains; on the contrary, the selling pressures and the profit collection operations executed on some leading stocks, pushed the Weighted and KXS-15 indices to end the week's trading in the red zone, after the good performance it witnessed since the beginning of the new year. The market witnessed such performance in light of the

continued watch of the traders for the listed companies' annual financial results, especially that such results will define to a great extent the investment goals of many investors for the next period.

In addition, the Boursa recorded market losses of KD 32.93 million during the last week, as its market capitalization reached by the end of the week KD 28.05 billion, down by 0.12 percent of its level at the previous week, where it was KD 28.09 billion. Also, the market gains since the beginning of 2018 contracted to reach KD 1.11 billion, with a growth of 4.14 percent compared to its value at the last trading day of the last year. (Note: The market cap for the listed companies is calculated based on the average number of outstanding shares as per the latest official available financial statements).

Moreover, the Boursa Kuwait initiated its first session of the last week with a decline included all its indices, especially the weighted ones, which were affected by the profit collection operations witnessed during the session and concentrated on the leading stocks, especially after the good increases it witnessed in the previous session. Also, the Price Index decreased affected by the selling pressures that the small-cap stocks were subject to, especially

the ones that have been traded on with prices less than its par value. On the next session, the Boursa was able to return to the green zone, after its three indices ended the session with different increases, supported by the return of the purchasing and collection operations executed on the leading stocks in particular, which was apparent on the performance of the Weighted and KXS-15 indices and enabled it to compensate all its losses recorded in the previous session, while the Price Index was able to record limited gains supported by the random purchasing operations executed on a number of small-cap stocks, to compensate a part of its losses recorded earlier in the beginning of week session.

The mid-week session witnessed mixed closings for the three indices, as the Price Index continued its upward direction affected by the speculative performance of the small-cap stocks, while the quick return of the profit collection operations on the leading stocks pushed the Weighted and KXS-15 indices to close in the red zone, which came in light of the dropped trading levels of both the volume and the cash liquidity, where the volume decreased by 12.42 percent and the value dropped by 11.24 percent.

The market did not witness on Wednesday's and Thursday's sessions much of a change compared to Tuesday's session, as the market indices continued its fluctuations amid a change of traders' behavior, where the Weighted and KXS-15 indices continued to decline in light of the continued profit collection operations in controlling the leading stocks' trading, which pushed it to end the week in the red zone, while the Price Index was able to continue its growth as a result to the purchasing and speculating operations on some small-cap stocks, which enabled it to compensate all its losses and pushed it to end the week's trading in the green zone. For the annual performance, the Price Index ended last week recording 3.81 percent annual gain compared to its closing in 2017, while the Weighted Index increased by 4.24 percent, and the KXS-15 recorded 5.54 percent growth.

### Sectors' Indices

Six of Boursa Kuwait's sectors ended last week in the green zone, while the other six recorded declines. Last week's highest gainer was the Technology sector, achieving 1.63 percent growth rate as its index closed at 488.33 points. Whereas, in the second place, the Real Estate sector's index closed at 1,010.98 points recording 1.31 percent increase. The Consumer Services sector came in third as its index achieved 0.57 percent growth, ending the week at 936.49 points.

On the other hand, the Health Care sector headed the losers list as its index declined by 3.93 percent to end the week's activity at 1,451.15

Boursa Kuwait Indices				
		Price Index	Weighted index	KXS 15
Weekly	Last week	6,651.91	418.45	965.55
	Previous week	6,639.38	419.11	966.69
	Change (Point)	12.53	-0.66	-1.14
Annual	Change (%)	0.19%	-0.16%	-0.12%
	Last year	6,408.01	401.42	914.87
	Change (Point)	243.90	17.03	50.68
	Change (%)	3.81%	4.24%	5.54%



MARKET ACTIVITY				
	Last Week	Previous Week	Ch. %	
Volume	593,962,136	688,570,812	-13.74%	
Value (K.D.)	68,301,210	78,395,403	-12.88%	
Deals	21,789	24,395	-10.68%	
MARKET CAPITALISATION (K.D.)				
	Last Week	Previous Week	Weekly Ch. %	Annual Ch. %
	28,054,269,521	28,087,200,024	-0.12%	4.14%
TOP GAINERS OF THE WEEK				
Company	Last Week Closing	Previous Week Closing	Ch. (fils)	Ch. %
ALMUDON	42.40	35.60	6.8	19.10%
RKWC	87.50	73.50	14.0	19.05%
CABLETV	25.00	21.60	3.4	15.74%
AMWAL	58.80	51.00	7.8	15.29%
SHOOTING	25.40	22.50	2.9	12.89%
TOP LOSERS OF THE WEEK				
Company	Last Week Closing	Previous Week Closing	Ch. (fils)	Ch. %
EXCH	100.00	158.00	-58.0	-36.71%
HCC	125.00	153.00	-28.0	-18.30%
SCEM	75.10	89.90	-14.8	-16.46%
YIACO	150.00	175.00	-25.0	-14.29%
AMAR	40.00	46.60	-6.6	-14.16%

## Earnings lift Wall St to record highs; dollar falls

**NEW YORK:** Strong earnings from Intel and other companies drove Wall Street indexes to record closing highs on Friday, while the US dollar remained weak after recent comments by the US Treasury secretary.

The S&P 500 jumped 1.2 percent, its biggest daily percentage gain since March 1. The S&P and the two other main indexes all notched their best four-week runs since 2016. Stocks around the globe also rose. The MSCI world equity index, which tracks shares in 47 countries, climbed for a 10th straight week, its longest weekly winning streak since 1999.

Shares of Intel Corp jumped more than 10 percent and hit their highest level since October 2000 a day after the company reported quarterly results. The results of Intel and some other companies helped investors shrug off weaker-than-expected US economic growth data. Fourth-quarter gross domestic product increased at a 2.6 percent annual

rate, the Commerce Department reported. Shares of drugmaker AbbVie Inc also climbed 10 percent after the company significantly boosted its 2018 earnings forecast and said it hopes to accelerate dividend growth and share buybacks.

"We continue to see these positive steps in the right direction and definitely earnings are clearly justifying a lot of the recent move that we've had," said Ryan Detrick, senior market strategist at LPL Financial in Charlotte, North Carolina.

Fourth-quarter earnings growth for the S&P 500 is now estimated at 13.2 percent, according to Thomson Reuters data, up from 12 percent at the start of the year.

Also helping equities, the US dollar remained weak against a basket of major currencies, still bruised by comments earlier this week by US Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin in support of a weak dollar and following Friday's US growth data.

President Donald Trump's comments on Thursday in favor of a "strong dollar," a day after Mnuchin said a weaker greenback would help US trade balances in the short term, failed to keep dollar bears in check.

The dollar index, which measures the greenback against a basket of six major currencies, was down 0.33 percent at 89.1 and on

track for a weekly fall of 1.6 percent. The Dow Jones Industrial Average rose 223.92 points, or 0.85 percent, to 26,616.71, the S&P 500 gained 33.62 points, or 1.18 percent, to 2,872.87, and the Nasdaq Composite added 94.61 points, or 1.28 percent, to 7,505.77.

The pan-European FTSEurofirst 300 index rose 0.54 percent, and MSCI's gauge of stocks across the globe gained 0.67 percent. For the week, the MSCI index was up 2 percent.

In a weekly note on capital flows, Bank of America Merrill Lynch analysts said that 98 percent of global equity markets are now trading above 50- and 200-day moving averages, though the pace of the melt-up meant a correction was increasingly likely.

World equity markets have rallied over the past year, buoyed by a synchronized uptick in global economic growth in a boon to corporate profits and stock valuations.

US Treasury yields climbed after the US GDP data and after the governor of the Bank of Japan said inflation is finally close to reaching the central bank's 2 percent target.

Benchmark 10-year notes last fell 11/32 in price to yield 2.6599 percent, from 2.621 percent late on Thursday. In the energy market, oil prices settled higher, with crude also posting a weekly gain as the weaker dollar



**NEW YORK:** The day's closing numbers are displayed after the closing bell of the Dow Industrial Average at the New York Stock Exchange on Friday in New York. —AFP

underpinned prices. Brent crude futures settled up 10 cents, or 0.1 percent, at \$70.52 per barrel, while US crude futures closed at \$66.14, up 63 cents, or nearly 1 percent. For the week, Brent posted a nearly 2.7 percent

gain, while US crude was up 4.3 percent for the week.

Gold also rose with the dollar's decline. Spot gold was up 0.3 percent at \$1,351.86, up 1.5 percent this week. — Reuters.

Business

# Jazeera Airways presses on with new direct flights to India

We're persistent about strengthening our Indian network: CEO



**KOCHI:** Jazeera Airways, Kuwait's leading low cost airline, operating regionally and internationally, celebrated its four weekly flights into Kochi. Together with the Cochin International Airport CEO (CIAL), media representatives and local travel agents from Kochi, Jazeera Airways inaugurated the third Indian destination at an event in the city today.

Following its recent launch into Hyderabad and Ahmedabad, Kochi is the third route in India being offered by Jazeera, launching direct flights into Kuwait from January 18, and connecting beyond to other destinations across the Middle East.

Flights operate four days a week on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Sundays departing at 8:55 pm from Kochi and arriving at 12:10 am in Kuwait and from Kuwait, departing at 12:45 pm reaching Kochi at 8:10 pm.

Rohit Ramachandran, CEO of Jazeera Airways said, "We have been persistent about strengthening our Indian network and today, looking at how Jazeera has successfully launched flights into three new cities,

brings us enormous pride. Kochi is a popular destination for tourism and medical visits and we see these as growing segments out of the Kuwait market. In addition, we will offer a welcome choice to the VFR (Visiting Friends & Relatives) travellers wanting to connect with their families in both Kerala and Kuwait."

V J Kurian, Managing Director CIAL (COK) said, "All of us at CIAL are honored by what the new operations can achieve for our local as well as international customers. We are eager to witness the dynamic flow of travelers this year, as Kuwait's Jazeera Airways connects more people to the benefits our state has to offer while enabling new bridges to exciting routes into Kuwait and the Gulf."

Jazeera Airways has built a reputation in Kuwait and the Gulf as a low cost champion, offering great value fares combined with unique service offerings such as the innovative Park & Fly facility at Kuwait International airport. The airline will move into its own new terminal in Q2 this year providing passengers with an improved experience when travelling in and out of Kuwait, or



## Kochi becomes Jazeera's third destination in India

## Ooredoo participates in Kuwait Aviation Show 2018

**KUWAIT:** Ooredoo proudly announced the conclusion of its participation at the Kuwait Aviation Show 2018, an event that was sponsored by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah that gathered all aviation enthusiasts within a fun-filled schedule. Over 40,000 people visited the four-day show, in which 144 international and local companies including 57 aircraft participated. Ooredoo showcased its participation by providing WIFI services at the exhibition and distributing giveaways to the visitors.

The event succeeded in attracting visitors and enthusiasts from different age groups, and included a number of activities such as entertainment performances and an exhibition. The airshow offered a variety of activities with aerial exhibits held on all four days by the Kuwait air force, Solo Turk, Saudi Falcons, Extra Qatar and various others. Qatar Airways also participated in the inaugural Kuwait Aviation Show 2018, where it displayed the Boeing



777 fitted with its award-winning, revolutionary new Business Class seat, Qsuite as well as its extra-wide body Airbus A350-900.

Ooredoo stated that its participation came in tan-

transiting through.

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

Flying to over 20 destinations across the Middle East, Europe and India, Jazeera Airways operates a

reliable fleet of 8 Airbus A320 aircrafts currently. Customers can enjoy a baggage allowance of 30kg for Economy Class and 50kg per Business class passengers.

Travelers can book flights or learn more about Jazeera Airways services, offers, promotions and destinations via Jazeera's website - Jazeeraairways.com, or through the dedicated app or from all travel agents.

## Kuwait National Fund signs an MOU with GE Power to train SMEs

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait's National Fund for Small and Medium Enterprise Development (The National Fund) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with GE Power to incubate small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to build digital industrial applications for the power generation sector and to strengthen their economic growth and competitiveness. The initiative ties in with the National Fund's vision to build an inclusive, collaborative and innovative ecosystem for entrepreneurs to lay the foundation for economic opportunities in Kuwait.

In the presence of Khaled Al-Roudhan, Kuwait's Minister of Commerce & Industry and Minister of State for Youth Affairs; Lawrence R Silverman, US Ambassador to Kuwait; Scott L Strazik, President & CEO of GE's Power Services business; Joseph Anis, President & CEO of GE's Power Services business in the Middle East, Africa and India; board members of The National Fund; and high-ranking officials of the Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority (KDIPA), the MOU was signed in Kuwait City by Mr. Abdullah Hamad Al-Jouan, Chairman of the Board & President of the National Fund for Small & Medium Enterprise Development, and Bhanu Shekhar, Chief Digital Officer of GE Power in the Middle East and Africa.

Khaled Al-Roudhan said, "This agreement is in line with the Ministry's strategy to support young entrepreneurs and create an ideal business environment for them to achieve the desired success for their enterprises. The continuous collaboration between the various departments within the Ministry of Commerce and Industry has paved the way towards reaching this agreement, which is in turn the result of the Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority's support and concentrated efforts to attract international investors, such as GE, and facilitate new initiatives to empower young entrepreneurs and give them access to the innovative services and technologies available within the GE Kuwait Technology Center."

As per the MOU, The National Fund and GE Power will identify, train and help entrepreneurs to grow SMEs that will develop digital applications for the industrial sector based on the Predix platform, GE's application development platform for the Industrial Internet, which was built to meet the scale, complexity, speed and security requirements of industry.



Digitization can unlock tremendous benefits for industry. A report issued by the World Economic Forum in 2016 stated that \$1.3 trillion of value can be realized purely by deploying and adopting digital technologies over the next ten years in the electricity sector alone.

Abdullah Hamad Al-Jouan said, "Digital technologies are a game changer that support businesses to scale up, enhance operational efficiency and achieve higher levels of productivity. Building the digital skills of Kuwaiti entrepreneurs on GE's Predix platform is a significant means to help realize their true potential. This collaboration will enable and inspire them to integrate digital tools as well as innovate new, more efficient and highly productive ways to boost growth. GE's global experience in leading the digital transformation of industry, together with its local presence and knowledge, make them an excellent organization to collaborate with on this initiative."

GE's Joseph Anis said, "Today's MOU is aligned with the goals of the Kuwait National Development Plan to create new job opportunities, support the SME ecosystem, and contribute to the diversification and competitiveness of the economy. The National Fund is setting an example as a world-class institution that is mapping out a vision for the future of the region - one where the public and private sectors come together to drive the digital transformation of the economy and reap the many bene-

fits it offers. We are honored to support this journey."

The Predix platform is already widely implemented across the Middle East and Africa, including at large utilities. Through the MOU, Kuwaiti SMEs will have the opportunity to participate in the ongoing digital transformation of the power sector, helping to enhance the industry's efficiency and reliability, while lowering its carbon footprint. Additionally, as the region turns towards a rising share of intermittent renewable energy in the overall generation mix, Predix-based Industrial Internet of Things applications can help enhance grid stability by improving the flexibility of the power generation sector so operators can ramp up or down power supplies more quickly.

GE Power will train entrepreneurs on developing applications on the Predix platform, supply the infrastructure to support application development and provide access to trainers for the Predix platform. Training and development activities will take place at the GE Kuwait Technology Center, a flagship facility that serves three core areas for energy sector customers across the Middle East and Africa: training, tooling and engineering.

The MOU builds on GE's strong legacy of contributions towards the development of Kuwait's industrial infrastructure. GE technologies deliver over a third of Kuwait's power today and the company creates employment for more than 250 people in the country.

## Kids win KD 250 with NBK's 'Save & Win' with Zeina

**KUWAIT:** National Bank of Kuwait believes in educating children in financial literacy and savings and works through its Zeina Savings Account to promote responsible saving and spending habits. On 23 January 2018, NBK announced the final winners of the Zeina Save & Win Campaign, held in collaboration with Kidzania.



Amal Al-Duwaisan

Ten lucky children won cash prizes of KD 250 each, deposited into their Zeina Savings Account. The winner's names were announced live on Nabth Al-Kuwait radio program on 88.8 FM. The draw was held in the presence of senior NBK officials and officials from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

"Zeina Save & Win was a successful campaign that raised awareness among parents and children the importance of financial literacy," explained Amal Al-Duwaisan, Senior Manager Consumer Banking Group, National Bank of Kuwait. "NBK strives to develop our future generations and offers products and services specifically tailored to suit their needs and develop their potential."

Winners for the fourth and final Zeina Save & Win campaign draw:

1. Hamad Mohd Hamad Alhaddad
2. Abdullah Rakan Abdullah Alrefaei
3. Bader Fahad Abdulaziz Al-Qattan
4. Dana Abdulla Bader Alshemal
5. Nour Loay Abdulhamid Al-Qattan
6. Mahdi Hasan Ismail Hussain
7. Fatima Mohammed Abdullah Shehab
8. Yousef Yaqoub Yousef Haidar
9. Faisal Sabah Sami Abdulsalam
10. Fay Mohammad Ismaeil Sadeqi

The Zeina Savings Accounts encourages children to learn about banking. It serves as an excellent tool for parents to teach children about saving and spending responsibly and how to utilize digital tools like NBK's award-winning website, NBK.com or the NBK mobile app to manage their account.

Children under 15 years old with an NBK Zeina savings account in their name received one entry into the quarterly draw for every KD 10 that was deposited into their account during the campaign period. Parents who set up a standing deposit order doubled their child's chances of winning.

A total of 40 young winners were awarded the KD 250 cash prize. The Zeina Save & Win Campaign ended 31 December 2017 and the 23 January announcement is the final 10 winners.

National Bank of Kuwait, a leading Kuwait bank, has been listed among the World's Safest Banks 12 consecutive times by Global Finance magazine. NBK enjoys the highest credit ratings by international credit rating agencies, Standard & Poor's, Moody's and Fitch Ratings.

Customers can benefit from NBK's Rewards Loyalty Program network, the largest in Kuwait. The NBK Rewards program includes more than 700 partner outlets restaurants, fashion brands, lifestyle shops, hotels, travel and entertainment for children. Parents can set up a Zeina account for their children by visiting a local branch or NBK.com website.

## Technology

# Data doom: Five steps from Davos to digital dystopia

## 'Humans will come to live under the rule of digital dictatorship'

**DAVOS:** Intelligent robots and all-knowing online networks threaten to drag humanity into a "totalitarian" nightmare of mind control, mass unemployment and children hooked on smartphones, experts warned at this week's Davos summit. Online retailers and social networks collect so much data about us that they can watch us, control us and will transform us entirely, said Yuval Noah Harari, the Israeli author of bestselling books about technology and anthropology.

"This will be decided by the people who own the data. They control not just the future of humanity but the future of life itself," he told a panel in Davos. "If democracy cannot adapt to these new conditions, then humans will come to live under the rule of digital dictatorship." As envisioned by various leaders, business people and thinkers at this year's World Economic Forum gathering, here are five stages through which digital technology will subjugate and dehumanize our race if we are not careful:

“  
A revolution  
in skills

”

to be normalised. It has to be regulated just like every other industry."

### Addiction

Karl Marx called religion "the opium of the people", but now another powerful drug is taking over. Online firms know how much we like thumbing away at our smartphones and are doing their best to keep us at it, several prominent delegates at Davos warned. "They deliberately engineer addiction to the services they provide," Soros said. "This can be very harmful, particularly for adolescents."

Marc Benioff, chief executive of major US cloud software firm Salesforce, said there were "a lot of parallels" between web apps and cigarettes. "Product designers are trying to make user interfaces more addictive than ever," he told AFP in Davos. "This needs to be discussed and evaluated," he said. "Technology has

### Mind control

Once the apps have got us physically addicted, experts fear, they will go to work on our minds by logging into our brain waves and bodily functions. "We've reached the point where we can hack not just computers but we can hack human beings and other organisms... Advances in computer science, machine learning and artificial intelligence are giving us the computing power," Harari said. "Brain activity, blood pressure can be tracked by an algorithm which can appeal to your sexual preference. Algorithms can predict desires, manipulate emotions, take decisions on your behalf."

### Data dictators

The fourth stage will be a political coup—albeit a quiet, digital one. The World Economic Forum calls the digital data age "the fourth industrial revolution". But what will the new regime be like? Billionaire investor George Soros said social media companies like Facebook and Google



**DAVOS:** People pass in front of big screen during the speech of US President Donald Trump on January 26, 2018 at the Davos Congress Centre (C), the venue of the annual World Economic Forum. —AFP

risk compromising themselves by cooperating with authorities in Russia and China and creating a "web of totalitarian control".

In an outspoken dinner speech during the summit, he warned of an "alliance between authoritarian states and these large, data-rich IT monopolies". World leaders at Davos echoed the warning about data and power. "The danger is that we are too slow and that the world is destroying us while we are still asking who really owns our data," said German Chancellor Angela Merkel in a speech.

### Dehumanization

In response to the tech upheaval, a grouping of com-

panies at Davos launched Skillset, a platform to help workers evaluate their job skills and acquire new ones. But while the companies were looking to preserve their human resources, others were casting doubt on the very future of the "H" in "HR". Once technology has taken our data, our political rights, our jobs and our free will, it will come for our souls.

For Harari, author of the two-book series "Homo Sapiens", the tech shift is an evolutionary one. "By hacking organisms, elites might gain the power to engineer the future of life itself," he said. "By hacking organisms, elites might gain the power. If too much of the data becomes concentrated in too few hands, humanity will split not into classes, it will split into different species." —AFP

## Facebook wins EU court fight against class action lawsuit

**LUXEMBOURG:** The EU's top court on Thursday dismissed a bid by an Austrian activist to bring a class action against Facebook for privacy breaches, although he can sue the US social media giant on a personal basis. Max Schrems said he would now push ahead in an Austrian court with the individual case against Facebook's Irish division for alleged rights violations including personal data. Facebook welcomed the judgment and said it looked forward to "resolving" the case brought by Schrems, a campaigner who has previously brought down a landmark EU-US data sharing pact.

"Mr Schrems may bring an individual action in Austria against Facebook Ireland," the Luxembourg-based European Court of Justice said in a statement. "By contrast, as the assignee of other consumers' claims, he cannot benefit from the consumer forum for the purposes of a collective action." Schrems had lodged legal cases in an Austrian court on behalf of himself and seven other users in Austria, Germany and India against Facebook in Ireland as a way of starting a class action suit. Austria's Supreme Court had referred the matter to the ECJ after Schrems's lawsuit was first thrown out and then restored by the country's courts.

### Huge blow

Schrems still hailed it as a victory, tweeting "YAY" with a winking-smiley-face emoji. "For three years Facebook has been fighting nail and toe against the Courts jurisdiction in Austria and lost. Now, we can finally go ahead with the case," he said in a statement. "Facebook will now have to explain to a neutral Court whether its business model is in line with stringent European privacy laws. This is a huge blow for them. Unfortunately the Court of Justice has not taken up the golden opportunity to finally establish collective redress options in Europe, but kicked the ball back to the legislator."

Facebook had argued that people can only sue as individual consumers, not as groups. "Today's decision by the European Court of Justice supports the previous decisions of two courts that Mr Schrems's claims cannot proceed in Austrian courts as "class action" on behalf of other consumers," a Facebook spokesman said in a statement. "We were pleased to have been able to present our case to the European Court of Justice and now look forward to resolving this matter."

Schrems single-handedly brought down the EU's former "Safe Harbour" data sharing arrangement in 2015 after he sued Facebook in Ireland over the transfer of personal information by Facebook from Europe to the United States. The ECJ ruled the 16-year-old deal was illegal after Schrems cited US snooping practices exposed by former US intelligence contractor Edward Snowden. Schrems is now suing Ireland's data protection regulator over the issue in a separate case being considered by the ECJ. —AFP



## Ariane 5 satellites in orbit but not in right location

**KOUROU:** Two commercial satellites have been placed in orbit by an Ariane 5 rocket but have yet to reach their correct positions, Arianespace said Thursday, after mission control briefly lost contact with the craft in a rare malfunction. The usually reliable European space workhorse blasted off at 7:20 pm (2220 GMT) from the Kourou Space Centre in French Guiana carrying satellites for Luxembourg's SES and the United Arab Emirates' Yahsat in the first launch of the year for Arianespace.

For nearly 30 minutes mission controllers were left on tenterhooks when the rocket lost contact in what CEO Stephane Israel described as an "anomaly". But the team later received good news when the satellites chirped back into radio contact. "Both satellites were confirmed separated, acquired and they are on orbit," Arianespace said in an updated statement after the initial lift-off scare. The company, which is headquartered in France, said a tracking station in Brazil was unable to locate the craft shortly after ignition of the rocket's upper stage.

"This lack of telemetry lasted throughout the rest of powered flight," the statement said. But both satellites were later "communicating with their respective control centers". But a source told AFP the satellites did not detach from the rocket in the correct place after the craft followed an "imperfect trajectory". Arianespace said they were currently "repositioning the satellites in the right place using their propulsion systems" adding that their current status was "reassuring after strong concerns". Israel had earlier tweeted that the initial launch had been "flawless".

### Reliable workhorse

The SES satellite, built by Airbus in the UK, weighs more than four tons and is carrying both telecoms equipment as well as a NASA platform designed to explore the boundary between Earth's atmosphere and space. SES said in a statement that its satellite was "in good health" and that it would be maneuvered into the correct orbit in the next few months thanks to its own propulsion system.

## BuzzFeed in deal to distribute content in China

**BEIJING:** BuzzFeed has struck an agreement with Chinese technology group ByteDance to distribute its content in China, a rare foray behind the "Great Firewall of China" for Western media as Beijing tightens its censorship of the internet. ByteDance, which operates the popular Toutiao aggregator, claims 200 million daily users, according to a statement the two groups released Friday. Under the partnership agreement ByteDance will be able to distribute content and videos from the US online news and entertainment firm on its own platforms in China.

"We look forward to meaningfully engaging Chinese audiences in our feedback loop, to learn more about what they love, how they use and interact with our content and what they'd like to see," BuzzFeed's international vice president Scott Lamb said in their statement. "We're thrilled about this first foray into testing our content there," he added. No financial details of the agreement were given. Founded in 2006, BuzzFeed has become a major player in the world of online information thanks to its viral

content and its ability to generate traffic via social networks. But several major global social media networks including Facebook, Twitter and Instagram—which are crucial for delivering BuzzFeed content—are not accessible in China, where they are blocked by draconian censorship.

BuzzFeed's content ranges from in-depth surveys and potentially sensitive political topics to much lighter coverage of celebrities and the popular video recipes of its "Tasty" food network. But ByteDance could carefully select what it broadcasts of BuzzFeed's content to avoid the wrath of Chinese censors. Its Toutiao platform has already fallen foul of the Cyberspace Administration of China, which in December asked it to remove sections accused of "disseminating pornographic and vulgar content" and "exerting a harmful influence".

With an online population of more than 700 million, China is a tempting market for BuzzFeed, which is going through tough times and had to give up plans for a stock market listing, after announcing in November that it was dismissing about 100 of its 1,700 employees. The Chinese audience could give it a new lease on life on the international stage, without too much financial risk. In 2016, BuzzFeed launched a Japanese edition of its website in collaboration with Yahoo Japan. ByteDance makes no secret of its international ambitions and hopes to break through abroad with a foreign version of Toutiao called TopBuzz, which relies on artificial intelligence to target information, videos and content specific to each user. —AFP

## British PM urges social media to act on abuse

**DAVOS:** British Prime Minister Theresa May will encourage activist investors on Thursday to pressure social media firms into clamping down on fake news, hate speech and sexual harassment. "Investors can make a big difference here by ensuring trust and safety issues are being properly considered. And I urge them to do so," she will say in a speech to the World Economic Forum in Davos. She will highlight how a group of shareholders recently demanded Facebook and Twitter "disclose more information about sexual harassment, fake news, hate speech and other forms of abuse that take place on the companies' platforms".

May will say that smaller media platforms also need to act, according to extracts of her speech released by her office in London. "Smaller platforms can quickly become home to criminals and terrorists. We have seen that happen with Telegram," May will say. "And we need to see more co-operation from smaller platforms like this. No-one wants to be known as 'the terrorists' platform' or the first choice app for paedophiles."

Her call comes as part of a broader push for international action against online extremism, which May took last year to the G7 and the United Nations General Assembly. In Davos, she will say that big technology firms have made progress in dealing with harmful and illegal online activity, but must do more. She will chair a meeting with technology companies including Siemens, Cisco and IBM, to discuss their role in ensuring the "responsible use of the internet", her spokesman said. —AFP

Health

# Papua's remote villages cry for help amid deadly health crisis

## No doctors in the community of several hundred

**ASMAT, Indonesia:** Worried parents braved long queues and scorching heat in the remote Papuan jungle to get their sick babies treated Friday, as the impoverished region grapples with a deadly measles-and-malnutrition outbreak. AFP has been able to access the isolated village of Ayam, where houses sit on stilts and the only bare-bones clinic has no modern medical equipment, a few rickety beds, and overwhelmed nurses struggling to cope.

There are no doctors in the community of several hundred which has seen over two dozen cases of measles. Crisscrossed by rivers and swamps, Ayam is a 10-hour boat trip to the nearest major city Timika. The Indonesian military has sent medical teams to Ayam and other remote locations across the vast region to prevent the spread of what they are calling an "extraordinary" outbreak. Villagers are also suffering from other health problems like diarrhea and respiratory infections.

"What we really need is medicine and food so our children here can be healthy again... that's what we need now," said 28-year-old father Yunus Komenemar, whose one-year-old son was diagnosed with measles. Ayam is in the Asmat district where some 800 children have been sickened, while as many as 100 others, mostly toddlers, are feared to have died in the outbreak, which was first made public this month.

Harrowing images from affected communities showed rail-thin children lying on rickety beds with their rib cages exposed and a malnourished girl lying on the floor hooked up to an IV drip. "I'm sad, I'm angry, and I feel pity," said Norce, a mother of a five-year-old being treated for measles in Agats, another hard-hit community. In Ayam, nurse Abednego Bakay said his clinic was short of almost everything, including crucial vaccines. "The equipment here is basic and so

we can only try to serve people by giving them medicine" he added.

### 'Too late'

The head of the military medical teams acknowledged that Jakarta's response was slow. "Let's be honest, maybe the local and national governments became aware of this (outbreak) too late," Asep Setia Gunawan, the military's medical task force chief, told AFP. "The conditions here are serious and that's why we are calling this an 'extraordinary' outbreak."

The problems in Ayam and other villages across Papua are a combination of myriad problems including years of national and local government neglect, a lack of jobs, and logistical hurdles in boosting the quality of life for remote communities, experts said. They warn that this crisis will be repeated without more action to pull the province out of grinding poverty and end a low-level separatist insurgency fuelled by resentment over poor conditions. "I hope this crisis will help some people here—at least those in power to change their minds, but if they choose business as usual another crisis will appear next year as well," said Andreas Harsono, a Jakarta-based campaigner for Human Rights Watch.

Komenemar, whose young son was being treated for measles, worried about what will happen when the military leaves Ayam. "The government is paying more attention, aid is coming in and there are (positive) changes, but we want it to last," he said. Many Papuans live a semi-nomadic existence and lack proper medical care, schools or other basic services, including access to clean water. Angelina Sanpai, a mother of six who was waiting to get treatment for her six-month old baby's diarrhea, said putting food on the table is a daily struggle. "I'm used to crying because we've got so little food," she said. —AFP



AGATS: A Papuan child suffering from malnutrition lies in a hospital bed for treatment in Agats, the capital of Asmat district in Indonesia's easternmost Papua province. —AFP



### An 'extraordinary' outbreak

## Heart attack risk high with one cigarette a day

**PARIS:** Just one cigarette a day carries nearly half the risk for heart attack and stroke as smoking a full pack of 20, according to a large-scale study published Thursday. "If someone smokes one cigarette instead of 20 per day, intuitively we'd think that the risk drops to 1/20, or five percent," said lead author Allan Hackshaw, a professor at University College London, whose paper analysed 141 previous studies. "This seems to be the case for lung cancer, but is not true for heart attacks and stroke, where one cigarette per

day carries around 50 percent of the risk of a pack a day," he told AFP.

Smokers should not be fooled, in other words, into thinking that a few cigarettes a day—or even just one—carries little or no long term harm, he added. "Whilst it is great that smokers try to cut down—and they should be positively encouraged to do so—in order to get the big benefits on cardiovascular disease they need to quit completely," he said by email. The findings were published in the medical journal BMJ. Tobacco kills about seven million people worldwide every year, according to the World Health Organization. About two million of those deaths are due to cardiovascular disease, mainly coronary heart attacks and stroke. Earlier research suggested that smoking a few cigarettes a day was linked to a higher-than-expected risk of heart disease, but findings were inconclusive. —AFP

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## What's On

## Marriott Hotels win 14 awards at HORECA Kuwait



Marriott Hotels in Kuwait have participated in HORECA Kuwait 2018 for food and hospitality industries for the sixth year in a row. The exhibition took place on January 15-17 at the Kuwait International Fair. A huge number of chefs from different hotels and restaurants in Kuwait competed in a series of live culinary shows which were judged by a panel of international chefs from the Middle East and Europe. JW Marriott Kuwait City and

Courtyard by Marriott Kuwait participated in various competitions including, ice carving, bedding competition, wedding cake and traditional Kuwaiti dish contest, and were awarded a collection of recognitions, including 2 gold medals in the Traditional Kuwaiti Dish and bedding competition, two silver in the fresh pasta and sushi contests, two bronze in the ice carving and sandwiches competitions, and eight Merit Certificates in other contests. Commenting about their participa-

tion in the exhibition, George Aoun, Cluster General Manager of Marriott Hotels in Kuwait said: "HORECA Exhibition is considered one of the most important food and hospitality events in the region that is why we participate every year." "We are very proud of our chefs and their amazing achievements. HORECA Exhibition 2018 proved once again Marriott's continued passion and excellence in dishing up world-class cuisine through its talented chefs." Aoun added.



## Induction of officers of Filipino Oral Hygienists' Society in Kuwait

We are pleased to announce to the public that the Filipino Oral Hygienists' Society of Kuwait (FOHSK) is now an Official and Duly Recognized Organization by the Philippine Embassy, Kuwait. FOHSK is a non-profit, non-political and free from religious ties organization based in Kuwait composing of 6 Board of Directors and 47 Pioneering Members of Filipino Oral Hygienists from both private and public sectors. Last January 5, 2018, the said group of Filipino Oral Hygienists gathered at the Philippine Embassy in Kuwait.

The big and historical day was highlighted by the Six FOHSK Board of Directors who successfully sworn their Oaths of Office before Honorable Charleson C Hermosura, Charge' d'affaires Philippine Embassy

Kuwait. The Six Governing Bodies of FOHSK being named, Alma Perias - Rafols, RDH, - Chairman of the Board; Ysabelle Paola L. Macatangay, RDH - Deputy Chairman of the Board, Piaget Louise F Maglalang, RDH -Executive Administrator; Catherine D Arguelles, RDH - Chairman on Committee and Affairs; Annabelle C Tiglao, RDH - Chairman on Media and Communication and Rudilyn O Pigar, RDH - Financial Analyst and the Oath Taking of the Pioneering Members.

Give-away of top brand in food supplements and dietary food like Orthomol (Germany) Vital F and Orthomol Femin Supplements were given away to members upon registration. Te'Pe interdental brushes from Sweden were given away to 17 winners as consolation prizes. Top Oral Hygiene brands like Waterpik and Philips were given away as GRAND RAFFLE PRIZES. The three grand prize raffle winners were drawn by Philippine Embassy Charge' d'affaires, Honorable Charleson Hemosura and FOHSK Chairman of the Board Alma Perias Rafols, RDH and were assisted by FOHSK Officers and Ultramed Clinical Product Specialists Catherine D. Arguelles, RDH and Annabelle C Tiglao, RDH. The event was graced by the presence of Bouchra A. Laksimi, D Sc; Ultramed Oral Hygiene Team Leader.



## Bee-Swarmed Bhavan marks the spellbinding day in style

'Spell-tacular gladiators' armed with letters and words fought vigorously in the colosseum of knowledge, and in times, like mystical beings, transforming into bees and butterflies collected nectar of letters to store in their arc-'hives' of achievements as the grand finale of the fourth edition of Bharatiya Vidhya Bhavan's GCC Spell Bee, a spell-the-word con-

test, culminated at Indian Educational School Kuwait in the most majestic manner on 20th January 2018.

The school auditorium took the shape of an amphitheatre where spectators fidgeted and grimaced in anticipation for the fight of the year. The chief guest, Ms. Ann Newman, Department of English Language and literature, Gulf University of Science and Technology, Kuwait, along with the guest of honour Dr. Shashiranjay Yadav, Vice-Chancellor, Indian Institute of Teacher Education Gujarat, India graced the day of grandeur. Mr. Suresh.V. Balakrishnan Vice Principal Middle and senior wing IES and Ms. Jaemi Byju Head of the Department of English, Middle and Senior wings IES were the chief pronouncers of the day along with Mr. E.P Prasad, senior faculty, the Department of English being the assistant pronouncer. Contestants from different schools in Kuwait were categorized and seated on the dais with their counterparts sitting and

churning their brain cells at different locations in the Middle East in real time.

The spellers were taken for a roller coaster ride of words of extreme complexity and simplicity, and they all gleefully rode along artfully dodging the cleverly laid traps of letters. The audience in the auditorium and the many thousands glued to the live streaming were fallen through the void of a whirlpool of words into a virtual world of letters which eventually entrapped them all for a few hours to let them watch in awe one of the most adrenalin-rushing arcade games of the alphabet. After 3 hours of brain racking, the regal ride came to an end with a bee dance by the charismatic students of IES breaking the spell and setting some fire work of elegant steps in the auditorium. Mrs. Meenakshi Nayyar, Vice Principal Co-Curricular Activities declared the final result of the Bhavans GCC Spell Bee Championship.

The winners are: Category 1: Parth Gupta, Bahrain

Indian School Bahrain (1st place), Jemi Eldho, Private International English School, Abu Dhabi, UAE (2nd place), Malavika Vinod, Indian Community School Khaitan, Kuwait (3rd place) and Abhinav Ashokan, Al Saad Indian School Al Ain, UAE (3rd place). Category 2: Rahul Wavare, British School of Kuwait (1st place), Aarush, Private International English School, Abu Dhabi, UAE (2nd place), Manini Lasit Desai, Bahrain Indian School Bahrain (3rd place). Category 3: Nevin Noji Vaidyan, Indian Educational School Kuwait (1st place), Arjun N Anooj, Private International English School Abu Dhabi, UAE (2nd place), Steve Chalil Biju, Bahrain Indian School Bahrain (3rd place). Category 4: Shad Ahmed Shahul, Fahaheel Al-Watanieh Indian Private School (DPS), Kuwait (1st place), Nivedha Mayiluanan, Private International English School Abu Dhabi, UAE (2nd place) and Parthiv Varma, Al Saad Indian School Al Ain, UAE (3rd place).









# Paris show pays homage to 'eternal style' of late designer Alaïa



A picture shows creations displayed at the exhibition "Je suis couturier" (I am a fashion designer) of late French-Tunisian fashion designer Azzedine Alaïa on January 21, 2018, at the Azzedine Alaïa Association in Paris. — AFP photos



Two months after legendary designer Azzedine Alaïa's sudden death plunged the fashion world into mourning, an exhibition in homage to the "King of Cling" opens Monday in his studios in Paris. The Tunisian-born designer, renowned for the way his clothes hugged the body, died suddenly in November aged 82, reportedly of heart failure after falling down the stairs at his home.

The diminutive maverick, who ignored fashion week convention by showing when and where he wanted, in July produced his first couture collection in six years to rapturous reviews. Now some of his most iconic dresses are going on display in the glass-roofed gallery next to his studio and home in the Marais district where he used to show his creations. It includes the dress worn by supermodel Naomi Campbell, his longtime friend and muse, when she led his last collection down the catwalk. The pair were so close Campbell called the designer "Papa", and she was inconsolable at his funeral in Tunis.

Alaïa studied to be a sculptor and used his fine art training to sculpt with needle and thread. Fashion historian Olivier Saillard, who has curated the show which runs until June, said Alaïa's famously flattering cut was timeless. To hammer the point home, none of the dresses in "Azzedine Alaïa: I am a Couturier" have a panel explaining when they were made. "I defy anyone to distinguish between a dress made in 1981, 1995 or 2017," he told AFP. Instead curious visitors must consult a catalogue at the door.



In this file photo taken on September 7, 2017 Franco-Tunisian fashion designer Azzedine Alaïa poses during an exposition of the work of British artist Richard Wentworth on fashion design at the Maison Alaïa in Paris.



## 'Last of the couturiers'

Saillard described Alaïa as the "last of the couturiers", capable of doing everything himself and making his mastery invisible. "Like Balenciaga and all those who knew how to cut and sew, he moved further and further away from making an obvious show of his brilliant technique." He said his clothes "didn't shout, there was nothing bling about them", instead he went for an eternal style that never went out of fashion. Almost all the dresses in the show—including ones he made for pop star and actress Grace Jones—are in black or white.

"Alaïa used to say that you can make an idea more precise in black and not dilute it," Saillard said. The famous hooded dress he made for Jones and the fire brigade-red zip one he created for pop superstar Rihanna are among the 41 classic dresses on display. Although his private life was always a mystery, the designer kept an open house in Paris during fashion weeks as celebrities rubbed shoulders with students and waifs and strays at his large kitchen table where he cooked for all comers. Alaïa moved to Paris at the height of the Algerian war of independence, where he soon got

a job with Christian Dior, only to be let go because he did not have the right immigration papers.

Despite the setback, he moved on to work with Guy Laroche and Thierry Mugler before going out on his own with his own wealthy clientele. A foundation has now been created to safeguard his work, and will also hold regular exhibitions from his vast personal collection of couture. A retrospective of his work, "Azzedine Alaïa, The Couturier", will open at the Design Museum in London in May, when his brand will also open its first British boutique. — AFP



## Five highlights from Paris haute couture fashion week

As Paris haute couture week ends Thursday, we look at the five things we learned from the elite fashion extravaganza:

### All hail Galliano

Genius is a word that gets thrown around in fashion like confetti at a wedding, but many who witnessed John Galliano's two shows for Margiela over the past 12 days believed that in his case the feathered hat fits. The British designer may never live down the notorious drunken anti-Semitic rant that cost him his job at Dior in 2011. Yet fashion would be far less fantastical without him.

His haute couture collection using transformative fabrics which look completely different to the naked eye than through the lens of smartphone, was not just inspired use of cutting-edge tech, but deft commentary on seeing at the world through the lens of Instagram.

### Karl's beard

Even geniuses make mistakes. Just ask Karl Lagerfeld who is no doubt stroking his chin over whether he will persist with his new wispy white beard. Reaction to the Kaiser's first major change in image in two decades was generally negative—and almost drowned out his very girly Chanel show. Vogue's legendary critic Suzy Menkes did her best to soften the blow by referring to the growth as "an exciting facial accessory".

### Be careful who you quote

Dior under Maria Grazia Chiuri loves nothing better than a good slogan. She began her reign at the fabled label with her "We should all be feminists" T-shirt and by plastering "Christian Dior J'adore" on just about everything, from bras to sandal straps. This week she wrote lines from Andre Breton's "Surrealist Manifesto" across her models' collar



Models present creations for Ralph & Russo during the 2018 spring/summer Haute Couture collection in Paris. — AFP photos



bones as part of a homage to Italian artist and proto-feminist Leonor Fini. Which was unfortunate, as critics quickly pointed out, because Breton was a notorious misogynist who Fini abhorred for writing that "the problem of woman is the most marvelous and disturbing problem in all the world".

**Don't say it with flowers**

Never write a note using the N-word and send it to someone who puts their entire life on Instagram. The Russian designer Ulyana Sergeenko learned that the hard way this week when she sent flowers to her friend the Moscow socialite Miroslava Duma when she arrived in Paris for the shows. Both women insisted it was meant as a term of endearment between friends, but the fashion world was not in a forgiving mood.

**Life is black and white**

While catwalks are more and more gender fluid with co-ed shows and androgynous and trans models, they could not have been more binary when it came to color this week. Black and white dominated from John Paul Gaultier's two-tone tribute to Pierre Cardin to Dior's surreal checkerboards and Clare Waight Keller's much-praised debut at Givenchy. That couture fixture the femme fatale cut a black and silver swathe through the Azzaro,



Alexandre Vautier and Galia Lahav collections, with shoulders exaggerated 1980s-style to emphasize killer glamour. Chanel and Valentino swam against the austere tide with a sweetsop assortment of sugary pinks and

greens, while Viktor & Rolf also went for a bolder palette, giving their quirky creations an extra sheen by making the complete collection in satin duchesse. — AFP



Models present creations by Giambattista Valli during the 2018 spring/summer Haute Couture collection.



**LVMH luxuriates in another record year**

French luxury group LVMH said Thursday it bagged another record year in terms of sales in 2017 and profits passed the five-billion-euro mark. "LVMH achieved another record year," said chief executive Bernard Arnault. "The excellent performance, to which all our businesses contributed, is due in part to the buoyant environment." Revenues grew by 13 percent to 42.6 billion euros (\$53 billion) and net profit jumped by 29 percent to 5.1 billion euros. And Arnault said LVMH-whose 70 brands range from Louis Vuitton, Hennessy and Givenchy to Celine, Guerlain and Sephora—was "cautiously confident" for 2018. "In an environment that remains supportive at the beginning of the year and despite unfavorable currencies and geopolitical uncertainties, LVMH is well-equipped to continue its growth momentum across all business groups in 2018," he said. By division, the fashion and leather goods business was able to lift sales by 13 percent to 15.4 billion euros last year, LVMH said. In the selective retailing division, revenues were up by 13 percent to 13.3 billion euros, while sales of perfumes and cosmetics increased by 14 percent to 5.6 billion euros. Sales in the wines and spirits division advanced by seven percent to 5.1 billion euros. "Champagnes grew steadily, with volumes up four percent. With 7.5 million cases of cognac shipped in 2017, Hennessy's volumes increased by eight percent, with significant growth in China and the United States despite supply constraints in the second half," LVMH said. Sales of watches and jewelry expanded by 12 percent to 3.8 billion euros. —AFP

## Lifestyle | Music &amp; Movies



Fleetwood Mac performs at the Person Of The Year gala at Radio City Music Hall in New York. — AFP photos



(From left) Honorees Stevie Nicks, John McVie, Christine McVie, Lindsey Buckingham and Mick Fleetwood of Fleetwood Mac seen onstage.



Former US President Bill Clinton (left) and Recording Academy and MusiCares President/CEO Neil Portnow (right) present the MusiCares Person of the Year award to honorees (second left) Stevie Nicks, Lindsey Buckingham, Christine McVie, Mick Fleetwood, and John McVie onstage during MusiCares Person of the Year honoring Fleetwood Mac at Radio City Music Hall.

## Clinton repays a favor to Mac at MusiCares ceremony

Their 1977 song "Don't Stop" helped power Bill Clinton into the White House in 1992, and on Friday it was the former US president doing the honors for Fleetwood Mac. Clinton presented Fleetwood Mac with statuettes as the 2018 MusiCares honorees, making them the first band to win the annual award given to a musician for creative achievements and charitable work. Clinton chose the British-American band's single "Don't Stop" as the theme song for his 1992 presidential campaign, helping to revive their popularity and encouraging the fractious soft rock band to reunite for his inaugural ball in 1993. "They let me use it as a theme song and I have been trying to live by it ever since," Clinton told the audience at Radio City Music Hall in New York. "I owe a great deal to all of them," he added.

At the concert and ceremony on Friday, Miley Cyrus, Lorde, Keith Urban, Harry Styles and Juanes were among musicians across genres to perform their own interpretations of Fleetwood Mac's biggest hits over a 50-year career. Band members Mick Fleetwood, John McVie, Stevie Nicks, Christine McVie and Lindsey Buckingham ended the three-hour celebration by taking to the stage to perform "Go Your Own Way" and "Little Lies." Fleetwood Mac formed in London in 1967 and went on to become one of the best-selling bands in the world, with more than 100 million records sold, including Grammy-winning 1977 album "Rumours" and hit singles "Songbird," "Rhiannon" and "Dreams." After romantic and creative tensions, some members going solo and several changes of line-up, Fleetwood, McVie, Nicks, Buckingham and Christine McVie put their differences

behind them and reunited in 2014 for the first time since 1998, and embarked on a sell-out world tour.

"Fleetwood Mac is well known for being a dysfunctional family... and it was certainly much of the fuel for our material," said Buckingham. "But what we are feeling really more now than ever in our career is love," he added. Proceeds from the annual MusiCares gala support members of the music industry in times of financial and medical need. Friday's event, held two days before the Grammy Awards, raised some \$7 million for MusiCares, Recording Academy chairman Neil Portnow said. Previous recipients include Tom Petty, Bob Dylan, Barbra Streisand, Bruce Springsteen and Paul McCartney. — Reuters



Actor/singer Jared Leto performs onstage.



Miley Cyrus performs at the 2018 MusiCares Person Of The Year gala.



Juanes performs at the 2018 MusiCares Person Of The Year gala.



Keith Urban performs at the 2018 MusiCares Person Of The Year gala.



Recording artist Lorde performs onstage.



Musician/actor Harry Styles performs at the 2018 MusiCares Person Of The Year gala.



(From left) Musicians Jimi Westbrook, Kimberly Schlapman, Karen Fairchild and Phillip Sweet of Little Big Town performs onstage.



Honoree Mick Fleetwood of music group Fleetwood Mac performs onstage.

## Post-Sundance, female filmmakers find Hollywood dream elusive

Sundance, the premiere US independent film gathering, this week saw a record number of female filmmakers showcased and it has championed women for four decades, but the Hollywood success that so often comes for male directors has proven elusive. A study published this month by University of Southern California's Annenberg Inclusion Initiative analyzed 1,100 Hollywood films from 2007 to 2017 and found that out of 1,223 directors, women accounted for only 4 percent of honorees.

In contrast, women made up 37 percent of directors represented across the 122 films debuting at Sundance this week. "The biggest problem is that it is so much harder to convince studios ... that we can also make the bigger movies," said Hannah Fidell, who wrote and directed "The Long Dumb Road," debuting at Sundance.

Michael Barker and Tom Bernard, who co-founded Sony Pictures Classics and often usher Sundance movies to Oscar success, said they have produced films by 59 female filmmakers,

but that a lot of those filmmakers have struggled to find success elsewhere. "I don't think women have been given those opportunities after their experience with us from all these other companies, and I think it's right to stand up and say they deserve more attention than they were given," Barker said.

Male directors, such as Quentin Tarantino, David O. Russell, Darren Aronofsky and Damien Chazelle, who all got their starts at Sundance, have gone on to enjoy studio success. This year's Sundance festival comes amid the rise of the Time's Up movement in Hollywood, launched by more than 300 industry figures to fight against sexual misconduct and discrimination in the workplace.

Several panels at the festival focused on the gender gap in Hollywood with actresses such as Octavia Spencer speaking out about pay parity. Spencer said she and Jessica Chastain had teamed up to negotiate five times her asking salary for an upcoming film the two are working on together. Along with pay issues, many film-

makers are looking for stories that move beyond female typecasts. Reed Morano first came to Sundance in 2008 as the cinematographer for "Frozen River." This year, she returned to Sundance with her film directorial debut "I Think We're Alone Now," centered on a man (Peter Dinklage) and a teenage girl (Elle Fanning) in a post-apocalyptic world.

"Out of 10 projects I get sent, seven or eight are female protagonists and that's not the only thing I'm interested in," Morano said. "I do think it's unfair for women who get pegged with creating fare for other women," she added. After writing and directing two films with strong female leads, Fidell said she purposely chose to center her latest film "The Long Dumb Road" on the story of two boys. "I was getting boxed into only making stories about women going crazy or young adult love stories," Fidell said. "I made this hoping that ... it would really open up new doors for projects." — Reuters



Director/screenwriter Hannah Fidell, actors Tony Revolori, Jason Mantzoukas and Sundance Film Festival Director, Trevor Groth attend the premiere of "The Long Dumb Road" during the Sundance Film Festival at The Eccles Center Theatre in Park City, Utah. — AFP

## Lifestyle | Features



In this photo floor staff gather for a meeting before lunch opening hours at the "Brasserie Paul Bocuse Le Musee" in the National Art Center in Tokyo. — AFP photos



Chefs prepare dishes during lunchtime at the "Brasserie Paul Bocuse Le Musee" in the National Art Center in Tokyo.



Floor staff prepare for lunch opening hours at the "Brasserie Paul Bocuse Le Musee".

## JAPAN CHEFS MOURN FRANCE'S BOCUSE LIKE AN IDOL

When Japanese cook Kazunori Nakatani talks about his mentor Paul Bocuse, the legendary French chef who died last week, he still uses the present tense: "For us he is someone very divine!" Bocuse is revered in France as the "pope" of the country's treasured cuisine, and gained international recognition in part for his revolutionary "Nouvelle Cuisine" in the 1970s. But he has a special legacy in Japan, where many local chefs trained at his Institut Paul Bocuse, near Lyon.

"He's an idol, not only in the world of French cuisine, but in the entire world of cuisine," said Nakatani, executive chef of the Paul Bocuse brand in Japan. "Good produce, well-seasoned, good cooking; that is good cuisine," he added, switching to French to reel off his mentor's golden rules. "These are the words that will stay with me." Nakatani was flying to France this week to join more than 1,500 chefs from around the world paying tribute to Bocuse at his funeral in Lyon.

### 'Deeply sad'

The French chef first visited Japan decades ago, and struck up a partnership with local chef Hiroyuki Hiramatsu, who would go on to manage Bocuse's six brasseries and two restaurants in Japan. The first opened in 2007, the "Brasserie Paul Bocuse Le Musee," inside Tokyo's National Arts Centre, where it occupies a dramatic spot atop a massive inverted concrete cone that dominates the museum's glass atrium. A staircase runs down from the center of the dining space into the depths of the cone, where cooks work silently and gracefully, delicately garnishing dishes that replicate Bocuse's French delicacies.

The kitchen resembles the steel interior of a

spaceship, with copper pots and pans hanging on all sides, and cooks in chef's whites gliding past each other. They tenderly prepare slices of duck terrine presented with mini cornichons and plump and golden portions of chicken confit. Then coarse salt is sprinkled on the dishes, which are intended to trans-

“For us he is someone very divine!”

port diners thousands of kilometers away to the Lyon region where Bocuse lived and worked. Jun Ueda, 42, has worked at the brasserie since it opened, and can hardly believe its founder is gone. "It's deeply sad," he said, his starched chef's hat perched atop his head. "I lost my father at the age of 17 and I can tell you the shock was just as great." "He's the one who inspired me to cook French food," he added, as a cook nearby sliced expertly through a sitting row of glistening red tomatoes.

### 'A big father'

Each of Bocuse's restaurants and brasseries in Japan was designed to mirror one of his establishments in France, with the museum brasserie's menu modeled on that of his Brasserie des Lumieres in Lyon's football stadium. "A museum is... a very special place, borderless," said Yuriko Narusawa, a PR official for Paul Bocuse's Japanese operations.

"That is one of the reasons why we wanted to open our first restaurant here. Because the aim is to spread French cuisine. So this is an ideal place." "Monseigneur Paul" as he was known, was France's only chef to keep the Michelin food bible's coveted three-star rating for more than four decades. But he distained overly fussy food, seeking to create only dishes that would tempt diners back "for a second helping." "He left us his philosophy, the way he thought about cooking," said Nakatani, who did several training sessions in Lyon. "He was always saying 'simply', and I think that best sums up his cooking philosophy."

Bocuse, who died at 91, was a larger-than-life character, and infamously maintained a relationship with his wife as well as two lovers. He also exuded a warmth that extended to every employee at restaurants, his former students say. "He treated everyone like a family member, even staff members, dishwashers," said Nakatani. "He is an idol, but he is also a big father." — AFP



Chefs prepare dishes during lunchtime at the "Brasserie Paul Bocuse Le Musee".



This file photo taken on November 09, 2012 shows French chef Paul Bocuse posing in his kitchen at L'Auberge de Pont de Collonges, during a culinary work shop in Collonges-au-Mont-d'Or.



Chefs prepare dishes during lunchtime at the "Brasserie Paul Bocuse Le Musee".

## Met Opera's 'Tosca' rises after backstage chaos

After enduring unprecedented cast upheaval, the Metropolitan Opera's new "Tosca" is winning standing ovations for its opulent reboot of Puccini's shadowy tale of love, politics, power and deception. The New York opera house's revamped take on the repertory favorite, which premiered on New Year's Eve, will go global Saturday when it is beamed to cinemas worldwide as part of the Met's "Live in HD" series. Building an unusual buzz within the audience before each performance, the new production stars two leads who had never before performed in the opera — Italian tenor Vittorio Grigolo and Bulgarian soprano Sonya Yoncheva.

Yoncheva says she was eager to put her imprint on the role of Tosca, a diva who is often portrayed as haughty and temperamental. "I always thought Tosca is a different person. She's not this arrogant diva. She's not narcissistic," Yoncheva told AFP. "I actually believe she's somebody exactly the opposite. She's somebody really loving and her jealousy is because she feels this passion for Mario." Her approach to the show-stopping aria "Vissi d'arte," sometimes rendered while kneeling, shuns histrionics. "For me, this is a moment of reflection," said Yoncheva. "Tosca will be in this completely intimate moment, singing for herself and singing for her god without exaggerating anything."

### 'More modern diva'

The standing ovations suggest Yoncheva's unadorned approach is resonating with Met audiences who may relate to Tosca's flirty banter with her lover Mario Cavaradossi, and, more darkly, see parallels between today's "Me Too" phenomenon and Tosca's predicament as she fends off and ultimately kills her would-be rapist, the villain Scarpia. The Met has set up a gallery on its first floor showcasing Maria Callas, Leontyne Price and other Toscas of eras bygone. But opera houses are also eager to refresh themselves to draw in younger audiences.

"It's one of those roles where the artist of course is at the service of the character, but also needs to speak about himself or herself, and in this way that Tosca is a modern Tosca," said conductor Emmanuel Villaume. "She's less difficult, less capricious than the idea of the diva we might have had in the time of (Renata) Tebaldi or Callas, who are the references in this role." Villaume said. Yoncheva is

"a more modern singer and she's a more modern diva," he said.

### Cursed?

One of the most popular and accessible operas, "Tosca" has proven tricky for the Met in recent years. The problems began in 2009 when the Met introduced a pared-down production by Luc Bondy, replacing a much-loved spectacle created by Franco Zeffirelli. The Bondy version infamously drew jeers on opening night from the Met audience, which is not known for booing, and was detested by some major patrons of the opera house. The new production, developed by David McVicar, replaces the minimalist look of its immediate predecessor with museum-quality sets, including of Scarpia's fresco-filled chamber room at the Palazzo Farnese. The McVicar staging conveys much of the grandeur of Zeffirelli's work, but the style is more "painterly," said John Sellars, the Met's assistant general manager for production.

An unusual feature is that the production is performed on a slanted stage, adding dramatic tension "by things being just a little bit out of whack," Sellars said. But casting the new production proved difficult, with the original tenor, soprano and conductor all bowing out soon after the show was announced in February 2017. Then, in a bombshell less than

a month before opening night, the Met suspended the production's second conductor, former music director James Levine, amid sexual abuse allegations. About 10 days later, Bryn Terfel, the last remaining star of the original cast, withdrew and was replaced as Scarpia by Serbian baritone Zeljko Lucic. "It was like a curse," recalled Yoncheva. "Everyone was scared something will happen to them." Villaume, who had just won plaudits for his handling of Massenet's "Thais" at the Met in November, was enlisted as an emergency replacement. "There was a lot of pressure on us considering the whole history of the production," he told AFP. "I probably lost a few years in a few weeks."

But critical reception of the opening night performance was generally good. The audience that night included Bill and Hillary Clinton, who met the cast and attended a gala dinner that was covered by Vanity Fair magazine. Both Yoncheva and Villaume say the performances have gotten progressively better. Now there is just one left for the current cast: the Saturday broadcast, Villaume's first "Live in HD." "The way we had to deal with all those challenges day after day it gave me a certain sense of 'stay calm,'" he said. "I will probably digest and metabolize all of this in a few weeks, but it has been an incredible experience." — AFP



## Out on a limb: Vanity Fair's curious cover

The latest cover of prestigious US magazine Vanity Fair features an annual photograph of Hollywood's elite with a twist. Reese Witherspoon, Oprah Winfrey, Tom Hanks, Robert de Niro, Nicole Kidman and other stars are grouped for the magazine's "Hollywood Issue" in a photo lavishly retouched-but forgetting, it seems, to erase an extra leg. "Well...I guess everybody knows now...I have 3 legs," Witherspoon joked on Twitter. "I hope you can still accept me for who I am." After Witherspoon's tweet, Winfrey—the queen of American television—raised her hand to comment on another picture taken for the issue by acclaimed photographer Annie Leibovitz.

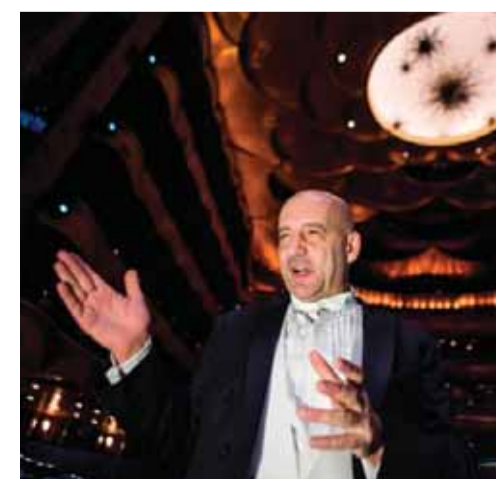
"I accept your 3d leg. As I know you accept my 3d hand," Winfrey joked. She was referring to a separate photograph from the shoot, one in which Winfrey indeed seems to have three hands: one at her waist, one around Witherspoon, and a third resting on her own leg. That picture has now been removed from Vanity Fair's website. The photographs caused

amusement on the internet Friday, and Vanity Fair played along. "While we would have loved the exclusive on @RWitherspoon's three legs, unfortunately it's just the lining of her dress," the magazine tweeted. As for Winfrey—a producer, presenter and actress—"how can we expect her to juggle it all with just two hands?" Vanity Fair joked, noting that the error was being corrected online.

Actor James Franco was also meant to be part of the Vanity Fair spread but was scrubbed because of "the misconduct allegations against him," The Hollywood Reporter said, citing a Vanity Fair source. He was reportedly accused by five women of sexually inappropriate behavior after he won a Golden Globe this month for best actor in "The Disaster Artist". Franco sat for the Vanity Fair photo shoot but was then digitally removed from the cover following the allegations, The Hollywood Reporter said, citing multiple sources. — AFP



Sonya Yoncheva, who plays the title role of the fiery diva, and Vittorio Grigolo, who plays her passionate lover, Cavaradossi, perform in "Tosca" at the Metropolitan Opera in New York.



French orchestra conductor Emmanuel Villaume speaks before conducting "Tosca". — AFP photos

# Lifestyle

SUNDAY, JANUARY 28, 2018



The Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle Michelangelo, aka Mikey, visits the exhibition "Michelangelo: Divine Draftsman and Designer" in his costume at the The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. The fictional turtle was named after artist Michelangelo Buonarroti (Italian, 1475-1564). — AFP



This file photo shows a fully functioning solid gold toilet, made by Italian artist Maurizio Cattelan, which was going into public use at the Guggenheim Museum in New York. — AFP photos

## Guggenheim offered Trumps a gold toilet in lieu of a Van Gogh

The request was for a Van Gogh to adorn the walls of the president and first lady's private residence in the White House. The answer? No—but how about a fully functioning, 18-karat gold toilet instead? While it's customary for US presidents to borrow works of art during their time in office, the Guggenheim in Donald Trump's hometown of New York was polite, but firm in its refusal. The Washington Post reported.

When the White House requested the renowned Dutch painter's "Landscape With Snow," the museum's chief curator—an outspoken Trump critic—countered that the 19th century painting was "prohibited from travel except for the rarest of occasions." "We are sorry not to be able to accommodate your original request," wrote Nancy Spector in an email obtained by the Post, "but remain hopeful that this special offer may be of interest." Italian artist Maurizio Cattelan's "America"—a gleaming gold toilet—was on display at the Guggenheim for nearly a year, installed in a restroom for the private use of members of the public with a guard posted outside.

Now that the exhibition was over, the artist would "like to offer it to the White House for a long-term loan," the Post quoted Spector as emailing. "It is, of course, extremely valuable and somewhat fragile, but we would provide all the instructions for

its installation and care." Asked to explain the meaning of the installation and why he offered it to the Trumps, 57-year-old Cattelan told the Post: "What's the point of our life? Everything seems absurd until we die and then it makes sense."

The Guggenheim, asked by AFP, said it had "no further information to provide." The White House did not immediately respond to an AFP query. In a blog last August, Spector called the toilet "a cipher for the excesses of affluence" and said more than 100,000 people had queued "for the opportunity to commune with art and with nature." "Though crafted from millions of dollars' worth of gold, the sculpture is actually a great leveler. As Cattelan has said, "Whatever you eat, a \$200 lunch or a \$2 hot dog, the results are the same, toilet-wise." Neither is it the first association between Trump, whose Manhattan home is famous for its lavish gold color scheme, and a golden toilet. Last June, Trevor Noah's "The Daily Show" hosted a free exhibition in New York lampooning the president, inviting the public to soak up his tweets and fire off one or two of their own from a golden toilet. —AFP



## 'Little idols': Japan's dark obsession with young girls

In a cramped and dark venue in a sleazy Tokyo district, dozens of middle-aged men cheer at a performer on stage: The object of their adoration is a six-year-old girl. Decked out in make-up with ribbons in her hair, Ai is dressed like an adult, but still looks very much a child. She is a so-called "idol" singer—common in Japan, where rights groups have complained that society's sometimes permissive view of the sexualisation of young girls puts minors at risk.

Most fans are "pure," insists Himeno, now 24, although she admits she was once offered 30,000 yen (\$260) for her used pantyhose. "Men idolizing young girls is relatively accepted in Japan," said Himeno, citing the "Tale of Genji", an 11th-century classic depicting a nobleman's romantic relationships with women, as well as a small girl. For Ai's manager Hidenori Okuma, the men are attracted by the thought of contact with a "girl next door". "Meeting and chatting with high-school idols has become so popular," said Okuma. "It's now less embarrassing to admit you like young girls. Now they (male fans) say they prefer primary school girls, without hesitation."

### A 'bizarre sight'

Ai's mother, Mami Yamazaki, says her daughter has wanted to be an "idol" singer since she watched an anime cartoon about young girls striving for stardom. "On television, you see kids acting in dramas and commercials. In magazines, children are modeling clothes. What Ai is doing is not much different," she says, despite the audience for idol shows being mainly adult males. Yamazaki, 26, herself played in a band as a teenager and sees her daughter's performances as a way into the popular and lucrative world of idols.

It can be a pathway to fame, as demonstrated by Japan's AKB48 band, one of the most successful acts of all time, who started in a small stage in Tokyo's Akihabara, with the youngest member aged 11. But getting a foothold into the idol scene means the child has to interact with adult fans, taking photos together and autographing the backs of their t-shirts. "It must be a bizarre sight" for foreigners, admits Himeno but she stresses any sexual advances are an absolute "no-no."

### 'Not normal'

Japan's battle against paedophilia is well documented. The number of minors abused in child pornography has risen five-fold in the past decade, according to official fig-



This photo shows adults watching a concert by an idol group in Tokyo. — AFP photos



ures. Police have failed to stamp out so-called JK (Joshi Kosei, or high school girls) businesses, which offer men services such as going for a walk with a teenage girl so the customers have a chance to negotiate for sex. Quasi-pornographic "chaku-ero", or clothed eroticism—images of small children posing in tiny swimsuits—are easily found on the Internet, slipping through a legal loophole.

Lawyer Keiji Goto, who campaigns for minors' rights, says the problem is a social one. Many Japanese think that sexually objectifying young girls is not taboo but rather "just falls into a grey zone," said Goto. Japan is far from being the only place with a problem of sexualising children. In America, concerns have been raised about the hyper-sexualisation of children appearing in beauty pageants, as well as on reality shows such as "Toddlers and Tiaras."

And the French Parliament in 2014 adopted a ban on "mini miss" competitions for girls younger than 13, prompted by controversy over a 2010 Vogue magazine

photo shoot featuring provocative images of a 10-year-old. But in Japan, there has been little public debate of the issue.

Psychiatrist Hiroki Fukui, who also treats paedophiles, says the awareness in Japan that children need to be protected from potential sexual predators is "so low." He explained: "We need to realise this situation in Japan is not normal."

Shihoko Fujiwara, the representative of an NGO that helps victims of human trafficking and sexual abuse, warned of a dangerous mindset. "The girls will think to themselves the audience is crazy about them because they are small girls and because their value will reduce once they get to the age of 18. A society that allows children to have such a twisted self-identity can never protect them." — AFP

“ It must be a bizarre sight ”

It was only in 2015 that possessing child pornography was criminalized and authorities are struggling to bring the country into line with other advanced nations on the issue. In the crowd at an idols show, Soichiro Seki, 40, says he watches young girls on stage twice a week. He insists he goes just to encourage the performers and feels no shame. But he did concede that other fans objectify them. "(For them) coming to a concert like this and visiting a hostess club in Kabukicho are essentially the same thing," he said, referring to Tokyo's major red-light district. Idol Tama Himeno, who has performed on stage since the age of 16, says the men attending her shows worship the performers and crave communication with young girls that they cannot get elsewhere.