

# Friday Times

ISSUE NO: 17754

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## Flags lend festive air across Kuwait

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## Local

## The roads of suffering



Local Spotlight

By Muna Al-Fuzai

muna@kuwaittimes.net

All of us are suffering from the roads in Kuwait these days. It seems that there is no quick solution to this problem, which has become a trouble for everyone. Flying gravel means damage to cars and spending a lot of money repairing tires and windshields. Even if the streets are under maintenance, you will suffer, because the contracting company will take its time to complete the roadwork, with more time taken to look for a subcontractor and bring workers. Months can pass, with daily grumblings and congestion.

Even the safety lanes, which are supposed to be only for police and firefighters, are crowded with ordinary cars, because we have made our streets a means of daily torment. In November 2018, heavy rains that hit Kuwait led to the sacking of the director general of the Public Authority for Roads and Transport and an investigation was launched into the inundation of several areas and roads in the country.

Some MPs were surprised by the sheer neglect exposed by the rains in Fahaheel, Mangaf and Sabahiya. People were also surprised, and wondered what if the rains had lasted longer. The problem is that when rain falls in Kuwait, most of the country's streets and traffic become paralyzed, with main roads closed and students and employees reaching their schools and workplaces late.

I believe that there should be advanced engineering studies that track the increase in traffic and its density. We should have innovative plans for the future to help manage and stream traffic on major streets during peak and rainy times. It will be useful to set some solutions to resolve this problem, including changing school timings. This should not be an issue. The truck ban timings on roads should be enforced too, along with new methods of operation and strict follow-up of legal rules.

I think that the political conflicts in Kuwait have resulted in many problems, including traffic jams and flying gravel, so everyone pays the price of political conflict without any solution. Citizens as well as expats are suffering greatly due to the traffic congestion in Kuwait.

I believe the development of Kuwait's roads must be reconsidered. I don't think the problem lies in the number of cars, as there are many expats who can't own a car or get a driving license. Why don't they have good alternatives like an advanced mass transit system, thus reducing the number of cars, smoothing the flow of traffic and repairing roads quickly?

Why have the legislative and executive authorities failed to provide effective solutions to the traffic crisis in Kuwait? How long will the traffic crisis continue and why are there no solutions? Are the responsible bodies waiting for more incidents due to the destruction of the streets?

## The Pink Dress



IN MY VIEW

By Alison Shan Price

local@kuwaittimes.com

It takes one photograph. A photograph of a simple display of clothes, clean and neatly pressed, attached without adornment on parallel white walls. Had I connected to my Facebook page a few moments later I would have missed it and these words in print before you would not have been written today.

The clothes are not designer clothes merely, but also ordinary dark shades of loose trousers, long skirts and baggy tops in many sizes. On the back wall, not easily noticed, is a tiny pink dress. I cannot read the name of the person who brought this pretty smock, so similar to that of my own daughter once, as a two year old.

But it was appalling to discover that this was an exhibition of clothes worn by rape victims. An exhibition quietly stating 'It was Not Your Fault'. I do not feel noncommittal or even shocked; but I am very angry. I am angry as a mother, an educationalist and as a human being. I am angry looking at the size of her dress because of the evil destruction of a child's innocence and of her body and

mind, in a world which boasts about caring religions and protective legal systems.

I am angry on behalf of the parents who could not protect their child, who have had their primary function torn from them, physically and/or psychologically. I am angry about the growing drive of the 'do-gooders' who believe that it is fashionable to encourage children to fight their rights as 'mini-adults', in person and online, at the detriment of adult protection.

I am angry because this pink dress represents the clothes of little girls and boys all over the world, of yesterday and today, and it represents those who live unaware of the terror they will witness, or who will be the victims of tomorrow. I am angry, that as a woman of action, I feel powerless to act. But I, like you, dear reader, have the power of Voice, and this is mine.

***Shan Price MBE is CEO and founder of One World Actors Center (OWAC) Kuwait, a leading theatre production and training center in Kuwait.***

## Try a little kindness

IN MY VIEW

By Melissa Azavedo

local@kuwaittimes.com

I came across The Goodwill Tribe, whose philosophy is to inspire compassion and human connection, back in 2014 while I was skimming through my Facebook account. This social initiative was inceptioned in Dubai by Sonia Parekh and Chandni Sawlani, who sought to make life more meaningful and complete by making people smile and by spreading joy and love to all.

It started with a social experiment, where they took up a stall at a flea market in Dubai and offered everything on their table as a gift to the community. Every gift was wrapped with a ribbon and a handwritten note, amplifying the experience. The reaction of people and the happiness expressed really touched the duo. In time, this positive energy led to the birth of The Goodwill Tribe, which has now spread to 12 cities worldwide: Mumbai, Pune, Delhi, Jaipur, Chennai, Goa, Nagpur, Dubai, London, Sydney, Munich and Kuwait City.

In all the twelve cities, The Goodwill Tribe hosts events, where kindness is extended to strangers, to help us connect with others and break the momentum of our lives. In a way, these events give us the opportunity to experience genuine love and kindness toward members of the community, and freedom from the self.

Kindness Confetti is one such event that has always turned out to be a success in this part of the

Gulf. At this event, we write notes and draw sketches with positive and kind messages and distribute them to strangers. It makes those of us who organize the event believe in goodness. The space of kindness that is created by the people gracing the event is sacred, pure and full of joy and smiles.

At our latest Kindness Confetti event, we met at our usual coffee place at 5.30 pm (coincidentally, we all love F.R.I.E.N.D.S), and our kindness preparations began. The participants who preferred writing passed the words they had written on the cards to the artists to add their magic, while the artists handed their cards to the writers who translated their art into words.

This connection between the artist and the writer, and consequently between the person who hands out the card to a random stranger and the receiver, highlights the importance of reaching out to others. Though the intention is to extend happiness to others, even the ones who handed out the cards said that they felt good, having not done something nice in a really long time. We ended the event by enjoying our cup of coffee and catching up on how everyone was doing and basking in the overall feeling of goodness in the room.

Let's not pretend it's easy to be good all the time. Let's fuel ourselves with kindness often because life has got no time for negativity.



# Kuwait Times

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## Local

# CELEBRATE KUWAIT

## February's festive flags

**F**ebruary is the festive season in Kuwait. The entire country comes together to celebrate the National and Liberation Days on 25 & 26 February and in the weeks leading up to that, decorations celebrating Kuwait and its history light up the nights and adorn buildings, homes, parks and more. To kick off the celebrations at Kuwait Times, we're sharing some of our favorite photos of the flag of Kuwait.

Adopted in September 1961, the current official version of the Kuwaiti flag

represents pan-Arab unity with the four colors - green, white, red and black. Each color represents a meaning derived from a poem by famous Arab poet, Safie Al-Deen Al-Hali: White our motives and deeds; Black are the battles we face; Green our fertile lands and Red our blood and swords.

Photos by Joseph Shagra  
and Yasser Al-Zayyat





# Local





## Local

# A visit to KUWAIT'S POLICE MUSEUM

By Nawara Fattahova

**A**lthough it opened five years ago, not many people know about the Kuwait Police Museum in Bneid Al-Gar. The building was the police station of the area before it was turned into a museum on Feb 20, 2014 by the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters.

Before entering inside the museum, visitors can enjoy the outdoor section of the museum, which has various old Kuwaiti police patrol cars, from the oldest vehicle to later models. A bomb disposal robot can also be seen in front of the museum.

The small museum has only five rooms, which have hundreds

of items on display. The main room is in the middle of the building and is the largest. It has been kept in its original setting as the reception area of the police station. The other rooms are divided according to different historical periods, from 1938 till 1960. The items displayed are all related to the history of Kuwait's police from its foundation in 1938 until the present day.

## Documents

Visitors can find old documents, even from the British era. Kuwaiti passports of different generations are on display too. Other documents include identification cards and driving licenses, in addition to archive documents and identification papers. There are also old license plates in different colors. In the early stages of vehicle registration, cars in Kuwait had short three- and four-digit plate numbers. Pictures of various ministers of interior are also found here.

## Weapons and uniforms

The museum displays police tools and equipment including guns, pistols, revolvers, swords and the different uniforms worn by policemen in various periods from the 1930s. The first uniforms included the traditional 'shmagh' headdress, followed by the 'ghutra', which in turn was replaced by the beret. The museum houses a mini-crime lab, including a forensic entomology section and a fingerprinting kit. Visitors can also see various artifacts and electric generators.

The museum welcomes few visitors, despite entrance being free. But according to the museum guide, the museum receives many students during school tours.

— Photos by Kuwait Times





## Local



## LOCATION &amp; HOURS

**K**uwait's police museum is located in Bneid Al Gar, Block 2 on the corner of AlMuhallab and 83rd Street (next to Assahah restaurant).

## HOURS

Monday-Thursday: 8:30am-12:30pm & 4:30pm-8pm.  
Fridays and Saturdays: 4:30pm-8pm.  
The museum is closed on Sundays.



# Imperial Airways once flew over Kuwait skies



KUWAIT: Imperial Airways aircraft "Hanno" fueling in Kuwait. — KUNA photos

**KUWAIT:** Back in the early to mid-1900s, Kuwait was one of the many stops for Imperial Airways, which covered destinations in Europe, South Africa, India and the Far East. Established in March 31, 1924, the long-range commercial airliner functioned until its operations ceased on Nov 24, 1939. In a research published in "Letters of Kuwait", historian Khaled Abdulghani revealed that Imperial Airways' first flights in the Gulf region dated back to 1929, adding that this was followed by the establishment of the Cairo-Basra route. The route was meant as a transit for the airliner on the way to Australia, said Abdulghani.

He indicated that Kuwait was not considered initially as part of Imperial Airways'

stops; however, the then Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and the British Gulf Residency struck an agreement, which led to the inclusion of the country in the airliner's regional stops. The British residency requested from Kuwait that Imperial Airways would not be asked to pay landing fees, a request granted by Sheikh Ahmad.

On Oct 18, 1932, Kuwait saw the first historical landing of an Imperial Airways plane on its soil, an event witnessed by the Amir and Lieutenant Colonel Harold Richard Patrick Dickson - British administrator in the Middle East - and many people. The airstrip was located behind one of the gates of Kuwait's protective wall. Imperial Airways continued flights to Kuwait,



An agreement signed by the then Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and the British Political Agent Lt-Col Harold Dickson.

	Departure and Arrival Times (Local Standard)	Miles Port to Port	Miles from London
Airway Terminal, Victoria, London, England	dep. Sat. 11.45		
Air Port of London, Croydon, England	dep. " 12.30		
Paris, Gare de Lyon, France	dep. " 21.30	105	105
Paris to Brindisi, Italy	dep. Mon. 10.15		
Brindisi, Italy	arr. Mon. 13.30	1147	1252
Athens, Greece	arr. " Even. 3.50		1281
Alexandria, Egypt	dep. Tues. 07.30		
Cairo	dep. " 13.30	517	1798
Gaza, Palestine	arr. " Even. 17.30	118	1916
Baghdad, Iraq	dep. Wed. 06.00	212	2128
Basra	dep. " 14.30	605	2733
Kowloon, Hong Kong	arr. " Even. 2.50		2759
Bombay, India	dep. Thurs. 07.00		
Surat, India	dep. " 07.30	75	2834
Shanghai, China	dep. " 11.50	105	2939
Calcutta, India	arr. " Even. 3.33		3194
Delhi	dep. Fri. 05.05		
Guwahati, Assam	dep. " 11.40	440	3634
Karachi, India	dep. " 13.40	300	3934
Jodhpur	arr. " Even. 3.14		3338
Delhi	dep. Sat. 05.00		
Canton	dep. " 08.15	304	3942
Alahabad	dep. " 10.45	245	3685
Calcutta	dep. " 12.30	100	3785
Alahabad	arr. " Even. 4.78		3445
Alahabad	dep. Sun. 06.00		
Alahabad	dep. " 10.45	333	4078
Rangoon	arr. " Even. 3.53		4141

Imperial Airways flight schedule on Sept 23, 1933.

leading to the construction of a 60 sq ft rest area for travelers awaiting their flights.

By 1935 and after the signing of the civil aviation agreement between Kuwait and Imperial Airways, flights doubled to Kuwait

with more departing and arriving flights. In Jan 1938, the airline halted its flights to Kuwait due to economic reasons and by the advent of WWII, Imperial Airways ceased its operations. — KUNA

## Call for equal opportunities for the disabled

By Faten Omar

**KUWAIT:** The Kuwait Society for the Follow-up of Issues of Disabled People organized a seminar on 'equality for disabled people' presented by experts from the Equality Society for People with Disabilities in Jordan. The event was held on Wednesday at the Kharafi Theater for disabled children's activities in Mishref. Adnan Aboudi, President of the Equality Society for People with Disabilities, said, "We hope that people with disabilities will have equal opportunities. Many people with disabilities are distinguished and talented and they deserve to be treated equally." He added: "All of us are different - disability is a kind of difference. We cannot refuse to allow someone to work because they are different."

Aboudi noted United Nations statistics indicate the importance of the category of people

with disabilities in society, where the proportion of disabled people in the world has reached 15 percent, and their number has exceeded one billion people around the world (1 in 7). "Many people with disabilities do not have equal access to employment opportunities, do not receive disability-related services that they require, and experience exclusion from everyday life activities. Donating money to people with disabilities may not serve the handicapped. We must invest the money in rehabilitation, education, and training that improves their life, qualifies them and involves them in society," he explained.

Aboudi affirmed that the equipment for involving people with disabilities is expensive - for example, a basketball chair costs \$5,000. He expressed his pride in Kuwaiti sports teams, adding that the Kuwaiti teams are among the greatest teams with disabilities in most sports. "As disabled people, we want equality. When a person feels empathy, he or she may diminish and reduce the confidence of the person with a disability, and extra compliments do not make us feel better either," she said.

Inas Saleh, Secretary of the Equality Society for People with Disabilities, gave a training course for the attendees, where she showed several pictures of people with disabilities and



KUWAIT: (From left) Moderator Abdulrahman Al-Azmi, Secretary of the Equality Society for People with Disabilities Inas Saleh and President of Equality Society for People with Disabilities Adnan Aboudi are seen during the seminar. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

asked them what they can see or what is wrong in the picture. The attendees learned that the person and his disability equipment should be seen as a whole. "Me and my wheelchair are one. People must see us as a whole. People with dis-

abilities also like to be heard and seen, so if you see a person with a companion, show respect and talk directly with the person with a disability and do not talk with the companion and ignore their presence," Saleh said.



# PM attends 'Shamel 5' drill



HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah arrives to the location of the exercises.



'Shamel 5' firefighting drill organized by Kuwait Fire Service Directorate (KFSD). — KUNA photos



**KUWAIT:** HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah attended and patronized yesterday the "Shamel 5" firefighting drill organized by Kuwait Fire Service Directorate (KFSD) in Arifjan. The drill was attended by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh, officials from state institutes, National Assembly and the interior and defense ministries, in addition to representatives from regional and international organizations dealing with crises and catastrophes.

KFSD Director General Lieutenant General Khaled Al-Mekrad delivered a speech during the event. The attendees were briefed about the drill's objectives and goals aimed at boosting coordination amongst different bodies of the state during crises and natural disasters. Speaking in a press release, Sheikh Jaber affirmed that the regularity of such drills will develop the skills of rescue teams and enable them to better handle situations of urgency.

He stressed that it was important to coordinate efforts amongst state bodies responsible for addressing emergencies, indicating that such a fact would lead to the protection of lives and a decrease in property damages. HH the Prime Minister took the opportunity to thank all those who participated in the rescue efforts during the heavy rains and floods, which hit the country in November last year. — KUNA



## Officials who failed to deal with rain to be questioned

**KUWAIT:** Minister of Public Works announced yesterday that officials suspected of slacking and complacency or negligence in dealing with last year's heavy rains will be interrogated. These leaders in the public works department, along with others, will be referred to the Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha) next week for interrogations, said Jenan Bushehri, who is also the Minister of State for Housing Affairs.

They will be subject to an inquiry at the offices of the Civil Service Commission, she said

at a news conference held at the public works ministry. Simultaneously, a probe will be conducted at the ministry regarding the recent "rain crisis", she added. Kuwait witnessed torrential rain late last year, inflicting widespread damage, swamping roads and public places. The heavy rains were reportedly unprecedented since the past 50 years.

Fahd Al-Rkaibi, the head of the special commission for probing repercussions of the "rain crisis", attended the news conference. Bushehri indicated that her decision to grill the suspected officials was based on the commission report, hinting that some of the senior civil servants would be suspended from work. The minister added the Central Agency for Public Tenders (CAPT) and the ministry of housing would be informed of the companies that had been absolved of responsibility and those that had been found guilty. Bushehri affirmed that repairing the roads that were damaged in the heavy downpour had already begun, indicating willingness to use good quality asphalt for repaving. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Minister of Public Works Jenan Boushehri and the head of the special commission for probing repercussions of the rain crisis Fahd Al-Rkaibi are seen during a news conference yesterday. — KUNA



# Qatar Asian Cup victory to 'deepen' Gulf tensions

## 'Omanis and Kuwaitis rejoiced in Qatari success'

**DOHA:** Qatar's remarkable Asian Cup victory may have been a sporting triumph which sparked wild celebrations in Doha but it is almost certain to come at a political price, analysts say. The win - in the hostile capital of the United Arab Emirates, one of its opponents in a bitter regional dispute - is expected to lead to further animosity between Qatar and the Saudi-led bloc of rival nations. And even just days after Qatar beat Japan 3-1 in the final, it may have already deepened the Gulf diplomatic impasse.

"Any sense of embitterment in Abu Dhabi at the way the tournament they hosted turned out may translate into an escalation of rhetoric against Qatar," said Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, a research fellow at Rice University. He added: "The response to Qatar's run in the Asian Cup has, if anything, deepened the split within the Gulf. "Omanis and Kuwaitis have rejoiced in Qatari success and have done so in extremely public fashion, visibly emphasizing their rejection of the blockading states' attempt to isolate Qatar in the region."

### Football and geopolitics

Qatar's first ever Asian Cup win is an astonishing story on numerous levels - a modern-day sporting parable, soaked in geopolitics and symbolism. It is a powerful Qatari riposte to critics who long ridiculed the 2022 World Cup host for its lack of footballing prowess. The team beat three sides who appeared in the Russia World Cup, scored 19 goals, conceded just one and provided the tournament's best goalkeeper, player and highest goalscorer. It is a vindication of the wealthy Gulf state's huge spending to develop talent at its Aspire Academy - 13 of the 23-man squad were graduates, including top scorer Ali Almoez.

But it is far more than just sport. Since June 2017, Saudi-led countries have cut ties with Doha, claiming it supports terrorism and wants a better relationship with Riyadh's arch-rival, Tehran. Qatar denies the charges, says it is being punished for pursuing an independent foreign policy and its enemies want regime change in Doha. As a result, few, if any, Qataris travelled to the UAE to watch matches, claiming they were fearful about what would happen to them. Practically their only supporters were a group of Omanis, subsequently leading Qataris to celebrate with Omani flags in Doha.

Notably, Qatar beat Saudi Arabia and the UAE, the latter victory seeing their players pelted with shoes and bottles by a partisan crowd. The 4-0 victory over the UAE was, according to some, better than the cup win. Many Qataris celebrated by holding up four fingers - one for each of the neighboring boycotting countries, said Ulrichsen. That gesture also matched the one used by Qatar-backed Muslim Brotherhood supporters following the overthrow of Mohamed Morsi in Egypt in 2013.

Qatar's victorious team were greeted by Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani when they arrived back home. He then made his first trip abroad since the victory, notably to regional peace-broker Kuwait, where he presented HH the Amir Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah with a maroon Qatar football shirt.

And there is yet more symbolism, argues James M Dorsey, author and a senior fellow at the S Rajaratnam School of International Studies. "The victory emphasizes to Qatar that it can stand on its own, whatever the obstacles," he said. Salford University professor Simon Chadwick said Qatar's win also helped polish its tarnished international standing. "Qatar's image and



**DOHA:** Qatari national football team players and staff celebrate on the corniche on Feb 2, 2019 after they returned from the United Arab Emirates with the trophy after winning the 2019 AFC Asian Cup. — AFP

reputation has gained advantage over its rivals, especially given the apparent calmness on Qatar's team when faced with sometimes rancorous rivals," said Chadwick.

### 'Very naive'

The "escalation" Ulrichsen spoke about is likely to focus on the 2022 World Cup, said Dorsey. "I think what you are going to see is Qatar's victory is going to escalate opposition by primarily the UAE and Saudi Arabia to Qatar hosting the World Cup," he added. Next month,

FIFA will rule on whether the 2022 World Cup will include 32 or 48 teams, and whether Qatar should share games, potentially with neighboring rivals.

FIFA President Gianni Infantino's insistence that an expanded World Cup could help ease regional tensions is "very naive", Dorsey insisted. He pointed to a previous Asian Cup victory - Iraq in 2007 - where people celebrated during a period of sectarian violence, but trouble soon flared again. "Sports and politics are inextricably enshrined," he added. — AFP

## Municipal leader hails Sheikh Jaber Causeway project

**KUWAIT:** Chairman of the Municipal Council Osama Al-Otaibi said Wednesday that Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah Causeway Project (SJSC) is one of the world's longest and most gigantic high-speed bridges. "The project is almost complete," he told reporters during an inspection tour of the construction works of the project. He was accompanied by Acting Director-General of the Public Authority for Roads and Transportation Soha Ashkenani and Head of the Capital Affairs Dept of the Municipal Council Hassan Kamal.

"The causeway spans 37.5 km across Kuwait Bay from Kuwait City to Subbiya. It includes a seven-km-long bridge and the Doha Link, which spans across Sulaibikhat Bay from Shuwaikh Port in Kuwait City to Doha Peninsula, with a total length of 12.4 km," Otaibi pointed out. "The mega transport project is one of the landmarks in His Highness the Amir's 2035 New Kuwait vision - it will cut short the distance between the capital and Subbiya and remarkably ease traffic between the northern and southern parts of the country over the coming three decades," he added.

Ashkenani said the project starts from the intersection of Jamal Abdul Nasser St and Ghazali Highway to the New Subbiya area



**KUWAIT:** Chairman of the Municipal Council Osama Al-Otaibi, Acting Director-General of the Public Authority for Roads and Transportation Soha Ashkenani and Head of the Capital Affairs Dept of the Municipal Council Hassan Kamal tour the Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah Causeway Project on Wednesday.— Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh

on the northern side of Kuwait Bay, with a view to easing traffic jams in this vital part of the country. "The causeway will shorten the distance between Kuwait City and Subbiya area from 104 km to 37.5 km and cut short the average time spent by motorists from 90 minutes to only 30," she noted.

"The causeway, the world's fourth longest bridge, follows the latest standards of construction," Ashkenani affirmed, adding that the project envisages launching two industrial islands, one near Kuwait City and another near Subbiya with total areas of 300,000 sq m each. — KUNA

## Naked body found in car

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

**KUWAIT:** Police found a body of a man inside a car on King Fahd Expressway near Adan Hospital, and there were signs of beating on it. The body — which was naked - was found in the back seat. The deceased was disabled, as one leg was missing and a prosthetic leg was lying next to the body.

### Escapee arrested

The interior ministry's public relations department commented on social media reports about a prisoner escaping from the Palace of Justice, saying the inmate was arrested immediately and was taken back to jail.

### Farwaniya afternoon hours

The interior ministry's PR department said Farwaniya residency affairs department will operate in the afternoon from 2:30 pm until 7:00 pm to process companies' transactions.



# International

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 2019



Macedonia takes major step on road to NATO membership

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## Europeans, Latin Americans to meet on Venezuela crisis

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BRUSSELS: European Parliament President Antonio Tajani shakes hand with British Prime Minister Theresa May before a meeting at the European Parliament in Brussels. — AFP

# May, Juncker hold 'robust' Brexit meet

## Brussels impasse deepens no-deal Brexit fears

**BRUSSELS:** Britain and the EU agreed yesterday to hold more talks to try to avoid a no-deal Brexit, after a "robust" meeting between Prime Minister Theresa May and European Commission chief Jean-Claude Juncker. A joint statement issued after the talks in Brussels said Juncker had again warned that November's withdrawal agreement could not be renegotiated—after May came hoping to persuade Brussels to agree on the need to change the so-called "backstop" clause for the Irish border.

But Juncker "expressed his openness to add wording" to a parallel political declaration laying out ambitions for future EU-UK ties if London wants to seek a "more ambitious" closer relationship after Brexit. In a sharp reminder of the urgency of finding a solution before Brexit day on March 29, Bank of England governor Mark Carney warned that Britain's economy was "not yet prepared" for a no-deal departure.

May came hoping to change the backstop so that Britain cannot be "trapped" in the bloc against its will—and by doing so win over enough MPs at home to get the deal through parliament. She reminded Juncker that the British parliament had mandated her to seek "a legally binding change to the terms of the backstop", but instead was offered a fresh round of talks. EU negotiator Michel Barnier will now meet British Brexit Minister Stephen Barclay in Strasbourg on Monday.

May herself will meet Juncker again before the end of February, a commission spokesman said. A stony-faced May shook hands stiffly with Juncker as she arrived at commission headquarters, refusing to answer questions, but she was expected to make a statement later yesterday. Expectations for the visit were already modest when, on Wednesday, EU kingpins Donald Tusk and Juncker torched May's prospects of winning changes to the withdrawal agreement. Juncker

told reporters May already knows and accepts that the Union will not reopen talks on the deal, while Tusk, who represents EU member governments as head of the European Council, triggered outrage across the Channel by damning pro-Brexit politicians for—in his view—recklessly failing to plan. "I've been wondering what that special place in hell looks like, for those who promoted Brexit without even a sketch of a plan how to carry it out safely," Tusk said.

### 'Don't gamble with peace'

But even this latest demonstration of EU unity did not deter Downing Street, which insisted May's top priority on the trip was to "find a way to guarantee we cannot, and will not, be trapped in the backstop". Number 10 said that because the British parliament rejected the deal, May must seek material changes to the accord or see it fail. The impasse in Brussels has deepened

fears that Britain could crash out of the EU without a deal on March 29, disrupting trade and supplies to manufacturing.

May has exasperated EU leaders by repeatedly coming to Brussels without detailed proposals to solve the Brexit deadlock, and Tusk warned her he expected her to bring "a realistic suggestion on how to end the impasse". Jeremy Corbyn, the leader of the main opposition Labor party, wrote to May yesterday setting out his five conditions for backing her on Brexit—including the UK staying in the EU's customs union.

While his demands will not be palatable to many in May's Conservative party—not least because of the deeply entrenched tribalism of British politics—it suggests there may be room for maneuver, if not yet a clear path to a cross-party deal. After seeing Tusk and Juncker yesterday, May will have dinner with her Irish counterpart Leo Varadkar Dublin today. — AFP



# Iraq's Shiite armed groups vow to oust US troops

## Americans seen as unwanted occupying force in Iraq

**BAGHDAD:** Ousting US troops from Iraq despite Donald Trump's vow to stay is now the top goal of pro-Iranian Shiite armed groups. And their leaders say there are only two ways—by passing a new law, or by force. US-Iraq relations have grown tense once again, after a series of ups and downs over the years, from the 1990 Gulf war through crippling sanctions to the 2003 invasion that toppled Saddam Hussein and the fight against the Islamic State group.

But a year after Iraq declared victory over IS following a three-year war against the jihadists in which it was also backed by Iran, the Americans are seen by some as an unwanted “occupying force”. And if they do stay, “every Iraqi will have the legitimate right to confront them by any means,” warned Mohammed Mohie, spokesman for the Hezbollah Brigades in Iraq, a force close to Iran that has also fought on the side of President Bashar al-Assad in Syria. The powerful leader of the Asaib Ahel al-Haq (League of the Righteous) armed group, Qais al-Khazali, echoed the warning. “If we are ever needed, we are ready,” he said.

### Americans ‘very worried’

There were nearly 4,500 US troops killed in Iraq between 2003 and 2011, including in fighting with Shiite armed groups. But before any decision to take up arms again and spill more blood, Mohie said he wants to give lawmakers a chance to set a timeframe for the departure of US troops from Iraq. A bill has been tabled in parliament, and there could be a rare show

of unanimity in support of it between its two biggest factions: populist cleric Moqtada Sadr's alliance, which champions Iraq's independence, and the pro-Iranian bloc of former anti-IS fighters.

“For three years, the main rivalry in parliament has been among Shiite factions,” said Renad Mansour, a researcher at the Chatham House think-tank. “They cannot agree on the choice of a minister, but they do on one point: that the experience of having America in Iraq has been bad.” Ironically, the person who has given new impetus to the proposed timetable for American troops to leave Iraq is the US president himself.

At the weekend, Trump provoked indignation even among Washington's allies in Baghdad when he said he plans to keep American forces in Iraq to keep an eye on Iran. As a result, US diplomats and military officials in Baghdad were “very worried” and doing everything to “minimize” the impact of the remarks, said Mansour. Trump had already irritated the Iraqis by not meeting any of the country's officials during a surprise Christmas visit to US troops stationed less than 200 kilometers from Baghdad.

### Step by step

US forces left Iraq in 2011, only to return in 2014, at the head of the coalition against IS in Iraq and Syria. But the United States is now seeking to use Iraq as “a base for attacking neighboring countries,” Khazali said. “Trump does not understand that Iraq is now a strong



**BAGHDAD:** Iraq's spokesman for the Hezbollah Brigades Mohammed Mohie gestures during a news conference in Baghdad.—AFP

country. But he can be sure that if he persists, he will pay very dearly,” said the Asaib leader wearing a Shiite white turban. Mohie said adoption of the bill on a US withdrawal would be the “first step”. But he swiftly added that “we think the United States will again challenge the popular will” by trying to stay in Iraq.

In that case, Mohie said his forces and others like it would move to the “second step” and

take up arms against “an occupying force”. “The resistance factions have gained capabilities and expertise in the fight against IS,” he said. The experience they gained “will serve to confront any army that threatens Iraq and its sovereignty.” He said that above all any confrontation would allow Shiite factions “to find an external threat on which to focus attention rather than their internal problems.”—AFP

## Haftar push in south Libya sparks backlash

**BENGHAZI, Libya:** A military push in southern Libya which strongman Khalifa Haftar says is aimed at rooting out “terrorists” and foreign fighters has sparked backlash from an ethnic minority and the UN-backed government. The offensive risks fuelling tensions in a country already wracked by violence and torn between rival administrations since the overthrow and killing of dictator Moamer Kadhafi in 2011.

A power struggle between the UN-backed government in Tripoli and a parallel administration supported by Haftar's self-styled Libyan National Army (LNA) in the east have left the country's vast desert south a lawless no-man's land. The rugged territory, which shares borders with Algeria, Niger, Chad and Sudan, has become a haven for jihadists and armed groups of all stripes.

They include Chadian rebels accused of fuelling insecurity and taking advantage of

the country's porous borders to establish rear bases. The LNA in mid-January announced the start of an offensive intended to “purge the south of terrorists and criminal groups”, including rebels from Chad. Days later, Haftar's forces claimed they had killed an Al-Qaeda leader and two other “terrorists”, including an Egyptian, before attacking the rebels.

The region is also the scene of a struggle between Libya's minority Tubu community and Arab tribes, particularly over the control of cross-border smuggling routes. Dozens were killed in clashes between the two sides until a 2017 peace accord signed in Rome froze hostilities. But some fear Haftar's offensive could re-ignite the conflict.

### Ethnic cleansing

Libya's Tubu, part of a larger cross-border ethnic group, have long rallied against discrimination in the predominantly Arab country. Some of its members accuse the LNA, which counts Tubu fighters among its ranks, of directing rival Arab tribes to enter their communities. Youssef Kalkouri, a Tubu lawmaker in the eastern Haftar-backed administration, told AFP his community categorically opposes Arab tribal forces entering their cities.

Haftar's forces said Friday they had bat-

tled Chadian rebels in the town of Ghuduwah south of Sebha, 650 kilometers south of Tripoli, before calling in air strikes against the insurgents on Sunday. But Tubu say they too were targeted. The weekend strikes prompted one Tubu minister in the eastern administration to resign and another Tubu lawmaker in the same body to suspend her role. Both spoke out against the “ethnic cleansing” of their community.

LNA spokesman General Ahmed al-Mesmari denounced what he called a “media campaign”. “Our Tubu brothers fight with us,” he told AFP, hailing the “heroism” of the LNA, which was “clearing the south of terrorism, chaos and foreign elements”. Analyst Jalal al-Fitouri said the Tubu are divided. “One party refuses the presence of Chadian rebels and supports the LNA, while others support the (rebels) and profit with them from smuggling and human trafficking.”

Analysts say the LNA's military push may also be linked to oil interests in the south, where the Tubu control important fields. The LNA said late Wednesday it had seized one of the country's biggest oil fields without a fight. Armed groups had shut down the Al-Sharara field, about 900 kilometers south of the capital, in protest at perceived marginalization by Tripoli.—AFP

## Saudi team ready to treat conjoined Yemeni twins

**RIYADH:** A Saudi medical team has offered to treat Yemeni conjoined twins following a plea from doctors in Yemen's blockaded rebel-held capital for the newborns to receive specialist care abroad. Abdelkhaleq and Abdelkarim were born outside Sanaa around 10 days ago and share a kidney and a pair of legs but have separate hearts and lungs. The head of pediatrics at Sanaa's Al-Thawra hospital, Dr Faisal al-Babili, said his department lacked the facilities to treat or separate the newborns and appealed on Wednesday for help from abroad.

Late on Wednesday, the head of Saudi Arabia's King Salman Aid and Relief Centre, Abdullah al-Rabeeah, said he had a team that was prepared to treat them. He said arrangements were being made to transport Abdelkhaleq and Abdelkarim from Sanaa to the kingdom “as soon as possible”, the official Saudi Press Agency reported. Rabeeah said the team would study the possibility of separating them. Rebel-held areas of Yemen have been under blockade by a Saudi-led military coalition since it intervened in support of the beleaguered government in March 2015.—AFP



# Macedonia takes major step on road to NATO membership

## NATO membership to bring stability to Balkans

**BRUSSELS:** Macedonia moved a step closer to NATO membership on Wednesday, signing accession papers after resolving a long-running name row with Greece. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said it was a "historic day" which will lead to Macedonia becoming the 30th alliance member, once the deal has been ratified by all the other capitals. NATO and the EU welcomed the move as bringing more stability to the Balkans, but the alliance's expansion into the region has been opposed by Moscow, which regards it as part of its own "sphere of influence".

After signing the accord with representatives of current NATO members at alliance headquarters in Brussels, Macedonian Foreign Minister Nikola Dimitrov said membership would make his country safer. "What's important for us is we'll never walk alone again and we stand beside these 29 allies able and ready to assume the obligations arising from our full membership," Dimitrov said.

Stoltenberg said the move would

bring "more stability to the Western Balkans", adding that he looked forward "to seeing thirty Allied flags fly outside NATO headquarters". "I want to congratulate both Skopje and Athens for showing commitment and courage in reaching an agreement on the name issue. We can now look to the future," Stoltenberg said. The Greek parliament is on Friday expected to formally back Macedonia's NATO accession bid.

### Safety in numbers

The agreement last month with Greece to change the name of the former Yugoslav republic to the Republic of North Macedonia ended one of the world's longest diplomatic disputes and paved the way for Skopje to join NATO and the European Union. Macedonian Prime Minister Zoran Zaev said it was a "great, historic day for all our citizens". "Today the largest security alliance in the world, NATO, has welcomed us," he wrote on Facebook and Twitter. "We have provided lasting stability for our country." The EU's enlargement com-

missioner Johannes Hahn also tweeted congratulations, saying the move was "a contribution to peace and stability" in the Western Balkans. But Macedonia's moves to join NATO, following Montenegro's admission in 2017, have ruffled feathers in the Kremlin.

### Name change

Russian President Vladimir Putin last month accused the West of "destabilizing" the Balkans by pushing Macedonia and Montenegro to join NATO. Washington has accused Moscow of meddling in the region, including in last year's referendum in Macedonia on changing its name. For many countries once in the Soviet orbit, NATO membership, with its guarantee of mutual defense, provides a welcome insurance policy against possible Russian incursions.

Macedonia will now take part in NATO ministerial meetings as an invitee, Stoltenberg said, starting with a gathering of defense ministers in Brussels next week. For Skopje to progress to full membership, all 29



**BRUSSELS:** Macedonian Foreign Minister Nikola Dimitrov, left, poses with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg following the signing ceremony of the accession protocol between the Republic of North Macedonia and NATO at the Alliance headquarters in Brussels. — AFP

current members must ratify the accession protocol. How long this will take depends on national procedures, but when Montenegro joined in 2017 it took about a year.

Dimitrov said Macedonia was determined to meet the NATO spending

pledge of devoting at least two per cent of GDP to defense by 2024. In another step towards normalizing ties, the government in Skopje on Wednesday announced it would open an embassy in Athens and consulate in Thessaloniki.—AFP



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## International

# Alleged Brussels museum killer was 'sadistic' Syria jailer

## Journalists accuse museum killer of violence, torture

**BRUSSELS:** Two French journalists yesterday told a terrorism trial in Brussels that they had "no doubt" the accused Jewish museum killer is the man who imprisoned and tortured them in Syria. The former hostages came to Brussels to testify against Mehdi Nemmouche, who faces life in prison if convicted of four anti-Semitic murders in the Belgian capital on May 24, 2014. Nemmouche, a 33-year-old Frenchman, smiled several times as he looked at the journalists during their testimony.

"I have absolutely no doubt about the fact that Mehdi Nemmouche who is present here was my jailer and torturer in Syria under the name of Abu Omar," former hostage Nicolas Henin told the trial. Henin described Nemmouche as a "sadistic, playful and narcissistic" man. He said Nemmouche expressed "admiration" for Mohammed Merah in the year after he shot dead a teacher and three children at a Jewish school in the French city of Toulouse in 2012.

Merah, a self-described Al-Qaeda sympathizer, also shot dead three French soldiers nearby three days earlier. Journalist Didier Francois also said he "had no doubt" Nemmouche was the man who held him hostage. "I came for three things: to say that we know him, how dangerous this person is and the risk he will repeat the crimes," the 58-year-old Francois told the court.

Francois and Henin as well as fellow French reporters Edouard Elias and Pierre Torres were

kidnapped in June 2013 and held hostage by the Islamic State group (IS) in the northern Syrian city of Aleppo until April 2014. Elias and Torres were not present yesterday, though they have also been listed as witnesses in the case. Francois alleged that Nemmouche abused him, including hitting him with a club 40 times, while he was held at a hospital turned prison in Aleppo. He added that the violence and "torture" meted out allegedly by Nemmouche mainly targeted Syrians and Iraqis also held there.

### Prosecution stunt

The prosecution and Jewish groups asked the journalists to give testimony against Nemmouche, who had been in Syria between January 2013 and February 2014. Michele Hirsch, the lawyer for the Jewish groups, said their testimony was "extremely important" to show the judges and jury what motivated the alleged gunman. It will also show how much his "idol" Merah influenced him, Hirsch added.

Nemmouche's lawyers said the journalists' testimony amounts to a "stunt" and a "trial within a trial" because their kidnapping is the subject of separate proceedings in France. Also on trial in Brussels is Nacer Bendrer, a 30-year-old Frenchman accused of supplying Nemmouche with the weapons. Bendrer also faces a life term if convicted of the same charge of "terrorist murder".

Investigators said Nemmouche attacked the museum shortly after returning from Syria,



**BRUSSELS:** A picture taken at the trial of Mehdi Nemmouche, accused of shooting four people dead at a Jewish museum in Brussels, shows a weapon, piece of evidence displayed during his trial at the Brussels Justice Palace. —AFP

where he had allegedly fought on behalf of jihadist groups. He allegedly killed an Israeli married couple, a young Belgian employee and a French volunteer. Six days after the attack, Nemmouche was arrested in the southern French port city of Marseille. Bendrer was arrested in Marseille in December 2014. The trial is due to end in late February or early March.

Some observers and lawyers hope the trial may yield more detail about Nemmouche's alleged links with other jihadists. Henin told the

court yesterday that he also recognized among his jailers "Abu Idriss," the alias of the Belgian-Moroccan Najim Laachraoui. Investigators say Laachraoui made the bombs for the November 13, 2015, attacks that killed 130 people in Paris and wounded hundreds of others.

Laachraoui was one of the bombers who blew themselves up at Brussels airport and a city metro train on March 22, 2016, killing 32 people and wounding hundreds of others. IS claimed responsibility for both attacks.—AFP

## Ukraine bans Russians from monitoring elections

**KIEV:** Ukrainian lawmakers yesterday voted to ban Russians from monitoring a forthcoming presidential election, as tensions between the neighbors flare before the poll. Kiev, fighting a Moscow-backed insurgency in eastern Ukraine, has said it suspects Russia of planning to interfere in the election. Lawmakers also voted to allocate around US\$350 million to the intelligence services to counter the perceived threat.

Yesterday's measure would block Russian nationals from taking part in international election-monitoring missions, and would also apply to parliamentary and local votes. The proposal has been condemned by Moscow and Kiev's Western allies alike. Kurt Volker, the US special representative in Ukraine, said Russians should take part in monitoring as long as they were overseen by international organizations. If they do not take part, this al-

lows "people to question election," Volker wrote on Twitter ahead of the vote.

"No games. Ukraine needs to have confidence in its own democratic institutions," he said. The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) is preparing an extensive mission for the March 31 poll. Russian senators told news agencies that Moscow might not recognize the results of the Ukrainian election if Russian observers are not allowed to monitor them.

Russia's OSCE envoy Alexander Lukashevich called the ban "a gross violation of Ukraine's OSCE commitments and international legal norms," in comments carried by the RIA news agency. Volodymyr Zelensky, a comedian who plays the Ukrainian president in a TV series, is currently favorite to take on the real-life role, according to polls. Zelensky is ahead of former prime minister Yulia Tymoshenko and incumbent Petro Poroshenko, as many voters turn their backs on the political class.

But there are a record number of candidates and the race remains unpredictable. Ties between Moscow and Kiev dramatically deteriorated after a pro-Western government came to power following a 2014 revolt against a pro-Kremlin leader. That year Moscow annexed Crimea and began backing rebels in a conflict in eastern Ukraine that has already claimed some 13,000 lives.—AFP

## Norwegian flight returns after bomb threat

**STOCKHOLM:** A Norwegian Air Shuttle plane en route to the French city of Nice returned to Stockholm safely after receiving a bomb threat shortly after take-off yesterday, the airline said. "Norwegian can confirm that a bomb threat was issued against flight DY4321 from Arlanda to Nice," it said in a statement, providing no other details.

Stockholm police spokeswoman Towe Hagg told AFP that local and border police as well as tactical units were "working actively at Arlanda to gather information, follow up and take necessary measures." A traveler at Arlanda airport, Pertti Arnberg, told daily Expressen the plane was parked at the far end of the runway, surrounded by a swarm of emergency vehicles with blue lights flashing. The plane had taken off at 10:09 am (0909 GMT) and landed back at the airport around 11:15 am.



**STOCKHOLM:** A picture shows a Norwegian Air Shuttle plane on the tarmac at Arlanda Airport in Stockholm, where it returned safely after receiving a bomb threat shortly after take-off. —AFP

Sweden's Joint Rescue Coordination Centre for sea and air rescues, which was informed of the bomb threat about 30 minutes into the flight, said in a statement 169 passengers were on board the plane. A passenger who declined to be named told Expressen they were waiting for mobile staircases to be able to disembark, more than hour after landing. It was not immediately known how the bomb threat was communicated.—AFP



# Europeans, Latin Americans to meet on Venezuela crisis

## Venezuelan military block humanitarian aid shipment

**MONTEVIDEO:** An international meeting to negotiate a solution to the Venezuelan crisis was set to open yesterday in Montevideo as President Nicolas Maduro and opposition leader Juan Guaido sparred over allowing humanitarian aid into the crisis-racked country. The European Union, eight other European countries and five Latin American nations were scheduled to meet in the Uruguayan capital with the goal of creating conditions for a peaceful political process, according to a European diplomatic source.

The initiative, originally launched by Mexico and Uruguay as a “neutral countries” conference on Venezuela, has evolved into a meeting of a “Contact Group” launched by the EU in late January, and joined by Costa Rica, Bolivia and Ecuador. On Wednesday, Maduro-having rejected an EU ultimatum on organizing snap presidential elections-welcomed the meeting and expressed support for “all steps and initiatives to facilitate dialogue”.

But Guaido, who on January 23 declared himself Venezuela’s interim president and is now recognized by 40 countries, has strongly rejected any talks with the government, dismissing it as a way for Maduro to buy time. “The Venezuelan government ... will not lend itself to any kind of false dialogue,” he reiterated Wednesday.

### Humanitarian aid blocked

The same day, Guaido had warned the army of its responsibilities after soldiers blocked a key border bridge, sparking angry demands from the United States to allow desperately needed humanitarian aid to enter the country. Venezuela’s army

had to choose between “a dictatorship that does not have an iota of humanity, or to side with the constitution” from which he takes his legitimacy, Guaido said in an interview on Colombian radio.

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said Venezuela’s military was deliberately blocking the aid “under Maduro’s orders.” Washington has pledged \$20 million in aid, while Canada has pledged \$40 million and the EU \$7.5 million. Maduro, who is supported by Russia, China, Turkey, Cuba and Iran, has refused all humanitarian aid shipments to Venezuela, which he says would open the way to allow a US military invasion. The 56-year-old has repeatedly accused the United States of fomenting a coup. He dismissed the need for aid on Wednesday as a “political show”. “Imperialism does not help anyone in the world,” he told Russia Today.

### Divided views

But while tensions remained at a peak, participants in yesterday’s meeting intended to “find a way between” the positions of US President Donald Trump and Russia’s Vladimir Putin, Turkey’s Recep Tayyip Erdogan and others, an EU source told AFP. It is “not easy”, added the source, whose delegation will be led by EU diplomacy chief Federica Mogherini. Even around the negotiating table, views are divided. On Wednesday, ahead of the meeting, Uruguay and Mexico-among the few Latin American countries that did not recognize Guaido-proposed a dialogue without pre-conditions.

“If we demand elections at this time, we impose conditions that make dialogue difficult,”



CUCUTA, Colombia: People cross the Simon Bolivar International Bridge on the border between Tachira in Venezuela and Cucuta in Colombia. — AFP

Uruguayan Foreign Minister Rodolfo Nin Novoa said in a joint statement of the two governments. Meanwhile among the Europeans, France, Germany, Britain, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and Sweden are among the 21 out of 28 EU member states that officially support Guaido.

Italy has not done so. Mexico agreed to attend the meeting, but did not wish to formally join the Contact Group. Above all, the EU diplomatic

source told AFP the meeting was about agreeing on “working methods”. Meanwhile, 35-year-old National Assembly chief Guaido has continued to ramp up pressure on the regime with a series of mass protests, the next of which is scheduled for February 12. His fledgling alternative administration will hold talks in Washington on February 14 on responding to “the largest hemispheric humanitarian crisis in modern history”. — AFP

## US House holds first hearings on gun violence, climate change

**WASHINGTON:** The US House of Representatives on Wednesday saw its first committee hearings on climate change and gun control in eight years following Democrats’ victory over Republicans in last year’s Congressional elections. “No more climate denialism. No more evasions. @HouseDemocrats are in charge,” tweeted the House Natural Resources Committee. A hearing on gun violence was held at the same time, also a first in eight years, in a sign of changing times on Capitol Hill.

Democrats retook control of the lower House in January after eight years of Republican majority. The Senate however remained in Republican hands. But the new elected officials took office at first paralyzed by the longest federal government

shutdown in American history. Now that a (temporary) deal has been reached, the Democrats are keen to show that they have taken over the House and its powerful committees.

House Judiciary Committee Chairman Jerrold Nadler said he was disappointed that Republican President Donald Trump did not mention guns in his big State of the Union speech on Tuesday. “The epidemic of gun violence in this country is a national crisis and an international embarrassment,” he said in a statement. “In 2017, nearly 40,000 Americans lost their lives because of guns. In fact, every day in America, on average, 34 people are murdered with a firearm, and more than 183 people are injured in an attack.”

Several survivors from recent mass shootings were present for the hearing, including those from Parkland High School in Florida, where the Valentine’s Day killing of 17 people last year sparked a national conversation on gun control. On the causes of climate change, Republicans and Democrats are deeply opposed, a fissure that has become all the more apparent since President Donald Trump withdrew the United States from the Paris accord in 2017. — AFP

## New Mexico gov withdraws National Guard from border

**LOS ANGELES:** The governor of New Mexico has ordered the withdrawal of the majority of National Guard troops stationed at the US state’s southern border, denouncing as “a charade” President Donald Trump’s warnings about migrants swarming the border. “I reject the federal contention that there exists an overwhelming national security crisis at the southern border, along which are some of the safest communities in the country,” Michelle Lujan Grisham said in a statement.

Her order for the troop withdrawal came shortly before Trump delivered his State of the Union address Tuesday evening, during which he vowed to build his disputed wall along the US-Mexico border. Grisham’s order covers most of New Mexico’s deployed troops as well as troops from Arkansas, Kansas, Kentucky, New Hampshire, South Carolina and Wisconsin

who had been deployed at the border. Her office said the troops number 118 in all.

Grisham said some troops would remain in place to provide humanitarian assistance to communities in the area that have had to deal with an influx of families, women and children crossing the border.

“We will support our neighbors where the need for assistance is great, and we will offer a helping hand when we can to those vulnerable people who arrive at our border, but New Mexico will not take part in the president’s charade of border fear-mongering by misusing our diligent National Guard troops,” Grisham said. “We will deploy our men and women in uniform only where there is a need, and where their presence can make a genuine difference in ensuring public safety and an easing of the humanitarian concerns at our southern border,” she added.

Trump has demanded \$5.7 billion to build a border wall, shutting down the government for 35 days in a failed attempt to pressure Democrats to approve it as part of a budget deal. On Sunday, the Pentagon said it was sending an additional 3,750 troops to the border to help install wire barriers and monitor crossings. That would bring the total number of active-duty personnel there to almost 6,000. — AFP



## International

# Trump says 'it's time' to end Afghan war - can he?

## Trump announces draft framework for deal with Taliban

**WASHINGTON:** After 17 years, countless thousands of civilian and military deaths, and more than \$1 trillion in US cash, President Donald Trump has declared that "it's time" to end the Afghanistan war. Touting talks with the Taliban, Trump in his State of the Union address on Tuesday said "the hour has come to at least try for peace" and close out America's longest conflict.

Ending US military involvement in Afghanistan has cross-party support, with much of America sick of the distant conflict that has claimed the lives of about 2,400 soldiers and tens of thousands more Afghans. "Our troops have fought with unmatched valor," Trump said. "Thanks to their bravery, we are now able to pursue a possible political solution to this long and bloody conflict." But critics warn against a precipitous pull out and Trump's seeming willingness to take the Taliban at their word in ongoing talks that have so far snubbed Afghan President Ashraf Ghani. Ryan Crocker, a former US ambassador to Afghanistan, said Trump's desire to pull out is akin to the Paris peace talks during the Vietnam War, when America desperately sought an end to that conflict.

"Then, as now, it was clear that by going to the table we were surrendering; we were just negotiating the terms of our surrender," Crocker wrote in an opinion piece in The Washington Post. "The Taliban will offer any number of commitments, knowing that when we are gone and the Taliban is back, we will have no means of enforcing any of them." Former president Barack Obama, who was

elected in part on a pledge to end the Afghanistan war, tried to reach a deal with the Taliban, only to see efforts collapse and the insurgent group that once harbored Al-Qaeda make new gains. Under Trump, the US is again engaging with the Taliban, with US special envoy Zalmay Khalilzad leading the effort in talks in Qatar.

He has announced a draft framework for a deal, but stressed "nothing is agreed until everything is agreed." Khalilzad said the Taliban have committed to prevent Afghanistan from ever again becoming a platform for international terrorist groups or individuals.

### Talks in early phase

Thomas Joscelyn, a senior fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies and editor of its Long War Journal, said the US must be skeptical of the Taliban, who have a track record of backtracking on commitments. The Taliban "mumbled something" to Khalilzad "and he immediately took that at face value and seems to believe that they would keep Afghanistan from becoming a hotbed for international terrorist organizations again," Joscelyn told AFP.

"There are many reasons to think that that is foolish and also not true," he said. For peace talks to yield anything of substance, Joscelyn said it is imperative the Taliban denounce Al-Qaeda, the jihadists who operated in Afghanistan in the 1990s and were responsible for the September 11, 2001 attacks. "If the Taliban is really going to renounce international ter-



**WASHINGTON:** US President Donald Trump speaks to the Ministers of the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS at the US State Department in Washington, DC. — AFP

rorism then they need to renounce Al-Qaeda unequivocally (and) in very clear terms," he said, including by denouncing the 9/11 attacks.

Experts warned that the current talks, ostensibly aimed at pushing the Taliban to negotiate with the Afghan government, could delegitimize

it by failing to include Ghani from the get-go. This week, a top US general said Kabul must be included. "Ultimately, we need to get to a Taliban-Afghanistan discussion," General Joseph Votel, head of US Central Command, told US lawmakers. — AFP

## As good as gold for some brides in India as election nears

**NEW DELHI:** An India state will give gold worth about \$530 to every bride from a poor family, the latest budget giveaway ahead of a general election that must be held by May. The northeastern state of Assam is run by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which is facing a battle for re-election because of low farm incomes and a lack of jobs that have turned off some of those who backed it in the last polls, in 2014.

The federal government announced cash handouts to farmers and tax cuts for the lower middle class last week. On Thursday, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) cut interest rates for the first time since 2017, in line with a government demand as it attempts to stimulate the economy. The opposition Congress party has also been forgiving farmers' loans and announcing it would provide the unemployed with cash handouts in some of the states it controls.

But handing out gold to brides is new. The tea-growing state's finance minister, Himanta

Biswa Sarma, allocated 3 billion rupees (\$42 million) for the next fiscal year, from April 1, for the gold program. That would buy 875 kg of gold, enough for about 80,000 brides. "A customary ritual which has been part of Assamese society for centuries is to gift a set of gold ornaments to one's daughter as a blessing as she leaves her father's home to start a new life," Sarma said in his budget speech on Wednesday. He said the program should stop families falling into debt to pay for daughters' weddings.

"I feel that it's my solemn responsibility to stand with those fathers who cannot afford to gift a set of gold ornaments," he said. The Assam government would buy the gold from the RBI and give it to the beneficiaries directly, Sarma said yesterday. The program would be limited to two women from each family with an income of less than 500,000 rupees (\$7,000) a year. Each bride would get a "tola", or 11.66 grams, of gold.

Indian brides traditionally get gold, which helps make the country the world's second-biggest buyer of the metal after China. The World Gold Council expects India to consume 750-850 tonnes of gold this year. The Assam government hasn't stopped at gold. Sarma said the state would also give electric bikes to girls who score at least 60 percent in school-leaving exams, forgetting to places of higher studies. He rejected opposition accusations he was making "fake promises" to win votes. Political parties and candidates find different ways to give presents to voters. — Reuters

## Pakistan activists' arrests fuel tension with Afghanistan

**ISLAMABAD:** The arrest of a group of ethnic Pashtun activists at a rally in Pakistan this week rekindled an angry row with neighboring Afghanistan yesterday as Afghan President Ashraf Ghani condemned Islamabad's treatment of the protesters. The members of the Pashtun Tahaffuz Movement (PTM) were detained during an Islamabad protest against police violence on Tuesday, the latest in a series of moves against the group which was founded a year ago to protest the death of a Pashtun man killed by police in the Pakistani port city of Karachi.

Islamabad's crackdown against the group, whose support comes mainly from the northwestern region of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, has drawn criticism and protests from over the border in Afghanistan, where Pashtuns are estimated to be the largest single ethnic group. Tuesday's incident, reopening longstanding ten-

sions between Kabul and Islamabad, comes as Pakistan has been supporting efforts to open a peace process with the Taliban to end more than 17 years of war in Afghanistan.

"The Afghan government has serious concerns about the violence perpetrated against peaceful protesters and civil activists in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan," Ghani, himself a Pashtun, wrote in a tweet. Pakistani Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi rejected Ghani's comment. "Such irresponsible statements are only gross interference," he said in a tweet, adding that Ghani should focus on the "longstanding grievances of the Afghan people".

Tuesday's protests followed the death of PTM regional leader Arman Loni in southwestern Balochistan province which the group blamed on police. Mohsin Dawar, a member of parliament and founding member of PTM, said police had singled Loni out and beat him to death. A police spokesman said Loni died of a heart attack after clashes between protesters and police. PTM leader and member of parliament Ali Wazir said that 18 activists were still in custody after one of those detained was released this week.

Rights group Amnesty International issued a statement saying authorities "must immediately and unconditionally release protesters belonging to the peaceful Pashtun Tahaffuz Movement". — Reuters



# Protesters rally in downtown Khartoum in support of detained

## President Bashir orders release of detained journalists

**KHARTOUM:** Hundreds of Sudanese protesters rallied yesterday in downtown Khartoum and other districts of the capital in support of fellow demonstrators detained in the weeks of rallies against President Omar al-Bashir's iron-fisted rule, witnesses said. The latest protest came after Bashir acknowledged that Sudan's controversial public order law and growing economic hardships had angered youths and sent them out into the streets.

The rally was called to express solidarity with the hundreds of demonstrators who have been arrested since anti-government rallies erupted in December. The protesters returned to the downtown area of the capital, chanting their campaign's rallying cry of "freedom, peace, justice," witnesses said. For almost two weeks a security clampdown had prevented them from converging on the capital's downtown area.

"Bring all your soldiers but today you will fall," chanted the protesters, witnesses said, adding that riot police swiftly confronted them with tear gas. "The authorities thought we won't be able to reach downtown," a demonstrator told AFP without giving his name for security reasons. "It has been difficult, but today we have managed to do it."

Protesters also staged rallies in the capital's eastern neighborhood of Burr and three other areas in Khartoum, witnesses said. Video

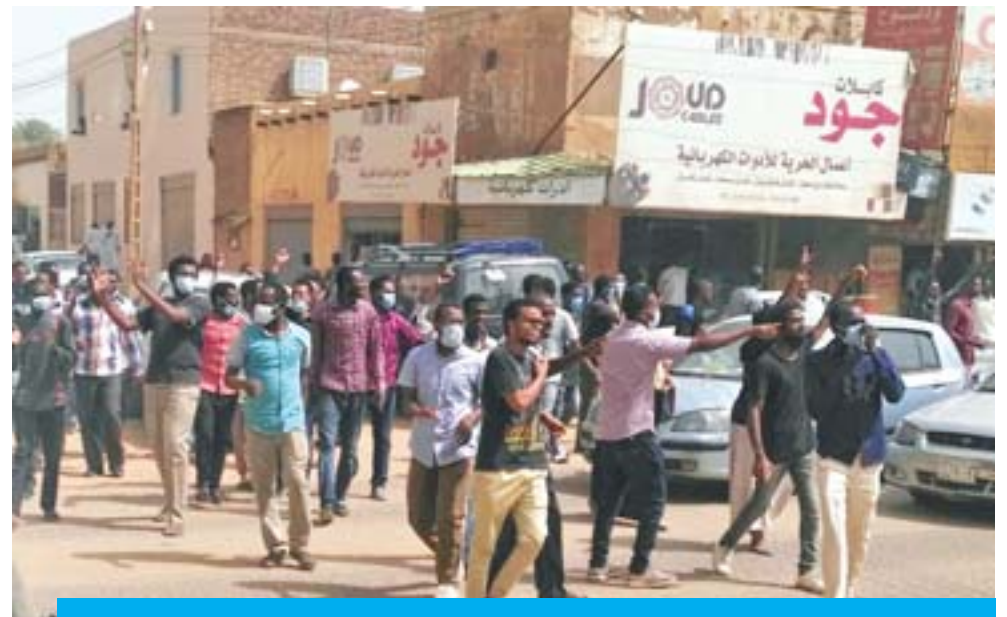
footages and photographs were swiftly uploaded on social media networks, some showing protesters being taken away by security agents in their vehicles. "They are taking their future back into their hands," tweeted prominent activist Salma Tigani.

### Youths leading rallies

The Sudanese Professionals Association (SPA) which has led the protest movement called yesterday's demonstrations specifically in support of the detainees who it says are being "tortured". Last week, a teacher from the eastern state of Kassala, Ahmed al-Kheir, died in detention after he was arrested in connection with the protests, a relative told AFP. On January 29, the chief of the National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS), Salah Ghosh, ordered the release of all detainees, but it is unclear how many have been actually freed.

On Wednesday, Bashir ordered the release of detained journalists but it was unclear whether they had been freed. Bashir, 75, acknowledged that youths, mainly women, were leading the rallies and said the public order law was "one of the reasons" for their anger.

Activists say the decades-old law targets mainly women, often accusing them of "indecent dressing and immoral behavior". Hefty punishments including fines and jail terms are imposed



**KHARTOUM:** Sudanese protesters take part in an anti-government demonstration in Khartoum. — AFP

on women found guilty under the legislation. According to some Sudanese women's rights groups, more than 15,000 women were sentenced to flogging in 2016. Bashir, who swept to power in a 1989 Islamist-backed coup, said the

harsh economic conditions in Sudan, such as high inflation, were also driving the protests. "It's not only the public order law that we are against," said Tahani, a female protester who asked not to be fully named. — AFP

## Facebook boosts political ad transparency ahead of India election

**NEW DELHI:** Facebook India said yesterday it will run disclaimers on political ads and publish details of sponsors to bring transparency in political advertising ahead of a general election due by May. Facebook has nearly 300 million users in India and political parties in recent years have embraced social media to reach out to country's burgeoning smartphone equipped population. The social media giant said users would see "published by" or "paid for by" disclaimers on political ads in a bid to end anonymity of advertisers and bring transparency in electoral campaigns.

"This will give people more information about who's responsible for the ads they see," Facebook said in a statement. The new policy starting this month will also apply to political campaigns run on Instagram, another popular app owned by US-based tech giant. Facebook will also display the primary country location of political pages running these adverts to ensure that genuine campaigns are run on its platforms. Users will

also be able to access a searchable library to find political advertisements, including the impressions and background of people who viewed the posts. Social media companies like Facebook, Twitter and Google have improved transparency in political advertising and introduced multiple step verification procedures for advertisers and page administrators to run campaigns.

Online companies have come under criticism globally for allowing campaigns run by vested and anonymous groups to influence voters, particularly in the aftermath of an advertisement scandal during the 2016 US presidential election. The Indian government had recently warned social media platforms over any attempt to undermine electoral processes.

Hundreds of millions of Indians will vote in a multi-phased general election due by May that is likely to be preceded by a bitter campaign between Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the opposition Congress led by Rahul Gandhi. Modi and Gandhi have millions of followers on social media and their parties have boosted their online presence to woo voters.

Industry estimates say political parties are expected to spend 30 billion rupees (\$420 million) during the 2019 election, nearly double the amount put into the 2014 campaign. Media reports and advertising firms estimate parties are likely to spend eight billion rupees on digital advertising, with Modi's BJP leading the social media advertising blitzkrieg. —AFP

## Myanmar villagers flee fresh Rakhine State fighting

**YANGON:** Scores of ethnic minority villagers have crossed from western Myanmar into Bangladesh in recent days amid fighting between the Myanmar military and ethnic Rakhine rebels, Bangladesh border guards and an activist said yesterday. Members of 38 families said they fled their homes fearing attack from military helicopters, said Colonel Zahirul Haque Khan, the Border Guards Bangladesh (BGB) commander in Bandarban district where the group of 136 people are now living in shelters.

Clashes between Myanmar's military and the insurgent Arakan Army, which mainly recruits from the Rakhine ethnic group, have displaced more than 5,000 people in parts of Rakhine and Chin states since early December. Myanmar's leaders have vowed to crush the rebels, who are fighting for autonomy for Rakhine State, and blocked most aid agencies from reaching the area, raising fears of more civilian suffering in an area long scarred by complex ethnic divisions.

While Rakhine State is majority Buddhist, in 2017 attacks on security posts by insurgents from the Muslim Rohingya minority provoked a military crackdown that forced

730,000 people from their homes and into camps in Bangladesh's Cox's Bazar district, according to U.N. agencies. Win Thein, a member of the nongovernmental Bangladesh Human Rights Commission, said he had visited the refugees, who are members of the Khumi, Cho and Rakhine ethnic groups, in their remote jungle camp.

They had crossed into Bangladesh on Sunday and Monday after fleeing from two villages in Chin state's rugged Paletwa township after they heard gunfire and saw helicopters nearby, he said. Some villagers said they later witnessed Myanmar soldiers looting and setting fire to homes, he said. Two spokesmen for the Myanmar military and the government's main spokesman, Zaw Htay, did not pick up phone calls seeking comment yesterday. Win Thein said some of the refugee children were seriously ill and had no access to medical care.

"There are no blankets at all and it is very cold," he said. Bangladesh summoned Myanmar's ambassador on Tuesday to protest over the new arrivals, according to a senior Bangladesh foreign ministry official. Brigadier General Sazedur Rahman, a BGB regional commander, said Bangladesh had beefed up security near the border to prevent more refugee arrivals.

The United Nations refugee agency in Cox's Bazar was trying to gather more information about the new arrivals, said spokesman Firas Al-Khateeb. "We'll coordinate with the government so we will be able to help them as soon as possible," he said. —Reuters



## International

# Malaysia's ex-PM Najib gears up for graft trial with charm offensive

## Prosecution recruits top notch criminal attorneys

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Disgraced former Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak has been out in recent weeks campaigning as if for an election, trying to shed the image of a wealthy, elite politician and elicit public sympathy before his corruption trial begins on Tuesday. Najib has pleaded not guilty to charges of criminal breach of trust, abuse of power and money laundering, in what is set to be the first of many trials over suspected multibillion-dollar fraud at state fund 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB).

The trial starts nine months after Malaysians voted Najib out of office in a general election dominated by public disgust over allegations some \$4.5 billion was stolen from 1MDB, and about a quarter of it went into his personal bank accounts. Police found nearly \$300 million worth of goods and cash at properties linked to Najib soon after the May 2018 election. But as the trial date nears, Najib - who has maintained his innocence - has sought a radical change of image, painting himself as a victim of a vindictive government led by Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad.

The 65-year-old son of Malaysia's second prime minister is also trying to build an image as a folksy voice of working people, especially members of the ethnic Malay majority. Najib, in a viral video last month, crooned a Malay-language version of the 1970s hit 'Kiss and Say Goodbye', surrounded by a chorus of somber young singers, criticizing Mahathir's coalition for failing to live up to election promises.

"On May 9, 2018, I was ousted. All this time, I

have been fighting with my life for the people I love. But what can I do?" an earnest Najib says of his "saddest day" in the introduction to the song. Najib has also been hitting out online. His jibes against ruling party politicians on Facebook and Twitter have some social media users referring to him as "King of Trolls". A relaxed, casually dressed Najib also paid a visit this month to Langkawi, Mahathir's island constituency, where he pottered around town, visiting markets, eating at hawker stalls and rubbing elbows and posing for selfies with passersby.

Mahathir was not impressed. He told a news conference last week Najib seemed to be getting popular on social media because "he provides a lot of stories". Harvinderjit Singh, one of Najib's lawyers, declined to comment on the former premier's public appearances but said the 1MDB trials were unlikely to be affected by the hoopla. "The case is going to be determined by what happens in court, not out of it," he said.

### 1MDB trial

While Najib has been trying to build public support, the Attorney General's Chambers (AGC) has been building a formidable team to prosecute Najib, his wife and a host of other former top officials charged for corruption. All of them have pleaded not guilty. The prosecution has been recruiting top notch criminal attorneys including former federal court judge Gopal Sri Ram and Sulaiman Abdullah, a lawyer with a background in cases of white-collar crime. The AGC has also recalled several prosecutors from state offices to join the team, two lawyers with



**KUALA LUMPUR:** Malaysia's former Prime Minister Najib Razak arrives in court in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. —Reuters

knowledge of the matter said. The AGC did not respond to a request for comment.

Najib has a defense team of eight lawyers, led by Muhammad Shafee Abdullah, who once represented the government in a sodomy case against former deputy prime minister Anwar Ibrahim. Najib could face years in prison. He faces 39 criminal charges over losses at 1MDB and other state entities. Seven of those charges will be the subject of Tuesday's trial, relating to transfers totaling 42 million ringgit (\$10.30 million) into Najib's per-

sonal bank account from SRC International, a former 1MDB unit. Prosecutors have handed nearly 3,000 pages of documents to the defense ahead of the trial, said Najib's lawyer Singh. The documents include statements from 26 witnesses, some of whom were SRC officials, who will likely be called to testify. Najib, who has not been asked to testify in his own defense, hopes only for a fair trial, Singh said. "Our client is of the view that if he gets a fair trial, then the truth will show itself to the public," he said.—Reuters

## Philippines hit by deadly measles outbreak

**MANILA:** A growing measles outbreak in the Philippines killed at least 25 people last month, officials said yesterday, putting some of the blame on mistrust stoked by a scare over an anti-dengue fever vaccine. Most of the dead are children and the toll is expected to rise as more cases are confirmed of the highly contagious disease, which has made a worldwide resurgence in recent years. Figures from the Philippines' national health authorities show cases jumped from 791 in 2017 to 5,120 last year. There were 1,813 confirmed cases in January alone.

The most recent numbers available show measles killed 30 in the first eight months of last year, and five in all of 2017. Authorities said vaccination rates in the Philippines have been declining for years, but also pointed to the recent controversy over the safety of the Dengvaxia dengue vaccine. "The measles vaccination coverage has been in decline in

the last five years," health undersecretary Eric Domingo told a press conference yesterday.

"In the recent years, it was the issue of Dengvaxia vaccine that contributed," he added, as the government pushed parents to get children vaccinated. The scare started in late 2017, shortly after the Philippines gave Dengvaxia to some 837,000 students as part of a public immunization campaign. The vaccine's maker, Sanofi, set off a panic when it said a new analysis showed Dengvaxia could lead to more severe symptoms for people who had not previously been infected with dengue.

Sanofi has unequivocally said its product is safe, but Manila still halted the campaign and left hundreds of thousands of terrified parents wondering if their children were at risk. The World Health Organization in November 2018 warned that measles cases globally had jumped more than 30 percent in 2017 compared to the previous year, in part because of children not being vaccinated. San Lazaro hospital in the Philippine capital reported more than 50 deaths from measles and over 1,500 patients in January alone, which is subject to health department confirmation.—AFP

## Abe strikes dovish tone on Russia at islands rally

**TOKYO:** Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe struck a conciliatory tone with Russia at an annual rally yesterday to demand the return of small northern isles claimed by both nations. The conservative leader did not explicitly demand sovereignty of the Southern Kuril islands, an emotive issue that has prevented the Asian economic power from signing an official peace treaty with Moscow since World War II.

Instead, he vowed to focus on concluding an official peace treaty with Russia, after meeting President Vladimir Putin 25 times, most recently last month. "It is not easy to resolve an issue that has remained unresolved for 73 years," Abe told the rally in Tokyo, attended by hundreds of former islanders and their relatives. "I am determined to take on the work to resolve the territorial issue by taking one step at a time with your earnest desire etched in my heart," he said.

Abe speaks at the rally every year, but struck a relatively softer tone yesterday. Despite the row, Tokyo and Moscow already have vibrant economic relations, with the likes of Toyota and Japanese energy firms heavily invested in Russia, operating major factories and

sales networks. And in recent years, Abe and Putin have discussed joint economic projects on the disputed islands between the Sea of Okhotsk and the Pacific Ocean. The Soviet army seized them in the last days of World War II, and Russia continues to control them.

Tokyo's traditional refusal to recognize Moscow's sovereignty there has been a barrier to a formal peace deal. However, the two sides did sign a 1956 Soviet-Japanese declaration that Japan would receive two of the smaller islands after a peace deal. Abe said the foreign ministers and special envoys from the two nations will meet this month to discuss a peace treaty, before he plans to meet with Putin again in June on the sidelines of a G20 summit that Japan will host.

The prime minister also said he would work with Moscow to enable former residents to visit their birth or ancestral places.

At the rally, Abe spoke in front of a large banner saying "Return the Four Northern Islands." But he did not utter the phrase. His focus on economic ties and delicate language on the sovereignty issue prompted some islanders to urge him to focus more on the subject, while others saw it as a realistic approach.

"We must not give up. We must demand the return of all four islands," said Kimio Waki, 78, who left his home island of Kunashiri at the age of seven after World War II. "Joint economic projects are in focus. But there is no path forward as far as the return of the islands goes," he told AFP. "I want to see results," he said.—AFP



# Lifestyle

Friday Times

www.kuwaittimes.net

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 2019

US model Joan Smalls walks the runway during the Tom Ford fashion show at New York Fashion Week in midtown Manhattan, New York City. — AFP

**10,000 Palestinian students  
participate in a drawing contest**

See Page 21





This picture a display with dog figures at The American Kennel Club Museum of the Dog.—AFP photos

## Dogs have their day at revived NY museum

**D**ogs play cameo roles in some of the West's most iconic paintings, yet man's best friend has arguably gotten short shrift in the global museum hierarchy. But a museum addition in Manhattan restores the animals to what canine aficionados will no doubt view as their rightful place at the center of the picture. The American Kennel Club's Museum of the Dog, which opens Friday in midtown Manhattan, contains a smorgasbord of works of varying aesthetic ambition, along with interactive displays. The museum's opening has been timed to coincide with the start of Westminster Week, an annual mid-winter canine fest that attracts dogs and dog-lovers from around the world and culminates with the Westminster Dog Show on Tuesday night and the selection of "Best in Show" at Madison Square Garden.

The collection comprises more than 2,000 paintings, photos, sculptures and artifacts and includes a healthy supply of works that document what the ancestors of today's pets looked like in the 19th century and earlier. These include the skeleton of "Belgrade Joe," a Fox Terrier that died in 1888 and is seen as a seminal figure in that breed's evolution. Some works are photograph-like depictions of breeds that will appeal to dog-showing professionals.

"They look at the painting as they would a show dog and they critique it that way—by the anatomy, the way it's built and so forth. There's nothing about how it was rendered or anything like that," said Alan Fausel, the museum's executive director, who specialized in canine art with private auction houses before being hired to lead the museum in 2018. "The average person will be interested in things that have some action, some activity, some narrative content," added Fausel, who

wants the museum to satisfy both the show dog industry professional and the everyday visitor. Paintings of dogs evolved from pre-Victorian depictions that emphasized carnal aggression, to 19th century portraiture to 20th century works that anthropomorphize the creatures once photography largely obviated more naturalistic works, according to Fausel.

### Central location

The museum itself dates to 1982 when it was first established in New York before relocating in 1987 to St Louis, where it stayed for 37 years in the sleepy outskirts of the mid-western city. The move to New York, which is home to myriad collections ranging from the Museum of Sex to the Tenement Museum to the Metropolitan Museum and other prestigious attractions, gives the collection more prominence. Its location near Grand Central Station figures to attract foot traffic. "It's great to show the collection that had been languishing in obscurity," said Fausel.

"It's also great to tell people who the AKC is and what we do." The collection includes depictions of Millie, the English Springer Spaniel that lived in the White House as the pet of the late president George H.W. Bush and wife Barbara, as well as "Silent Sorrow," a poignant rendering of King Edward VII's Fox Terrier mourning its master's sudden death that may remind viewers of Sully, the Labrador Retriever who went viral last year after he was photographed sleeping next to Bush's coffin. The museum features interactive displays, including a rather tongue-in-cheek one that helps visitors discover which breed they most resemble, and advice on training, as well as a sample of some 15,000 doc-



Two workers at The American Kennel Club Museum of the Dog looking at a painting of Millie Bush, an English Springer Spaniel and former White House resident.

uments contained in a canine library.

A smart-phone application provides details about many of the displays, though Fausel confesses that the museum hasn't nailed down the complete history of each item. For example, a 1902 painting of two growling Irish Terriers with the British Parliament in the background is titled "Irish Members," but Fausel isn't certain of the exact context of the work, which was painted by Brit Maud Earl. The museum is targeting perhaps 100,000 visitors in its first year, but Fausel expects to organize a series of special exhibits that could potentially have broad appeal. These include shows on dogs in Hollywood, presidential dogs and the biological evolution of the beloved creatures.—AFP



A worker in The American Kennel Club Museum of the Dog looking at a painting "Poodle" by Maud Earl.



A worker of the American Kennel Club's Museum of Dog looking at a painting of Millie Bush, an English Springer Spaniel and former White House resident.



A painting area for kids in the American Kennel Club's Museum of Dog.



# 10,000 Palestinian students participate in a drawing contest organized by Embassy of Palestine



A students drawing competition was held, with the support of Palestine Embassy in Kuwait, under the slogan "colors from Palestine" from Dec 8, 2018 until Jan 20, 2019, with more than 10,000 students participating. Coordinator general of the tournament Adnan Saad said students of all stages participated from government, Arab, private and foreign schools.

"The aim of the competition is to have students express their feelings and knowledge about the beautiful nature, civilization heritage, culture and customs in the state of Palestine through their drawings be it water color, crayon or any other material that allows them to be creative in drawing a piece of Palestine and improve understanding between cultures through education, and benefit from the students and others culture and discover the reflection of the principle of cultures exchange at the local, regional and international levels, while gaining experience and skills that are suitable with students ages, their levels and move with the arts culture in the fields of our artistic, popular and cultural heritage", Saad said.

"It also affirms the students selfness and provide opportunities to express their reactions and feelings as they form their personalities, along with the growth of arts feeling and

awareness. It projects their ability of observation, thinking, imagination and accurate vision, besides constructive critique and artistic taste. Drawing will be a suitable tool hold dialogue, and achieve contact with all persons, even those who do not know how to draw," he added.

Stages of participation were divided as follows: Elementary schools from (6-9 years), intermediate schools (11-13 years) and secondary schools from (14 years and above), this in addition to the participation of special needs schools. Valuable prizes will be given to the top 10 winners during the closing ceremony. The deadline for handing over drawings is Feb 28, 2019, and can be handed to the Palestine embassy from 8 am until 1 pm at Bayan, bloc 12 street 7 no. 24.

The officiating committee will be made of artists from outside the education sector, formative artists Abdelkareem Al-Enezi, Asaad Bunashi, and Zvitlana Ardent, head of the Kuwait-Ukraine friendship society as they will select the best 10 art works from each stage. The winning works will be evaluated on basis of creativity, effort, method and subject. The closing ceremony will be held at the auditorium of Gulf University for science and technology, and we are pleased to invite you for the ceremony and opening the exhibition of winning works at 4:30 pm, Sunday Feb 10, 2019.

## 'Fake' still life in US museum confirmed as real Van Gogh

Art experts have confirmed that a small still-life at a US museum once dismissed as a fake is in fact by Vincent van Gogh, the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam said Wednesday. The painting, "Still Life with Fruit and Chestnuts", was donated by a couple to the Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco in 1960 and suspected to be by the Dutch master. Several experts had previously said that the painting dated to 1886 was not a real Van Gogh, and it was not included in previous official catalogues of works by the painter, who committed suicide in 1890.

"It is true that at the end of last year, experts from the Van Gogh Museum attributed a painting from the collection of the Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco as a Vincent van Gogh painting," press officer Milou Bollen told AFP. "There was always a question whether the painting was or was not made by Van Gogh." In a further discovery, the experts found that there was a portrait

of a woman hidden underneath the still life, the Van Gogh museum said.

Van Gogh often reused his canvases as he found himself working in poverty, managing to sell only a few of his paintings during his troubled life. The Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco was not immediately available for comment. It already lists the painting as being by Van Gogh on its website. Van Gogh is better known for his vibrant renderings of sunflowers but he also painted a series of lesser, often darker still lifes including the one now officially attributed to him. "Still Life with Fruit and Chestnuts" is believed to have been painted in Paris in the autumn of 1886, the Dutch newspaper Volkskrant reported. It was at one point owned by the mother of French painter Emile Bernard, who was friends with Van Gogh. The Van Gogh Museum is asked to examine 200 works a year to see if they are really by the artist, but since 1988 it has only added 14 to the official oeuvre, Volkskrant said.—AFP





The battle for Hmong heritage  
in *Vietnam*



**V**uong Duy Bao surveys his ancestral palace, a vestige of Vietnam’s marginalized Hmong ethnic minority that he says was taken from his family by local officials. The wooden structure is laden with historic markers: opium flowers carved into pillars in a nod to the region’s once-booming trade, and an iron fence made with metal imported from former colonial ruler France. Built in 1903 by Bao’s warlord grandfather with his opium fortune, the retired civil servant claims local authorities took possession of the property in the northern Ha Giang province from his family and are now refusing to return it.

“Hmong people all over the world acknowledge this as (our) family home... so we can’t lose it,” he told AFP from the building, which authorities run as a museum. Both sides agree it is an architectural treasure since the historically nomadic Hmong rarely stayed long enough in one place to build anything lasting. Bao had been living in Hanoi, but on return to the family home, he discovered local authorities had taken ownership of the palace and rejected his claim to it because he could not provide deeds. He branded the request “absurd” and said official documents did not exist when the property was built but his family’s connection to it was set out in history books about the local area and even in pictures of it displayed in the museum.

Many Hmong fear the government is simply commandeering their culture to boost tourism dollars. For Bao, his battle for repossession goes beyond the personal. He believes Hmong heritage belongs in the hands of Hmong people, a tightknit minority originally from China who proudly cling to customs wherever they settle, from California to Minnesota, Laos and Thailand.

**‘Community spirit’**

In Vietnam, they have been largely excluded from the economic growth of the past decade, and more than 60 percent of the country’s one million Hmong live below the poverty line. The ethnic group have long been at odds with the central government—stemming in part from the CIA recruitment of anti-communist Laotian Hmong during the Vietnam War—which for decades has imposed a series of resettlement, development and assimilation campaigns that have mostly failed. “More than any other ethnic minority in Vietnam the Hmong have been marginalized by programs



Tourists visiting an ancient Hmong family heritage palace in Dong Van district.



Tourists posing for photographs at the ancient Hmong heritage palace in Dong Van district.





A Hmong woman carrying her child on her back while harvesting soybeans on a hill in Dong Van district, northern Vietnam's Ha Giang province. — AFP photos



A Hmong shopkeeper waiting for customers at his shop in Dong Van district.



Tourists visiting an ancient Hmong family heritage palace in Dong Van district.

that purport to develop them,” writes anthropologist Ngo Tam in her 2016 book “The New Way: Protestantism and the Hmong in Vietnam.”

Ha Giang authorities are touting tourism as the best way to lift the Hmong out of grueling poverty, and the province has said in its master plan it wants the area to be a “key attraction” for visitors by 2030. Officials have opened a series of ‘traditional cultural villages’ where visitors can peek into old-school wooden houses or take photos of themselves carrying a bamboo basket, a common vessel for Hmong farmers ferrying flowers or grass from the field.

Local Hmong are encouraged to wear traditional hemp clothing and build traditional houses, and have been asked to shorten funeral and wedding ceremonies, days-long, booze-soaked affairs that are among the most sacred of Hmong rituals. “Sometimes authorities try to impose their ideas on people forcibly, but we resist by refusing to follow,” Vang My Sinh, a Hmong man in Ha Giang, told AFP. “We’ve always had strong community spirit, we build things together and preserve things together. Nothing can break us,” he said.

That community spirit has proven powerful. Troops were sent to quell a massive Hmong protest in 2011, in which some called for independence. More recently, Hmong in Vietnam have turned to organized religion and embraced Protestantism, which makes the communist government nervous.

‘Die on the rock’

In Ha Giang, some Hmong are happy to comply with government guidelines if it means improving their lot. “It is good to preserve tradition, for ourselves, for our children, and even for tourists who come out of curiosity and bring us more money,” said Va Thi May, who was selling grilled yams at a quiet roadside stop. Ethnic minorities are not always the beneficiaries of Vietnam’s booming tourism sector.

In northern Vietnam’s visitor-saturated Sapa, locals complain hotel owners from the Kinh majority earn big while ethnic minority women and children hawk Chinese-made fabric and fake silver. Regaining control of the Hmong palace could be a small step toward recovering their own history and benefitting from local tourist spending. For some, the loss of the palace is part of a broader issue.

“It’s one of the many things that make Hmong feel marginalized and definitely adds to their disenfranchisement,” said Sebastian Rumsby, a PhD candidate at University of Warwick whose research focuses on Christianity among the Hmong. Bao hopes to push back against that by getting his palace back-so his Hmong clan can regain their spiritual homeland. —AFP



Ethnic Hmong food vendor Va Thi May checking her phone while waiting for customers at her stall in Dong Van district, northern Vietnam's Ha Giang province.



Tourists taking photos in a field of flowering buckwheat in Dong Van district.





A guide waits for visitors at the space museum located in Saint Paraskeva church in Pereyaslav-Khmelnitsky, a small town some 80 kilometers southeast of Kiev. — AFP photos



A picture shows exhibition items at the space museum located in Saint Paraskeva church in Pereyaslav-Khmelnitsky.

# To divinity and beyond: Questions over Ukraine space church’s future



A man visits the space museum located in Saint Paraskeva church.

Inside a traditional Orthodox church topped with a gold cross, instead of icons, visitors can see a lunar rover and the helmet of the first man in space Yuri Gagarin. The wooden church in central Ukraine is one of thousands of buildings that were repurposed or simply destroyed during an anti-religion campaign in the Soviet era. But now some believers are asking whether it’s time for the blue and grey painted structure to be returned to the Church, especially as Ukraine is undergoing a religious revival. Last month the country created its own Orthodox Church in a historic break with the Russian Orthodox Church, against a backdrop of its ongoing war with Russia-backed rebels in eastern Ukraine that has killed more than 10,000 people. “Today, when it is no longer forbidden to pray and believe in God, the church must be used as a place of worship,” said priest Mykhaylo

Yurchenko, from the new Ukrainian Orthodox Church who serves in one of the nearby churches. Museum staff say clerics have visited and even tried out the acoustics, but there are no plans to reconsecrate it. “The museum was founded in the 1970s,” said Sergiy Volkodav, its 37-year-old chief curator. “It happened when space flights were wildly popular and every boy dreamed of becoming a cosmonaut,” he said, standing beside a spacesuit worn by cosmonaut Vyacheslav Zudov for a spacewalk in 1976. Built in 1891, the Church of Saint Paraskeva houses over 450 exhibits, including a scarlet training parachute belonging to Gagarin, a collection of portraits of him and other personal items of the cosmonaut whose historic 1961 space flight made him a Soviet icon. The museum is part of a vast outdoor ethnographic



A guide waits for visitors at the space museum located in Saint Paraskeva church.



A guide waits for visitors at the space museum located in Saint Paraskeva church in Pereyaslav-Khmelnitsky.



## Lifestyle | Feature

complex, located in Pereyaslav-Khmelnytsky, a small town some 80 kilometers (50 miles) southeast of Kiev.

### 'As cold as in space'

Soviet anti-religious propaganda used images of space exploration to persuade people that God did not exist. The Soviets also put some former churches to ideological use such as opening a museum of atheism in a cathedral in Leningrad, now Saint Petersburg. Some other churches were converted into planetariums. Volkodav said that, in opening a space museum in a church, the Soviet authorities' intention was not necessarily to mock religion.

One of those who lived in the village, Borys Stolyarenko, a 60-year-old mechanic, recalls services being held there in the early 1960s. "Later, when the Soviets turned it into a granary, we climbed through its windows with my friends and jumped down into the grain," he said. He has no photographs of his former home village, he went on. "All I have is this church. The creation of the museum saved it," he added.

Today though, the museum looks like it has seen better days. The exhibits are shabby and blue paint is flaking off the interior walls.

Most visitors come in summer due to the lack of heating: a thermometer inside displays minus 10 degrees C (14 degrees F). "It's as cold as in space," joked a museum employee, wearing a sheepskin coat and hat.

### Use for worship

The fall of the USSR and the proclamation of Ukraine's independence in 1991, followed by religious freedom in this predominantly Orthodox country have not changed the museum's status. Father Feodosiy from the local Orthodox monastery, loyal to the Moscow Patriarchate, said he would like to see the museum return to the Russian Orthodox Church. But if it were to go to the new Ukrainian Church, he would rather see it continue to host space exhibits, he said. "In the situation we have now, it's better to have a museum there than those schismatics" from the independent Church, he said. Some locals have suggested moving the space exhibition to another location and opening a museum of religious icons in its place. But Volkodav is resolutely opposed. "This is the only space museum in a church in the whole world... it's unique," he claimed. — AFP



A guide waits for visitors at the space museum located in Saint Paraskeva church in Pereyaslav-Khmelnytsky, a small town some 80 kilometers southeast of Kiev. — AFP photos

They simply chose a building that could display large exhibits that include a model rocket several meters (feet) high, he said. Some, like Volkodav as well as priests and other locals, argue that the creation of the museum in fact saved the church from destruction. It formerly stood in a Cossack village that was deliberately flooded to build a vast reservoir in the 1960s. The church was one of the few buildings to be painstakingly dismantled and moved to a new location.



A guide waits for visitors outside the space museum located in Saint Paraskeva church.

## Berlin filmfest rolls out red carpet for women trailblazers

Europe's first major film festival of the year, the Berlinale, kicked off yesterday making a statement against entertainment industry sexism by welcoming an unprecedented line-up of female directors. The 11-day event prides itself on being the most politically engaged of the A-list cinema showcases, presenting 400 movies from around the world, most on hard-hitting topical themes including rising extremism and economic exploitation. But its red carpet promises a steady stream of glamour too with Christian Bale, Diane Kruger, Tilda Swinton, Catherine Deneuve, Jonah Hill, Chiwetel Ejiofor and Casey Affleck all awaited in the frosty German capital.

French Oscar winner Juliette Binoche, 54, is leading a six-member panel choosing the winner of the prestigious Golden and Silver Bear prizes, to be awarded at a gala ceremony on February 16. Last year, with the #MeToo movement against abuses of power roiling the industry, the innovative docudrama "Touch Me Not" about sexual intimacy by Romania's Adina Pintilie clinched the top honors. For the first time this year, seven out of the 17 contenders are women—a more than 40-percent share that eclipses rivals such as Cannes and Venice, which have come under fire as chummy men's clubs. The top festivals have long faced pressure to boost their female representation as they serve as gatekeepers to international distribution, awards and box office cash.

### 'Big step forward'

Binoche welcomed the more diverse selection, saying it was long overdue and sent a message beyond the world of cinema. "I think that's a good step forward, 10 years ago was not like that," she told reporters. "Open minds—it's a good sign." British producer, director and actress Trudie Styler, 65, who is also on the jury, said the Berlinale had long championed films by underrepresented groups but that this year's selection was "not only courageous but a big step forward".

Denmark's Lone Scherfig, who made the Oscar-nominated coming-of-age tale "An Education" in 2009, will start the festival with the premiere of her film "The Kindness of Strangers" yesterday evening. The bitter-sweet drama stars Zoe Kazan ("The Big Sick") as a mother of two who has to rely on her fellow New Yorkers for help, in a cast including Andrea Riseborough ("The Death Of Stalin") and Bill Nighy ("Love Actually"). Scherfig, 59, said she was proud her film would be opening the last Berlinale under Kosslick, who is passing on the baton after 18 years. "It's a milestone edition so I'm really looking forward to presenting the film there," Scherfig told film industry bible Variety.

Polish veteran Agnieszka Holland will unveil the Stalin-era thriller "Mr Jones" starring James Norton ("Happy Valley") while France's Agnes Varda will premiere a new autobiographical documentary out of competition. Acclaimed French director Francois Ozon will present his controversial new drama "By the Grace of God" based on real-life cases of sex abuse allegedly committed by a French priest. A cardinal, Philippe Barbarin, is currently on trial in Lyon on charges he covered up the assaults, allegations he denies.



French actress and president of the Berlinale 2019 jury Juliette Binoche poses for photographers in Berlin. — AFP

### 'World's biggest festival'

Kosslick, 70, is credited with expanding the Berlinale and boosting its international profile with high-wattage guests ranging from the Rolling Stones to festival regulars Swinton and George Clooney. "Our fans have stayed true to us and grown so much that we can say we're the world's biggest film festival in terms of audience," Kosslick told AFP, with around a half-million tickets sold each year. Kosslick will be handing over the reins at a time of growing competition from streaming services but said he saw scope for cinemas to "co-exist" and thrive.

After winning the Golden Lion top prize at the Venice film festival in September with "Roma", Netflix will enter the Berlin race for the first time with gay marriage drama "Elisa and Marcela" by Spain's Isabel Coixet, based on a true story. In June, Kosslick will be succeeded by Carlo Chatrian, the current head of the Locarno film festival, and Mariette Rissenbeek, the Dutch director of German Film, which promotes homegrown movies abroad. For his last edition, Kosslick has opted to make a parting political statement, offering to buy tickets for leaders of the far-right Alternative for Germany party to a screening of "Who Will Write Our History?", a documentary about the Warsaw Ghetto. — AFP



# Exploring Phuket Town:

## The Thai holiday island's cultural capital



Thanks to its strategic southern Thailand location and rich natural bounty, Phuket's backstory is a fascinating, multifaceted one. Europeans (Dutch, Portuguese, French and British) began to land on the Andaman Coast's largest island from the 16th century, but the greatest group of international arrivals were the Chinese, who flocked here to stake their fortunes on the 19th-century tin-mining boom. These workers married into Phuket's Siamese community, and the local Baba (Peranakan) culture was born. This distinctive cultural heritage is visible all over Phuket Town, from its architecture to its cuisine. Ditch the beach towel: Phuket Town whizzes you right back to the island's roots.

### Much more than a day trip

Plenty of travellers blitz through Phuket Town on a half-day visit, but stay a couple of nights and you'll get to sample its busy nightlife (this is where Phuketians and local expats party), dig into its deliciously varied culinary world (Thai-style dim sum for breakfast?), explore its vibrant art scene

(street art on every other corner), suss out an ever-growing number of excellent artisan cafes and experimental cocktail bars, and snooze in century-old hŭrng t?aΣou (shophouses) transformed into boutique guesthouses.

### Sino-Portuguese architecture

Phuket Town's Baba inhabitants made their riches in tin-mining, then turned their attention to constructing majestic, European- and Chinese-inspired mansions featuring breezy terraces, elaborate wood-carved doors and central tile-floored courtyards. Others set up slim, multi-level shophouses, with louvered windows, upper terraces and elegantly arched ground-floor porches. Over the last decade, many of these buildings have been colorfully restored, some as cafes, restaurants, boutiques and guesthouses. A shining example is 1903 Chinpracha House off Th Krabi, still lived in by the six-generation descendants of its original owner.

A DIY walking tour of Phuket Town's Sino-Portuguese highlights could begin at the mango-





## Lifestyle | Travel

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yellow Standard Chartered Bank, before meandering along vibrantly repainted Th Thalang and Soi Romanee, whose shophouses gleam with pastel-pink walls and stuccoed pillars under swaying Chinese paper lanterns. Check out the beautifully refurbished Phra Pitak Chinpracha Mansion (now the famed Blue Elephant Thai restaurant) and delve into local history at Phuket Thaihua Museum on Th Krabi.

#### Chinese shrines

Phuket's cultural capital isn't all tin-mining grandeur. Sprinkled amid the Sino-Portuguese storefronts are a number of serene Chinese temples still very much in use. One of the most enchanting is the elaborately carved, restored 1889 Shrine of the Serene Light, a Taoist shrine with intricate wall etchings, off Th Phang-Nga.

Visit in late September or October and you'll see these hushed worship spaces burst into action for Phuket's famously frenzied Vegetarian Festival. Expect thunderous firecrackers, vivid street parades, masses of vegetarian food, and skewer- and knife-pierced worshippers. This important local celebration invokes the nine emperor gods of Taoism through self-mutilating mediums (mostly men). Jui Tui Shrine and Bang Niew Shrine are major sites for festival activity.

#### Fabulous food

Phuket Town's multicultural makeup means its cuisine is as diverse as it is celebrated. From super-fresh seafood to some of the best curries outside the Indian subcontinent, Phuket Town's culinary creations, both traditional and inventive, are just as likely to be dished up on shophouse porches as inside early-20th-century mansions. Here, Chinese and Malay flavors mingle with southern-Thai cooking, producing a deliciously varied local microworld of Peranakan cuisine, with distinctive specialties seen only in this part of Thailand.

On Th Thalang, Kopitiam by Wilai is a great place to savour some soulful southern favourites; try the mee sua (sautéed noodles with egg, sea bass, prawns and squid). A few doors east, long-running Abdul's Roti Shop doles out hotplate-fresh roti with sweet banana or savory massaman curry, while Mee Ton Poe on the Clock Tower Circle is the place to go for hokkien noodles. At Cookie House, pick up boxes of Phuket's signature cookies made from freshly pulverized almond paste, egg yolks and butter.

Long-established, antique-packed Sino-Portuguese townhouse Raya pulls in a loyal following for its well-priced Phuket specialties, such as moo hong (pepper-and-garlic-braised pork), mee gaang poo (crab-meat curry with noodles) and pak miang (scrambled kale-like leaves). Just around the corner, sister restaurant One Chun works up a similarly enticing Phuketian menu. For Phuket favourites in a stylish setting, head to Tantitium or Tu Kab Khao, both inhabiting restored Sino-Portuguese buildings.

At the gourmet end of Phuket Town's dining spectrum, Suay surprises with chef Noi Tam-masak's fantastic fusion fare - lemongrass lamb chops, braised-beef-cheek massaman curry, sweet-basil Shanghai noodles, and mango sticky rice with black-sesame ice cream.

#### Boutique sleeps

Phuket Town has excellent-value lodgings, many of which are tucked into refurbished century-old buildings oozing historical charm. Cheap sleeps abound in characterful, contemporary hostel dorms, such as at Ai Phuket Hostel. If you're on a flashpacker budget, bag one of four arty, polished-concrete rooms at boutique-chic The RomManee, which unravels behind a bright turquoise façade on Soi Romanee above DouBrew coffee shop. An exquisite upper-midrange choice is white-on-white boutique



hotel Casa Blanca Boutique Hotel, complete with private pool, Spanish-inspired flourishes and Sino-Portuguese history.

#### Market mania

Many of Phuket Town's historical shophouses house an eclectic bunch of boutiques and local artist-owned studio-galleries. Squeeze past antiquated stone Buddhas to find Thai-vintage-inspired women's couture at Ranida, or sift through rainbows of fabrics at Ban Boran Textiles. With kaleidoscopic canvases, metallic furniture and soft-booming background bass, street-art-inspired Drawing Room is easily Phuket Town's most original gallery. There's nothing like plunging into the depths of a local market to find Phuket's pulse. Phuket Town's jam-packed Weekend Market, 3km southwest of town, is reminiscent of Bangkok's legendary Chatuchak Weekend Market (but not as massive). On Sunday afternoon, an evening shopaganza unfolds at Th Thalang's Walking St (from 4pm). ([www.lonelyplanet.com](http://www.lonelyplanet.com))





# Peanut blossom cookies with a more robust peanut flavor

**P**eanut blossom cookies first gained notoriety at the 1957 Pillsbury Bake-Off. They're simply a peanut butter cookie topped with a Hershey's Kiss. We started with the original recipe and made tweaks to it with the goal of achieving a more robust peanut flavor.

Adding more peanut butter didn't do the trick. We tried swapping chunky peanut butter for the creamy, but tasters disliked the craggy texture it gave these cookies. We got the best peanut flavor when we replaced a portion of the flour with roasted peanuts, which we ground finely in the food processor so they wouldn't compromise the cookie's texture.

Most recipes recommend pressing the kisses into the cookies immediately after baking, but the warm cookies softened the kisses too much, and they took 4 hours to firm up again longer than we were willing to wait to indulge. Strangely enough, we found that placing the chocolates on the cookies during the last 2 minutes of baking helped them firm up more quickly. Why? It turns out that a little direct heat stabilizes and sets the exterior of the chocolate, and the kisses were firm enough to eat after the cookies had cooled for just 2 hours.

## PEANUT BLOSSOM COOKIES

### Ingredients

Servings: Makes 48 cookies  
Start to finish: 1 hour  
1 1/3 cups (6 2/3 ounces) all-purpose flour  
1/2 cup salted dry-roasted peanuts  
1/4 teaspoon baking powder  
1/4 teaspoon baking soda  
1/4 teaspoon salt  
8 tablespoons unsalted butter, softened  
1/3 cup packed (2 1/3 ounces) dark brown sugar  
1/3 cup (2 1/3 ounces) granulated sugar  
1/2 cup creamy peanut butter  
1 large egg, room temperature  
1 teaspoon vanilla extract  
48-50 Hershey's Kisses, unwrapped

### Preparation:

Process 2/3 cup flour and peanuts in food processor until peanuts are finely ground, about 15 seconds; transfer to bowl and whisk in baking powder, baking soda, salt, and remaining 2/3 cup flour.

Using stand mixer fitted with paddle, beat butter, brown sugar, and granulated sugar until fluffy, about 2 minutes. Add peanut butter and beat until combined. Add egg and vanilla and beat until combined. Reduce speed to low, add flour mixture in 2 additions, and mix until just combined. Cover bowl tightly with plastic wrap and refrigerate for 30 minutes.

Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 350 F. Line two baking sheets with parchment paper. Roll dough into 1-inch balls and space them 2 inches apart on prepared sheets. Bake, 1 sheet at a time, until cookies are just set and beginning to crack, 9 to 11 minutes. Working quickly, remove sheet from oven and place 1 candy in center of each cookie, pressing down firmly. Return sheet to oven and bake until cookies are light golden, about 2 minutes longer. Let cookies cool on sheet for 5 minutes, then transfer to wire rack. Let cookies cool completely before serving.

### Nutrition information per serving

94 calories; 53 calories from fat; 6 g fat (2 g saturated; 0 g trans fats); 11 mg cholesterol; 48 mg sodium; 9 g carbohydrate; 1 g fiber; 6 g sugar; 2 g protein.



**PEANUT BLOSSOM COOKIES**





CURRIED BUTTERNUT SQUASH AND APPLE SOUP

# A DUTCH OVEN MAY BE KEY TO A BETTER BUTTERNUT SQUASH SOUP

Butternut squash soup is a fall staple, but many recipes fail to live up to their potential, ending up too sweet or with too little squash flavor plus, prepping the squash can be time-consuming and unwieldy. We found the solution to these problems in our Dutch oven. We sautéed a shallot in butter with the reserved squash seeds and fibers before adding water for a flavorful, squash-enhanced liquid that we then used for steaming the squash.

The Dutch oven's ample size provided plenty of room for steaming, and we could drop the squash in unpeeled and quartered, which cut out lots of prep time. To complete our soup, we scooped out the cooked squash from its skin and then pureed it with some of the strained steaming liquid for a perfectly smooth texture.

Some heavy cream added richness, and a little brown sugar and curry powder balanced the squash's earthy flavor. A tart apple, such as a Granny Smith, adds a nice contrast to the sweet squash, but any type of apple may be used.

## CURRIED BUTTERNUT SQUASH AND APPLE SOUP

### Ingredients

Servings: 4-6

Start to finish: 1 hour, 15 minutes

6 slices hearty white sandwich bread, crusts removed, cut into 1/2 inch pieces (3 cups)  
 3 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted, plus 4 tablespoons unsalted butter  
 Salt and pepper  
 1 large shallot, chopped  
 2 1/2 pounds butternut squash, quartered and seeded, fibers and seeds reserved  
 6 cups water  
 1 large apple, peeled, cored, and quartered  
 1/2 cup heavy cream  
 2 teaspoons curry powder  
 1 teaspoon packed dark brown sugar

### Preparation

Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 350 F. Toss bread with melted butter, season with salt and pepper, and spread onto rimmed baking sheet. Bake until golden brown and crisp, 20 to 25 minutes, stirring halfway through baking. Set aside to cool. (Croutons can be stored at room temperature for up to 3 days.)

Melt 2 tablespoons butter in Dutch oven over medium heat. Add shallot and cook until softened, 2 to 3 minutes. Stir in squash seeds and fibers and cook until butter turns orange, about 4 minutes. Stir in water and 1 teaspoon salt and bring to simmer. Place squash, cut side down, and apple in steamer basket and lower basket into pot. Cover and steam until completely tender, 30 to 40 minutes. Using tongs, transfer squash to rimmed baking sheet. Let squash cool slightly, then scrape flesh from skin using soup-spoon; discard skin.

Strain cooking liquid through fine-mesh strainer into bowl. Working in batches, process squash and 3 cups strained cooking liquid in blender until smooth, 1 to 2 minutes, then return to clean pot. Stir in cream, curry powder, sugar, and remaining 2 tablespoons butter and bring to brief simmer over medium-low heat. Adjust consistency as needed with remaining strained cooking liquid. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Top individual portions with croutons before serving.

### Nutrition information per serving

556 calories; 284 calories from fat; 32 g fat (19 g saturated; 1 g trans fats); 91 mg cholesterol; mg sodium; 66 g carbohydrate; 9 g fiber; 17 g sugar; 8 g protein.



# Rethinking Chicken Florentine with clearer, brighter flavors

Chicken Florentine is a buffet-line favorite featuring chicken breast and spinach in a mild cream-and-Parmesan sauce sometimes stuffed inside, sometimes stacked on top. All of these components are good, but this dish can often be stodgy (think old-fashioned casserole) or fussy (involving dredging chicken in flour and sauteeing).

We wanted a simplified recipe for an elegant dish with clearer, brighter flavors. Braising was the perfect technique to achieve this: For flavor, we seared the chicken breasts first, cooked aromatics and added our cooking liquid (a balanced mix of water and chicken broth enriched with a modest amount of cream), and then simmered the chicken in the reducing sauce until perfectly cooked.

After we topped the tender chicken with some sauteed spinach and the cream sauce, it needed just a quick run under the broiler to become appealingly golden on top. We like tender, quick-cooking bagged baby spinach here; if using curly-leaf spinach, chop it before cooking.

## CHICKEN FLORENTINE

### Ingredients

Servings: 4-6

Start to finish: 45 minutes  
2 tablespoons vegetable oil  
12 ounces (12 cups) baby spinach  
4 (6-ounce) boneless, skinless chicken breasts, trimmed  
Salt and pepper  
1 shallot, minced  
2 garlic cloves, minced  
1 1/4 cups chicken broth  
1 1/4 cups water  
1 cup heavy cream  
6 tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese  
1 teaspoon grated lemon zest plus  
1 teaspoon juice

### Preparation

Adjust oven rack to upper-middle position and heat broiler. Heat 1 tablespoon oil in 12-inch skillet over medium-high heat until shimmering. Add spinach and cook, stirring occasionally, until wilted, 1 to 2 minutes. Transfer spinach to colander set over bowl and press with spoon to release excess liquid; discard liquid.

Pat chicken breasts dry with paper towels and season with salt and pepper. Wipe out pan with paper towels and heat remaining 1 tablespoon oil over medium-high heat until just smoking. Cook chicken on both sides until golden, about 4 minutes. Add shallot and garlic to skillet and cook until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Stir in broth, water, and cream and bring to boil.

Reduce heat to medium-low and simmer until chicken is cooked through, about 10 minutes; transfer chicken to large plate and tent with aluminum foil. Continue to simmer sauce until reduced to 1 cup, about 10 minutes. Off heat, stir in 1/4 cup Parmesan and lemon zest and juice. Cut breasts crosswise into 1/2-inch-thick slices and arrange on broiler-safe platter. Scatter spinach over chicken and pour sauce over spinach. Sprinkle with remaining 2 tablespoons Parmesan and broil until golden brown, 3 to 5 minutes. Serve.

### Nutrition information per serving

334 calories; 208 calories from fat; 23 g fat (11 g saturated; 1 g trans fats); 128 mg cholesterol; 400 mg sodium; 5 g carbohydrate; 2 g fiber; 1 g sugar; 25 g protein.



CHICKEN FLORENTINE



Comic

Word Search

The Beach

Find and circle all of the beach words that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell an additional beach word.

T R I H S T S T O W E L B E  
Y K S E S U A T S A G L E R  
A S V U R I I O D D N A A O  
S A E F N U F R B I I B C H  
W U I S S S A R D N L Y H S  
W N N M S O C R A G I E B A  
G A I S B A I R N T A L A E  
P W T F H F L O E D S L L S  
S I R E T I K G C E D O L E  
H U E W R C N A N E N V S A  
S A O R L I F E G U A R D G  
T O T E E F E R A B S N L U  
D E S W I M M I N G P A I L  
L L E H S A E S D U O L C L

- BARE FEET

BEACH BALL

BOAT

CLOUDS

DRIFTWOOD

HAT

KITE

LIFEGUARD

OCEAN

PAIL

PIER
- SAILING

SAND

SEAGULL

SEASHELL

SEASHORE

SKY

STARFISH

SUNGLASSES

SUNSCREEN

SUNSHINE
- SURFBOARD

SURFING

SWIMMING

SWIMSUIT

T SHIRT

TOWEL

VOLLEYBALL

WADING

WATER

WAVES

Yesterday's Solution

Thanksgiving (U.S.)

M A C P I L G R I M S P A R A D E  
S M A Y S W E E T P O T A T O Y N  
G N I R E H I A G S H T H G A O S  
D N P L L A B I O O F F R N I C E  
O S U C K S N S L G E A O N R L O  
O T M I E R E I V S V I U A A D T  
F U P I O L O V T Y T E N U N G A  
R F K C N A E I N I R B N E N A T  
I F I Y Y O V S D T E N K G H O O  
E I N D A A V A R R A E A Y T N P  
N N P N L O R E R A E L T P U A D  
D G I A M I S Y M W T R E F O P E  
S Y E K R U T R G B A T E R M M H  
H A R V E S T I N U V E A D E Y A S  
H S A U U S O U E H S R A N L W A  
R F A M I L Y L A I T L A D P E M

- ANNUAL

AUTUMN

CELEBRATION

CORN

CRANBERRY

FAMILY

FEAST

FESTIVAL

FOOD

FOOTBALL

FRIENDS

GATHERING
- GRAVY

HARVEST

HOLIDAY

LONG WEEKEND

MASHED POTATOES

MEAL

NOVEMBER

PARADE

PILGRIMS

PLYMOUTH

PUMPKIN PIE
- RELATIVES

REUNION

SQUASH

STUFFING

SWEET POTATO

THURSDAY

TRADITION

TRAVEL

TURKEY

WAMPANOAG

YAMS

The hidden message is: MACY'S THANKSGIVING DAY PARADE

CROSSWORD 2131



- ACROSS

1. A light touch or stroke.

4. Of or relating to or characteristic of Assam or its people or culture.

12. A white linen liturgical vestment with sleeves.

15. (Babylonian) The sky god.

16. An oral beta blocker (trade name Visken) used in treating hypertension.

17. A statement that deviates from or perverts the truth.

18. A miserly person.

20. A trivalent metallic element of the rare earth group.

22. A friendly nation.

23. A soft white precious univalent metallic element having the highest electrical and thermal conductivity of any metal.

26. Affording unobstructed entrance and exit.

27. A British imperial capacity measure (liquid or dry) equal to 1/60th fluid dram or 0.059194 cubic centimeters.

28. A framework that holds the panes of a window in the window frame.

32. Anything that serves as an enticement.

36. (law) A comprehensive term for any proceeding in a court of law whereby an individual seeks a legal remedy.

38. French postimpressionist painter who influenced modern art (especially cubism) by stressing the structural components latent in nature (1839-1906).

40. Being nine more than ninety.

41. A member of a North American Indian people living east of the Sacramento river in California.

43. German physicist and chemist who formulated the third law of thermodynamics (1864-1941).
- DOWN

2. A blue dye obtained from plants or made synthetically.

3. Perennial or biennial herb cultivated for its delicate usually blue flowers.

4. (usually followed by 'to') Naturally disposed toward.

5. The ninth month of the civil year.

6. An unforeseen obstacle.

7. A condition (mostly in boys) characterized by behavioral and learning disorders.

8. A polyvalent metallic element that resembles chromium and tungsten in its properties.

9. Resembling or characteristic of or appropriate to an elegy.

10. Danish chemist who devised the pH scale (1868-1939).

11. Angular distance above the horizon (especially of a celestial object).

12. By bad luck.

13. Being three more than fifty.

14. English monk and scholar (672-735).

19. Bleeding into the interior chamber of the eye.

21. South Asian deer with three-tined antlers.

24. The basic unit of electric current adopted under the System International d'Unites.

25. A state in New England.

29. A city in western Germany near the Dutch and Belgian borders.

30. Remove with or as if with a ladle.

31. Deduce (a principle) or construe (a meaning).

33. Reports of the work of a society or

Yesterday's Solution

A H A B C A S S I R I M A D  
D A M A R I C I N U S I D A  
A N I L A L I G N A C N E D  
D I S A R M A M P A R A N A  
S T E P H E A D C A  
A G A C N B B G A G A  
G A D A S I A N R B C A N  
H U A L P A I A G A G U L O  
A C T N I S I G N A L E R  
S H U D R A A L A D A N A  
T O M A H A W K D A I R A K  
C E A B B O D  
V I T H A R R J A C A M A R  
A R A S A S A N A H E D G E  
L I I I S A R A Z E N M E I  
I S L E K W A N Z A A A D D

Daily SuDoku

3		2				1		
				5	3		7	
6	7		9					
			2		5		8	9
	4						7	
5	1		4		7			
					3		1	8
		6		8	2			
		4				6		7

Yesterday's Solution

6	9	2	8	3	5	1	4	7
7	8	5	1	4	2	3	6	9
3	4	1	9	6	7	2	5	8
2	1	8	7	9	6	4	3	5
5	3	9	2	1	4	8	7	6
4	6	7	5	8	3	9	2	1
1	7	4	3	5	9	6	8	2
8	5	3	6	2	1	7	9	4
9	2	6	4	7	8	5	1	3



TV Listings

Friday, February 8, 2019



01:55 Real Steel  
04:15 Taj Mahal  
06:00 The Osiris Child  
07:40 Shut In  
09:20 Real Steel  
11:35 Patriots Day  
13:50 Now You See Me 2  
16:10 Timeline  
18:10 Security  
19:45 The Fate Of The Furious  
22:05 Patient Zero  
23:35 Sniper: Ultimate Kill



00:50 Killer Whales  
01:45 North Woods Law  
02:40 Alaska Monsters  
03:35 Great White Serial Killer  
04:25 Killer Whales  
05:15 North Woods Law  
06:02 Wildest Islands  
06:49 Pit Bulls & Parolees  
07:36 Meet The Sloths  
08:00 Meet The Sloths  
08:25 Wildest Europe  
09:15 Wildest Europe  
10:10 Wildest Europe  
11:05 Wildest Europe  
12:00 Wildest Europe  
12:55 Wildest Indochina  
13:50 Great White Serial Killer  
14:45 Dr. Jeff: Rocky Mountain Vet  
15:40 Scaled  
16:35 Alaska Monsters  
17:30 The Animals' Guide To Survival  
18:25 Animal Cops Phoenix  
19:20 Great White Shark: Uncaged  
20:15 The Vet Life  
21:10 Amanda To The Rescue  
22:05 Wildest Islands  
23:00 Alaska Monsters  
23:55 Pit Bulls & Parolees



00:30 South Park  
00:55 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah  
01:25 This Is Not Happening  
01:50 John Oliver's New York Stand Up Show  
02:35 South Park  
03:00 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah  
03:30 South Park (Digital)  
03:55 South Park (Digital)  
04:20 Lip Sync Battle  
04:45 Lip Sync Battle  
05:10 Catch A Contractor  
06:00 I Used To Be Fat  
06:50 Dallas Cowboys Cheerleaders: Making The Team  
07:40 Sweat Inc.  
08:30 Lip Sync Battle  
08:55 Lip Sync Battle  
09:20 I Used To Be Fat  
10:10 Disaster Date  
12:15 Workaholics  
14:20 Friends  
16:48 Impractical Jokers  
17:12 Impractical Jokers  
17:36 Impractical Jokers  
18:00 Comedy Central Presents  
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18:25 Comedy Central Presents  
Comedy 3alwagef  
18:50 Takeshis Castle Thailand  
19:15 Takeshis Castle Thailand  
19:40 Dallas Cowboys Cheerleaders: Making The Team  
20:35 Barely Famous  
21:00 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah  
21:30 Tracy Morgan: Bona Fide  
22:25 Comedy Central Stand Up Presents  
22:50 Tosh.0  
23:15 Tosh.0  
23:40 Norm Macdonald: Me Doing Stand-Up



00:25 Our Girl  
01:20 Holby City  
02:15 Hold The Sunset  
02:45 Bancroft  
03:35 Doctors  
04:05 Doctors  
04:35 Doctors  
05:05 Death In Paradise  
06:00 Doctors  
06:30 EastEnders  
07:00 Doctor Who: Twice Upon A Time  
08:00 Doctor Who  
09:10 Death In Paradise  
10:05 Father Brown  
10:55 Hold The Sunset  
11:25 Doctors  
11:55 Doctors  
12:25 EastEnders  
13:00 Holby City  
13:55 Casualty  
14:45 Hold The Sunset  
15:15 Father Brown  
16:00 Doctors  
16:30 Doctors  
17:00 Doctors  
17:30 Doctors  
18:00 Doctors  
18:30 Agatha Raisin  
19:20 Agatha Raisin  
20:10 Our Girl  
21:05 Line Of Duty  
21:50 Press  
22:55 Father Brown  
23:40 Doctors



00:30 Xploration Outer Space  
00:55 Xploration Outer Space  
01:20 Pick A Puppy  
01:45 Pick A Puppy  
02:10 Adventure 8: Zoo Games  
02:35 Adventure 8: Zoo Games  
03:00 World's Toughest Expeditions With James Cracknell  
03:50 How It's Made  
04:15 How It's Made  
04:40 Weather Gone Viral  
05:30 Xploration Outer Space  
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06:20 Kids Do The Craziest Things  
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07:00 Mysteries At The Museum  
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02:55 Homicide: Hours To Kill  
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04:45 Evil Up Close  
05:30 I Killed My BFF  
06:15 Cold Case Files



00:50 Scene Of The Crime With Tony Harris  
01:45 Kiss Of Death  
02:40 Primal Instinct  
03:35 Bride Killa  
04:30 Reasonable Doubt  
05:25 Murder Calls  
06:20 Betrayed  
07:10 I Almost Got Away With It  
08:00 I Was Murdered  
08:25 Southern Fried Homicide  
09:15 Blood Relatives  
10:10 Murder Calls  
11:05 Betrayed  
12:00 Diabolical: Deadly Love  
12:55 Southern Fried Homicide  
13:50 I Almost Got Away With It  
14:45 Murder Calls  
15:40 Betrayed  
16:35 Reasonable Doubt  
17:30 Southern Fried Homicide  
18:25 Blood Relatives  
19:20 I Almost Got Away With It  
20:15 Murder Calls  
21:10 Betrayed  
22:05 Swamp Murders  
23:00 Sugar Town  
23:55 Sugar Town



00:10 Sabrina: Secrets Of A Teenage Witch  
00:35 Binny And The Ghost  
01:00 Alex & Co.  
01:25 Alex & Co.  
01:45 Disney Mickey Mouse  
01:50 Evermoor Chronicles  
02:15 Sabrina: Secrets Of A Teenage Witch  
02:40 Sabrina: Secrets Of A Teenage Witch  
03:05 Binny And The Ghost  
03:30 Binny And The Ghost  
03:55 Hank Zipzer  
04:15 Disney Mickey Mouse  
04:20 Hank Zipzer  
04:45 Alex & Co.  
05:10 Alex & Co.  
05:35 Sabrina: Secrets Of A Teenage Witch  
06:00 Sabrina: Secrets Of A Teenage Witch  
06:25 Binny And The Ghost  
06:45 Disney Mickey Mouse  
06:50 Rolling With The Ronks  
07:00 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir  
07:25 Raven's Home  
07:50 Tsum Tsum Shorts  
07:55 Penny On M.A.R.S  
08:20 Shake It Up  
08:45 K.C. Undercover  
09:10 Bizaardvark  
09:35 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir  
10:00 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir  
10:25 Tangled: The Series  
10:50 Tangled: The Series  
11:15 Bizaardvark  
11:40 Bizaardvark  
12:05 Liv And Maddie



00:00 PJ Masks  
00:30 The Lion Guard  
01:00 Sofia The First  
01:25 Minnie's Bow-Toons  
01:30 Henry Hugglemonster  
02:00 PJ Masks  
02:25 PJ Masks  
02:50 The Hive  
03:00 Zou  
03:15 Zou  
03:30 Henry Hugglemonster  
03:55 Henry Hugglemonster  
04:20 The Hive  
04:30 The Hive  
04:40 Zou  
05:25 The Hive  
05:35 The Hive  
05:45 Henry Hugglemonster  
06:00 Henry Hugglemonster  
06:30 Minnie's Bow-Toons  
06:35 The Hive  
06:45 PJ Masks  
07:55 Minnie's Bow-Toons  
08:00 Disney Muppet Babies  
08:20 Paprika  
08:30 Paprika  
08:40 PJ Masks  
09:00 Mickey And The Roadster Racers  
09:15 Puppy Dog Pals  
09:30 Vampirina  
09:45 Fancy Nancy  
10:00 Sofia The First  
10:30 Elena Of Avalor  
11:00 Mission Force One  
11:15 Mission Force One  
11:30 PJ Masks  
11:45 PJ Masks  
12:00 Disney Muppet Babies  
12:15 Disney Muppet Babies  
12:30 Mickey And The Roadster Racers  
13:00 Mickey And The Roadster Racers  
13:30 PJ Masks: Vehicle Special  
14:30 PJ Masks  
15:00 PJ Masks  
15:30 Mission Force One  
15:45 Mission Force One  
16:00 Mickey And The Roadster Racers  
16:30 Mickey And The Roadster Racers  
17:00 Disney Muppet Babies  
17:15 Disney Muppet Babies  
17:30 Elena Of Avalor  
18:00 Puppy Dog Pals  
18:25 Playtime With Puppy Dog Palsshorts  
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12:30 Liv And Maddie  
12:55 K.C. Undercover  
13:20 K.C. Undercover  
13:45 Bunk'd  
14:10 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir  
14:35 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir  
15:00 Hotel Transylvania: The Series  
15:15 Shake It Up  
15:40 K.C. Undercover  
16:05 Disney Mickey Mouse  
16:10 A.N.T. Farm  
16:35 Penny On M.A.R.S  
17:00 That's So Raven  
17:25 That's So Raven  
17:50 Raven's Home  
18:15 Stuck In The Middle  
18:40 Bizaardvark  
19:05 K.C. Undercover  
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19:55 Descendants Wicked World  
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06:45 Bear Grylls: Born Survivor  
07:35 Deadliest Catch  
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00:15 Bear Grylls: Born Survivor  
01:05 Impossible Engineering  
01:50 Mythbusters Jr.  
02:35 What On Earth?  
03:20 Fast N' Loud  
04:05 Fast N' Loud  
04:50 How Do They Do It?  
05:15 How Do They Do It?  
05:35 Container Wars  
06:00 Storage Hunters UK  
06:20 Container Wars  
06:45 Bear Grylls: Born Survivor  
07:35 Deadliest Catch  
08:20 Gold Rush  
09:10 Alaska: The Last Frontier  
09:55 Alaskan Bush People  
10:45 How Do They Do It?  
11:10 How Do They Do It?  
11:30 Fast N' Loud  
12:20 Fast N' Loud  
13:05 Storage Hunters UK  
13:30 Container Wars  
13:55 Alaskan Bush People  
14:40 Alaska: The Last Frontier  
15:30 Master Of Arms  
16:15 Wheeler Dealers  
17:05 Alaska: The Last Frontier  
17:50 Gold Rush  
18:40 How Do They Do It?  
19:05 How Do They Do It?  
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## Stars

**Aries (March 21-April 19)**

When did you lose that famous can-do attitude of yours?! Today you need to try to get it back—so ask friends for encouragement. They will love to let you rely on them right now, especially after all you've done for them. Think positively because, dear beautiful soul, you can! Your abilities have never lessened, but it looks as though your self-confidence has. The good news is, you can get it back today.

**Taurus (April 20-May 20)**

One person's garbage is another person's treasure—it all depends on your point of view. So when you have an intellectual or business discussion today, try to see things from another perspective. You are confident enough in your point of view to entertain the idea that you could be missing out on something. And opening yourself up to a new way of thinking is a healthy, mature thing to do. Plus, it will make you feel a whole lot better about yourself.

**Gemini (May 21-June 20)**

In any type of decision-making process today—from picking a place to eat to choosing which bill to pay first, you need to get a consensus! Letting everyone involved have a real voice will set a much more positive tone for your relationships, and it will also help uncover new ideas and plans of action that you haven't thought of before. There's no question that a group effort is the best effort right now, no matter how big or how small that group may be.

**Cancer (June 21-July 22)**

Pay special attention to the boundary between your home life and your professional life. It's solid, and you need to make sure it stays that way today. It's more important than ever to keep any problems that you're having at work as far removed from your personal life as possible. There's also a risk that a deepening relationship with a colleague could have undue influence over a personal decision. Beware—this could be a problem.

**Leo (July 23-August 22)**

Even though your self-respect is growing right now, it might be growing at a slower pace than you would like. But there is something to be said for gaining confidence at a slower pace—you're more conscious of the important small steps you're making. A major transition that you're looking forward to may not be as satisfying as you expect, so there is no need to reach too high too quickly. Take comfort in the fact that you are definitely going in the right direction!

**Virgo (August 23-September 22)**

You have always known that hard work pays off, and even if you don't see much evidence of that today, it still holds true. Someone will get a lot of undeserved positive attention today, while you are not getting the acclaim you deserve. Instead of taking it personally, rise above the competitiveness you feel. People who have not worked for their rewards will get their just desserts. Criticizing them or pointing out their laziness will only make you look small-minded.

**Libra (September 23-October 22)**

Watch out when it comes to your coffee intake right now, because you already have as much energy as you need! Adding fuel to your fire might end up adding stress to your day, so just kick back and let the day unfold in front of you. It will offer a few amusing mysteries to solve, and a few small adventures, too. You will have a lot of fun finding out what lies around every corner, and your energy will be a welcomed addition to any social gathering.

**Scorpio (October 23-November 21)**

Your ability to keep a level head in a sea of chaos is one of your most valuable traits, and it is one that will come in very handy today in a situation that very few people will understand how to handle. Your shrewdness has a way of cutting through the melodrama and getting to the truth of any matter. So when tempers start to flare or people start to get frustrated today, you can get everyone back on the same page if you just remind them of the goal.

**Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)**

Is your desire to save money keeping you from having a fulfilling social life? Money is meant to be spent as well as saved, so shake loose some of your spare change and treat yourself to a small splurge today. You can be wise about how you use your money without cutting yourself off from every single spending situation. Being too focused on money is not a good thing. As in all things, your financial life must be balanced.

**Capricorn (December 22-January 19)**

A lovely, quiet morning could evolve into a very active afternoon—and a very hectic evening. Your chances of a good night's sleep are slim. You probably already know who will be responsible for the increased drama, and you won't mind the inconvenience at all. This person is making some waves and causing some major changes in your life—but luckily, these changes will be very positive for you and your people! So how do you want to celebrate?

**Aquarius (January 20- February 18)**

The voices that whisper softly in your ear—not the ones that yell loudly—are the voices that you'll hear most clearly today. Avoid people who are brash and hostile, because what they have to say is definitely not worth hearing. Instead, pay attention to the quieter, subtler stuff that's going on. You'll be able to notice many new ideas, and you might even find a new way to connect with an old friend. Today is all about nuance and subtext.

**Pisces (February 19-March 20)**

In a group situation today, all your people may be present, but it will still feel as though something important is missing. It's in your best interest to figure out what the missing element or resource is before letting things move forward. While everyone may be physically there, they might not all be mentally there. So check in with each and every person to make sure they are all in tune with what is going on. Otherwise, precious time could be wasted.

## Country Codes


Afghanistan	0093	Jordan	00962
Albania	00355	Kazakhstan	007
Algeria	00213	Kenya	00254
Andorra	00376	Kiribati	00686
Angola	00244	Kuwait	00965
Anguilla	001264	Kyrgyzstan	00996
Antigua	001268	Laos	00856
Argentina	0054	Latvia	00371
Armenia	00374	Lebanon	00961
Australia	0061	Liberia	00231
Austria	0043	Libya	00218
Bahamas	001242	Lithuania	00370
Bahrain	00973	Luxembourg	00352
Bangladesh	00880	Macau	00853
Barbados	001246	Macedonia	00389
Belarus	00375	Madagascar	00261
Belgium	0032	Majorca	0034
Belize	00501	Malawi	00265
Benin	00229	Malaysia	0060
Bermuda	001441	Maldives	00960
Bhutan	00975	Mali	00223
Bolivia	00591	Malta	00356
Bosnia	00387	Marshall Islands	00692
Botswana	00267	Martinique	00596
Brazil	0055	Mauritania	00222
Brunei	00673	Mauritius	00230
Bulgaria	00359	Mayotte	00269
Burkina	00226	Mexico	0052
Burundi	00257	Micronesia	00691
Cambodia	00855	Moldova	00373
Cameroon	00237	Monaco	00377
Canada	001	Mongolia	00976
Cape Verde	00238	Montserrat	001664
Cayman Islands	001345	Morocco	00212
Central African Republic	00236	Mozambique	00258
Chad	00235	Myanmar (Burma)	0095
Chile	0056	Namibia	00264
China	0086	Nepal	00977
Colombia	0057	Netherlands (Holland)	0031
Comoros	00269	Netherlands Antilles	00599
Congo	00242	New Caledonia	00687
Cook Islands	00682	New Zealand	0064
Costa Rica	00506	Nicaragua	00505
Croatia	00385	Niger	00227
Cuba	0053	Nigeria	00234
Cyprus	00357	Niue	00683
Cyprus (Northern)	0090392	Norfolk Island	00672
Czech Republic	00420	Northern Ireland (UK)	0044
Denmark	0045	North Korea	00850
Diego Garcia	00246	Norway	0047
Djibouti	00253	Oman	00968
Dominica	001767	Pakistan	0092
Dominican Republic	001809	Palau	00680
Ecuador	00593	Panama	00507
Egypt	0020	Papua New Guinea	00675
El Salvador	00503	Paraguay	00595
England (UK)	0044	Peru	0051
Equatorial Guinea	00240	Philippines	0063
Eritrea	00291	Poland	0048
Estonia	00372	Portugal	00351
Ethiopia	00251	Puerto Rico	001787
Falkland Islands	00500	Qatar	00974
Faroe Islands	00298	Romania	0040
Fiji	00679	Russian Federation	007
Finland	00358	Rwanda	00250
France	0033	Saint Helena	00290
French Guiana	00594	Saint Kitts	001869
French Polynesia	00689	Saint Lucia	001758
Gabon	00241	Saint Pierre	00508
Gambia	00220	Saint Vincent	001784
Georgia	00995	Samoa US	00684
Germany	0049	Samoa West	00685
Ghana	00233	San Marino	00378
Gibraltar	00350	Sao Tome	00239
Greece	0030	Saudi Arabia	00966
Greenland	00299	Scotland (UK)	0044
Grenada	001473	Senegal	00221
Guadeloupe	00590	Seychelles	00284
Guam	001671	Sierra Leone	00232
Guatemala	00502	Singapore	0065
Guinea	00224	Slovakia	00421
Guyana	00592	Slovenia	00386
Haiti	00509	Solomon Islands	00677
Holland (Netherlands)	0031	Somalia	00252
Honduras	00504	South Africa	0027
Hong Kong	00852	South Korea	0082
Hungary	0036	Spain	0034
Ibiza (Spain)	0034	Sri Lanka	0094
Iceland	00354	Sudan	00249
India	0091	Suriname	00597
Indian Ocean	00873	Swaziland	00268
Indonesia	0062	Sweden	0046
Iran	0098	Switzerland	0041
Iraq	00964	Syria	00963
Ireland	00353	Taiwan	00886
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Japan	0081	Tonga	00676



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**DR. MOHAMMAD AL HAJRY**  
Canadian Board of Otolaryngology  
Head & Neck Surgery and Facial Plastics.  
Fellow of Royal College of Surgeons-Canada  
A rare Subspecialty in Microscopic Ear Surgery, Cochlear implant & Ear diseases



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- ◆ Minimally invasive Microscopic & Endoscopic Ear surgery
- ◆ Diagnosis & treatment of Otolaryngology and Audiology (Hearing loss, Tinnitus & balance disorders)
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- ◆ Diagnosis & Treatment of voice and swallowing disorders.
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Consultant Cosmetic Dermatologist & Hair Transplant, NY



**ACADEMIC CERTIFICATES:**


- ◆ Dermatology board certified.
- ◆ Fellowship training program in cosmetic dermatology and hair transplant, New York, USA.
- ◆ Member of American cosmetic dermatology society.
- ◆ Referee reviewer of International Journal of Dermatology.

**SPECIALIZED IN:**

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- ◆ Laser Treatments.
- ◆ Hair Transplant & Restoration.
- ◆ Body & Face Contouring.
- ◆ Injectable Fillers & Botox.


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Email: dr.fahad@beautybeyond.com.kw  
www.beautybeyond.com.kw



مستشفى السلام الدولي  
Al-Salam International Hospital

**DR KHALED ALMERRI**  
Consultant Interventional Cardiology  
Department: Heart & Vascular Center



**Specialized in:**

- 1-Diagnostic and therapeutic cardiac catheterization (Angiography and Angioplasty). Aortic valve implantation.
- 2- Diagnosis and treatment of coronary artery diseases
- 3- Diagnosis and treatment of heart failure, cardiomyopathies and valvular diseases.
- 4-Diagnosis and treatment of high blood pressure and high cholesterol.
- 5- Diagnosis and treatment of syncope, palpitations and cardiac arrhythmias.
- 6-Non-invasive diagnostic procedures echocardiography, exercise stress test, and 24 hour blood pressure and Holter monitoring

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**Know your Doctor**  
Otorhinolaryngology (E.N.T)  
**Dr Hamoud Abdullah Alarouj**  
ENT Specialist



- ◆ Laryngology Fellowship - Canada
- ◆ Fellow of the European Board Otolaryngology - Head & Neck Surgery
- ◆ Member of the American Academy of Otolaryngology Head & Neck Surgery
- ◆ Member of the British Laryngological Association
- ◆ Member of the Canadian Society of Otolaryngology Head & Neck Surgery
- ◆ Member of the European Laryngological Society

**Specialized in:**

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- ◆ Single Port Surgery
- ◆ Treatment of Colo-Rectal Diseases, Including Colorectal Cancer
- ◆ Surgical Treatment of Inflammatory Bowel Abscess
- ◆ Treatment of Perianal Fistula & Complex Perianal Fistula (complications)
- ◆ YAAFT Procedure (Treatment of Fistula through Fistuloscope)
- ◆ Treatment of Intractable Bowel Symptoms
- ◆ Colonoscopy & Gastrosocopy
- ◆ Stomach Balloon Insertion & removal
- ◆ Bariatric Surgery - Lap Sleeve Gastrectomy
- ◆ Gallstones & Abdominal Hernias Surgery

◆ Colonic Hydrotherapy & Fecal Incontinence Treatment

◆ Laparoscopic mini bypass

◆ Transanal minimally Invasive surgery

**Academic Certificates, Trainings & Fellowships:**

- ◆ American Board of General Surgery
- ◆ Fellow of American College of Surgery
- ◆ Canadian Board of General Surgery
- ◆ Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians & Surgeons of Canada
- ◆ American Board of Colo - Rectal Surgery
- ◆ American Board of Surgical Critical Care




**Dr. Abdullah Al Haddad**  
Surgery Department  
Consultant General Surgery, Laparoscopic & Colo - Rectal Surgeon

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Telephone: 1802 555

Email: aalhaddad@daralshifa.com



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Dar Al Shifa Hospital


**Dr. Ahmad Alaeddine**  
Head of Cardiology departmenta  
at Dar Al Shifa hospital



- Consultant Interventional and conventional cardiologist.
- Specialised in the Diagnosis and treatment of all adult cardiac diseases, including those cases that need urgent intervention in Cath lab (primary angioplasty).


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Laparoscopic and Bariatric Surgery



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- ◆ (IFSO) member .
- ◆ Faculty member of (BEST).
- ◆ Member of Kuwait Surgical Association.

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- ◆ Abdominal wall and hernia surgeries.
- ◆ G.I. surgeries.
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- 4- Tumors And Malignancies Of The Urinary Tract (Kidney, Adrenals, Ureter, Bladder And Testes)
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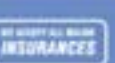


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Friday, February 8, 2019

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Jazeera Airways	177	Qatar Airways	22423888
Wataniya Airways	22 066 536	KLM	22425747
American Airlines	22087425	Royal Jordanian	22418064/5/6
	22087426	British Airways	22425635
Jet Airways	22924455	Air France	22430224

**STATE OF KUWAIT**  
DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION  
METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT



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



### Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

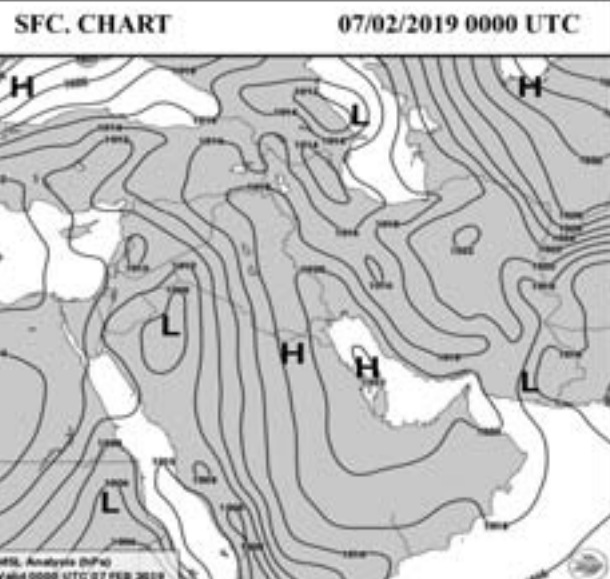
**BY DAY:** Fair and with light variable wind, with speed of 06 - 20 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear.

**BY NIGHT:** Cold and Partly cloudy with light to moderate variable wind to south easterly wind, with speed of 06 - 26 km/h.

#### WEATHER WARNING

No Current Warnings

STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.
KUWAIT CITY	22 °C	11 °C
KUWAIT AIRPORT	21 °C	06 °C
ABDALY	22 °C	06 °C
BUBYAN	0- °C	0- °C
JAHERA	21 °C	08 °C
FAILAKA ISLAND	20 °C	08 °C
SALMIYAH	20 °C	14 °C
AHMADI	18 °C	13 °C
NUWAISIB	20 °C	08 °C
WAFRA	22 °C	04 °C
SALMY	19 °C	05 °C



#### 4 DAYS FORECAST

DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Friday	02/08	Warm with a chance for scattered rain later on	24 °C	14 °C	SE-S	12 - 40 km/h
Saturday	02/09	Warm and Cloudy to partly cloudy with a chance for rain that might be thundery at times with a	24 °C	12 °C	SE	20 - 50 km/h
Sunday	02/10	Fair with a chance for rising dust	21 °C	11 °C	SE-NW	20 - 45 km/h
Monday	02/11	Fair and some high clouds will appear later on	20 °C	08 °C	NW-VRB	10 - 32 km/h

#### PRAYER TIMES

Fajr	05:13
Sunrise	06:34
Zuhr	12:02
Asr	15:09
Sunset	17:31
Isha	18:49

#### RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT

MAX. Temp.	00 °C
MIN. Temp.	00 °C
MAX. RH	00 %
MIN. RH	00 %
MAX. Wind	N 00 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

#### LOST

Original document policy No. 633003889 Saghir Ahmed DV the State Life Insurance Corporation of Pakistan, Gulf Zone is reported to have been lost. Anyone finding the same or claiming

any interest in it should communicate with the Manager Kuwait State Life Office - Ph: 22452208. (C5443)

#### EMERGENCY

112

## Hospitals

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

## Clinics

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



## Business

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 2019

**38** Ghosn under scrutiny over 50,000-euro wedding bill**39** Ooredoo reports revenue of KD 665 million for FY 2018**41** BoE sees weakest outlook for UK since 2009 on Brexit crisis

**BONN:** Andreas Mundt, President of the Federal Cartel Office speaks during a press conference on the investigation by the German competition authorities for abuse of a dominant position by Facebook in Bonn, yesterday. —AFP

# Germany seeks more control for FB users

## Twitter profit soars as user base shrinks

**BONN:** Facebook users should be asked for consent before data collected by the group's subsidiaries WhatsApp and Instagram and on third-party websites is combined with their social network account, Germany's competition authority said yesterday.

Neither should users who refuse permission for their data to be merged be shut out of Facebook services as a result, the Federal Competition Office (FCO) ruled. "In future, Facebook will no longer be allowed to force its users to agree to the practically unrestricted collection and assigning of non-Facebook data to their Facebook user accounts," FCO chief Andreas Mundt said in a statement.

"If users do not consent, Facebook may not exclude them from its services and must refrain from collecting and merging data from different sources." Officials have been looking into Facebook since mid-2016, charging that the Silicon Valley giant uses other networks-like subsidiaries Instagram and Whatsapp, as well as Twitter and other websites-to collect masses of information about users without their knowledge.

That data then provides the foundation for Facebook's advertising profits. The FCO's requirement for specific consent to merge data with Facebook accounts stopped short of media rumors the authority could ban some of its products, such as the "Like" or "Share" buttons strewn around many third-party websites which aid data collection. Nor has the Californian giant been ordered to pay a swingeing fine like those imposed by Brussels on rival Google over competition misdeeds.

### 'Exploitative abuse'

However, the FCO found that Facebook has a "dominant" position in social networking in Germany, with its 23 million daily active users representing 95 percent of the market-meaning there is no viable alternative service for most people. Rival services like Snapchat, YouTube or Twitter "only offer parts of the services of a social network" and are not directly comparable, the authority said.

That meant that a one-off choice between accepting all kinds of data collection and not using

Facebook at all "represents above all a so-called exploitative abuse", the FCO argued.

"The only choice the user has is either to accept the comprehensive combination of data or to refrain from using the social network," competition chief Mundt said. "We are in the process of introducing competition law safety barriers to the internet," he added, giving Facebook four months to present a "concept" for compliance and a year to implement it.

If not, the FCO can levy fines of up to 10 million euros (\$11.3 million) per month. In its own statement, Facebook said it would appeal the FCO's decision. "The Bundeskartellamt's decision misapplies German competition law to set different rules that apply to only one company," the California firm said, adding that "we face fierce competition in Germany" from other networks.

### Long year

Rather than the FCO, the Irish Data Protection Commission should be overseeing Facebook's use of data as the company's European HQ is based in

Dublin, the social network said.

Yesterday's German decision looks like a prolongation of Facebook's nightmarish 2018 into the new year. In the past 12 months the firm was battered by a torrent of outcries and scandals. It was accused of offering a platform for manipulating voters and failing to protect user data. As it celebrated its 15th birthday, the social network had to contend with the global Cambridge Analytica scandal of March 2018.

In that case, data belonging to tens of millions of Facebook users was harvested by the British company through an online personality quiz. The same consultancy worked on both the Leave campaign in the UK's Brexit referendum of 2016 and on Donald Trump's election campaign in the same year.

The EU introduced its General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in May last year, intensifying regulators' focus on Facebook. In January, Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg defended his company in the international media, saying its advertising-based business model required collecting personal data. —Agencies



## Business

# Ghosn under scrutiny over 50,000-euro wedding bill

## Is it a trap? Is it a plot? It's obvious: it's a story of betrayal: Ghosn

**PARIS:** French carmaker Renault said yesterday that it would inform investigators about a transaction it uncovered involving its former boss Carlos Ghosn and the Palace of Versailles, where the auto executive held an extravagant wedding in 2016. Ghosn's tenure as CEO has come under the microscope since his arrest last November in Japan on charges he under-reported millions of dollars in pay as head of Nissan, Renault's alliance partner.

His subsequent indictment on three charges of financial misconduct has led to renewed scrutiny of his management and lifestyle at both companies while he sits in a Tokyo jail awaiting trial.

The latest charges involve Ghosn's lavish second marriage at the Chateau de Versailles outside Paris in October 2016. Ghosn and his new wife Carole threw a Marie Antoinette-themed dinner and party at the former royal residence complete with entertainers in period costumes.

"We wanted it to feel as if we were inviting guests into our home—nothing too studied," Carole Ghosn told *Town & Country* magazine a few months later when it published photos of the wedding.

According to a report in the *Figaro* newspaper, the operators of the palace waived the usual fee of 50,000 euros (\$57,000) fee for the reception at the 17th-century Grand Trianon complex. It said the arrangement was made as part of a sponsorship deal between

Versailles and Renault. The company confirmed yesterday that internal audits "identified that a contribution of 50,000 euros, under a sponsorship agreement signed with the Chateau de Versailles, was allocated to Mr Ghosn's personal benefit." "Renault has decided to bring these facts to the attention of the judicial authorities," it added.

### Betrayal?

Ghosn's arrest and continued detention marks a stunning fall from grace for an executive widely credited with forging the Renault and Nissan alliance into the world's top-selling automotive group. The 64-year-old Franco-Brazilian-Lebanese executive has angrily denied the misconduct charges against him, which saw Nissan and the group's other alliance partner Mitsubishi jettison him as chairman shortly after his arrest.

"I am accused of under-reporting income I never received! There is not one yen that I have received that was not reported," Ghosn told AFP in an interview at the Tokyo detention center where he is being held last week. "Is it a trap? Is it a plot? It's obvious: it's a story of betrayal. There is no question about this," he said.

So far Renault has said its internal investigations have found that his pay was in compliance with French law. But facing the prospect of several more months behind bars before his trial opens, Ghosn last month relinquished his



**PARIS:** In this file photo, then Renault-Nissan chairman and CEO Carlos Ghosn gestures during a press conference in Paris. French carmaker Renault said yesterday that it would inform investigators about a transaction it uncovered involving its former boss Carlos Ghosn and the Palace of Versailles, where the auto executive held an extravagant wedding in 2016. —AFP

grip as CEO of Renault.

The affair has also exposed rifts between Renault and Nissan, which some analysts say was bristling at Ghosn's efforts to bring the two automakers' operations even closer together.

Ghosn was the linchpin of the three-way alliance, earning industry plaudits for driving together a sometimes fractious threesome with headquarters 10,000 kilometers apart. Much of the tension between the partners stems

from a complex ownership structure that gives Renault 43 percent of Nissan, whereas Nissan owns just 15 percent stake in the French company—and no voting rights.

Adding to the complexity, the French state owns just over 15 percent of Renault, and government officials have said they are keeping a close eye on the alliance's future. "We are being vigilant to ensure the balances of the alliance are preserved," French President Emmanuel Macron said last month. —AFP

## US Treasury's Malpass aims to reform the World Bank

**WASHINGTON:** In his two years serving in the US Treasury, David Malpass has repeatedly lambasted the big development lenders as wasteful and ineffective, and called for reforms. Now he is poised to take over the helm of the World Bank, where he can put his own stamp on its policies—something that many experts say undermines the institution. President Donald Trump on Wednesday tapped Malpass to lead the World Bank, replacing Jim Kim who left February 1. According to an unwritten rule, as the single largest shareholder, Washington gets to choose the leader, with the support of European nations. Malpass, a 62-year-old US Treasury official in charge of international affairs, does not mince words.

Institutions such as the World Bank, he said in congressional testimony in 2017, "spend a lot of money" but are "not very efficient."

"They are often corrupt in their lending prac-

tices and they don't get the benefit to the actual people in the countries," he said. Malpass is tall and approachable but also viewed as brittle, with a direct manner bordering on abrasive.

By the middle of last year, about 20 career staff at Malpass' office had quit, some of them chafing at his management style, according to media reports.

The Michigan native with a degree in physics completed studies in economics at George Washington University in the US capital. He then held several Treasury Department positions under former Republican presidents Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush. He then began a lengthy stint at Bear Stearns—an investment bank that collapsed at the start of the 2008 financial crisis—including six years as its chief economist. After the bank failed in 2008, he founded his own economics firm, Encima Global. His policy positions and economic forecasts have had decidedly mixed results. In 2007, the eve of the financial crisis, Malpass penned a *Wall Street Journal* op-ed telling readers not to "panic" because "housing and debt markets are not that big a part of the US economy."

In 2010, as the Federal Reserve was pumping cash into markets, he signed onto a letter to Fed Chairman Ben Bernanke, calling for an end to the stimulus program, which he said would drive up inflation. It did not. —AFP

## Total makes 'significant' offshore gas find in S Africa

**CAPE TOWN:** French energy giant Total announced yesterday it had found "significant" gas off the southern coast of South Africa, a discovery expected to boost the nation's struggling economy.

"Total has made a significant gas condensate discovery on the Brulpadda prospects... in the Outeniqua Basin, 175 kilometers off the southern coast of South Africa," it said in a statement.

Total's CEO Patrick Pouyanne said the potential quantities "could be around one billion barrels of global resources, gas and condensate light oil". "So it could be quite big, it's probably quite big," he told journalists in Paris. "Having said that this region is quite difficult to operate, with huge waves, so the weather is not very easy," he said of the block with water depths ranging from 200 to 1,800 meters (650 to 5,900 feet).

South Africa's Mineral Resources Minister Gwede Mantashe welcomed the news of the discovery as "potentially a major boost" for the economy which grew less than one percent last year "It is exciting for our country. We welcome it as we continue to seek investment to grow our economy," the minister said.

The news came just hours before President Ramaphosa delivers a state-of-the-nation address, his final one before crucial elections due in May this year. Mining analyst Makwe Masilela said the discovery was "positive" for South Africa, which is desperately seeking foreign direct investment and to cut down on gas imports from neighboring Mozambique. "Foreign direct investment is something we are seriously looking for as a country," he told AFP on the sidelines of a mining investment conference.

"With this discovery, Total has opened a new world-class gas and oil play and is well positioned to test several follow-on prospects on the same block," said Kevin McLachlan, Senior Vice President Exploration at Total. Total holds a 45 percent stake in the block, alongside Qatari, Canadian and South African firms. —AFP



# Ooredoo reports revenue of KD 665 million for FY 2018

## Customer base up by 3% to reach almost 27 million

**KUWAIT:** National Mobile Telecommunications Company K.S.C.P “Ooredoo” (Ticker: OOREDOO) announced yesterday its financial results for year 2018:

### Financial highlights:

- Consolidated customer base increased by 3 percent to 27.0 million in 2018, compared to 26.3 million in 2017.

- In local currency terms Kuwait, Tunisia, Maldives and Palestine recorded good growth in revenue. However, revenues in KWD were impacted due to 9.8 percent depreciation of the Tunisian Dinar and 5.5 percent depreciation in the Algerian Dinar. Consequently, consolidated revenue decreased by 5 percent to KD 665.0 million for 2018, compared to KD 697.6 million for the same period in 2017.

- EBITDA was KD 217.1 million for 2018, compared to KD 255.6 million for the same period in 2017.

- Net profit attributable to NMTC was KD 29.7 million for 2018, compared to KD 39.5 million for the same period in 2017. The decrease was mainly caused by a lower Algerian contribution due to a weak economic environment, currency devaluation and price competition.

- The consolidated earnings per share was 59 fils for 2018, compared to 79 fils per share earned for the same period last year. The Board of Directors recommends a dividend payment of 50 fils per share, subject to shareholder approval at the General Assembly scheduled for 14 March 2019.

Sheikh Saud Bin Nasser Al-Thani, Chairman of the Board of Directors commented: “Despite a challenging environment, Ooredoo Kuwait (NMTC) had a good year in 2018, with revenues at KD 665 million and net profit at KD 29.7 million. Earnings per share were 59 fils for 2018 and we are pleased to announce that our Board of directors proposed a dividend payment of Fils 50 per share, subject to shareholder approval. We remain committed to delivering long-term shareholder value, whilst working hard to ensure our customers receive the greatest levels of service.

In 2018, we continued our digital transformation journey, with innovation and excellence in customer experience at the heart of our strategy. We launched a number of initiatives and offerings that brought greater flexibility and value to our customers whilst opening up new revenue streams for the future.

Our proactive approach to managing the shifting landscape of the telecommunications industry, reflected by the move from voice to data, enabled us to grow our customer number by 3 percent to 27 million for the year ended 31 December 2018, despite the challenging conditions in some of our markets. Financially, we reported good growth in local currency terms, however, due to cur-



Sheikh Saud Bin Nasser Al-Thani

rency fluctuations, our consolidated financial results were adversely impacted. Additionally, we have seen margin compression in Kuwait, as a result of increased handset sales and weak economic conditions in Algeria. All our other operations contributed positively to EBITDA.

In Kuwait we made significant progress towards becoming the leading integrated communications provider and our customer base increased by 4 percent and revenues were up by 8 percent. In Tunisia, we increased our mobile customer base by 7 percent confirming our position as the Number 1 mobile telecom player.

In Algeria we made strong progress in preparing for a data centric future, adding 1400 4G sites to its LTE network creating the first 4G network to serve 48 wilayas covering 48 percent of the country's population.

In Palestine, we successfully rebranded Wataniya Mobile to Ooredoo Palestine aligning the company more closely with the group and enabling greater synergies. Customer numbers increased by 27 percent and revenue increased by 17 percent. Maldives performed well, with a 5 percent increase in revenue and a stable customer base of 440,000.”

### Review of operations

The Group's operational performance can be summarized as follows:

- Ooredoo continues its digital transformation strategy: Al-Thani
- Significant progress in Kuwait
- Dividend of 50 fils per share recommended
- B2B in Kuwait was enhanced by a partnership with SAP



### Ooredoo - Kuwait

Ooredoo's customer base in Kuwait increased to 2.3 million in 2018, up by 4 percent compared to 2017. Revenues for 2018 were KD 240.9 million, an increase of 8 percent compared to KD 222.7 million in 2017. Higher handset sales led to an increase in revenue, while at the same time negatively impacting margins. EBITDA was KD 55.0 million for 2018, compared to KD 54.3 million for the previous year.

The B2B in Kuwait was enhanced by a partnership with SAP to provide best in class enterprise cloud services and by leveraging Ooredoo's state-of-the-art data centers to provide end to end IT solutions to strategic enterprise clients.

### Ooredoo - Tunisia

Ooredoo's customer base in Tunisia increased 8 percent to reach 9.1 million customers in 2018, compared to the previous year. Growth was supported by digital offerings such as 'Tedallel,' an in-app multi-platform offering providing users with the flexibility to choose between voice, data or value-added services such as music, video and gaming. The Tunisian dinar depreciated by 9.8 percent year on year, leading to a decrease in revenues from KD 127.5 million in 2017 to KD 126.6 million in 2018. In local currency terms, revenues were up by 9.0 percent. EBITDA was KD 49.3 million in 2018 compared to KD 50.5 million in 2017.

### Ooredoo - Algeria

Ooredoo Algeria added 1400 4G sites to its LTE network creating the first 4G network to serve 48 wilayas covering 48 percent of the country's population. Data traffic increased 117 percent in 2018 compared to the previous year.

Business in Algeria was negatively impacted by the devaluation of the Algerian Dinar, intense price competition and a weak economic environment. Customer base declined by 3 percent to 13.9 million in 2018, compared to 2017. Revenues also decreased to KD 228.9 million in 2018, compared to KD 285.1 million in the previous year. EBITDA was KD 85.3 million in 2018, down from KD 125.5 million in 2017. Algerian dinar depreciated by 5.5 percent year on year.

### Ooredoo - Palestine

Ooredoo Palestine made good progress in 2018, with the launch of the 3G network in the West Bank in January 2018. Customer numbers increased by 27 percent to 1.3 million, benefiting from the Gaza launch in October 2017. Revenue increased to KD 30.3 million, up by 17 percent compared to KD 26.0 million in 2017. EBITDA was strong, increasing to KD 8.0 million in 2018 compared to KD 5.7 million in 2017.

### Ooredoo - Maldives

Ooredoo Maldives reported a 5 percent increase in revenues to KD 38.2 million in 2018, compared to KD 36.3 million in 2017. EBITDA was stable at KD 19.7 million in 2018. Ooredoo Maldives now serves a total of 440k customers.

Ooredoo Maldives entered the content space with the launch of Amazon Prime Video and OpenMiTV, an application allowing television to be viewed anywhere.



## Business

# India CB slashes rates to boost Modi image ahead of elections

## Headline inflation to soften; rupee edges up

**MUMBAI:** India's central bank cut interest rates yesterday, giving a surprise boost to Prime Minister Narendra Modi ahead of general elections due this year.

The cut in borrowing costs in Asia's third-biggest economy comes as the economy stutters and other central banks, most notably the Federal Reserve, have sounded increasingly cautious about the global outlook. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said the benchmark repo rate—the level at which it lends to commercial banks—would be reduced by 25 basis points to 6.25 percent.

It marked the first interest rate decision under new bank chief Shaktikanta Das, an ally of Modi who was appointed in December after his predecessor, Urjit Patel, quit following a public spat with the administration over alleged government interference.

The government was believed to be unhappy with the RBI over a number of issues, including its apparent reluctance to cut rates to stimulate the economy.

India's finance ministry had reportedly been pressuring the bank to enact policies to help spur growth ahead of the elections due by May, when Modi will run for a second term. On Wednesday, a key economic advisor to Modi called on the RBI to announce a cut to help boost consumption and investment.

Rajiv Kumar, vice chairman of government think-tank NITI Aayog, said the bank should

act to help spur "higher growth rates". Modi was swept to power in 2014 on a business-friendly manifesto that promised to shake up India's economy and boost jobs. He announced a number of high-profile policies, including the introduction of a new single tax on goods and a controversial currency ban.

### Modi's election battle

But data have raised questions about how successfully he has delivered on his pledges and polls suggest he faces a tough re-election fight. Statistics showed the economy expanded only 7.1 percent on-year in July-September, down from 8.2 percent in the previous quarter.

Analysts say India needs to regularly record growth of at least eight percent to generate employment for the millions entering the workforce each year. But a government report leaked last week showed unemployment at a 45-year-high of 6.1 percent in 2017-18.

Yesterday's cut, which was the first in 18 months, surprised the majority of analysts who had expected rates to be held. Thirty-two out of 43 economists surveyed by Bloomberg News had predicted no change. Despite the cut the rupee edged up 0.1 percent against the dollar. The RBI raised rates twice last year over concerns about rising prices but with inflation currently at an 18-month low the bank said it was time to opt for a reduction.



**BANGALORE:** Narayana Murthy, founder of Indian technology company Infosys (right), and Managing Director and CEO Salil Parikh (left) gesture as they speak together prior to a panel discussion held at the company headquarters at the Electronic City in Bangalore yesterday. —AFP

"Headline inflation is projected to remain soft in the near term reflecting the current low level of inflation and the benign food inflation outlook," the bank said in a statement.

India's retail inflation declined from 3.4 percent in October 2018 to 2.2 percent in December, well below the bank's target of four percent. Central banks around the world have turned more dovish in recent months as they grow concerned about the state of the global

economy, the China-US trade war and China's economic malaise. The Fed has indicated it will slow its pace of rate hikes this year, having raised them four times in 2018, the European Central Bank has indicated that it is not looking to move on rates and the Bank of Japan has again lowered its inflation forecasts.

The Reserve Bank of Australia, Bank of Korea and Bank of Thailand have also tempered their outlooks in recent weeks. —AFP

## Ambani to invest \$1.4bn in West Bengal, will boost e-commerce

**MUMBAI/KOLKATA:** India's Reliance Industries will invest 100 billion rupees (\$1.4 billion) in the eastern state of West Bengal, a part of which would fund the company's new e-commerce venture, its chairman Mukesh Ambani said yesterday. The energy and telecoms conglomerate, which already runs retail stores, has announced plans to diversify into e-commerce at a time when India's new foreign investment curbs have dealt a blow to Amazon.com Inc and Walmart's Flipkart.

The investment announcements also come as a boost for the state's chief minister, Mamata Banerjee, who has in recent weeks rallied regional parties and the main opposition Congress to forge an alliance to beat Prime Minister Narendra Modi in upcoming elections, which must be held by May.

Ambani's so-called "new commerce" venture aims to connect small merchants with his retail network and warehouses, helping them better manage their inventory. It already has more than 500 retail stores in the state, selling everything from clothes to groceries, and the new plan would "increase manifold" its warehouse space in the next 24 months in West Bengal, he said.

The new e-commerce platform "will bring win-win benefits to consumers, retailers and producers" and help 30 million small shopkeepers, Ambani said. The billionaire businessman has been more vocal about his e-commerce plans after India in December imposed new restrictions on how foreign companies operate in the e-commerce sector. The new rules, which kicked in on Feb. 1, have disrupted product listings on Amazon.com's India website.

Addressing a business summit in West Bengal's Kolkata city, Ambani also said he plans to expand the reach of his telecom services in the state and swiftly open a data center which would be "as good as the ones in Silicon Valley". "There is no area of the economy, governance or life which is untouched by the revolutionary potential of digital technologies," Ambani said. —Reuters

## RCom shares continue to plunge in twist between battling tycoon brothers

**MUMBAI:** Shares of Reliance Communications continued to plunge yesterday falling over six percent as the debt-laden company pursued bankruptcy following a brutal telecoms price war that pitched two billionaire brothers against each other. The Anil Ambani-led mobile carrier is reeling under debts of around \$4 billion after a battle with Reliance Jio-led by Ambani's older brother and India's richest man Mukesh Ambani. The fight for supremacy in India's hugely competitive telecoms market is the latest twist in a long-running saga between the tycoon brothers which has gripped India's business community.

Reliance Communications said in a statement last week that it had decided to start insolvency proceedings after failing to sell assets to pay back lenders. The company had hoped to offload its telecom tower and spectrum business to Reliance Jio for \$2.4 billion but the deal has hit regulatory hurdles and opposition from creditors. It faces liquidation if it is unable to pay back its debts, with the help of the national bankruptcy court, in 270 days. Shares in the mobile network firm fell 35 percent on Monday and finished another 28 percent lower on Tuesday. Reliance Communications was once India's second-



Anil Ambani

biggest wireless carrier, but began a downward spiral when its rival shook up the telecoms market in 2016 by offering free voice calls and vastly cheaper data plans. The new 4G Jio network sent competitors scurrying to match the costly investment or deciding to get out of India altogether. The Ambani brothers engaged in a bitter feud for control of Reliance Industries after their rags-to-riches father Dhirubhai Ambani died in 2002 without a will.

The pair ended up splitting the Reliance group that was India's most valuable listed company. After a protracted court case that saw their mother, Kokilaben, act as peacemaker, the brothers agreed to bury the hatchet and tear up a non-competition agreement that prevented them from entering the same sectors. In 2011, Mukesh and Anil came together to dedicate a memorial to their father, and their mother declared the enmity over, telling reporters: "There is love between the brothers." —AFP



## Business

# BoE sees weakest outlook for UK since 2009 on Brexit crisis

## Bank policymakers keep rates at 0.75%

**LONDON:** The Bank of England said Britain faced its weakest economic growth in 10 years in 2019, blaming mounting Brexit uncertainty and the global slowdown, but it stuck to its message that interest rates will rise, if a Brexit deal is done.

While other central banks say they will hold off from raising borrowing costs, the BoE restated that gradual and limited rate rises lie ahead for the world's fifth-largest economy, as along as a no-deal Brexit in just 50 days' time is averted. "UK economic growth slowed in late 2018 and appears to have weakened further in early 2019," the Bank's policymakers said after they voted unanimously to keep rates at 0.75 percent, as expected in a Reuters poll of economists.

"This slowdown mainly reflects softer activity abroad and the greater effects from Brexit uncertainties at home." Britain is due to leave the European Union on March 29, but Prime Minister Theresa May is holding out for more concessions from the bloc in an attempt to get her divided Conservative Party behind her plan.

The BoE has previously said a worst-case Brexit scenario, with no deal for a transition period and a sudden loss of confidence in Britain among foreign investors, could hammer the economy more than the global financial crisis did.

The central bank yesterday sharply lowered its 2019 economic growth forecast to 1.2 percent from its previous estimate of 1.7 percent, made as recently as November. That represented the biggest cut in its projections since the period immediately after the 2016 Brexit

referendum and put Britain on course for its weakest economic growth in the 10 years since the global financial crisis.

The BoE saw a fall this year in business investment and housebuilding, which have been weak in the run-up to Brexit, as well as a halving of the growth rate in exports, reflecting the global slowdown. For 2020, the overall economic growth outlook was also cut to 1.5 percent from 1.7 percent before picking up to a stronger-than-previously expected 1.9 percent in 2021.

The weaker growth outlook came even as the Bank acknowledged that investors have scaled back their expectations on how much interest rates are likely to rise, a key factor underpinning its own projections. The BoE said markets were now pricing in its Bank Rate rising to 1.1 percent by the end of 2021, compared with 1.4 percent at the time of its last forecasts in November.

But it sent a reminder to investors that rates might rise more quickly by saying it saw inflation in two years' time at 2.1 percent, a touch above its 2 percent target. Inflation was likely to fall below its target because of the global fall in oil prices in the coming months before bouncing back above 2 percent in a year's time.

The main reason the BoE thinks underlying inflation pressures will grow is faster wage growth after Britain's unemployment rate hit its lowest level in more than 40 years. The BoE kept its wage forecasts largely unchanged with earnings rising by more than 3 percent a year over the next three years. The bigger picture remains weak. Private-



**LONDON:** In this file photo, people walk by the viewing area in Greenwich Park in London with the towers and offices at Canary Wharf, London's financial district in the background. —AFP

sector business surveys have suggested the economy has slowed to a crawl ahead of Brexit. The BoE said yesterday a survey it conducted of more than 200 businesses showed that half had begun to prepare for a no-deal Brexit, something a majority expected would cause the economy to shrink and unemployment to rise.

It repeated its message that it could either cut or raise interest rates after a no-deal Brexit, although many economists think it would be forced to help the economy with more stimulus, as it did

after the Brexit referendum shock in 2016. A rate rise by the BoE would contrast with moves by other central banks. Last week the US Federal Reserve signalled its three-year run of raising rates might be ending and earlier yesterday, India's central bank cut borrowing costs. The European Central Bank has sounded more worried that the euro zone's recovery has run out of steam. German industrial production data published yesterday raised fears that Europe's biggest economy might be heading for a recession. —Reuters

## EU slashes eurozone growth forecast as Germany cools

**BRUSSELS:** The European Commission sharply cut its eurozone growth forecast for 2019 yesterday as an unexpected slowdown in Germany and protests in France weigh on the economy in Europe. The EU also cut Italy's growth rate to a five-year low, a situation that risks reopening bitter differences between Brussels and Rome about the government's spending plans this year. The commission, the EU's executive arm, is now expecting growth of 1.3 percent in the eurozone this year, a significant cut from 1.9 percent predicted in November. It said the full European Union would grow by 1.5 percent instead of the earlier 1.9 percent.

The health of the German economy is fast emerging as a worry for the EU as slumping demand for foreign cars in China takes a toll on Europe's export powerhouse. The commission said Europe is facing international headwinds that have now taken the steam out of a post-crisis recovery in the eurozone.

The slowdown "reflects external factors, such as trade tensions and the slowdown in emerging markets, notably in China," said European Commission Vice President Valdis Dombrovskis.



**BRUSSELS:** European Commissioner for Economic and Financial Affairs Pierre Moscovici presents the EU winter economic forecasts during a news conference at the EU Commission headquarters in Brussels, yesterday. —AFP

"The possibility of a disruptive Brexit creates additional uncertainty," he added. Another problem is Italy, which the commission said would grow by a paltry 0.2 percent this year, still better than a recession, but a huge cut from the 1.2 percent forecast late last year.

Slower growth spells big trouble for populist-led Italy, where huge amounts of government money are swallowed up each year to help pay down about two trillion euros in public debt. Rome's coalition government of the anti-establishment Five Star Movement (M5S) and the League party was already forced to water down its ambitious budget in December to avoid being punished by the EU Commission and financial markets. —AFP

## Italy's economic policies likely to hurt the poorest: IMF

**ROME:** The economic policies of Rome's populist government make Italy vulnerable to a crisis of market confidence, with the poorest likely to suffer the most, the IMF warned yesterday.

"The authorities' policies could leave Italy vulnerable to a renewed loss of market confidence," an International Monetary Fund annual report on the country said. "Italy could then be forced into a notable fiscal contraction, pushing a weakening economy into a recession. The burden would fall disproportionately on the vulnerable," the IMF added.

Deputy Prime Minister Matteo Salvini, head of the far-right League party, scoffed at the report, saying it would "bring happiness" to Italy because the IMF has "always predicted the opposite of what happens". On January 31, official data showed that the Italian economy, the eurozone's third largest, contracted in the fourth

quarter of 2018, which meant the country was in a technical recession.

The fund expects the Italian economy to grow by no more than 0.6 percent this year, well below the government's own estimate of 1.0 percent.

The European Commission is tipped to lower its Italian growth forecast yesterday, and slower growth could spell trouble for Italy, where around 20 percent of national output is swallowed up each year by payments on the public debt, the second biggest in the eurozone.

The IMF report praised the coalition government's "objective to improve economic and social outcomes (as) welcome". But it added that the only sustainable way of achieving such goals was through "faster potential growth" that would require structural reforms, "a credible fiscal consolidation" and stronger bank balance sheets.

The coalition government of the anti-establishment Five Star Movement (M5S) and the League party was forced to water down its ambitious and costly budget in December to avoid being punished by the EU Commission and financial markets. The IMF report emphasized Wednesday that Italy "needs to tackle long-standing structural impediments to productivity growth." —AFP



## Sports

# Korean Olympic sports diplomacy is a difficult game of two halves

**SEOUL:** When ice hockey players from North and South Korea skated together on to the Olympic rink in matching white kits last year, it was seen as a symbol of the rapid diplomatic progress catalysed by the Winter Games. With Pyongyang subject to multiple international sanctions over its nuclear and ballistic missile programs, sport is one of the few spheres where real co-operation is possible between the two countries.

However, analysts say sporting diplomacy on the divided peninsula will go nowhere without tangible advances on underlying issues surrounding the North's atomic arsenal. Games organizers proclaimed the 2018 event in Pyeongchang a "Peace Olympics" as the two Koreas fielded a joint women's ice hockey squad, their first-ever unified Olympic team. The last 12 months have seen a series of joint Korean sides follow in their tracks, from judo to basketball. Results have been mixed.

The men's handball team lost all but one of its matches at the world championships in January, but the women's dragon boat squad won Asian Games gold in the 500m last year, and the women's table tennis players reached the world championship semi-finals. However, each new unified team has been met with less and less fanfare than the one before as familiarity breeds public disinterest. And off-field progress on the North's denuclearization has been even more limited than the unified teams' victories. "The thing with a stunt is that it receives a lot of attention at first but its originality quickly fades," said Go Myong-hyun, an analyst at the Asan Institute of Policy Studies. "Sports diplomacy won't be sustainable unless it expands to other exchanges," he added.

## Rapid-fire diplomacy

The women's ice hockey squad sparked a

media sensation at Pyeongchang despite losing all five of their matches by a combined scoreline of 28-2. The skaters — 23 Southerners and 12 from the North — made headlines from start to finish, including with a stroll to the beach, language-barrier troubles and a friendly rendezvous at an Olympic Village McDonald's where they shared drinks.

North Korea's presence at the Games was a transformative moment on the peninsula, where Pyongyang and Seoul — backed by allies from each side of the Cold War — fought each other to a standstill in the 1950-53 Korean War. They remain technically at war after hostilities ceased with an armistice rather than a peace treaty, and 2017 saw tensions soar as the North detonated its most powerful nuclear device ever and launched missiles capable of reaching the entire US mainland.

Before the Olympics, as North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and US President Donald Trump traded personal insults and threats of war, Pyongyang had kept silent on whether it would participate in the Games. But then dovish South Korean President Moon Jae-in offered to postpone major joint military drills with the US, while Kim said he was willing to send a delegation to Pyeongchang, triggering rapid-fire rounds of diplomacy. At the opening ceremony, Moon sat in the VIP box with US Vice President Mike Pence and the North Korean leader's sister, Kim Yo Jong. Pyongyang's attendance marked a distinct change in tone and "opened the door" to subsequent negotiations, said Troy Stangarone, a senior researcher at the Korea Economic Institute. Moon and Kim have since met three times and the North Korean leader had a landmark summit with Trump — the first of its kind — in June, with a second scheduled for Vietnam from February 27-28.

Pyongyang and Seoul have announced plans



**GANGNEUNG:** In this file photo taken on February 15, 2018, North Korean cheerleaders wave Unified Korea flags during the men's preliminary round ice hockey match between South Korea and Czech Republic during the Pyeongchang 2018 Winter Olympic Games at the Gangneung Hockey Centre. —AFP

for a joint bid to host the 2032 Summer Games. But unity on the pitch can only go so far. Diplomatic progress has now stalled with North Korea demanding the sanctions against it are loosened and Washington insisting the measures stay in place until it denuclearizes. "In the absence of sanctions relief to allow for inter-Korean economic cooperation, we should expect North Korea to lose interest in sports diplomacy," Stangarone told AFP.

In the meantime, he added, as sporting connections between the two Koreans becomes more frequent, "it will also be more commonplace and begin to lose its resonance". The uni-

fied ice hockey team met a mixed response in South Korea, with critics saying its hasty formation just two weeks before the Games deprived their own athletes of playing time.

That highlighted the disparity in attitudes between the young South Koreans who prioritize "impartiality and justice", and policymakers who focus on "reconciliation and cooperation on the Korean peninsula", said Koo Kab-woo, a professor at the University of North Korean Studies in Seoul. Asan analyst Go added: "The idea that we are one has been rooted in both South and North Korea, but the reaction showed that this message was wearing out." — AFP

## Sarajevo to rekindle Olympic flame with Youth Games

**SARAJEVO:** When Sarajevo welcomed the globe's top athletes to its mountains for the 1984 Winter Olympics, it was a moment of pride for all of Yugoslavia. Three decades later, the post-war capital of Bosnia hopes to rekindle the flame as it hosts the European Youth Olympics next week.

Tomislav Lopatic, who represented Yugoslavia in the biathlon in 1984 games, remembers those days as the "last moment" of unity and pride in the former communist state, which collapsed through a series of brutal wars only seven years later. "Everyone still loved the flag, our coat of arms," recalls the 55-year old, who now coaches the national biathlon team in Bosnia, one of several states to emerge from the federation's bloody break-up.

He was a four-time Yugoslav champion of the sport during his heyday, although

he did not take home a medal in the 1984 games. Bibija Kerla, a Bosnian speed skater for former Yugoslavia, also finished empty-handed. But the 59-year-old still hums Yugoslavia's national anthem ("Hej Sloveni!") and remembers the collective pride she felt when Slovenian Jure Franko became the only one from their country to make the podium when he took a silver for the giant slalom.

Back then, they were all Yugoslavs. But in post-war Bosnia, they are frequently identified by their differences: Tomislav is a Bosnian Serb and Kerla is a Bosnian Muslim, commonly known as a Bosniak. Bosnia remains carved up along ethnic lines more than two decades after the 1992-95 conflict that left 100,000 dead as Bosnian Muslims, Serbs and Croats clashed. The same is true for Sarajevo,

whose centre is populated mainly by Muslims while an eastern enclave is dominated by Serbs.

Yet the European Youth Olympics Festival (EYOF), which runs from February 9 to 16, has become a rare opportunity for the city's two administrations to find common ground. With the slogan "Two cities, one dream", the Sarajevo and East Sarajevo mayors, Abdulah Skaka and Nenad Vukovic, have held joint press conferences about their desire to "revive the spirit of the Olympics" with the Youth competition. The European Youth Olympics will bring more than 1,500 young people from 46 countries to Bosnia to compete in sports ranging from alpine skiing to figure skating and curling. "We want to create a new memory, and a positive dynamic that will serve as a foundation for better times," said Abdulah Skaka. —AFP

## Vinales blazes to first, Marquez feels pain in Sepang MotoGP test

**SEPANG:** Yamaha's Maverick Vinales made a late charge to finish first on day two of the MotoGP pre-season test in Malaysia yesterday, while champion Marc Marquez slipped to eighth after suffering with an injured shoulder. Vinales of Spain, who rode 63 laps in Sepang, pulled off an incredible performance in the closing moments to post the fastest time of 1min 58.897sec.

Rival Alex Rins, on a Suzuki, maintained his overnight position and was 0.527 seconds behind his countryman. Jack Miller made a big improvement on his Ducati to finish third with 1min 59.517sec. The Australian had ended 11th on Wednesday. Meanwhile MotoGP world champion Marc Marquez slipped from first to eighth, complaining of pain from his left shoulder after surgery in December.

The 25-year-old reigning and five-time champion completed only 37 laps, fewer than half the number of laps completed by some riders. He underwent a four-hour shoulder operation in December. "In the beginning, I felt better than yesterday. Then immediately in the 2nd and 3rd runs I started to feel the energy go down on the shoulder and started to lose power and more pain," he said after ending his test runs much earlier than planned. —AFP



# Starc out of India tour with ‘substantial’ muscle tear

**SYDNEY:** Pace spearhead Mitchell Starc was yesterday ruled out of Australia's Twenty20 and one-day tour of India with a “substantial” muscle tear, joining fellow quick bowler Josh Hazlewood on the sidelines. Australia play two T20s and five ODIs against the Indians from later this month as part of an important build-up to their World Cup title defence in England this year. But they will be doing so with a depleted attack.

Starc, man-of-the-match after collecting 10 wickets in the second Test against Sri Lanka in Canberra this week, will miss the series. Hazlewood remains sidelined as he recovers from a back injury picked up in Australia's Test series loss to India. “Unfortunately, scans have revealed that Mitchell Starc sustained a substantial tear to his left pec muscle while bowling on the final day of the Test match in Canberra,” said national selector Trevor Hohns. “This means he will be unavailable for the tour of India, but we will instead target a return to play for the ODI series against Pakistan in the UAE in March.”

Eleven of the 14 players that took on Virat Kohli's men in a recent one-day series loss in Australia have been retained. But veteran seamer Peter Siddle, fast bowler Billy Stanlake and all-rounder Marsh were dropped, which has opened the door for pacemen Kane Richardson and Nathan Coulter-Nile, and hard-hitting batsman Ashton Turner. “Kane has been in outstanding form over the summer, including his recent performances in the Big Bash League,” said

Hohns. “Kane not only has experience playing ODI cricket for Australia, but he's also performed well for his country when given the opportunity. “Nathan Coulter-Nile provides us with another quality bowling option,” he added. “He brings good energy in the field and can also score runs in high-pressure situations.”

Hohns added that Western Australia's Turner had been on his radar for some time and he now “has an opportunity to put his case forward ahead of the World Cup”. With Hazlewood out, Pat Cummins was named co-vice captain alongside Alex Carey. Aaron Finch remains skipper. Opener D'Arcy Short was included as cover for Shaun Marsh as he recovers from a hamstring injury. Short is expected to play in the two T20s with Marsh joining the squad following the birth of his second child.

“With the World Cup on the horizon, we see the ODI tours of India and the following tour against Pakistan as important windows for the squad to continue their preparations for our title defense,” said Hohns. “We were really pleased with the progress we made during the recent ODI series against India, and we feel the progress is reflected in the squad selection, with only a couple of changes.” The squad for the Pakistan series, that immediately follows India, will be named later with the possibility that Steve Smith and David Warner may be considered for the latter part once their bans for ball-tampering expire on March 29. —AFP



**CANBERRA:** Australia's Mitchell Starc bowls during day four of the second Test cricket match between Australia and Sri Lanka at the Manuka Oval Cricket Ground. —AFP

## Davies captains Wales against Italy

**NICE:** Jonathan Davies will captain Wales for the first time after the centre was named as skipper by coach Warren Gatland for Saturday's Six Nations match away to Italy in Rome. Regular captain Alun Wyn Jones is on the bench. Gatland, announcing his team from the squad's training base in Nice on Thursday, also gave a Six Nations debut to Thomas Young, the Wasps flanker.

Young, who won two caps against Tonga and Samoa on Wales' 2017 tour, lines up in the back-row alongside Aaron Wainwright and Josh Navidi. The son of Wasps rugby director and former Wales prop Dai Young, Thomas Young has impressed in the English Premiership this season. Gatland has made 10 changes and one positional switch from the side that came from 16-0 down at half-time to beat France 24-19 in Wales' Six Nations opener in Paris last week. The New Zealander, in his final Six Nations as Wales coach before standing down after the World Cup, is keen to give all his squad members game time ahead of Japan 2019. To that end, Leicester back Jonah Holmes has also been given a Six Nations debut, with scrum-half Aled Davies and flanker Wainwright making their first starts in the Championship.

Elsewhere, centre Owen Watkin, fly-half Dan Biggar, lock Jake Ball and hooker Elliot Dee are all included, with Navidi moving from blindside flanker to No 8. But, as part of Gatland's squad rotation, several players who started against France are not in this week's matchday 23, including wing George North, centre Hadleigh Parkes and hooker Ken Owens. Victory for Wales at the Stadio Olimpico would make it 11 successive wins and equal their all-time unbeaten record set between 1907 and



**PARIS:** Wales' winger George North (2nd R) celebrates after scoring a try during the Six Nations rugby union tournament match between France and Wales at the stade de France. — AFP

1910. “We have made a number of changes this weekend, but have picked what we think is a very exciting team that still has huge experience throughout it,” said Gatland in a Welsh Rugby Union (WRU) statement. “We have made a similar number of changes to what we did last year, but it is all about opportunity for these players. “We have had a squad of 31 training together, replicating the Rugby World Cup, and it is important they get game-time.”

Gatland added: “It is a great opportunity for Jon (Davies) as captain. He has a huge amount of experience, is a great leader and it is a great honor for him to lead his country.” Italy opened the Six Nations with a 33-20 loss to Scotland at Murrayfield — their 18th successive Championship defeat.

But Gatland warned: “Italy will be hurting after last weekend, but they are a different proposition in Rome. “They are an experienced team themselves and they will be looking to put things right on the pitch after their opening defeat.” — AFP

## Mulder added to S Africa Test squad

**JOHANNESBURG:** Batting all-rounder Wiaan Mulder has been included in South Africa's squad for two Test matches against Sri Lanka, starting in Durban on Wednesday. Mulder, 20, was added to the 13-man squad which beat Pakistan in all three Tests in a home series earlier this season. “Wiaan has been part of our strategic thinking in developing a batting all-rounder for the Test squad for some time,” said selection convener Linda Zondi in announcing the squad on Thursday.

Mulder was part of the Test squad for a series against Australia last season but did not make the starting eleven. He suffered an ankle injury during a one-day international against Zimbabwe last September but made a successful return to first-class cricket for the Lions franchise last month. A notable omission is fast bowler Lungi Ngidi, who is recovering from a knee injury sustained during a limited overs tour of Australia in November. Ngidi has

been training with the South African limited overs squads in recent weeks but Zondi said the selectors were taking a cautious approach. “We are not going to rush him back into international action until he has had the time to regain full match fitness,” said Zondi. The Sri Lankan team were due to arrive in South Africa on Thursday after suffering two heavy defeats in a Test series in Australia.

Sri Lanka are likely to face a difficult task with an inexperienced team, which includes only six of the players defeated in all three Tests in South Africa two seasons ago. Their squad includes nine players who will be making their first tour of South Africa. South Africa's fast bowlers were dominant in the Tests against Pakistan and the Sri Lankans are likely to face a pace barrage, although the Test venues in Durban and Port Elizabeth are the least pace-friendly of South Africa's regular Test grounds. — AFP



## Sports

Friday, February 8, 2019

# Bucks stay hot, pound Wizards while Warriors smash Spurs

**MILWAUKEE:** Giannis Antetokounmpo scored 43 points, Eric Bledsoe added 22 points and 11 assists, and the Milwaukee Bucks routed the visiting Washington Wizards 148-129 on Wednesday night for their fifth straight win. Antetokounmpo made 17 of 21 field-goal attempts, including 3 of 3 from 3-point range, as Milwaukee beat the Wizards for the second time in less than a week. The Bucks, who shot 60.2 percent (56 of 93) and made 19 of 30 3-pointers, have won 11 of their past 12. Bradley Beal scored 30 for the Wizards, who allowed a season-high point total in losing their third straight. Thomas Bryant had 26 points and 14 rebounds for Washington while Tomas Satoransky had 16 points and 10 assists.

## Warriors 141, Spurs 102

Golden State made 24 of 25 shots bridging the second and third quarter, breaking open a close game en route to a shellacking of short-handed San Antonio in Oakland, Calif. The Spurs elected to rest their top two scorers, LaMarcus Aldridge and DeMar DeRozan, in the second game of their eight-game "Rodeo Trip," with the second half of a back-to-back looming Thursday night against the Trail Blazers in Portland, Ore. The Warriors scored 49 points in the third quarter, giving them 115 for three periods, the most ever allowed through three quarters in the Gregg Popovich era in San Antonio. Klay Thompson had 26 points and Kevin Durant 23 for the Warriors, who won for the 13th time in their last 14 games.

## Rockets 127, Kings 101

With James Harden leading the way in scoring for a 33rd consecutive game, visiting Houston turned a second-quarter eruption into an easy victory over Sacramento. Harden posted 36 points on 13-of-26 shooting and extended his streak of consecutive 30-plus-point games to 28. He hit 8 of 13 3-point attempts after entering

play having shot 31.9 percent from deep over his previous 12 games. Gerald Green (25 points) and Eric Gordon (20) helped shoulder the scoring load for Houston, shooting a combined 15 of 31. Buddy Hield scored 20 points for Sacramento while Bogdan Bogdanovic and Frank Mason added 13 apiece.

## Nets 135, Nuggets 130

D'Angelo Russell totaled 27 points and 11 assists as Brooklyn stopped a three-game losing streak with a victory over visiting Denver. Russell shot 10 of 23 from the field, including 6 of 9 on 3-pointers, and posted his sixth double-double of the season. The All-Star guard also recorded at least 25 points and 10 assists for the second time in his career as the Nets won for the 14th time in their past 16 home games since Dec. 7. DeMarre Carroll contributed 18 points, 10 rebounds and six assists as the Nets shot 51.1 percent, handed out a season-best 36 assists and withstood some shaky moments in the final minutes. The Nuggets' Nikola Jokic recorded his 10th triple-double of the season by totaling 25 points, 14 rebounds and 10 assists. Denver lost its second straight after winning six in a row.

## Mavericks 99, Hornets 93

Rookie of the Year favorite Luka Doncic recorded the third triple-double of his career and shook off poor shooting to produce late fireworks as host Dallas defeated Charlotte. Doncic, just 3 of 16 from the floor with under four minutes to play, came up with a nifty finish at the rim and drew the foul for a three-point play and then followed up with a 3-pointer to put the Mavs ahead for good, 94-88, in a game that wasn't pretty but was mostly close throughout. The 19-year-old Slovenian finished with a team-high 19 points on 5-of-20 shooting—just 2-of-10 from beyond the arc—and added 11 assists and 10 rebounds. His total floor game



**OAKLAND:** Alfonzo McKinnie #28 of the Golden State Warriors dunks the ball against the San Antonio Spurs on February 6, 2019 at ORACLE Arena. — AFP

stole the spotlight from All-Star Kemba Walker, who led the Hornets with 30 points.

## Pelicans 125, Bulls 120

Julius Randle returned from a six-game absence to score 31 points and lead a balanced New Orleans offense in a win at Chicago. Randle, who had been sidelined by an ankle injury, was joined in double figures by Cheick Diallo (18 points), Jrue Holiday (18 points and 11 assists), Jahlil Okafor (13 points) and Darius Miller and Kenrich Williams (12 points each) as the Pelicans won for just the second time in eight games. The Pelicans chose not to play All-Star forward Anthony Davis, who requested a trade last week while sidelined by a finger injury that has since healed enough for him to be cleared to play. For

Chicago, Lauri Markkanen had 30 points and 10 rebounds while Zach LaVine added 28 points, eight rebounds and seven assists.

## Jazz 116, Suns 88

Donovan Mitchell scored 21 points, and Rudy Gobert added 16 points and 12 rebounds as Utah had more than enough to beat visiting Phoenix, which took its 12th consecutive defeat. Royce O'Neale and Joe Ingles added 15 points each for the Jazz, who have just two victories in their past four games but are 11-3 over their past 14 contests dating to Jan. 9. Ingles had 11 assists. Josh Jackson scored 27 points for the Suns, picking up the slack in the backcourt in the absence of Devin Booker, who did not play because of a tight right hamstring. — Reuters

## Female CEO unfazed by hostile reception in English football

**LONDON:** Katrien Meire endured a baptism of fire in English football, with disgruntled fans even travelling to Belgium to present her parents with a dossier over how terrible she was as chief executive of Charlton. But the Belgian lawyer, one of a handful of women in the boardrooms of English clubs, refused to be cowed and is now plotting how to lift sleeping giants Sheffield Wednesday back into the Premier League.

The 34-year-old was chief executive at Charlton from the start of 2014 until the end of 2017, during which time the south London side were relegated to the third tier of English football. She was blamed by supporters, who were angered by the manner in which she and owner Roland Duchatelet ran the club. They took exception to being labeled "customers" and to the succession of foreign managers — one fan harangued Meire on a train over the appointment of Israeli manager Guy Luzon.

A statement on the Charlton website accused some fans of wanting the club to fail as the atmosphere turned toxic. Meire, who had initially approached Duchatelet out of the blue, offering him advice on broadcasting rights, understands that fans

are emotionally involved but says the Charlton supporters went too far. "It is not nice to read in the papers you are a horrible person, that you are horrible at your job, attacking my personality, attacking me as a whole," she said. "However, they did not succeed in intimidating me, so they then tried the same tactics on people close to me."

This meant not only going to the houses of other Charlton staff but even closer to home. "They went to the front door of my parents' house in Belgium, rang the doorbell and gave them a folder detailing how bad I am at the job and then hung posters in the village saying the same thing. "At first they did not tell me about incident. I was Skyping and I saw my mum crying. She would not tell me why but after a while they told me what happened." Meire says despite such sinister intrusions, her parents are broadly supportive of her as they know she loves what she does and she refused to be bullied out of the job.

When Sheffield Wednesday's Thai owner Dejphon Chansiri came calling, Meire accepted and took up her new role as CEO at the beginning of last year. "I guess I wanted to prove to myself I could do the job on my own," she said. Research reported by Women in Football in December 2017 said just 35 out of the 523 directors across men's league football were women — a meager seven percent. Since the appointment of Karen Brady, as managing director of Birmingham City in 1993, just a handful of women have followed in her footsteps, with seven female CEOs across the Premier League and the English Football League, it said. — AFP

## Body from wreck of Sala plane taken to UK

**PORTLAND:** Investigators recovered a body from the wreckage of a plane carrying Argentine footballer Emiliano Sala in the Channel and transported it to Britain yesterday for identification. Britain's Air Accidents Investigation Branch (AAIB) also said that bad weather meant they were not able to recover the plane and it was therefore closing down the operation.

The light aircraft was carrying the 28-year-old footballer to his new Premier League team Cardiff City when it disappeared near the British island of Guernsey on January 21, along with 59-year-old pilot David Ibbotson. Sala's disappearance prompted outpourings of grief across the footballing world, including at his former club Nantes in France where the plane was flying from.

After search operations were suspended, a shipwreck hunter hired by Sala's family with funds donated by football stars such as Lionel Messi found the wreckage on Sunday. The AAIB, who then took over the operation, revealed on Monday that an unidentified body had been found at the site. — AFP



## Sports

# Messi unable to inspire Barca as Madrid hold on for a draw

**BARCELONA:** Real Madrid gained a measure of redemption at the Camp Nou by holding Barcelona to a 1-1 draw on Wednesday and taking the upper-hand in the semi-final of Copa del Rey. Neither Lionel Messi nor Gareth Bale were named in the starting line-ups for this first leg but their replacements filled the void as Malcom's curling shot cancelled out an early opener from Lucas Vazquez.

After an impressive opening 20 minutes, Madrid were largely second best in a compelling, if unspectacular, Clasico but the result leaves them well-placed heading into the second leg at the Santiago Bernabeu on February 27. For Santiago Solari's side, a resilient, gutsy display will also help erase the memory of their humiliation here in October, when they were thrashed 5-1, a result that caused Julen Lopetegui to be sacked the following day. "Comparisons are unhelpful," said Solari. "But this result shows how hard the team is working."

Messi, who had been struggling with a thigh problem, and Bale, who faces a fight for place after recovering from a calf injury, both came on after the hour but neither could inspire a winner. Instead, it was Vazquez, and two youthful Brazilians that took centre stage. Vazquez scored but Vinicius Junior, the youngest Real Madrid player to feature in a Clasico this century, was his team's greatest threat until the 18-year-old departed in the second half.

"I'm not surprised by how he plays because I've known him since he arrived," said Solari. "But an 18-year-old boy playing and developing in this way, that is a surprise." Malcom was just

as unpredictable and in the end, it was the 21-year-old's intervention that keeps Barca on level terms. "The tie is in the balance," coach Ernesto Valverde said. "A draw is a fair reflection," said Sergio Busquets.

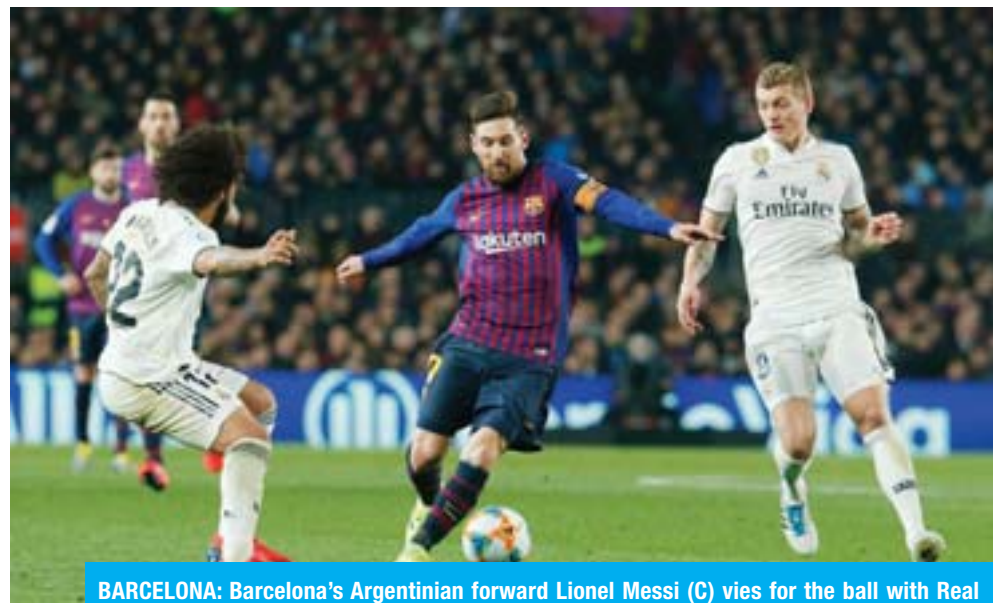
Barely 10 seconds had passed before Toni Kroos snapped into Ivan Rakitic, setting the tone for what was a dominant opening spell from Madrid. Vinicius led the way. He was fearless, full of imperfections and erratic decisions but delivering moments of clarity too when Madrid were at their most threatening.

## Benzema sets up Vazquez

He jinked inside Nelson Semedo and teed up Kroos before producing the cross that created the goal, an arching ball over the head of Jordi Alba, which Karim Benzema tucked back for Vazquez to poke in. Rakitic and Philippe Coutinho were both careless in possession but Vinicius lacked precision to capitalise, first scuttling into Benzema and then misreading the Frenchman's run.

Barca had been just as frantic, with Luis Suarez even tripping over his own feet. But they improved and after half an hour, were in the ascendancy. Malcom missed a one-on-one and then became their best player for a period, crossing for Rakitic to head against the bar and teeing up Suarez to sting the hands of Keylor Navas.

The home fans called Messi's name at the start of the second half and when he jogged up the touchline shortly before the hour, they roared as if for a goal. They did that soon after



**BARCELONA:** Barcelona's Argentinian forward Lionel Messi (C) vies for the ball with Real Madrid's Brazilian defender Marcelo (L) and Real Madrid's German midfielder Toni Kroos during the Spanish Copa del Rey (King's Cup) semi-final first leg football match between FC Barcelona and Real Madrid CF at the Camp Nou stadium. — AFP

too, after an equalizer of chaos and quality in equal measure. Navas rushed out to block Alba before Suarez curled a brilliant shot that beat the diving Sergio Ramos but not the post.

It spilled to Malcom and he still had work to do, 20 yards out with white shirts in front. He found a gap. Messi came on, along with Arturo Vidal, Bale and Casemiro. Vinicius was among

those to make way, his bright start fading with fatigue. Neither side seemed sure how much to commit for a winner. Messi twice weaved through but the best chance fell to Bale, who received from Benzema after Marc-Andre ter Stegen's skewed clearance. The goal was open but Bale's touch was heavy and Semedo made a crucial block. — AFP

## PSG need extra time to beat minnows Villefranche in Cup

**PARIS:** Paris Saint-Germain required extra time to overcome third-tier Villefranche 3-0 in the last 16 of the French Cup on Wednesday. Holders and record 12-time champions PSG were held in check at Lyon's Groupama Stadium until Julian Draxler bundled in a cross from substitute Edinson Cavani on 102 minutes.

Moussa Diaby and Cavani sealed victory late on after both were set up for simple tap-ins by Kylian Mbappe, who came on for Angel Di Maria with an hour gone. PSG will host Dijon in the quarter-finals as they bid to win the competition for a fifth time in a row. Thomas Tuchel's side face Bordeaux at home in the league this weekend before travelling to Old Trafford on February 12 for the first leg of their Champions League tie with Manchester United.

"It's normal to have the match against Manchester United in one corner of your head even if we're trying to go step by step," said PSG defender Marquinhos. "You saw the coach looked to rest some players to best manage the squad. We're thinking about the important dates com-

ing up." Argentine midfielder Leandro Paredes made his first start for PSG after his arrival from Zenit Saint Petersburg for a reported 47 million euros (\$54 million). "He played well, he was very reliable in the middle. He didn't lose the ball. He had a lot of quality in his passes. It wasn't easy and he was very good," Tuchel said of Paredes.

PSG will be without Brazilian forward Neymar for both legs of the last-16 clash against United after the world's most expensive player suffered an injury to his right foot last month. Elsewhere, Jordan Siebatcheu scored twice, including a 91st-minute winner, for Rennes as they came from behind to defeat 10-man Lille, who saw Adama Soumaoro sent off after just 19 minutes. Fourth-division Vitre reached the last eight of the French Cup for the first time in club history as a stoppage-time penalty completed a remarkable 3-2 victory, having trailed third-tier Lyon-Duchere by two goals. Lyon, who snapped PSG's unbeaten league run at the weekend, visit Guingamp in the final of the last-16 games. — AFP

## Unopposed Ceferin re-elected as UEFA president

**ROME:** UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin was yesterday re-elected for a four-year term as head of European football's governing body by acclamation. The 51-year-old Slovenian lawyer was the only candidate going forward for election at the UEFA Congress in Rome.

Ceferin took over two and a half years ago after the corruption scandal that toppled his predecessor, Frenchman Michel Platini. "I am honored," said Ceferin, thanking members of UEFA's 55 member associations for re-electing him, saying he was taking over with "fewer doubts and less skepticism than back then". "The most dangerous thing we can do is rest on our laurels and bask in our current situation," he continued. "So, what's going to happen now? That is the question many people were asking when I was elected two and a half years ago," said Ceferin.

"It was a legitimate and pertinent question. A question that I asked myself, to be totally honest with you. It was a bit of a jump into the unknown. "At that time, football, at both world and European levels, was being rocked by the most serious governance crisis in its history and yet you

decided to entrust the keys to the UEFA house to a virtual unknown."

Previously the head of the Slovenian Football Federation, Ceferin's presidency has so far been marked by his discretion and a less charismatic approach than that of Platini. The Frenchman is still suspended until October this year, when he will complete a four-year ban from all football-related activities following the corruption scandal that also brought down then-FIFA chief Sepp Blatter.

Ceferin defended his record since taking over with his most notable achievement being the introduction of term limits for UEFA presidents, to a maximum of three four-year stints. "Limited terms of office, the publication of salaries, the creation of a Compensation Committee and the inclusion of independent members in a reinforced Governance and Compliance Committee are just a few of the common-sense reforms we have introduced," he said.

"This is only the start. We will be doing more in this area because there remain weaknesses in our system. "When crisis hits, it is not the time to suddenly forsake everything that has gone before. I am not the president of a 'new UEFA'. I am the president of UEFA, a UEFA that can be proud of its past and confident about the future." Ceferin promised to work closely with world football governing body FIFA. "With our unity restored, we will be a source of constructive ideas for FIFA, rather than one of opposition. And we expect the same attitude from FIFA." The UEFA chief also promised to work to bring the 2030 FIFA World Cup back to Europe. —AFP



## Sports

# Zain sponsors sixth Al Marshoud Horse Jumping Championship



**KUWAIT:** Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, announced its main sponsorship of the sixth edition of Al Marshoud Horse Jumping Championship held at the Kuwait Riding Center (KRC) under the patronage of Sheikh Sabah Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah.

Zain took part in awarding the winners of the sixth edition of the championship with the attendance of Sheikh Sabah Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, H.E. Minister of Commerce and Industry and Minister of State for Service Affairs Khalid Al Roudhan, Head of the Championship's Organizing Committee Waleed Al Marshoud, and Zain

Kuwait's Chief Corporate Communications and Relations Officer Waleed Al Khashti.

Zain's support to the championship came in line with its keenness to be actively present in the various sports events and activities, as well as encouraging the efforts that contribute to the development of Kuwait's sports and youth sectors. The company is keen on supporting the various equestrian and horse jumping events that highlight Kuwaiti riders' talents who represent Kuwait in regional and international arenas.

The annual Al Marshoud Horse Jumping Championship held at the Kuwait Riding Center

(KRC) is overseen by an international refereeing team, and witnesses high levels of professionalism. The championship witnessed the participation of many riders who represented local clubs, as well as the attendance of large crowds from horse admirers and equestrian enthusiasts. Winners and participants were awarded with many valuable prizes with the aim of encouraging Kuwaiti riders, especially young ones, to excel and represent Kuwait in local and international arenas.

Supporting Kuwaiti sports will always be an integral part of Zain's Corporate Sustainability

strategy towards the youth and sports sectors. The company further confirms its commitment towards Kuwaiti champions, which resembles the company's endless confidence in the competencies of local talents and their capabilities in excelling in different sports. As a leading telecommunications company in Kuwait, Zain is constantly looking to identify and support excellence across the sports sector. The company will continue to put Kuwaiti National teams and individual athletes at the forefront of its priorities and pledges to continue motivating them to achieve all the recognition they deserve.

## The 8th International Shooting Grand Prix begins tomorrow

By Abdellatif Sharaa

**KUWAIT:** HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah 8th International Shooting Grand Prix will be kicking off tomorrow. Nearly 500 shooters representing 42 countries will compete at the Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Olympic Shooting Complex. Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Faisal Humoud Al-Malik Al-Sabah will represent HH the Amir in the opening ceremony on Saturday evening.

The higher organizing committee completed its preparations to ensure the success of this event, in which has seen an even further increase in the number of shooters participating. Each of the training courses was completed under the supervision of the Kuwait and Asian Shooting Federations. The committee had made some final touches to the opening ceremony, which will be preceded by the technical meeting to be held Saturday morning. Kuwait was the winner of the previous Grand Prix that was held in January 2018 that saw the participation of 330 shooters representing 39 states.

Meanwhile, Director of National Shotgun team Mohammad Al-Daihani said his shooters are ready for competitions, and participated in international and local championships to get



ready. In addition to training camps, he added that juniors will have their own share of competition, as part of the policy to prepare them for future event and competitions. Al-Daihani said he has high hopes that Kuwait will be able to maintain their top performance, especially as the coming period is important with the contests lead-up to the Tokyo 2020 Olympics. Al-Daihani thanked the KSSC board of directors for its constant support and its help to ease all problems.



## Sports

Friday, February 8, 2019

## Ooredoo annual football tournament



**KUWAIT:** Ooredoo Kuwait, announced the kick-off of the fifth edition of its annual football tournament "The Ooredoo Cup", which officially started last week at DBS Field in Sharq. This is the fifth year in a row where Ooredoo holds this event which aims to further engage with employees from different departments and divisions. The event aspires to gather employees in a casual friendly atmosphere, outside of the office premises and working hours.

Ooredoo's Senior Director of Corporate Communications, Mijbil Alayoub said: "At Ooredoo we seek those opportunities to better engage with our employees in fun-filled activities which they like and take part of. The previous year's football tournaments were a success and we look forward to another great one this year." At the end of the tournament, the first place winners will be presented with the Ooredoo cup while other top-performing teams and players will be presented with medals, as well as many other valuable prizes as recognition for their accomplishment.



## Guardiola vows Man City have desire to retain title

**LIVERPOOL:** Pep Guardiola insisted Manchester City's 2-0 victory at Everton proved they are determined to win their title fight with Liverpool as the champions returned to the top of the table on Wednesday. It was a far from inspired performance from City at Goodison Park, but goals from Aymeric Laporte and Gabriel Jesus ensured they knocked Liverpool out of pole position on goal difference. Liverpool had occupied first place since December 8, but now the pressure is on Jurgen Klopp's side just five weeks after they could have moved 10 points clear of City. With Liverpool showing signs of nerves after two successive draws damaged their bid for a first English title since 1990, City took advantage in a fixture which was brought forward due to their League Cup final date with Chelsea later this month. It was a crucial victory and City manager Guardiola claimed his players have no intention of letting Liverpool off the hook now.

"We come from champions and we are in a situation where we could have given up but it didn't happen," Guardiola said. "We gave an incredible game against Liverpool. These players have shown incredible desire and performances for the last two years. How could I question them? "We have played one more game. but it's the best we can do. The reality is one month ago we could have been 10 points behind when we played Liverpool. "A few days

ago we could have been seven points behind. Now we are top of the league. That is the best advice, the lesson is - never give up.

"That is a lesson for all athletes. Try to win the games, because life can change immediately." City struck at the best possible time when Laporte headed them in front in the second minute of first half stoppage-time. The opening goal came from a free-kick, needlessly conceded by Idrissa Gueye as he slid in late on Fernandinho, and taken by David Silva. The Spanish midfielder curled in a perfect delivery which found Laporte unmarked, and only eight yards from goal, for a solid finish.

It was the 16th consecutive league and cup game in which Guardiola's side has scored a first half goal, a run dating back to their first league defeat of the season at Chelsea in early December. And in the context of the title race, it may yet prove to be one of the more important although it took until deep into stoppage-time of the second half for City to claim their second.

### Title intrigue

Kevin De Bruyne played in Jesus, whose initial run was blocked by Jordan Pickford, only for the ball to sit up kindly for the Brazilian to head into an open goal. That was enough to stretch City's goal advantage to seven over Liverpool and set up an intriguing weekend, when Klopp's team must face Bournemouth 24 hours before the leaders host Chelsea on Sunday.

"We have started the week well, (beating) Arsenal and here, now comes a big, big test, a big goal," Guardiola said. "Chelsea are an exceptional team who have had seven days to prepare. We have to prepare well. "It really is a final for us this weekend. If we are able to take these points, it is a huge step forward." Having survived a test of their nerve at Everton, City have no time to rest on their laurels. — AFP

## Lingard says 'old school' Man Utd back under Ole

**LONDON:** Ole Gunnar Solskjaer has helped bring back "the old school Manchester United" and persuaded Jesse Lingard that they can mount a Premier League title challenge next season. Jose Mourinho's December sacking was followed by the surprise appointment of Solskjaer until the end of the campaign.

The Norwegian has won nine of his 10 matches in charge in all competitions, with that unbeaten start to life in the dugout seeing United close the gap on the top four and excite the fans. "Solskjaer and (assistant) Mike Phelan have brought back the old school Manchester United," the England midfielder told Britain's Daily Mail newspaper. "They know the league and the club inside out, so to pass that on and get us playing how we are has been perfect. Solskjaer is doing very well, nobody can fault him. "He got the players backing him straight away. He told us there are big expectations and pressure at this club but we have to deal with it and play like a real United team."

Lingard said United, currently two points behind fourth-placed Chelsea in the race for Champions League places, were setting their sights higher for next season. "We will challenge for the title next season if we carry on how we are now," said the 26-year-old. "We're back to basics and winning games by grinding out results or scoring a lot of goals. "As long as we're winning games, that's all that matters." — AFP



# Sport Times

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 2019



BARCELONA: Barcelona's Chilean midfielder Arturo Vidal (R) vies with Real Madrid's Brazilian midfielder Casemiro during the Spanish Copa del Rey (King's Cup) semi-final first leg football match between FC Barcelona and Real Madrid CF at the Camp Nou stadium. — AFP

## All to play for in Bernabeu as fiery Clasico ends 1-1

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