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# Pompeo heading to Kuwait to take part in strategic dialogue

Trip to focus on GCC ties, countering Iran • No timeline for Syria withdrawal

## Dependent to work visa ban mullied

By A Saleh

**KUWAIT:** Well-informed sources at the manpower authority said the authority is about to issue a resolution suspending the transfer of dependent (article 22) visas to article 18 visas to work for the private sector. The sources added that the decision was made following intensive studies with the aim of preventing expats from changing their residency status.

The sources explained the aim of this decision is also to limit the spread of marginal labor, including expats who manage to transfer their visas and get work permits and yet work in activities other than those they transfer to, start their own unlicensed businesses or even provide home delivery services. The sources noted that the law currently in effect allows the transfer of a spouse's visa provided the sponsor approves it and is present at the labor department in person to sign an official waiver and transfer form.

**WASHINGTON:** US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo will tour eight Middle East capitals including Kuwait next week in an effort to shore up crucial alliances strained by the Yemen war, US plans to exit Syria and the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi. Pompeo leaves on Tuesday for the eight-day trip to Amman, Cairo, Manama, Abu Dhabi, Doha, Riyadh, Muscat, and finally Kuwait City, the State Department announced on Friday. In addition, according to the White House last week, a stop in Baghdad is possible, though the State Department could not confirm it.

Pompeo will travel to Kuwait to lead the US delegation for the third US-Kuwait Strategic Dialogue, focused on new areas of cooperation, the State Department announced. Areas of cooperation include defense, cyber security and strengthening economic ties. While in Kuwait, Pompeo will also meet leaders to discuss regional issues including, "the need for GCC unity and supporting UN-led efforts toward a comprehensive political agreement among



Mike Pompeo

parties to end the conflict in Yemen," a State Department memo said.

In Kuwait, Pompeo will underscore "our strong partnership", a State Department official said. "Kuwaitis have been very helpful on regional challenges including Iraq reconstruction, support for refugees in Syria. He will have the aforementioned strategic dialogue, which would be the third annual strategic dialogue with the Kuwaitis, and he'll thank the Amir for everything that the Kuwaitis have done to push Gulf unity under the

leadership of the Amir of Kuwait," the official added.

The trip was confirmed two weeks after President Donald Trump announced unexpectedly that the US would pull its troops out of Syria, stunning allies and sparking concerns of a vacuum in the war-torn country that could be filled by Iran. Pompeo is scheduled to make a keynote address in Cairo, his second stop, where he will underscore the trip's overall message that "the United States is not leaving the Middle East," a senior State Department official told journalists Friday. "Despite reports to the contrary, false narratives surrounding the Syria decision, we are not going anywhere," the official said.

At the same time, Washington wants its Middle East allies to shoulder more of the burden in maintaining regional security and stability, amid fears of a resurgence of extremist groups like Al-Qaeda and Islamic State as US forces pull back. Pompeo is under pressure to counter the impression given to US allies in the region by Trump's Dec 19 announcement that the

US withdrawal from Syria would take place immediately. He has since spoken of "slowly" sending troops home, with a vague timetable "over a period of time".

Nearby countries, led by Israel, are nervous that their regional archrival Iran will be able to expand its presence in Syria with the possible resumption to full power of Tehran's ally President Bashar Al-Assad. Ahead of Pompeo's trip, White House National Security Advisor John Bolton was to depart Friday for talks with Israel and Turkey on how to move ahead. "The Iranian regime is the dangerous actor in the region," the State Department official said. "The secretary will continue his work on galvanizing our regional partners and allies to counter the regime's destabilizing activities."

A second US official stressed Friday that "we have no timeline for our military force to withdraw from Syria". "Our military posture in Syria may be changing. But our overall goals in Syria remain the same, and key among those is...

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## News in brief

### 1,498 permits issued via single counter

**KUWAIT:** The ministry of commerce said yesterday 1,498 licenses for companies were issued via the single business counter in December. The permits included 1,393 for individual companies, 13 for very small businesses (VSBs) and 35 for mobile vendors. The single counter has received 5,014 applications for establishing companies, 2,014 of which were approved. Up to 850 companies were founded and 1,102 are in the process. Moreover, 1,757 permit applications were received for individual companies, 1,393 of which were issued and 607 are in the process. The single counter also received 105 applications to launch VSBs, of which 28 were approved. Formation of 12 companies has been accomplished and 16 are underway. Applications for 26 licenses were received for very small companies, 19 of which were granted. Furthermore, there had been 177 applications for permits for mobile vehicles, of which 86 were licensed and 91 are still being processed. — KUNA

### Iran to deploy warships to Atlantic

**TEHRAN:** Iran is to deploy its newest warship to the Atlantic Ocean on a five-month mission - the navy's longest in a decade, the conservative Fars news agency reported yesterday. "The navy has had a plan to deploy a flotilla to the Atlantic Ocean for a few years and now everything seems prepared to launch the mission," said Fars. Rear Admiral Touraj Hassani-Moghadam told the official IRNA news agency on Friday that the mission would start early in the next Iranian year, which begins in late March. The flotilla will comprise the new guided missile frigate destroyer escort Sahand, which was unveiled just last month, and the recently upgraded 33,000-ton fuel ship Kharg. The vessels are expected to dock in a friendly Latin American country such as Venezuela, Fars said. The ships are among Iran's largest and both are capable of carrying helicopters. — AFP

### Mallya 'fugitive economic offender'

**NEW DELHI:** Billionaire tycoon Vijay Mallya was declared a "fugitive economic offender" by an Indian court yesterday, the first businessman to be indicted under the country's new anti-money laundering law. The special court in Mumbai declared Mallya an economic fugitive following a request by India's financial fraud police that is investigating money laundering charges against him. The court is also due to hear another prosecution plea to seize Mallya's properties. The 62-year-old liquor baron fled the country in 2016 after failing to repay state-owned banks more than \$1 billion in loans that prosecutors say was diverted to other businesses. Mallya has been living in a sprawling \$15 million mansion in southeast England but has denied absconding and any wrongdoings, instead saying the charges are politically motivated. — AFP

## Qatari football team heads to UAE via Kuwait

**DOHA:** Qatar's 23-man football squad for the Asian Cup left Doha yesterday, heading circuitously to the United Arab Emirates on a sports quest which could ultimately be overshadowed by politics. The tiny gas-rich state's participation in Asia's biggest football tournament comes at a highly sensitive time in Gulf relations, as host UAE, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain have imposed a political and economic boycott on Doha since June 2017.

Officials and players have vowed to put politics to one side during the almost month-long tournament. "In the end this is football," Qatar's goalkeeper Saad Al-Sheeb told AFP. "We just control ourselves and play football," he said. But the tournament - which pitches Qatar against Saudi in Abu Dhabi on Jan 17 - could prove to be a flashpoint.

Even the Qatari team's journey is a reminder of the politics involved - the squad has to fly via Kuwait, because of a ban on direct flights imposed against Doha by the UAE, Saudi and Bahrain. The team's route is symbolic as Kuwait has led regional mediation over the crisis. Abu Dhabi, Riyadh and Manama accuse Doha - which is

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ABU DHABI: Performers are seen during the opening ceremony of the 2019 AFC Asian Cup at the Zayed sports city stadium yesterday. — AFP

## Trump slams profane vow to impeach him

**WASHINGTON:** A Democratic congresswoman kicked off her term with an expletive-laced vow to impeach Donald Trump, testing her party's discipline and earning a chiding Friday from the president. As a clip of Michigan Democrat Rashida Tlaib's animated comments cir-

culated widely on social media, Trump tartly dismissed the threat of impeachment, while the newly elected Democratic House Speaker Nancy Pelosi appeared loath to reign in the congresswoman's language.

"How do you impeach a president who has won perhaps the greatest election of all time?" Trump said on Twitter, saying Democrats only consider impeachment "because they know they can't win in 2020." At an event hours after her swearing-in on Thursday, Tlaib told supporters that "we are gonna go in

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WASHINGTON: In this photo taken on Jan 3, 2019, US House Representative Rashida Tlaib participates in a ceremonial swearing-in at the start of the 116th Congress at the US Capitol. — AFP (See Page 10)



TOKYO: President of sushi restaurant chain Sushi-Zanmai, Kiyoshi Kimura, displays a 278 kg bluefin tuna at his main restaurant yesterday. — AFP

## Tuna sells for record \$3m at Tokyo auction

**TOKYO:** A Japanese sushi entrepreneur paid a record \$3.1 million for a giant tuna yesterday as Tokyo's new fish market, which replaced the world-famous Tsukiji late last year, held its first predawn New Year's auction. Bidding stopped at a whopping 333.6 million yen for the enormous 278-kg fish - an endangered species - that was caught off Japan's

northern coast. Self-styled "Tuna King" Kiyoshi Kimura paid the top price, which doubled the previous record of 155 million yen also paid by him in 2013.

"It's the best tuna. I was able to buy a delicious, super fresh tuna," the sushi restaurant chain owner proudly told reporters. "The price was higher than originally thought, but I hope our customers will eat this excellent tuna." Kimura said after the auction. Tsukiji - the world's biggest fish market and a popular tourist attraction in an area packed with restaurants and shops - moved in October to Toyosu, a former gas plant a bit further east.

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# Kuwait Municipality monitors spa activities, tracks down violations

## 'Municipality only issues licenses for spas, not massage centers'

By A Saleh

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Municipality only issues licenses for spas and not massage centers, acting director Faisal Al-Juma said. Responding to an inquiry by Municipal Council member Hamdi Al-Azmi concerning the licenses of spas and massage centers in residential buildings, Juma explained that the municipality only issues licenses to spas after the commercial license is issued from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry as per the conditions stipulated in ministerial decision number 206/2009, including having the spas on the first and second floors of residential buildings and that the spa's total area is a minimum of 180 square meters.

Juma added that ministerial decision number 87/2015 allows spas to build sauna and massage rooms but bans private cabins, conditions the presence of changing rooms, WCs, showers, athletic exercise devices, a sauna room, massage room, jacuzzi, towels, sanitizing devices and materials, special trainers and in

case of swimming pools, the pool's water must be filtered, lined with porcelain and a lifeguard must be present. Juma noted that if the spa includes a male or female beauty salon, all conditions must be respected and the spa's total area must be at least 240 square meters. He added that municipality inspectors are working 24/7 to monitor spa activities and track down any violations to be legally dealt with.

In other news, Minister of State for Municipal Affairs Fahd Al-Shola gave strict instructions to periodically inspect billboards and ads on main streets including Gulf Road, informed sources at Kuwait Municipality said. The minister asked the municipality's executive body to survey those billboards, remove unlicensed ones and take legal actions against violators, the sources added.



**Power saving**  
The Ministry of Electricity and Water (MEW) approved power-saving codes in various buildings, said MEW's power conservation efficiency manager Iqbal

### Periodic inspection for road billboards

Al-Tayyar, noting that the new codes will be mandatory prior to applying to connect service to any building. Tayyar explained that the new codes include maximum electricity consumption for illumination and air-conditioning per square meter and using thermal insulation during construction. The new codes also encourage the use of high-efficiency air-conditioning, mandating new government buildings to produce at least 10 percent of the maximum power they need using renewable energy and using less than 1,000 BTU air-conditioners, or water-cooled ones like those used at MEW.

بلدية الكويت  
Kuwait Municipality



### Biometric devices

The Ministry of Education's assistant undersecretary for financial affairs Yousif Al-Najjar announced that the tender of supplying biometric access devices was approved by the fatwa and legislation department, adding that the Central Agency for Public Tenders will be soon contacted, followed by the State Audit Bureau. "The project will most likely be launched by the beginning of the next school year," he underlined. Notably, the project of supplying various public schools with biometric devices for staff access control, time and attendance costs KD 1 million.

local spotlight

## Freedom of expression



By Muna Al-Fuzai

Muna@kuwaittimes.net

**F**ajer Al-Saeed is a Kuwaiti producer and a strong media personality. I know her personally as a social and political activist. She is a woman who knows very well what she says. Ms Fajer is now under strong attack from several quarters because she expressed her personal opinion clearly on social media. Freedom of expression is guaranteed by the Kuwaiti constitution, which stresses freedom of opinion and belief, but her views caused extensive outrage.

On the first day of the new year, Ms Fajer called for an economic relationship with Israel, which provoked widespread controversy over her violation of the official position taken by Kuwait towards Israel - not only the official position, but the position of many organizations and people in the Arab world. But I think we have to analyze the subject calmly before making accusations against this woman. The question is if the Arab world is now ready for the establishment of economic or social relations with Israel.

Ms Fajer does not hold a formal position, either in the Kuwaiti government or in the National Assembly. She made her personal and private opinion openly and is free to express her beliefs. But the problem is that the timing and history added another complex dimension to the subject, because the Arab world is in its worst phase of intellectual extremism and non-acceptance of other opinions. So naturally the Arab world sees her personal opinion as a crime as it is contrary to the objectives of political organizations and the official Arab media - and not what goes on behind closed doors.

This is, of course, a contradiction in the Arab world, because while Ms Fajer is facing attacks and death threats for a line she wrote, some Gulf and Arab governments and well-known figures have established open relations with Israel without being harmed by any kind of threats. I wonder if this attack is directed at her because she is a woman, or because she countered the official Kuwaiti position, or because it contradicts the position of the speaker of the National Assembly.

In fact, there is a difference between Zionism as a political movement and organization and Israel as a state and a political system. The proof is that Palestinian organizations maintain relations with Israel as a state and sit with them at one table. But they attack Zionist acts, killings and torture.

For example, IS claims it represents Islam and the caliphate, but the reality is that it is a political movement - a group of murderers and mercenaries, and has nothing to do with the Islamic religion. All their massacres in the name of religion are not acceptable and Islam is innocent of it. So I refuse to accuse Islam of terrorism because of a handful of murderers like IS.

I think what happened in the case of Ms Fajer is that she made an opinion at a wrong time and in a situation that is unlikely to accept any opinion contrary to that of political forces. I remember when I was a young student at school, I asked my teacher a question about the Shiite sect. I did not realize that I would be questioned for the reason behind this minor inquiry. I learned then that I should not ask such questions and I still wonder why I was punished on that day! This incident occurred 40 years ago and I know today that nothing has changed.

The Arab world lives with many contradictions between what is portrayed and what is hidden. What Ms Fajer said is not a crime. The Arab world does not mind saying what she wants in secret, but when you say it in public, it is not acceptable, because we are not ready to accept an opinion that goes against what we learned in school and what we should say in public.

## 'Thousands' of marine species settle reserves



**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Dive Team of the Environmental Voluntary Foundation announced yesterday successful settlement of thousands of marine species in Jaber Al-Kuwait Reserves for Sea Creatures and the grand reserve in large sizes and various species. These organisms include seashells, oysters, shellfish, algae, corals and some molluscs, said the environmental projects officer at the Diving Team, Mahmoud Ashkanani, in a statement to the press.

Such marine reserves create an environment similar to the natural ones where coral reefs grow, Ashkanani said. The team's efforts in the field of marine reserves and Jaber Al-Kuwait Reserves for Sea Creatures project, which extended for 22 years, achieved the desired goals, especially increase of coral colonies onto sandy spots at rocky beds. These sea beds have been covered with layers of sand due to water currents, some construction works and coastal dams, he added.

The project, which was inaugurated in 2003 in south Doha and Bnaider, is about concrete materials at the bottom of the sea with suitable depths to create an environment suitable for the settlement of coral larvae, in addition to providing caches for fish and other marine organisms. The location of the grand reserve was carefully chosen according to the requirements of safe navigation and diving in it is located in the south of Doha and Bnaider, about 1.6 kilometers from the coast and five kilometers from Ras Al-Zour.

Ashkanani praised the role of governmental and private bodies in supporting this large environmental project, including the Kuwait Oil Company (KOC), the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research and the Environment Public Authority. He called on sea goers to preserve these protected areas and the biodiversity of species and not to dump the waste and to inform the concerned authorities of any violations on coral reef sites. — KUNA



**KUWAIT:** Representative of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Amiri Diwan's Advisor Abdullah Al-Maatouq departed yesterday to Egypt to participate in the opening ceremony of 'Al-Fattah Al-Alim' mosque and 'The Nativity of the Christ' cathedral. — KUNA

### News in brief

#### Lawyer to sue parliament

**KUWAIT:** Attorney Ali Al-Ali announced he will file a case at the constitutional court against the parliament if it doesn't announce the start of registration of candidates for by-elections in its next session. He said the by-elections should be held to replace MPs Waleed Al-Tabtabaei and Jamaan Al-Harbash, who were convicted by a final court verdict. Ali said it's against the law to hold any voting at the National Assembly on the final court verdict, warning he will file a case against the parliament if its members engage in any "illegal" act. — By Nawara Fattahova

#### Projects' development monitored

**KUWAIT:** The General Secretariat of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development said that developing its 'New Kuwait' website aims to monitor the execution of governmental projects. The website will also allow officials and citizens to follow up on the processing of these projects, the secretariat's Assistant Secretary General Talal Al-Shammari said in a press statement yesterday. He added that the website will also include pictures and videos on development topics and the number of days left until the completion of the project as well as information on costs. Moreover, it will also be a source of accurate and transparent information for all types of media on the 'New Kuwait 2035' developmental vision, Shammari noted. — KUNA

#### Arab journalists decry attack

**CAIRO:** The Federation of Arab Journalists condemned yesterday Friday's ransacking of offices of the Palestinian Broadcasting Corporation (PBC) in Gaza Strip. "This cowardly attack serves no-one but the Zionist enemy and deepens the gulf of differences among the brothers of the homeland," the federation said in a statement, a day after at least five persons brandishing sticks and sharp objects burst into the TV and radio headquarters, smashing costly equipment. The federation called on Hamas, which controls the strip, to look for the "saboteurs and culprits of this low level act and bring them to justice," hinting such an incident might snag efforts for conciliation with the West Bank-based government. It also urged international and organizations and associations to condemn "the unprecedented incident" with the most possible terms. — KUNA

Local

# Local dailies suspend publication to cut costs in face of growing digital media

Arabic dailies cite little advertisement income, rising cost for step



KUWAIT: Reading newspapers while drinking morning coffee is considered a weekend ritual to many people. —KUNA photos



Following in the footsteps of English dailies, Arabic dailies Al-Qabas, Al-Rai, Al-Anbaa and Al-Jarida stopped publishing on Saturdays.



Al-Qabas Chief Editor  
Waleed Al-Nisf



Chief Editor of Al-Rai  
Newspaper Majed Al-Ali



Al-Anbaa Newspaper Editor-  
in-Chief Yusuf Al-Marzouq



Managing Editor at Al-Jarida  
Newspaper Nasser Al-Otaibi



Dr Munawer Al-Rajhi



Hanan Al-Zayed



Abdulwahhab Al-Essa



Abdullah Buftain

KUWAIT: The once-a-week newspapers' publication suspension in Kuwait has left the door wide open for speculations that this step would either be recalculations of feasibility of overall paper production or start of transformation to online copies. Journalists however considered the decisions by local Arabic Al-Qabas, Al-Rai, Al-Anbaa and Al-Jarida dailies to stop paper production on Saturdays - following in the footsteps of English dailies - as unjust towards readers who have sentimental attachment to paper copies, who also consider the way they hold and read the paper a daily ritual.

### Economic decision

Arab and Western newspapers have been affected by digitization of papers in the past decade, including for example the Christian Science Monitor which stopped paper production in 2009 after circulation dropped to 200,000 copies while its digital copy was read by more than a million people. "This is a 100 percent economic decision aimed at cutting cost," Waleed Al-Nisf, Al-Qabas Chief Editor said, and the newspapers "agreed there are difficulties in competing against electronic means." Nisf also attributed the once-a-week publication suspension to less "advertisement and the economic situation," therefore newspapers decided to stop production for a day as a mean to overcome these troubles.

Nisf said suspension may give newspapers' workers a time to rest "thus have more production while cutting cost. This procedure has been adopted in the US, Europe and other parts of the world, where newspapers have one copy for Saturday and Sunday." He cited a US report suggesting newspapers would vanish by the year 2032, affirming Al-Qabas' plans to strengthen its web-based content. "We have big investment in this domain and we will attract more readers who will pay affordable prices for the service," he said.

### Digital copies

Majed Al-Ali, chief editor of Al-Rai Newspaper, said the one-day paper publication suspension would not affect the number of readers because all newspapers have 'digital copies', or news websites where content is updated round-the-clock. Citing international studies conducted in 2018, Ali said they concluded newspapers were more "credible" than the digital copy because they "verified the story before publication, contrary to other means which consider publication speed more important than content or credibility."

Furthermore, Ali said little advertisement income and rising cost caused the one-day production suspension. "Newspapers have been suffering from losses for years, and it is time to rearrange their priorities," he proclaimed.

Al-Anbaa Newspaper Chief Editor Yusuf Al-Marzouq brushed aside speculations one-day suspension was a beginning of permanent closure. "The aim is to cut expenses because the whole world is experiencing an economic crisis at all

fronts," he said, adding that the number of readers would not be affected because Saturday was a weekend anyway.

Nasser Al-Otaibi, Managing Editor at Al-Jarida Newspaper, who acknowledged newspapers were suffering severe financial issues, said the one-day suspension was not the end of newspapers. "It is too early to talk about closure of newspapers in Kuwait because they are taking serious steps to prevent this," he said. Al-Jarida, he said, would rather develop its paper copy to include more analyses, reports, interviews and features in order to counter the competition posed by the digital media. Otaibi said that Al-Jarida, like other papers, would compensate suspension of publication of its hard copy into its digital copy and social media. Al-Jarida, he noted, was already updating its digital copy and providing most recent stories like the National Assembly sessions.

### Daily ritual

A 2016 study by Al-Jazeera Center for Studies showed internet users in the Arab world skyrocketed from 29 million in 2007 to 140 million in 2015, indicating rising number

"The newspapers represent a daily ritual for a large segment of people specially the senior citizens," said Waleed Al-Holan, a journalist, adding the credibility of newspapers was higher because every story was verified at multiple levels before final print. However, Hanan Al-Zayed, another journalist, said correcting mistakes in digital copies

was easy and would not cost anything, contrary to the print papers which would lose further papers. She believed the one-day production suspension "will trigger a social problem, at least at the personal level because people will miss the feeling of papers and sound of flip of pages." Zayed said the smartphones became a gateway for "daily activities which isolate the individual from his or her social environment."

Dr. Munawer Al-Rajhi, Head of Mass Communications Department at Kuwait University (KU), said suspension of newspapers' publication on Saturday should have occurred 2-3 years ago. Rajhi, anticipating suspension to include Fridays as well in one or two years, said advertisers would not advertise during holidays. "Therefore, newspapers' owners were forced to stop publication in order to save money."

Abdullah Buftain, a journalist, said the one-day suspension of production was only a start "of the end of newspapers." Abdulwahhab Al-Essa, another journalist, said newspapers were suffering from "electronic revolution," and predicted the papers to continue publications but on a weekly or even monthly basis.

Newspapers are struggling in the face of digital age, but one should not forget many people thought introduction of TV was the end of radio. They were wrong and the radio survived through development of content and introduction of interactive methods that retained its audience. Will newspapers follow suit? Time will tell. —KUNA



## Serious steps to prevent permanent closure

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Local

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: A kingfisher flies over the Arabian Gulf waters north of Kuwait on January 3, 2019. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

# Kuwaiti artist presents history in new ways at Qatar exhibition

‘History in Color Exhibition’ gallery hosted at Katara Cultural Village



DOHA: Kuwaiti artist Eiman Al-Shammari explains themes of her works to gallery visitors. — KUNA photos



The 'History in Color Exhibition'.

DOHA: Kuwaiti artist Eiman Al-Shammari yesterday stressed the importance of presenting history in new artistic ways through the use of educational curricula and technological methods such as artificial intelligence, collage art and color prediction. Shammari was speaking to the press on sidelines of her 'History in Color Exhibition,' currently held at Katara Cultural Village.

She said that this experiment depends on the technology of artificial intelligence in coloring the images and study the image historical details to provide old images in a modern way: the pictures seem to have been taken yesterday, she added. She pointed out that the exhibition, which takes place from

January 2 to 14, represents the first initiative of its kind, adding that it presents the Islamic and Arab history to the world in a series of art exhibitions, three of which ended in Kuwait, and pave the way for globalism in Katara Doha.

Shammari said that she set up her first art exhibition in the Arab world in 1997 at College of Engineering and Petroleum in Kuwait University, where she revived the Arabic calligraphy by using technological techniques. Shammari is a Kuwaiti artist, writer, and poet. She is the first Arab woman to launch a humanitarian campaign to enter the Guinness Book, the first of its kind against racism, sectarianism and bullying. — KUNA



A painting by Kuwaiti artist Eiman Al-Shammari.



Works by Kuwaiti artist Eiman Al-Shammari.

## 320+ chefs compete during Horeca Kuwait

KUWAIT: The 2019 Horeca Kuwait cooking competition will be held as part of the exhibition, and is set to be attended by sponsors and participants. Over 320 chefs will be competing over the three-day exhibition which is due to be held at Kuwait International Fairgrounds in Mishref in the period of January 14-16, 2019, and organized by Leaders Group in collaboration with Hospitality Services Company.

A statement made by the organizing committee said that ever since its inception in 2012, Horeca Kuwait's cooking competitions had developed to include various categories with over 250 contestants in addition to 40 others competing in house-keeping, tea and coffee making and serving competitions.

The committee added that the jury would include the head of the World Association of



Chef Societies (WACS), chef Thomas Gugler, former head of Le Notre chef Samaan Hilal, owner of Al-Makan restaurant, chef Faisal Al-

Nashmi, head of the French Cooking Academy chef Mark Mubash, the French Academy representative in the Middle East



chef Charles Azar, chef Tareq Ibrahim, chef Silvian Hervio and many other chefs. The statement added that the competitions'

results would be declared on the third day of the event when both winners and jury members would be honored.

Local

# Banker magazine selects Central Bank governor best in Middle East for 2019

## Hashel succeeded in taking care of one of the world's strongest banking sectors

KUWAIT: The Banker magazine, which specializes in financial and banking information, has elected the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) Governor Dr Mohammad Al-Hashel as the best central bank governor in the Middle East for 2019. The magazine published on its website yesterday its list of best central bankers around the world, with Croatian Boris Vujic as the European best.

Mexican Central Bank Governor Alejandro Diaz has been chosen as the best in the Americas and Malaysia's Noor Shamsia was the best in Asia and the Pacific, and Morocco's Abdullatif Al-Gohari was the best in Africa. "He is a rising star in the region as he took office in 2012 at the age of 37 and since then has managed the country's financial sector and successfully navigated it to overcome a wide range of volatility and challenges that followed the crisis," the magazine said on Hashel.

"Hashel has succeeded in taking care of one of the strongest banking sectors in the world. Today, Kuwaiti banks enjoy high rates of capitalization and profitability and are proud of the outstanding quality of their assets. This is largely due to Dr Hashel's efforts to enhance the overall stability of the financial system," it added. It noted that under the guidance of Hashel, the CBK improved its capital adequacy ratio to Kuwaiti banks at an average of 18.3 percent at the beginning of 2018. Furthermore, additional capital requirements were set for banks of systemic interest, while other financial safety indicators, Global standard.

The International Monetary Fund noted that the regulatory requirements in terms of costs and profits are estimated by the CBK and are periodically reassessed to increase flexibility and robustness in an efficient and rational manner. The magazine pointed to Kuwait's growth as a center for Islamic finance, with Islamic financial assets accounting for 40 percent of the domestic banking sector, noting that the

CBK launched in November 2018 the experimental regulatory environment to provide a secure environment for testing the innovations of modern financial technologies and services related to electronic payment systems.

This experimental control environment operates on four levels as the applications of financial techniques are first developed and evaluated by the Central Bank in terms of technical safety and then conform to the instructions and controls, the magazine said. The Banker is one of the oldest banking information centers established in 1926 and since then it has provided coverage, information, studies and reports on the banking sector with a 91-year-old credibility.

### Supervisory achievements

In other news, Kuwait's State Audit Bureau (SAB) said yesterday that many supervisory achievements were made during 2018 as part of its strategic vision (2016-2020) in monitoring public wealth. In a statement, SAB announced in its annual report of 2018 which highlights the results after examining and revision

on the budgets of ministries and governmental managements is its leading achievement of the year. The bureau also showed that it published many supervisory reports such as 'citizen's report 2018,' 'risky subjects report' and in addition to issuing three guides.

On the international level, the SAB said that it has won first place in the elections of Governing Board members of Asian Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions (ASOSAI) in its 14th assembly in Hanoi, Vietnam last September. SAB's report noted the participation in the higher financial and auditing bodies meeting at the UN headquarters in New York to achieve UN's 2030 Vision of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In order to achieve its 3rd goal of its strategic plan, SAB have signed six cooperating agreements to develop means of communication and exchange knowledge and experiences. The report indicates that SAB hosted more than a dozen of international and regional events that are related to financial supervi-

National Bank of Kuwait said, "NBK places significant importance to serving the youth and we are glad to have had the opportunity to meet with the NUKS members and Kuwaiti students studying abroad. NBK always listens to students and the younger generation to ensure we tailor products that meet their banking needs."

Othman added, "NBK provides many easily accessible services to the youth in addition to holding activities and campaigns all year long to offer them promotions and rewards. The Bank also offers services that ease their banking experience when traveling or living abroad, all available in 15 international branches and through toll free numbers available for customers to connect with the Bank while traveling."

Customers can connect for free with NBK through the toll free numbers available in nine countries. The numbers are available in the most popular travel destinations: UAE, USA, UK, Canada, France, Germany, Turkey, Italy and Spain.

The bank launched new services on the NBK Mobile Banking Application, introducing e-payments through which customers can make hassle-free electronic payments anytime, anywhere and for service providers in Commercial Liabilities, telecom and entertainment.

The bank recently launched also on its Mobile Banking Application the NBK Quick Pay service which is a fast and easy way to receive money, pay bills and transfer due amounts to friends, anytime and anywhere, even on weekends and official holidays.



### Audit Bureau highlights 2018 achievements



Dr Mohammad Al-Hashel

sion contained many training programs and seminars presented by experts worldwide. The bureau affirmed that all of its achievements were the result of high efficiency institutional work which targets the latest developments in the world.

### SAB visits Morocco

In other news, a delegation from SAB is seeking opportunities for knowledge exchange with their Moroccan partners as part of efforts to boost efficiency in inspection programs, said a pair of Kuwaiti auditors yesterday. The Kuwaiti contingent's week-long visit to Morocco represents an earnest desire to gain some insight into the North African nation's successful foray into renewable energy, Kuwaiti auditor Yaqoub Al-Terkait said. Such initiatives allow auditors from both nations to gain knowledge in new concepts, which in turn, will lead to more transparency in the audit sector, he added. Another Kuwait auditor, Fahad Al-Jamae, praised the Moroccans' "success" in the field of renewable energy, saying the visit will prove mutually beneficial for state audit bodies in both countries. The Kuwaiti auditors plan to visit solar plants across Morocco in a bid to gain a first-hand view of how operations are handled in these renewable energy facilities, he pointed out. — KUNA

### News in brief

#### KD 336.3 million credit loans in 2018

KUWAIT: Kuwait Credit Bank said yesterday that the total of all types of loans reached KD 336.3 million (\$1.1 billion) last year. The bank added in a press release that the number of clients the bank received in all its branches reached 314,636. The number of signed contracts in the legal administration have reached 9,494, and the number of accredited cheques reached 49,228 and 14,878 transfers. Kuwait Credit Bank is an independent public institute under the supervision of Minister of State for Housing Affairs, and it handles housing loans to citizens in addition to other banking services. — KUNA

#### 'Capital Markets' conference

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Capital Markets Authority (CMA) said yesterday that its fourth annual conference titled 'Capital Market Reforms through Regional Initiatives' will be held on January 23rd to discuss issues regarding capital markets. In a press release, organizers said the conference will also tackle security activities, and the functions of the regulatory bodies along with reviewing the recent developments in the field. The statement noted participants will review "leading global cases in market capitals, which are presented by a selection of international and regional experts and specialists." The first part emphasizes on discussing essential incentives and initiatives for listing across the Africa and Middle East region, the expected benefits and impact on financial markets in particular, and on the economic reality in general. The second part addresses financing of small and medium enterprises (SME) and its mechanisms and tools, including risks rising from financial technology. — KUNA

## NBK management meets NUKS - USA, Kuwaiti students

KUWAIT: With a growing commitment to the youth of Kuwait, offering its support within the banking sector and beyond, the Executive Management of the National Bank of Kuwait recently hosted a luncheon for members of the National Union of Kuwait Students (NUKS) - USA Branch and Kuwaiti students who are studying abroad.

The luncheon held discussions with the NUKS - USA members and Kuwaiti students about their banking needs that the Bank can provide to support their studying experience outside of Kuwait. NBK presented the products and services it has carefully developed to cater to the unique and fast-paced lifestyles of the younger generation, and especially when living outside their home country. The Bank also discussed the latest introduced updates to enhance NBK Mobile Banking App, ensuring the highest technological standards and features that allow customers to manage their accounts and complete transactions easily.

Speaking of the fruitful luncheon, Mohammed Al-Othman, General Manager of Consumer Banking Group,



## Kuwait-Austria trade at \$66 million in 1st half of 2018

VIENNA: Trade volume between Austria and Kuwait reached 58 million euros (\$66 million) in first half of 2018, said Dr Mudar Khojah, Secretary General of the Arab-Austrian Chamber of Commerce. Commercial exchanges between the two countries are forecast to reach KD 120 million (\$136.5 million) after assembling all data and figures of the year second half, said Khojah in a statement to the press. Austria exports to Kuwait cars, fire engines, medicines, jewelry, food, mechanical spare parts, electrical appliances and chemical materials, said Khojah, who will partake in a forum, 'Digital Transformation,' due in Kuwait tomorrow. Praising the current level of commercial cooperation between Kuwait and Austria, Khojah forecast growth of the Kuwaiti-Austrian trade



Dr Mudar Khojah

exchanges. On the forum planned in Kuwait, he said the conferees would discuss setting up electronic sites for all local and Arab commercial chambers to facilitate access to information. He affirmed Austrian companies' readiness to partake in Kuwait's mega projects, within framework of New Kuwait 2035 development strategy. — KUNA

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# International

SUNDAY, JANUARY 6, 2019



Democratic allies should rally to protect Taiwan from China: Tsai

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## Defendants cleared in EU 'golden' visas trial in Portugal



KOCHI: Police detain an Indian activist amid demonstrations after women entered the Sabarimala temple.— AFP

# Violence rages over flashpoint temple

## Prolonged showdown between religious hardliners and authorities

**THIRUVANANTHAPURAM:** Twin arson and bomb attacks rocked southern India yesterday, continuing a violent backlash that followed the entry of two women into a Hindu temple that forbids female devotees. The Sabarimala temple in Kerala state has been at the centre of a prolonged showdown between religious hardliners and authorities since September, when India's top court overturned a ban on women aged 10 to 50 setting foot inside.

Police said unidentified attackers hurled a homemade bomb at the home of a politician from the rightwing Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and set ablaze the office of its Hindu nationalist parent group Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). Both are

opposed to the court's order to allow women inside the temple. No injuries were reported, police said. The fresh attacks came hours after unknown attackers bombed the house of a politician linked to the state's ruling Communist Party, which has vowed to implement the court order.

One person has died and more than 270 others have been injured since Wednesday, when thousands protested after two women devotees in their 40s prayed inside the temple. The two local women had become the first to access the shrine since the landmark verdict and months-long of siege by Hindu hardliners that forced dozens of women devotees to retreat from the gold-plated hilltop temple.

A third woman from Sri Lanka said she entered the temple on Thursday night but this was disputed by the temple authorities, who performed a "purification" ritual after the two other women made their way into the shrine. More than 3,000 protesters have either been arrested or taken into preventive custody after multiple clashes between police and demonstrators. Kerala has a history of political violence between Hindu and the left-leaning parties but tensions in the region have escalated since the women entered the temple on January 2.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, a member of the BJP, joined calls by his party and the RSS for a statewide shutdown to protest the women's entrance. Modi's party accuses the state government of backing "anti-reli-

gious" groups to violate Hindu traditions. Hindu groups believe that women of menstruating age should not enter the temple because they are "impure" and the temple deity, Ayyappa, was celibate.

The Communist Party has accused the BJP and RSS of inciting violence in the state. Women are barred from a handful of Hindu temples in India, including Sabarimala, where it was considered a taboo for centuries before the ban was given legal force by Kerala High Court in 1991. But the Supreme Court in a landmark judgement in September overturned the Kerala court's ruling after six women lawyers petitioned it in 2006, challenging a ban they said violated their fundamental rights.—AFP

## Trump warns could force long shutdown over border wall

**WASHINGTON:** A defiant President Donald Trump said Friday he was prepared to keep the US government shut down for as long as it takes — months or even years — to force Congress to provide billions of dollars for a border wall with Mexico. "This is national security we're talking about. We're not playing games," Trump said following another round of talks at the White House with Democratic leaders on ending the two-week impasse which has shut about 25 percent of the government.

"The southern border is a dangerous, horrible disaster," he said, decrying illegal immigration, drug smuggling and human trafficking. "We have to get a structure built," Trump said, calling on Congress to approve his \$5.6 billion request for a "major powerful barrier" made of concrete or steel. Trump also claimed that some previous US presidents had told him they should have built a wall. None of Trump's predecessors has ever publicly advocated such a thing.

Describing the situation as a "national emergency," Trump said he was looking into ways to get a wall built without congressional approval. "I may do it," he said. "I am allowed to do that." Chuck Schumer, the Senate minority leader, said Democrats had urged Trump during what he called a "sometimes contentious" meeting to reopen the federal government, which has been partially shut down since December 22 leaving 800,000 employees furloughed or working without pay.

A handful of those employees held a roadside protest in Maryland on Friday, saying they want to get back to work, WTOP radio reported. "We told the

president we needed the government open," Schumer said. "He resisted. In fact, he said he'd keep the government closed for a very long period of time. Months or even years." Asked by reporters whether this was true, Trump said it was although he added that he hoped the shutdown "doesn't go on even beyond a few more days. I will do whatever we have to do," Trump said. "If we have to stay out for a very long period of time we will do that."

### Talks over the weekend

Trump said a bipartisan group including Vice President Mike Pence would meet over the weekend to try to reach an agreement. "Our aim will be to find a solution, not just simply to end the government shutdown, to provide funding to end the crisis at our southern border, to achieve real border security and to build a wall on our southern border," Pence said.

A quick end to the stalemate does not appear to be in sight, however, as Democrats, who now control the House of Representatives, seem in no mood to make concessions. "We are committed to keeping our borders safe," Nancy Pelosi, who took over as speaker of the House on Thursday, told reporters following the meeting with the president. But, Pelosi added, "we recognize on the Democratic side that we really cannot resolve this until we open up government."

"And we made that very clear to the president," she said. "Services are being withheld from the American people. Paychecks are being withheld." Both Democrats and Republicans have attempted to pin the blame for the shutdown on the other side and Pelosi has ruled out funding for a border wall she has described as an "immorality." Shortly after the new Congress was sworn in on Thursday, the House approved legislation to fund homeland security operations until February 8 and several other agencies through September — but no money for a wall.

Trump has said he would veto any bill that does not include funding for the barrier and the Republican-run



WASHINGTON DC: US President Donald Trump speaks during a press conference in the Rose Garden of the White House following a meeting with Congressional leaders on the government shutdown.— AFP

Senate has said it would not consider anything that does not pass muster with the president. The fight over the wall is setting the stage for what could be a tumultuous final two years in office for Trump faced with a hostile Democratic-controlled House equipped with investigative powers.

Some newly seated Democrats have even called for impeachment proceedings against the Republican president although Pelosi has distanced herself from those appeals for the time being. "We talked about (impeachment) today," Trump said. "Nancy said 'We're not looking to impeach you.'" Trump also sought to defend his record saying "you don't impeach people when they're doing a good job." —AFP

## Patriarch signs decree on independent Ukraine church

**ISTANBUL:** The Istanbul-based Orthodox patriarch yesterday signed the formal decree confirming the creation of an independent Ukrainian church, marking a break with the Russian church that has angered Moscow. The Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople, the leading authority in Orthodox Christianity, signed the decree known as Tomos at a ceremony in Istanbul. Ukraine's President Petro Poroshenko and former Ukrainian president Viktor Yushchenko were on hand to witness the ceremony.

"Dear Ukrainians, this is a historic event! This is a great day!" Poroshenko said as he thanked the Orthodox patriarch. "Once more, words of great gratitude in the name of the Ukrainian people, in the name of our nation to Your Holiness... It took us a very long time to get here." The Ecumenical Patriarchate had first agreed to recognise the independence of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in October. Then in December a historic council of Orthodox bishops in Kiev created the independent body.

The Russian Orthodox Church cut ties with the Constantinople Patriarchate in protest at the move, which dealt a huge blow to Moscow's spiritual authority in the Orthodox world. Vladimir Legoida, a spokesman for the Moscow church, denounced the decree as "a document that is the result of irrepressible political and personal ambitions". —AFP

## International

# France announces 'action plan' to counter migrant Channel crossings

## France has already doubled the number of coastguard boats

PARIS: The French government announced an "action plan" Friday to counter attempts by migrants to cross the Channel to Britain by sea, which it promises will end a phenomenon that has alarmed the Conservative government in London. An increase in crossings by asylum-seekers, mostly Iranians, has led Home Secretary Sajid Javid to declare a "major incident" with the government under pressure to provide a response.

"This plan should enable us to end these crossings," French Interior Minister Christophe Castaner was quoted as saying in the statement on Friday, adding that they were "not only illegal but also extremely dangerous. It's in our interest, as well as the United Kingdom's, to do everything to prevent new networks (of people smugglers) developing which would likely attract irregular migrants to our shores again," it added.

The plan will see stepped-up police patrols around ports where some migrants have attempted to steal boats, as well as surveillance of beaches where dinghies have been launched from. A British navy ship was patrolling the Channel on Friday in addition to four other British coastguard boats which watch over the 21 miles of sea that separate

France and Britain at its narrowest point.

France has already doubled the number of coastguard boats in the Channel to two-four per night depending on the weather, a spokeswoman for French marine operations in the area told AFP this week. The new French measures will be in addition to a joint action plan announced on December 31 by the French and British government, according to the statement from the French interior ministry. Castaner is to travel to London soon to discuss this joint plan, which is expected to include combined operations at sea and greater intelligence sharing about smuggler networks.

### Overblown fears?

Earlier Friday, French government spokesman Benjamin Griveaux had downplayed the phenomenon of sea crossings in the Channel by comparing the number of arrivals in Britain to the number of people crossing the Mediterranean by sea. "We are not talking about the same level at all," Griveaux said.

A total of 504 people, the vast majority in the last two months, attempted to cross the Channel to Britain in 2018, with 276 successful

in reaching British waters, according to the latest figures from the French interior ministry. Data from the UN's refugee agency showed that 55,756 people crossed the Mediterranean to Spain in 2018.

Griveaux said that "there is no requirement to increase any further the resources there (on the Channel coast) which are working very well and are proving their worth." Explanations for the sudden spurt in sea crossings vary. The weather in recent months has been unusually calm, coastguard and security officials say.

Others have suggested that Britain's impending exit from the European Union next March could be playing a role, prompting fears among migrants that Britain will clamp down even more on immigration post-Brexit. But Fabien Sudry, the top security official in the northern Pas-de-Calais region, told AFP recently that the most likely reason is the arrival over the last month of larger-than-usual numbers of Iranians around the port of Calais. They have attracted, or led to the creation of, a new people-smuggling network which is trying to avoid increasingly tough security controls in the port, where migrants try to stow away on trucks heading for Britain. — AFP



A crew member from the Dutch-flagged Sea-Watch 3 rescue vessel throws a buoy and a rope to rescue a migrant, after he dived on January 4, 2019 from the vessel in the cold Mediterranean off Malta's coast, in an attempt to reach the shore by swimming. — AFP

## UK warns Russia against 'games' over alleged spy

LONDON: Britain warned Russia on Friday against playing "diplomatic chess games" after Paul Whelan, a former US Marine who reportedly also carries Canadian and Irish passports, was charged with espionage. Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt said Britain had offered consular access to Whelan, who was detained in Moscow last week, but had not been able to visit him yet.

"We are giving him every support that we can, but we don't agree with individuals being used in diplomatic chess games," Hunt told the BBC in an interview. "It is desperately worrying, not just for the individual but their family, and we are extremely worried about him and his family as we hear this news," he said. US ambassador Jon Huntsman visited Whelan at the Lefortovo prison in Moscow on Wednesday.

The United States has been cautious in its public comments on the case, with Secretary of State Mike Pompeo saying earlier that Washington was trying to learn more about the situation. Whelan, 48, was arrested last Friday "while carrying out an act of espionage", according to Russia's FSB domestic security service. The charge carries a maximum jail sentence of 20 years. US news reports painted Whelan as an unlikely spy with a chequered history who most recently worked for the security service of an international auto parts manufacturer.

Whelan was court-martialed by the Marine Corps in 2008 on charges of larceny and passing bad checks. The New York Times said, an offence that in most cases disqualifies candidates from foreign intelligence work. He was arrested while attending an American friend's wedding to a Russian woman at Moscow's upscale Metropol Hotel, according



This undated family handout picture obtained on January 3, 2019, shows Paul Whelan posing for a picture, an American ex-Marine who Russian prosecutors have charged in Moscow with espionage. — AFP

to his twin brother David. His family has denied he is a spy, with his brother calling the possibility "inconceivable".

### Collecting passports

The New York Times said Whelan has been travelling regularly to Russia since 2006 and made friends with Russians through his social media account in VK, the local version of Facebook. He also appears to have developed a penchant for collecting passports, with his case now implicating four Western countries. Whelan also holds an Irish passport, although he entered Russia on his US one, an official source told AFP.

The Irish foreign ministry said it has "requested consular access to an Irish citizen currently detained in Russia after receiving a request for assistance". The Russian foreign ministry said Britain's request to see Whelan "is being worked on". And The Washington Post said Whelan also carries a passport from Canada, where he was born.

"He collected (passports) as a game," the Post quoted a person familiar with Whelan's case as saying. "There was an ongoing competition with his sister to see who could get the most." Diplomatic relations between Britain and Russia are tense, particularly following the attempted murder of a former Russian spy in Britain last year with a nerve agent. Britain accused Russia of being behind the attack despite Moscow's denials, and coordinated the expulsions of dozens of Russian diplomatic staff around the world. — AFP

## Lima Group countries say won't recognize new Maduro mandate

LIMA: Foreign ministers from 12 Latin American countries and Canada said Friday their governments would not accept Nicolas Maduro as Venezuela's president when he is sworn in for a second six-year term next week. The 14-member Lima Group — with the exception of Mexico — said it would not grant recognition to Maduro's hardline socialist government, after meeting in the Peruvian capital to discuss ways to step up international pressure on the regime, which has presided over the oil-rich country's economic collapse.

Peru's Foreign Minister Nestor Popolizio said the group had delivered "a strong political message" ahead of Maduro's inauguration on January 10. Maduro was re-elected on May 20 in a ballot boycotted by the main opposition parties and widely condemned by the international community, including the United States which called it a "sham." "The main message is undoubtedly the non-recognition of the Venezuelan regime's new term," Popolizio told reporters.

"It is very important that the Lima Group has issued this statement to continue exerting pres-

sure with a view to the restoration of democracy in Venezuela," the Peruvian minister said. The Group, of which Canada is a member, said Maduro should temporarily transfer power to the opposition-controlled National Assembly until free elections can be held. "Nicolas Maduro is urged not to assume the presidency, to respect the powers of the assembly and to temporarily transfer power until new elections are held," Popolizio said.

Venezuela hit back at the Lima Group, accusing it of fomenting a coup at the behest of the US, which has sanctioned Venezuelan officials and entities. Caracas expressed its "great bewilderment at the extravagant declaration of a group of countries of the American continent which, after receiving instructions from the United States through a videoconference, have agreed to encourage a coup d'etat," according to a statement read by Venezuela's foreign minister, Jorge Arreaza.

The United States, which is not a member of the group created after deadly anti-Maduro protests in 2017, participated in the meeting for the first time. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo commented by video conference from Washington. The arrival in power of a new far-right government in Brazil under President Jair Bolsonaro is likely to harden regional opposition to Maduro. Bolsonaro, who has aligned himself with Washington by expressing hostility towards "authoritarian regimes," said Thursday he was open to discussing his country's becoming home to a US military base "in the future." Venezuela recently hosted the Russian Air Force, including

long-range nuclear bombers, for joint military exercises — a move that stoked regional tensions.

### Cutting diplomatic ties

The Lima Group action coincides with a statement from Venezuela's opposition-dominated but toothless National Assembly, which said it would not recognize the "illegitimate" Maduro when he takes office. "We are facing a man who stole an election. We will not have more than a usurper (as president). Neither Venezuelans nor foreigners can recognize Maduro as president," opposition deputy Delsa Solorzano told AFP.

Separately, the Secretary General of the Organization of American States, Luis Almagro, called on Twitter for the international community not to recognize Maduro. Maduro, who was hand-picked by Socialist president Hugo Chavez to succeed him when he died in 2013, was re-elected in May after early elections called by the Constituent Assembly, a body created by Maduro which has in practice replaced the legislature.

The Lima Group statement reiterated its support for the National Assembly, which it recognizes as Venezuela's "constitutionally elected body." Washington has recently stepped up contacts with South American states dealing with the influx of migrants — around one million to Colombia alone — from Venezuela's worsening economic crisis. Pompeo was in Cartagena earlier this week for talks with Colombian President Ivan Duque. Both officials have denounced Maduro's "dictatorship" and agreed to step up efforts to isolate his government diplomatically. — AFP

## How to explain the return of Nigeria's Boko Haram militants?

KANO: Nigeria's Islamic State West Africa Province, a faction of Boko Haram affiliated to the Islamic State militant group, has intensified attacks against the army in the northeast of the country at an alarming rate, and the military appears to be struggling. Here are the principal reasons:

### Better-armed jihadists

Fighters from the Islamic State-affiliated group, known by its acronym ISWAP, have managed to assemble a potent arsenal thanks to raids on military bases and capturing weapons in attacks, but also through arms smuggling from other African countries. On December 27, the jihadists showed their force again during a brief takeover of Baga town: In just a few hours, the militants had routed around 500 soldiers from the multi-national MNJTF force comprising of soldiers from Nigeria, Niger, Chad and Cameroon.

As with many attacks, after the soldiers fled, the militants took advantage to captured weapons, ammunition and vehicles at the strategic base on the shores of Lake Chad. "The truth of the matter is that Boko Haram are better equipped than soldiers which is why they keep attacking and forcing soldiers out of military bases," Sanda Kime, a pro-government militiaman in the Lake Chad region, told AFP.

"There is a paucity of arms and ammunitions for our fighting troops. It is a serious problem," said Amaechi Nwokolo, a security analyst with the Roman Institute of Security Studies in Abuja. There are increasingly more voices from

within the ranks of the military decrying the poor state of their equipment, such as bullet supplies that are incompatible with the army's standard rifles. The increase in arms-trafficking in sub-Saharan Africa has also allowed ISWAP to acquire "more sophisticated" equipment, most notable from the Horn of Africa and the Middle East via Sudan, according to Yan St Pierre, a counter-terrorism expert with MOSECON, a Berlin-based security consultancy.

### Demoralized army

Nigeria's security situation has deteriorated rapidly in the last few years, forcing the army to deploy on numerous fronts in several parts of the country. "The morale of troops is low. They have been pushed to breaking limit," said Abuja analyst Nwokolo. In August, hundreds of soldiers invaded the runway of Maiduguri airport, in Borno state, firing their weapons in the air to express their exhaustion after four years on the frontline without much leave from the fight against jihadists to see their families.

The army managed to make important military progress against jihadists at the end of 2015 chasing the militants out of areas under their control but since then the fighters have adopted guerrilla tactics that are more complex to counter. "The soldiers are fatigued. Sometimes they withdraw when Boko Haram attack their base after a brief encounter or without putting a fight at all," said one Nigerian security source who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to reporters.

In his New Year's message, Nigeria's Air Force Chief of Staff Marshal Sadique Abubakar said jihadists had added experienced IS foreign fighters to their ranks. "In the fight against Boko Haram, we saw the emergence of new tactics as well as the introduction of highly experienced and skilled fighters and technology, as ISIS elements, dislodged from Syria, relocated to the North East of our country," he said. Rumors about Boko Haram bringing foreign fighters into its ranks are not new, but in recent months several witnesses and experts have added weight to reports of such recruitment. — AFP

## Two alleged Rohingya drug dealers found dead in Bangladesh

DHAKA: Bangladesh police yesterday found the bullet-ridden bodies of two alleged Rohingya drug dealers in a south-eastern coastal town notorious for its connection with the Myanmar meth trade. Teknaf town police chief Prodiip Kumar Das said the bodies were found lying next to a highway beside the sea and some 10,000 meth pills were recovered from their possession.

"Both of these refugees were... notorious drug dealers in the region. We're suspecting they were killed in a gang fight over sharing profits," he said. The police said they were investigating the deaths but

did not provide further information on the two men. Over 720,000 Rohingya Muslims have fled a brutal military crackdown in Myanmar's northern Rakhine state since August 2017 and joined some 300,000 refugees already living in squalid camps in Bangladesh's Cox's Bazar district.

Bangladeshi authorities say local kingpins use the refugees — trapped in poverty and unlikely to return home any time soon — to transport "yaba" pills which are made in Myanmar meth labs. Yaba is a methamphetamine-based, caffeine-cut stimulant that translates as "crazy medicine". The coastal town on the Naf river that divides the two neighbors is a key entry point through which yaba enters the South Asian nation's multi-million dollar drug market.

In May Bangladesh launched a violent anti-drug crackdown which saw the deaths of at least 250 drug dealers, including 26 in Teknaf in the last three months. Experts have compared the campaign with the Filipino anti-drug war of Rodrigo Duterte, in which police say they have killed nearly 5,000 alleged users and pushers — although rights groups say the toll is at least triple that. — AFP

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## International

# Rise of far-right unsettles Spain's mainstream conservative parties

## Campaigning on a nationalist, anti-feminist agenda

**MADRID:** Spain's far-right party Vox holds the key to the formation of a right-wing government in the southern region of Andalusia but is proving to be a tough partner for Spain's mainstream conservative parties. Vox this week warned it wouldn't back a coalition government in Andalusia made up of the Popular Party (PP) and Ciudadanos unless the two parties agree to end funding for measures to fight domestic violence.

Formed in December 2013 by former PP members, Vox won a surprise 12 seats in Andalusia's regional elections last month after campaigning on a nationalist, anti-feminist agenda and polls show it could play a crucial role in national politics after the next polls. It was the first time that a far-right party has won representation in a Spanish regional parliament since the country returned to democracy following the death of longtime dictator Francisco Franco in 1975.

The election outcome appeared to set up the end of 36 years of Socialist rule in Spain's most populous region but the PP and Ciudadanos together only have 47 seats in Andalusia's 109-seat regional parliament. Without the support of Vox they will not be able to form a government. Vox's national leader, Santiago Abascal, said his party wants to "replace ideological gender laws, which do not protect women and persecute men just for being men."

### 'Will not retreat'

The party's demand for domestic violence legislation to be overturned sparked outrage in Spain where the fight against violence against women has been a national priority for years and where a resurgent feminist movement organized a massive strike in favour of gender equality last year. "This is not

debatable, we will not retreat," Spain's Socialist Deputy Prime Minister Carmen Calvo tweeted.

"There is a violence and a contempt which is specifically aimed at women and girls around the world, it is called male chauvinism and patriarchy. Nobody can hide this reality." The national leader of the PP, Pablo Casado, said "one should not politicize domestic violence". "On this issues we all have to row in the same direction," he added. But his party partially ceded to Vox's demands on Friday by proposing that state aid to male victims of domestic violence be increased.

"It seems to us to be a good start," said Abascal, who still wants the PP and Ciudadanos to sit at the negotiating table with Vox. The issue is especially tricky for Ciudadanos, which fears losing its more centrist credentials as well as its support in Europe by associating itself with a far-right party ahead of elections to the European Parliament in May.

### 'Impassable wall'

Spain has up until now been immune to populist, nationalist right-wing politics which have gained ground in Italy, France and other European countries. But Vox has surged in the polls over the past year, buoyed by its tough opposition to Catalonia's separatist push and rising migrant arrivals. The party defends bullfights, calls for separatist parties to be banned and wants an "impassable wall" to be built around Ceuta and Melilla, two tiny Spanish territories in North Africa which have the European Union's only land borders with Africa.

It also wants the national health service to cease paying for abortions and an end to "subsidized radical feminist associations". Vox would capture 12.9 percent of the vote if a national election were held



**GRANADA:** In this file photo taken on November 26, 2018 Santiago Abascal, leader of Spain's far-right party VOX, gives a speech during a campaign meeting ahead of regional elections. —AFP

now, entering the national parliament with 43-45 seats, according to a poll published Wednesday in centre-right daily El Mundo. If the PP, Ciudadanos and Vox joined forces they would have an absolute majority in the 350-seat parliament of as much as 189

seats, according to the poll. The survey comes amid rising speculation that Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez will call a snap general election this year. His Socialists have only 84 seats and are struggling to approve their draft 2019 budget. —AFP

## Defendants cleared in EU 'golden' visas trial in Portugal

**LISBON:** A court in Portugal cleared most of the defendants in a corruption trial on Friday linked to a government scheme granting so-called "golden" visas to wealthy foreigners, a case highlighting concerns over a controversial but widespread practice in Europe. Out of 17 indictments for charges including corruption, money-laundering and influence-peddling, two people were given suspended sentences and two Chinese nationals were fined.

But the most high-profile defendant — Miguel Macedo, who was forced to resign as interior minister from the previous centre-right government in November 2014 — was among those acquitted of bribery and influence-peddling charges. "The acquittal is the logical result from the lack of evidence to support a baseless accusation," said his lawyer Alfredo Castanheira Neves. The Lisbon court also cleared former border police director Manuel Jarmela Palos, who was accused of running a network which profited from the granting of the residency permits to foreign investors.

Cash-strapped Portugal in late 2012 began offering the "golden" visas to wealthy foreigners willing to invest 500,000 euros (\$570,000) in property, make a capital transfer of one million euros or create 10 jobs. The country handed out 6,800 such permits to investors and 11,600 more to their family members in exchange for 4.15 billion euros in investments, most of it in real estate. China was the country with the largest number of beneficiaries of the scheme followed by Brazil.

### 'A perverse scheme'

A number of European governments offer passports or residency rights in exchange for investments. In analyzing the schemes in Cyprus, Malta and Portugal for a recent report, Transparency International and Global Witness noted "the ways in which insufficient due diligence, wide discretionary powers and conflicts of interest can open Europe's door to the corrupt".

One of the most critical voices of the practice in Portugal, Socialist MEP Ana Gomes said she was "disappointed but not surprised" by Friday's ruling and blamed the prosecutors office for making a weak case. "It is a perverse scheme and a prostitution of citizenship which... fuels corruption by feeding a whole network of intermediaries," Portuguese Socialist MEP Ana Gomes told AFP. "It is intolerable to hear some security discourses about migrants and refugees, and then to see that the discourse changes completely when it concerns wealthy foreigners," she added.

### 'A growing industry'

In their report published last October, Transparency International and Global Witness said four EU countries — Austria, Bulgaria, Cyprus and Malta — "sell" passports to wealthy investors, while 12 offer them residency rights. Spain tops the list of countries in terms of the number of visas issued and the amount of capital received — an average of 976 million euros annually.

In total, European countries pulled in 25 billion euros from 6,000 new citizens and some 100,000 residents over the last 10 years, the report from the two NGOs said. "Just like a luxury good, European Union citizenship and residency rights can be bought," it said. "There are many buyers, and there is no shortage of suppliers, which explains why investment migration is a growing, multi-billion-euro industry." As part of an effort to combat money-laundering, the European Commission is to present a report early this year on national schemes granting EU citizenship or residency to investors. —AFP

## French cardinal to go on trial over child abuse cover up

**LYON:** The highest-profile Catholic cleric to be caught up in a pedophile scandal in France is to go on trial tomorrow, charged with failing to report a priest who abused boy scouts in the 1980s and 90s. Cardinal Philippe Barbarin, the archbishop of Lyon, is to stand trial along with five others from his diocese over allegations that they helped cover up abuse in one of the parishes in the area.

The 68-year-old, an arch-conservative, is one of the most prominent Catholic figures in France who faces up to three years in prison and a fine of 45,000 euros (\$54,000) if convicted of failing to report the abuse. He denies the allegations. France's Catholic church has been roiled in recent years by allegations against predator priests which have come to light in the wake of a global move by victims to come forward with evidence. Clerics have been denounced in countries as far afield as Australia, Brazil, Chile, Ireland, and the United States, leading Pope Francis to promise to rid the church of the scourge that has done enormous damage to its standing.

### 'Abused as a child'

The scandal in Lyon first came to public attention in 2015 when a former scout went public with allegations that a local priest, Bernard Preynat, had abused him as a child 25 years ago. The scout, Francois Devaux, who has since formed a victims' group, also filed a complaint against Barbarin, the priest's superior, alleging that he had known about the abuse but had covered it up.

After six months of investigation and 10 hours of interviews with Barbarin, investigators dropped the case in 2016 after concluding that the allegations against him were either too old or impossible to prove. But a group of victims succeeded in having the probe reopened which led to Barbarin and the others, including the archbishop of Auch and the bishop of Nevers in France, being ordered to stand trial. "We hope this time to have a ruling that will be clear and obvious for everyone," Devaux said before the start of the trial.

His victims' group, La Parole Liberee (Freed Speech), began with a handful of people, but soon received calls and testimony from a total of 85 people claiming to have been victims of Preynat in Lyon. The priest was prevented from leading scout groups after he was first denounced in 1991, but was later allowed to teach to children and held positions of authority in parishes until the scandal surfaced in 2015. A lawyer for Barbarin, Jean-Felix Luciani, said the cardinal was



**LYON:** In this file photo taken on April 03, 2016 Roman Catholic Cardinal, Archbishop of Lyon, Philippe Barbarin leads a mass, in Saint-Jean cathedral. —AFP

counting on the trial to "re-establish some facts because you don't repair one injustice by creating another one."

### Pope's role

The story of Devaux, the victim who brought the scandal to light, is to be told in a film this year called "Grace a Dieu" ("Thanks to God") which has been made by French director Francois Ozon.

The priest at the centre of the scandal, Preynat, has acknowledged abusing boys during interviews with investigators. He

is set to go on trial this year charged with statutory rape.

Two other French religious figures have been convicted of failing to report child abuse in the past: the archbishop of Bayeux-Lisieux, Pierre Rican, in 2001, as well as the former bishop of Orleans, Andre Fort, last year. The head of the Vatican's powerful Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Spanish Archbishop Luis Francisco Ladaria Ferrer, has also been accused of complicity in the alleged cover-up in Lyon. —AFP

## Somalia refuses to take back expelled UN envoy

**UNITED NATIONS:** UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Friday agreed to appoint a new UN envoy to Somalia after its president refused to reverse a decision to expel a representative for raising human rights concerns. Guterres spoke by phone with President

Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed on Friday — his second call to the Somali leader in three days — to once again urge him to change his mind, according to diplomats.

But the president dug in his heels and said UN envoy Nicholas Haysom would remain persona non grata and would not be allowed to return to Somalia, diplomats told AFP. Guterres "deeply regrets" Somalia's decision, said UN spokesman Farhan Haq, adding that the UN chief nevertheless intends to appoint a new UN envoy. The UN Security Council met behind closed doors to agree on a response to Somalia's decision.

But during that meeting, China asked for more time to consider a draft statement put forward by Britain that

expressed regret at the decision, diplomats said. The council was to reconsider its response today. In the British-drafted text, the council would express its support for the UN mission in Somalia and say it expects Somalia to fully cooperate with the United Nations.

Haysom, a South African lawyer and experienced diplomat, was told to leave Somalia on Tuesday after he questioned the government's decision to arrest an Al-Shabaab defector who was running in elections. Muktar Robow, who defected from Al-Shabaab in 2017, was arrested last month and flown to the capital Mogadishu after announcing his bid for the state presidency in South West State. —AFP

## Tanzanian prez seeks to 'take advantage' of refugee crises

**NAIROBI:** Tanzanian President John Magufuli on Friday urged his ministers to "take advantage" of refugee crises and make money by selling food to international aid organizations. The country hosts around 300,000 refugees, mainly from Burundi and Democratic Republic of Congo, largely in three camps in the north-west of the country, according to the Norwegian Refugee Council.

Speaking in Dar es Salaam, Magufuli celebrated the signing of a contract to deliver 36,000 tons of maize to the UN World Food Program (WFP) for around 8 million euros (\$9.1 million). "These funds are allocated to help our refugee friends from other countries in conflict, it is our

duty to take advantage of them," said Magufuli in Swahili, to laughter in the room. "We must take advantage of their problems. They fight at home and we get the money."

Magufuli, known for his sometimes abrupt and controversial statements, has earned some international respect by fighting internal corruption but global donors have raised concerns about human rights abuses. Critics say Magufuli has unleashed a wave of oppression since his election in 2015, cracking down on opposition figures, the media and gays. The European Union, Tanzania's biggest development partner, and the World Bank recently took measures to sanction repressive policies by Magufuli's government.

After his comments in front of ministers and WFP representatives led to some snickers and giggles, the president tried to qualify his words: "I do not say that I wish they fight, but if they fight, that their conflict is a source of profit for us." "Because even if we do not give them food, they will fight. We do not want them to fight, but if they fight, let's take advantage of it," he clarified. Magufuli called on



**NAIROBI:** In this file photo taken on October 31, 2016 Tanzanian President John Pombe Magufuli speaks during a press conference with Kenyan president at the State House. —AFP

the agriculture ministry and other services to seize possible business opportunities. "The market is there: if the WFP even asks for 200,000 tons, hurry up and buy

from producers and give to the WFP," he said. Tanzania sold 31,000 tons of maize to the WFP in 2018, according to the agriculture ministry. —AFP



International

# Democratic allies should rally to protect Taiwan from China: Tsai

## Beijing has stepped up military drills around the island

**TAIPEI:** Taiwan's president called on allies to help defend its sovereignty yesterday, accusing China of waging a "deliberate campaign" to undermine the island's democracy by refusing to talk to her government. Relations between Taiwan and China have been at a low since Tsai came to power in 2016, refusing to acknowledge that the self-ruled island is part of "one China".

Beijing unilaterally cut off communication with her administration and stepped up military drills around the island as well as poaching several of its dwindling diplomatic allies. Tsai's comments capped a week of escalating rhetoric between the two neighbors, sparked by a landmark speech from Chinese president Xi Jinping on Wednesday. Xi described Taiwan's unification with the mainland as "inevitable" and reiterated Beijing's willingness to use force if necessary, especially if Taiwan ever declares formal independence.

He also said Beijing was willing to talk to political parties and groups in Taiwan that recognized their "one China" principle — a reference to the main opposition parties. Tsai hit out at Beijing's willingness to bypass her elected government as "a continuation of its deliberate campaign to undermine and subvert our democratic process and create division in our society". "At a time when we are exhausting efforts to avoid provocation and miscommunication, China's actions are unhelpful and contrary to democratic practices," she said in a briefing with foreign media on Saturday.

**'Which country will be next?'**  
China still sees Taiwan as part of its territory to be reunified, despite the two sides being ruled separately since they split in 1949 after a civil war. The schism is one of profound geopolitical importance. The United States diplomatically recognizes China over Taiwan but it remains Taipei's staunchest political and military ally. Tsai said China's increasingly muscular rhetoric towards Taiwan was a test of whether democratic allies would protect each other. "If the international community fails to speak up for and assist Taiwan under the circumstances we face today, I have to ask which country will be next?" she asked. Xi has been touting the "one country, two systems" model for Taiwan. A version was implemented in Hong Kong after Britain handed the city back to China in 1997 as a way to guarantee the kind of liberties and government unseen on the authoritarian mainland. But sliding freedoms in Hong Kong in recent years have done little to endear the Taiwanese people to the idea of a similar deal for them from Beijing.

Tsai said it would be impossible for her government or any Taiwanese politician to accept Xi's recent remarks "without betraying the trust and will of the people of Taiwan". Taiwanese frustration has also been compounded recently by allegations from the government that Beijing is not doing enough to inform its neighbor about an outbreak of African swine fever on the mainland. Taiwan's livestock exports have in the past been hammered by disease outbreaks from the mainland. The discovery this week of infected pig carcasses on a



**HONG KONG:** Former Hong Kong lawmaker Leung Kwok-hung (centre R), also known as 'Long Hair', Avery Leung (C) and other members of the League of Social Democrats (LSD), protest a recent speech made by Chinese President Xi Jinping, where he did not rule out using military force in the unification of Taiwan with the Chinese mainland. —AFP

Taiwanese island close to China's shoreline — which authorities believed floated over from the mainland — has only added to a sense of urgency and anger in

Taipei. "I urge the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) to intervene and call on countries in the region to engage in outbreak prevention," Tsai said. —AFP

## Floods, blackouts after Thai storm, tourist isles spared

**NAKHON SI THAMMARAT:** Floods and blackouts caused by Tropical Storm Pabuk left nearly 30,000 people in evacuation shelters across southern Thailand yesterday, as relieved tourists stranded on islands further north were spared the worst and began to plot routes home. Pabuk, a once in three-decade weather system, packed winds of up to 75 kilometers an hour and brought heavy rains and storm surges as it lashed the entire south of the kingdom on Friday, downing power cables and causing widespread flooding.

A fisherman died in southern Pattani province early Friday after high waves smashed into his boat and another crew member was reported missing, while a 35-year-old man in Nakhon Si Thammarat died when a tree toppled onto his house. But the storm tacked away from the key tourist islands of Koh Samui, Koh Phangan and Koh Tao where large numbers of travelers hunkered down for 24 hours in heavy rains, unable to leave as airports closed and ferry services were cancelled.

"There were no casualties, there is some sunshine today and I'm confident some tourists will be able to leave today as ferries and flights resume," said Koh Samui district chief Kittipong Roddon. But "red flag" swimming bans off what are normally sun-baked paradise beaches at this time of year were still in place. "It's all over. All 10,000 tourists are safe... I am relieved," said Krikkrat Songthanee, district chief of neighboring Koh Phangan, an island famed for its full-moon parties. High winds caused only minor damage, he added. But holidaymakers keen to leave the islands face long delays with a backlog of flights as three airports reopened and ferry services slowly resumed yesterday. The storm was downgraded early Saturday



**NAKHON SI THAMMARAT:** Two girls drive through heavy rain due to tropical storm Pabuk in the southern Thai province. —AFP

to a depression with wind speeds slackening as it moved into the Andaman Sea, Thailand's weather bureau said.

### Power outages

Pabuk made landfall on Friday afternoon in Nakhon Si Thammarat province, south of the tourist hubs on the Gulf of Thailand, hammering the coastal province with rain. Authorities warned of flash floods as some parts remained inundated by a combination of rainfall and storm surges. Around 200,000 people were left without electricity as dozens of power poles were toppled by high winds or falling trees, with 30,000 waiting for supply to be reconnected early

Saturday, authorities said.

Residents returned to find homes slaked in mud and ankle-deep water, while many southern roads remained blocked by the fallen power lines. "The roofs on some rooms in my house are gone. The house is filled with mud," Boonchuy Chuaysri told AFP in Talum Puk — a headland where the eye of storm barged through villages. Others were relieved to find only broken windows as Pabuk's force was less destructive than first feared. Pabuk struck in peak tourist season, a blow to the cash-cow industry that is integral to Thailand's economy. The kingdom is expected to welcome a record 40 million visitors this year. —AFP

## Ex-N Korea diplomat urges colleague to come to the South

**SEOUL:** A former North Korean diplomat who defected to the South urged an ex-colleague missing in Italy to come and settle in Seoul yesterday, as the rare asylum bid makes global headlines. Jo Song Gil, the North's acting ambassador to Rome, went into hiding with his wife in November and is seeking asylum, according to Seoul's intelligence authorities.

It would be the first high-profile defection of a North Korean diplomat since 2016 when the then deputy ambassador to London, Thae Yong Ho, switched sides to settle in Seoul. Jo has not contacted Seoul's spy agency since he went into hiding, suggesting he was seeking asylum in a third country in the West, possibly the US, according to several media reports. But Thae, who said he once worked with Jo at Pyongyang's foreign ministry, wrote an open letter urging his ex-colleague to come to the South instead and work together to help the two Koreas reunify.

"I thought that I knew a lot about the South...through the Internet while serving overseas. But the South I actually experienced was far more democratic and economically prosperous than I imagined," Thae said in the letter posted on his blog. "Sure, the South is not exactly a paradise. But it is a place where you and I could achieve the dream we all have," he said. "Wouldn't it be our lifelong mission as diplomats to help the two Koreas reunify...and to pass the unified peninsula to our children?" Since coming to Seoul, Thae has become a public speaker giving speeches about the reality of his impoverished but nuclear-armed former homeland and about ways to narrow down differences between the two neighbors that technically remain at war. —AFP

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## Analysis

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Email: info@kuwaittimes.com  
Website: www.kuwaittimes.netOffices grow  
'brains' as firms  
seek to attract  
smarter workers

Employees will not need a key to get into the office of the future when it opens in Berlin this year, featuring ample meeting space, plenty of copy machines always stocked with paper along with high-quality air processed to maximize worker health and minimize sick time. Their smartphones will help guide them around their new workplace - and they may need the assistance because they will not have permanent desks. With technology changing how and where we work, property developers are tapping artificial intelligence to create more sustainable workplaces to help staff work more efficiently and comfortably.

Fierce competition for talent is turbo-charging the trend in Berlin. While the city used to be a bit of a business backwater, in recent years it gained a reputation as a start-up hub. Office vacancy rates have tumbled to just 1.5 percent as rents are rocketing, making it an ideal place for developers to showcase these new offices. Property owners in Berlin are taking a cue from the Netherlands, home to several intelligent and sustainable office projects.

Rapid growth of start-ups such as Zalando and Delivery Hero is driving demand for office space in the German capital. Two new smart offices are under construction in the former no-man's land of the Berlin Wall, next to the city's main train station. The Cube, being built by Austrian real estate company CA Immo, will be completed by the end of this year, and The Edge Grand Central by EDGE Technologies, a subsidiary of Dutch firm OVG Real Estate, is planned for 2020.

"The office building is the new company car. In my world, people do not want a car as a perk anymore. They look around and say, 'This would be a nice place to work,'" said Martin Rodeck, executive managing director at EDGE Technologies Germany. Both offices are packed with a network of sensors that measure everything from motion, temperature and lighting to humidity and CO2 and are connected to a cloud platform.

In The Cube, the technology is dubbed "the brain", a self-learning software that analyses all the data it receives and optimises how the building is run. For example, if part of a building is unoccupied, it can turn off the lights and heating systems. If a meeting room is crowded it can pump in more oxygen. Users access the building via a smartphone app that knows their schedules and may suggest sitting by a window or on a floor where a meeting is scheduled. The app can be used to book meeting rooms, order food and navigate the building.

Workers will need the navigational aid to find their desk. The offices feature a "hot desking" system in which employees do not have a permanent desk, but rather the appropriate workspace for the type of work they want to do. Lockers will be available to store belongings. Smart offices can also minimize daily frustrations such as the printer running out of paper or being unable to locate a colleague, Rodeck said.

The printers work along the predictive maintenance model. In the same way that a car warns it is running out of fuel, printers send alerts to the building's management system when a machine needs paper, so someone can fill it up. But to take advantage of these benefits, users need to actively opt-in to be tracked, visible to their colleagues, and their boss, while in the building. In doing so, they override the default setting to be 'hidden'.

## Falling sick rates

Studies show people work better in environments providing good air quality as well as comfortable noise and humidity levels. Comparing sick leave rates in older and new offices highlights the potential benefits of state-of-the-art buildings. When consulting firm Deloitte moved into OVG Real Estate's landmark smart building The Edge in Amsterdam in 2015, the firm found sick rates fell drastically while the number of job applicants increased, Rodeck said.

Before online fashion retailer Zalando designed new headquarters, the company asked staff to share opinions on existing workspace. Employees complained about too few meeting rooms and the challenge of concentrating due to noise. In its new headquarters, due to open in early 2019, workers can choose from a library for quiet work, telephone booths for private conversations as well as living rooms located on the open catwalks to encourage interaction. "The important part is that we provide a work environment for everyone," said Zalando's vice president for real estate Raimund Paezmann.

Zalando plans to install smart technology to make it easy to reserve a desk from home and take away the stress of arriving at the office and not knowing where to sit. While shifting to hot-desking can control costs, a survey by CCL consulting and property agents Savills found half of those aged under 34 and 60 percent of those over 35 did not want to give up their fixed desk. "We all need our home, a haven and part of the office that belongs to us," said Franz Kuehmayer, a trend researcher at think-tank Zukunftsinstitut. "Many employees question how they will organize their daily work life and where they can put pictures of their children." — Reuters



US House Representatives Rashida Taib (left) and Ilhan Omar (right) - with their hands on Holy Qurans - participate in a ceremonial swearing-in with Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi at the start of the 116th Congress at the US Capitol in Washington on Jan 3, 2019. — AFP



## Washington Watch

## A historic day in Congress

By Dr James J Zogby

I spent Thursday morning at the offices of two new Members of Congress, Rashida Taib of Michigan and Ilhan Omar of Minnesota. The scenes at both were just delightful. Throngs of Palestinian Americans jammed into Taib's offices, spilling out into the hall. It was much the same at Omar's, but there the crowds were largely Somali Americans and Yemeni Americans. Many had traveled hundreds and even thousands of miles to witness history being made. You could feel their excitement. It was a day of celebration, validation, and empowerment.

Palestinians, Somalis, and Yemenis are among the most beleaguered communities in America. Many of them have come here or are the descendants of those who came as economic or political refugees from deeply troubled regions plagued by war and hardship. Once in the US they have been disproportionately hounded by law enforcement, spied upon, profiled, and victimized by discrimination. Nevertheless, all of these immigrant communities have worked hard to make their way in their new country.

Like other American success stories, many Palestinians, Somalis, and Yemenis began at the bottom rung of the economic ladder and within less than a generation began to climb upward. Forty years ago, Yemenis, for example, were laborers and farmworkers. Today they count among their ranks thousands of successful small businessmen, with their children having become lawyers, doctors, and engineers. Palestinians, who have been here longer, have a similar success story to tell.

The children of the Palestinian grocers, with whom I worked 40 years ago, are now successful entrepreneurs or college educated professionals. Somalis, the newest of the groups with most of their community having arrived in the last three decades, are already on the same path of upward mobility. They are starting small businesses and seeing their children fulfill the hopes that drew them to start a new life in America.

When Jesse Jackson ran for President in 1984, his campaign slogan was "Our Time Has Come." African Americans understood his call and registered to vote in record numbers. When he rose to the podium of the 1984 Democratic convention to speak, African Americans felt that they too had risen to new heights of empowerment. In the next few years, the impact of Jackson's campaign

was realized, as African Americans elected their first governor and mayors in many major American cities.

## Shared victory

This was how it felt being in Taib's and Omar's offices. To their respective communities, the victories of these two women was a shared victory, opening a door of unlimited new possibilities for them and for their children. Congresswoman Taib is the daughter of Palestinian immigrants and has a grandmother still living in the West Bank. Always proud of her Palestinian heritage, she made a point of wearing a traditional Palestinian thobe to her swearing-in ceremony. Reflecting on her decision and her victory, she wrote:

"Throughout my career in public service, the residents I have had the privilege of fighting for have embraced who I am, especially my Palestinian roots. This is what I want to bring to the US Congress, an unapologetic display of the fabric of the people of this country. That is why I decided to wear a thobe when I am sworn into the 116th Congress. This really happened! I am a US Congresswoman. Not bad for a girl from southwest Detroit who didn't speak English, daughter of Palestinian immigrants."

The impact of her decision was amazing. Many of the Palestinian women who came to her office wore thobes and men sported keffiyehs. #Tweetyourthobe trended on Twitter, as Palestinian American women proudly displayed their cultural heritage. NBC TV news anchor, Ayman Mohyeldin, posted a picture of his little daughter and niece in thobes, writing: "As the son of a Palestinian mother, it's a milestone for Palestinian Americans to see their heritage and culture reflected in their elected officials. Young girls like my daughter and niece now have officials they can see and aspire to be like one day!"

Congresswoman Omar's story is a fascinating and important American tale. She was born in Somalia. Her father is Somali, her mother Yemeni. At age 9, she and her father became refugees. She came to the US when she was 12 as a refugee. In several tweets, she reflected on the remarkable trajectory of her life:

"23 years ago, from a refugee camp in Kenya, my father and I arrived at an airport in Washington DC. Today, we return to that same airport on the eve of my swearing-in as the first Somali-American in Congress. As someone who has seen what it means to

seek asylum at a border and be received with such generosity, I want to make sure we understand there are other countries who take in so many of the world's most pained people. In the US, we can do better. From a refugee camp in Kenya to the Capitol, this story has come full circle. This is the America I believe in, and the one I will never stop fighting for."

It's worth noting that Omar, who wears a hijab, has already made one change. In deference to her, a rule in place since 1837 banning any head attire on the floor of Congress was scrapped.

## Larger message

I was struck by the comments of the Palestinians, Somalis, and Yemenis who filled the offices of "their" two new Members of Congress. One woman, quoted in the Washington Post, reflected the feelings of many others when she said "This means everything to us. It means that we can get into politics and make it to the highest level."

As I reflected on the meaning of the day, I couldn't help but think of the larger message that was unfolding. Somalis and Yemenis face a discriminatory policy banning their entry into the US, affecting their families and reflecting the general hostility to refugees and immigrants from the Middle East. Palestinians face hostility from an Administration and a Congress that not only refuses to recognize the rights and humanity of their people but have taken punitive measures against them. Add to this, there is the nativism, xenophobia, and Islamophobia fueled by the president.

In spite of all of this, these two women who embody the endangered ideals of America will now be serving in the Congress. More than that, they are progressive champions elected on platforms that commit to fighting for raising the minimum wage, universal health care and college education, and environmental and economic justice. Both are savvy legislators who understand their roles and will make a mark in Congress.

In sum, it was a historic day of firsts: the first Muslim women, the first immigrant, the first African, the first Palestinian American woman have taken their oath of office and for three communities it was a day when the promise of America became real.

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

2019 will be  
year of more  
state control

A signature theme of the new year is the possibility of a malign confrontation between the world's greatly enhanced capacity for electronic surveillance and the weakening of democratic control. The antidote to that risk is the democratic spirit and civil freedoms - both of which are suffering world-wide. These are not dead, but they are unwell, at times untended.

The world's two most populous states, China and India - together, around 37 percent of the global population - have rolled out nationwide digital systems of monitoring and classification. These combine the collection of personal information needed for fuller citizenship with the capacity for fuller surveillance and intervention by the state.

China's system overtly seeks to monitor the behavior of its 1.4 billion people and to reward those actions the state/Communist Party defines as "good" or punish those it defines as "bad." It is the secular alternative to religiously-guided societies, substituting the commandments of a god mediated through a priesthood with the criteria of a state whose ruling party claims virtual infallibility through its interpretation of the philosophy of Karl Marx aided by a gloss provided by its president - the "Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era," now written into China's constitution.

The country's "social credit system"

combines face, voice and fingerprint recognition technology with monitoring of public and private behavior such as internet use, educational choices and social networks, as well as a huge web of paid informants who report unusual activities. The Chinese government uses these elements to produce a picture of each person's social, political, professional and private activities - and awards points which aid career and other choices - or punishes anti-social or anti-Party behavior by depriving citizens of rights, promotions and travel possibilities.

The official Party description of the system claims that it "will allow the trustworthy to roam freely under heaven while making it hard for the discredited to take a single step." It already assigns rewards and punishments: 2019 is the year in which coverage is aimed to be completed so as to monitor everyone in the country by 2020.

India's Aadhaar ("foundation" in Hindi) national identity card technology aims to be as comprehensive as the Chinese model, but is not designed to be as intrusive. It began as a voluntary initiative, the brainchild of software entrepreneur Nandan Nilekani, who wanted to make "every Indian, no matter how poor or marginalized, visible to the state." Since last year, it ceased to be a choice in several Indian states, and the ambition is to make it compulsory, with plans to link it to access to needed commodities, higher education, government subsidies and healthcare.

Complaints that Aadhaar breaches the right to privacy are lodged with the courts, and a battle is joined between civil libertarians and the state. The economist Reetika Khera wrote in the Washington Post in August that the system constitutes "one of the most brazen breaches of the right to privacy and the

right to live initiated by the government of a democratic country."

## Digital ambitions

Western democracies don't have China-sized - or even India-sized - digital ambitions. But in the aftermath of the 2013 publication of documents taken from the US National Security Agency, many of their secret services have been given legal power to monitor all their citizens' communications - though with increased legal safeguards. The most powerful of democracies, the United States itself, is the birthplace and headquarters of the great digital corporations which, with Facebook in the lead, now face increased questioning by the public and governments on their ability to preserve privacy and weed out or at least reveal the existence of illegal hate speech and covert propaganda masquerading as news.

A few years later, as Facebook was soaring in popularity, Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg opined that keeping information private was no longer "a social norm". He has no doubt changed, or been forced to appear to have changed, his views since then, but the business model of Facebook, and others of the tech giants' pack, remains dependent on Facebook sharing personal information with advertisers.

These developments grow in importance and scope at the same time as the authoritarian world increases its size and becomes more restrictive. In a disturbing essay published last year, scholars Yascha Mounk and Roberto Stefan Foa wrote that "In the span of a quarter century, liberal democracies have gone from a position of unprecedented economic strength to a position of unprecedented economic weakness." They believe that the dominance of global affairs by liberal democ-

racies through the 20th century was less because of the attraction of either liberalism or democracy, but because of the example they set of wealth creation.

Besides the outright authoritarians, there are the democratically-elected populists - as in the United States, Italy, Poland, Hungary and elsewhere - who usually adopt some part of the authoritarian practice on issues like immigration, sexual and ethnic minorities and NGOs. The most recent addition - the presidency of Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil - saw the new leader threaten, on his first day in office, the land granted to indigenous peoples and to remove LGBT issues from the protection of the Human Rights Ministry.

Neither the authoritarians nor the national populists are likely to use the new powers of surveillance, and their capacity to discipline populations, with a strong regard for human rights - at least the rights of those of whom they wish to marginalize. Instead, these powers, especially the Chinese system, are likely to be used by leaders who wish to radically alter the liberal policies and customs they have inherited.

The danger is not in the technology. Mature democracies, whose publics, courts, media outlets and institutions of civil society remain free and vigilant, can - with some exceptions and accidents - ensure that technological use is consonant with the need to counter threats, or secure efficiency in the public sphere. They can also ensure that debate on the use of technology is robust, and that the weight of public opinion is felt, and can change policy.

The predictions of democratic failure in the face of authoritarian power will come true only if publics allow it. 2019 cannot be the year of more control, but of the revival of the liberal spirit. — Reuters

## Business

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YINGLIN: Workers at a swimwear factory in Yinglin town in Jinjiang, in China's eastern Fujian Province. — AFP

# China woes help US in trade talks: Trump

## President asks Apple to build at home, downplays warning

WASHINGTON/BEIJING: President Donald Trump on Friday downplayed a revenue warning from Apple Inc that cited slowing sales in China and said China's weakening economic growth puts the United States in a strong position as negotiators from the world's two largest economies prepare for trade talks next week.

Trump has slapped import tariffs on hundreds of billions of dollars of Chinese goods as he seeks concessions from Beijing on issues ranging from industrial subsidies to hacking, sparking retaliation by China. The measures have disrupted trade, hurt manufacturing, roiled international markets and slowed the global economy.

US officials are heading to Beijing next week for the first face-to-face talks since Trump and China's President Xi Jinping in December agreed to a 90-day truce in the trade war as they sought to strike a deal. "I

think we will make a deal with China," Trump told reporters at the White House after a meeting with Democratic and Republican lawmakers about the US government shutdown. "I really think they want to. I think they sort of have to."

Beijing on Friday cut bank reserve requirements for a fifth time this year amid slowing growth at home and the punishing US tariffs on exports. "China's not doing well now. And it puts us in a very strong position. We are doing very well," Trump said. "I hope we're going to make a deal with China. And if we don't, they're paying us tens of billions of dollars' worth of tariffs—not the worst thing in the world."

Official data this week showed manufacturing has slowed in both China and the United States, though the US Labor Department on Friday reported a surge in new jobs in December along with higher

wages. The president downplayed the effects of the economic woes on US technology giant Apple Inc, which this week blamed slowing iPhone sales in China for a rare reduction in its quarterly sales forecast.

When asked if he was concerned about Apple's revenue cut and share price drop, Trump said: "No, I'm not. I mean look, they've gone up a lot."

### 'Build at home'

Shares of Apple rebounded on Friday after a 10 percent nosedive on Thursday on the revenue warning. The shares closed at \$148.26 on Friday, down about 5.1 percent for the week. For the 2018 full year, Apple shares fell 7 percent, though they are up about 24 percent since Trump took office in January 2017. "They're going to be fine. Apple is a great company," Trump said, adding he had told Apple Chief Executive

Officer Tim Cook to build his company's products at home in the United States, something he has harped on previously.

"Apple makes its product in China. China is the biggest beneficiary of Apple, more than us, because they build their product mostly in China," Trump said. "I want Apple to make their iPhones and all of the great things that they make in the United States. And that'll take place."

Apple's lowered revenue outlook along with a double-digit drop in earnings at commodities giant Cargill Inc on Thursday may be among the clearest warning signs yet that the trade war's effects have begun to hit US companies. A team led by Deputy US Trade Representative Jeffrey Gerrish will travel to China for talks, China's commerce ministry and USTR said. That news that helped boost global markets. The talks begin tomorrow.

USTR said the US delegation would also

include undersecretaries from the US Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Energy and Treasury, as well as senior officials from those agencies and the White House. While Trump and other officials have said talks between the two sides are progressing well, they have given few details on concessions that China has made. Some US demands would require structural reform that may be unpalatable for Chinese leaders. China would deepen reform but will not yield on issues it deems to be its core national interests, a commentary in the ruling Communist Party's official newspaper said on Wednesday.

"We know what sort of changes we need," White House economic adviser Larry Kudlow said in an interview with Fox Business on Friday. "Now, the question is can we negotiate these changes and can we do so with enforcement (and) with timetables." — Reuters

## Fed's Powell seeks to soothe markets, rules out resignation

WASHINGTON: US Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell tried to reassure financial markets on Friday that rising interest rates were not locked in and reasserted the central bank's independence, saying he would not resign even if President Donald Trump asked him to.

The dovish comments sent US and global stock markets surging higher, recovering some of the territory lost in recent weeks. Trump named Powell to the helm of the Fed at the start of the year but has been a frequent and vocal critic, blaming Powell and the Fed for raising rates which he says pose a threat to his economic agenda—an unprecedented public berating that breaks with recent norms.

Asked at an economic conference in Atlanta if he would step down should Trump request his resignation, Powell said, "No." He said he had not heard directly from Trump despite the president's many recent Twitter outbursts, and repeated that the institution remained outside political considerations.

"People should know the Fed has a very strong culture around non-political activity and we are committed to achieving the goals the law gives us in a completely non-political way based on the best thinking," Powell said. US and global stock markets have tumbled in recent weeks



ATLANTA, GA: (Left to right) Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell and former Chairs of the Federal Reserve Janet Yellen and Ben Bernanke participate in a panel discussion at the American Economic Association conference on Friday. — AFP

and 2018 was Wall Street's worst year in the decade since the global financial crisis amid worries about the slowing world economy, trade tensions and rising interest rates.

And Trump's attacks added to the jitters, since it could cause the Fed to tighten policy just to prove its independence. But Powell once again stressed that the Fed had no "pre-set" plan for interest rates and would bide its time to see how the economy evolves. The Fed's policy committee raised the benchmark lending rate four times last year but signaled last month it expected only two increases this year, rather than three. —AFP

## Kuwait requests Dubai to release half-billion dollars frozen in dispute

WASHINGTON: The Port Fund yesterday announced that Kuwait has joined its year-long effort to recoup \$496 million of investor funds that have been held in Dubai.

The State of Kuwait has formally requested that Dubai unfreeze and return the money to The Port Fund, a private equity fund, which will then distribute the money to its investors and other international and US stakeholders. After selling its last investment in November 2017, The Port Fund wired \$496 million to the bank account of its general partner, Port Link GP Ltd., at Noor Bank in Dubai, at which point the money was frozen without cause.

In a letter dated December 30, 2018, Kuwait Attorney General Dherar Al-Asousi wrote to Dubai Attorney General Essam Issa Al-Humaidan requesting "to remove the hold [on the funds] ... and enable



the account holder company to transfer and distribute the mentioned amount [\$496 million]."

Dubai cleared the funds of any legal concerns months ago, leaving Kuwait – the largest investor in The Port Fund – as the only government that had not yet approved the release of the funds. Now that Kuwait has lifted its hold, The Port Fund anticipates the immediate transfer of the money to its account at Noor Bank. "We are pleased that both Kuwait and Dubai have recognized the lawful nature of our successful management of The Port Fund," said Mark Williams, investment director of the fund. "We are eager to distribute these funds to our investors and have already provided Noor Bank with wiring instructions to ensure there is no delay in these payments. We thank our investors and stakeholders for their patience and trust in our management team as we bring this matter to a successful conclusion."

## Business

# US job creation vaults higher in 2018; economy in good health

## Trump gets a shot in the arm amid new economic challenges

WASHINGTON: US job creation rocketed higher last month, a jolt of unexpected good news for President Donald Trump as his economic agenda comes under increasing strain.

With an unexpectedly strong finish to 2018, the blowout US jobs numbers were a reminder that the world's largest economy remains in good health for the moment—sharply contrasting with gloom on global financial markets in recent weeks. Fears over a slowing world economy last month caused stock prices to tumble and confidence waned among corporations who foresee dwindling demand and weakening sales in 2019. But the December jobs news helped prompt a rebound on Wall Street, with all three major indices rallying after Thursday's rout.

Employers added a whopping 312,000 net new positions for the month, smashing economists' expectations, and wages rose steadily, gaining 3.2 percent for the year.

The unemployment rate ticked up by two tenths of a point to 3.9 percent but mostly because the labor force grew as more workers joined the job hunt, according to the closely-watched report.

And net job gains in October and November were revised up a combined 58,000, the Labor Department said. Job creation last year rose to a monthly average of 220,000 positions, far higher than the 182,000 recorded in 2017 but lower than 2014 and 2015, a sign that 2018 was boosted by unusual tax cuts and fiscal stimulus.

The fresh signal that although Wall Street may be ailing the real economy is chugging along was sure to delight Trump.

### Rising interest rates?

However, the new evidence of a strong economy could add to the case for the Federal Reserve to con-

tinue to raise interest rates this year, something Trump has aggressively and publicly complained about. Forecasts from Fed officials last month indicated they expect just two rate hikes in 2019 amid signs of weakness, rather than three.

Jim O'Sullivan of High Frequency Economics said "the unemployment rate is already low enough to put upward pressure on labor costs." "The recent turmoil in markets is raising the likelihood of some slowing ahead, although these data provide a reminder of how strong the trend has been before whatever slowing occurs," he said.

Wall Street forged higher following the jobs news, aided by an announcement that US-China trade talks were due to resume next week in Beijing.

The rally kicked into high gear and the Dow Jones Industrial Average ended with a posting a 3.3 percent gain, also helped by Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell who said the US central bank would be "patient" in deciding on any further increases in the benchmark lending rates.

Trump faces protracted political battles in 2019 and the danger he could be blamed should the economy stumble amid a government shutdown and a stinging trade war with China.

Hiring last month jumped in healthcare, bars and restaurants, construction and, notably, in manufacturing, especially for durable goods, fabricated metal products and computers and electronics—all sectors that complain of lower profits and lost sales due to global trade tensions.

The report also suggested there was rising hope among job seekers.

The labor force participation rate—a measure of the total supply of employed people and those available and searching for work—rose to its highest level since September 2017 at 63.1 percent of the working-age



NEW YORK: A man carries a briefcase as he walks through the Financial District, on Friday in New York City. —AFP

population. The 3.2 percent wage gains compared to 2017 also meant workers saw increased purchasing power as consumer inflation over the same period was a slower 2.2 percent.

The sudden jump in hiring could be explained by weather effects as much of the nation experienced unusually cold temperatures during the November survey week while December was unseasonably

warm. "We expected a strong payroll number after the distortions of recent months due to two hurricanes, the California fires and the very cold November survey week, but this is spectacular," said economist Ian Shepherdson of Pantheon Macroeconomics.

But he cautioned that "this pace can't be sustained." —AFP

## Eurozone inflation slows in Dec

BRUSSELS: Eurozone inflation slowed to an annual rate of 1.6 percent in December mainly due to lower energy costs, preliminary data from the EU statistics unit Eurostat showed Friday.

Falling oil prices helped limit increases in the costs consumers pay for energy of all kinds to an average of 5.5 percent, down from a 9.1 percent in November. Overall inflation in the 19-member zone was 1.9 percent in November, and analysts polled by Factset had expected only a slight dip to 1.8 percent last month.

Economist Nicola Nobile at Oxford Economics felt the data "clearly bodes well for consumer spending, which we see accelerating this year." But European Central Bank monetary policy is aimed at keeping inflation just below but close to 2.0 percent, and the latest reading left the ECB "in an awkward spot with regards to their first rate hike," ING economist Bert Colijn noted.

Core eurozone inflation, which strips out volatile items including energy, food, alcohol and tobacco, was stable in December at 1.0 percent, the Eurostat data showed.

The ECB has held its reference interest rate at zero since March 2016, and analysts have been looking for signs as to whether it might begin to raise the cost of borrowing later this year.

"But with inflation moving away from the target and an economy that is slowing, the question is whether the ECB will see a chance to hike at all," Colijn said.

Bank board member Benoit Coeure told France Inter radio Friday that its rates "are going to remain low for a long time still". Referring to global risks, including that of a trade war between China and the US, Coeure added: "The machine to make crises is still there, there will be new financial crises and we have not done all we could in terms of financial regulation."

He pointed in particular to parallel financial networks known as "shadow banking" but added that even among high-street banks, "with the financial crisis in the past, bad habits are coming back."

ING economist Bolijn concluded that the ECB "is set for a year of uncertainty." —AFP

## KIB sponsors 2nd John Maxwell Leadership Forum

KUWAIT: KIB announced its sponsorship of the 2nd John Maxwell Leadership Forum, which was organized by a certified international instructor from the John Maxwell organization who is specialized in the field of personal development, Basma Ghareeb. The forum aimed at developing key skills required for self-confidence and self-development for youth.

The forum was designed by the John Maxwell organization to provide youth with the necessary tools to enable them to take on and overcome challenges in life. Additionally, it addressed four main topics of interest to youth, namely: combating bullying and ways to prevent it, empowering youth to overcome obstacles and failure, developing a positive self-image, as well as building and enjoying a self-confident personality.

On its part, KIB commented saying: "Our sponsorship of this forum comes as part of our strongly held belief in the importance of nurturing youth. This is particularly true in this day and age, as youth face many challenges, such as



John Maxwell Leadership Forum

lack of self-confidence, fear of failure, and bullying. Of course, our support of this forum comes under our new strategic direction of being a 'Bank for Life', reflecting our key role in the community as a partner in every aspect of people's lives. Through this new strategic direction, we continue to support youth and nurture their self-confidence by sponsoring events that develop their skills and

hone their abilities; thereby enabling them to make impactful contributions towards the future development of the nation." KIB always strives to enhance the self-confidence of youth and empower them by channeling their energies towards achieving practical goals. As a cornerstone of the nation, youth are able to support its development to build a better future for coming generations.

## Credit Suisse pledges help in US fraud probe

GENEVA: Credit Suisse said Friday it had been deceived by three former employees, accused by prosecutors in New York of orchestrating \$2 billion in dodgy loans to Mozambique, and pledged to cooperate with a US investigation. Switzerland's second largest bank said the suspects "sought to hide these activities from the bank" and stressed that Credit Suisse was not a target of the US Justice Department indictment.

"The former employees worked to defeat the bank's internal controls (and) acted out of a motive of personal profit,"

a Credit Suisse statement said.

The three suspects, who were arrested in London on Thursday, have been identified as Andrew Pearse, Surjan Singh and Detelina Subeva. London's Westminster Magistrates' Court has confirmed that they have been released on bail and are fighting extradition to the United States.

According to charges filed at a federal court in Brooklyn, the suspects helped officials in Mozambique secure \$2 billion (1.8 billion euros) in loans several years ago for a coastal protection plan.

The funds were then allegedly raided through various kickbacks and bribes.

Manuel Chang, who served as Mozambique's finance minister from 2005 to 2015, was arrested in South Africa last week and is also fighting US extradition. Lebanese businessman Jean Boustani, accused of helping coordinate

the alleged fraud, was arrested at a New York airport on Wednesday.

### Erase the debt?

Details of the dubious loans emerged towards the end of Chang's tenure and helped plunge Mozambique into its worst financial crisis since independence in 1975. Debt soared to 112 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) by the end of 2017, forcing the country to suspend repayments and arousing distrust from investors. Donors including the International Monetary Fund and World Bank suspended aid to the impoverished country after the government admitted it had secretly borrowed the \$2 billion.

The Jubilee Debt campaign, which has been campaigning to erase Mozambique's debts amassed in the alleged fraud, applauded the arrests.

"The investigation is likely to reveal fur-

ther evidence of how these loans were used to defraud the people of Mozambique," the group said in a statement.

Mozambique's main opposition party, Renamo, agreed that the debts incurred by the dubious loans "should not be paid by the Mozambican people."

In a statement, Renamo praised "the energetic action" taken by the US courts while blasting the "inertia of the Mozambican authorities" and the ruling Frelimo party. "The arrest of former finance minister Chang and former Credit Suisse bankers... is confirmation that there was a criminal practice on the part of the Frelimo leaders," the party said.

"Renamo demands a statement from the President (about) a fundamental mega-fraud that disgraced the Mozambican people," it added. There was no immediate reaction from the government on the latest arrests. —AFP

## Sterling scales \$1.27 as investors prepare for Brexit debate

LONDON: Sterling jumped on Friday after suffering heavy losses spurred by fears of a global economic slowdown, but uncertainty about Brexit kept its gains in check.

The pound sank to its lowest since April 2017 on Thursday after worries about the health of the global economy and particularly China sparked an investor exodus from currencies considered riskier.

The currency staged a recovery on Friday, trading up 0.6 percent against the dollar to \$1.2722, but still close to the bottom of its long-term range. Versus the euro, it also rose 0.6 percent to 89.66 pence.

Traders said the pound was helped by broad dollar weakness. The greenback fell despite US job growth surging and comments from Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell that the central bank will be sensitive to market concern about a US economic slowdown. —Reuters

## Boeing stuck in Iran creates headaches for Norwegian airline

OSLO: Norwegian Air Shuttle said Friday one of its Boeing 737s has been stuck in Iran for three weeks after an unscheduled landing due to engine problems, as US restrictions reportedly create headaches for the airline and possibly passengers. The aircraft was en route from Dubai to Oslo with 192 passengers and crew members on board when it carried out a "safety landing" in Shiraz in southwestern Iran because of engine trouble on December 14, a Norwegian Air Shuttle spokesman, Andreas Hjornholm, said.

While passengers were able to fly on to Oslo the following day on another aircraft, the Boeing 737 Max has been stuck on Iranian soil where the airline's mechanics are trying to repair it, Hjornholm said.

According to specialized sites such as

www.airlive.net, the repair work has encountered problems because international sanctions bar the airline from sending spare parts to Iran.

With the US withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal, the Trump administration decided to reimpose sanctions on Tehran. Norwegian Air Shuttle refused to comment on those reports.

"I can only say that we are working with several options to get the plane back on the wings, and right now we are waiting for our technicians to be able to service the plane and to get it working," Hjornholm said.

The incident has fuelled jokes on social media. "Iran has become a Bermuda Triangle that feeds on planes," one Iranian Twitter user wrote. It could also pose problems for the plane's passengers and crew members if they want to travel to the US in future.

Since 2015, anyone who has travelled to seven countries considered at risk (Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen) since March 2011 is excluded from the US visa waiver program applied to most Europeans. According to Hjornholm, the passengers and crew on the Dubai-



In this file photo, Boeing signage is seen on the outside of the Boeing Sheffield factory, the aerospace company's first manufacturing facility in Europe, in Sheffield, northern England. —AFP

Oslo flight officially entered Iran and stayed overnight at a hotel on December 14-15.

The US embassy in Oslo was not available for comment. Last year, former NATO

secretary general Javier Solana was refused entry to the US because he had visited Iran for the inauguration ceremony of President Hassan Rouhani in 2013. —AFP

Business

# US auto consumers tap brakes, swerve away from small cars

## Industry maintains healthy sales total

CHICAGO: Major automakers on Thursday announced slowing 2018 sales in the US even as the industry maintained close to its overall total from the previous year, defying expectations.

Overall, the North American auto industry maintained a healthy sales total, boosted by low unemployment and tax cuts. A total of 17.3 million vehicles were sold, about the same as in 2017, according to figures provided by the analytics firm Autodata. However, many major carmakers struggled to match 2017 sales, signaling US consumers were pulling back, increasingly squeezed by higher interest rates and rising price tags.

Also, Americans' love of larger, and pricier, SUVs and trucks was not enough to offset plummeting sedan and small car purchases. "We are forecasting sales to slow further in 2019. For some automakers, the slowdown has already begun," Cox Automotive Senior Economist Charlie Chesbrough said in a statement.

### Trucks, SUVs

GM, the biggest of the US automakers, reported a 2.7 percent sales dip in the fourth quarter and a 1.6 percent decline for 2018 — despite selling more crossover SUVs. Ford also struggled. Sales were down 8.8 percent in December to end the year 3.5 percent lower than 2017. It, too, sold more of its larger vehicles, including F-Series pickups. Another industry giant, Toyota, recorded US sales declines in December and the year — 0.9 percent and 0.3 percent, respectively.

FCA US, Fiat Chrysler's US subsidiary, improved its annual total by nine percent-fruits of its new focus on larger vehicles. The company's sales rose 14 percent in

the final month of 2018.

"This year's performance underscores the efforts we undertook to realign our production to give US consumers more Jeep vehicles and Ram pickup trucks," FCA US's sales chief Reid Bigland said in a statement. Further slowing in 2019 -

The overall industry sales total came in slightly above analysts' expectations, but a slowdown was still expected to come in 2019.

Carmakers were expected to face more challenges, and research firm Edmunds predicted the industry would sell fewer cars — 16.9 million in 2019. The effects of the tax cuts, especially for businesses buying fleets of cars, were expected to wane. Millions of recently leased cars also were to come back to dealerships and compete with new cars for consumer dollars.

Those challenges were coinciding with rising prices for new vehicles and higher interest rates.

Kelley Blue Book predicted the average new-car price was up about three percent in 2018 to more than \$36,000. "Despite retail sales falling for the sixth consecutive month, the continued growth in transaction prices is allowing manufacturers to offset lower sales with higher revenue," JD Power analyst Thomas King said in a statement.

### Mazda, Tesla see gains

Among other automakers, Honda boosted its December sales by 3.9 percent but declined 2.2 percent for the year. Truck and SUV sales nudged up for the year, but car sales plummeted. Nissan similarly rose 7.6 percent in December but fell 6.2 percent in 2018. Its car



NEW YORK: In this file photo, Jeep Wranglers are displayed at a Manhattan Fiat Chrysler dealership in New York City. Auto makers announced their end-of-year US sales totals, showing a slowing market even as Americans' demand for more expensive SUVs and trucks drove up prices. — AFP

sales fell 17 percent while truck-SUV sales gained 2.5 percent. Mazda fared the opposite: declining 3.8 percent for December, but up 3.7 percent for the year. The brand was buoyed by unusually high gains in SUV sales. Tesla delivered 90,700 cars in the fourth quarter,

slightly below the 91,000 expected by analysts. It also delivered 245,240 for all of 2018, more than twice the number from the previous year as it worked out shipping and delivery problems for its new mid-priced Model 3 sedan. — AFP

## AUB announces KD 250,000 Hassad Islamic Account winner

KUWAIT: Ahli United Bank held its salary quarterly grand prize draw for a Lifetime Salary, as part of the Al-Hassad Islamic Savings Account program, which is the largest prize draw in Kuwait. It was a special occasion for Abdulrahman Abdullah Alsubaiee who won KD 250,000 as a lifetime salary paid over 250 months.

Ahli United Bank congratulates Al-Mutairi who

is now able to achieve his dream, simply by having an account with AUB in Kuwait. The Al-Hassad Islamic Savings Account program is the largest such draw in Kuwait with a total annual prize draw of KD 3,400,000. The program also provides 26 weekly prizes, which represents the largest number of weekly winners.

To qualify for the Al-Hassad Islamic Savings Account prizes, customers only need to open a savings account with a minimum of KD 100. For every KD 50 of quarterly balance in the account, customers earn one chance to enter the quarterly draw. Moreover, customers earn one chance to enter the weekly draws for every KD 50 of balance. This means the more deposits made, the higher the chance of winning. The Al-Hassad Islamic Savings Account's customers in Kuwait and Bahrain are eligible to participate in the draw in line with the account's terms and conditions.

## Bolsonaro signals weaker pension reform, concern over Boeing deal

BRASILIA: Brazil President Jair Bolsonaro on Friday called for minimum retirement ages significantly lower than those proposed by his predecessor, sparking concerns among investors that he will back watered-down pension reform legislation.

Bolsonaro also said regional security was the basis for his statement on Thursday that he might be willing to allow a US military base on Brazilian soil as a way to counter Russian influence in Venezuela.

The newly inaugurated leader, speaking at an Air Force swearing-in ceremony on Friday, further said he is concerned that the latest proposal for the sale of 80 percent of Embraer's commercial aviation business to Boeing Co could ultimately lead to the US planemaker owning all of the new venture. It was the strongest expression of concern so far by his government over the tie-up.

Embraer shares were down more than 5 percent in late afternoon trading. On pension reform, Bolsonaro told reporters at an Air Force event that the minimum retirement age would be 62 for men and 57 for women, effective five years after any legislation is passed. That is lower than the minimums of 65 years of age for men and 62 for women that were proposed by ex-president Michel Temer.

Later on Friday, Bolsonaro's Chief of Staff Onyx Lorenzoni appeared to walk back what Bolsonaro said on minimum age requirement, saying it was one option and that no final decision had been made by the president's economic team. A reform of Brazil's bloated pension system will be among Bolsonaro's biggest challenges, since he has yet to build a base in Congress. It is key to erasing the country's 130 billion reais (\$34.76 billion) public deficit for 2019.

Investors on Friday sent interest rates higher on futures markets, showing disappointment about the lower-than-expected minimum age. The head of one major foreign bank's treasury desk saying that "it was not expected by the market and its unambitious, to say the least." Bolsonaro told reporters his government would have to raise the IOF tax on financial transactions to compensate for tax breaks extended to Brazil's poor north and northeast. But tax revenue secretary Marcos Cintra later said that would not be necessary, after meeting with the president.

### Alignment with US

Since his inauguration on Tuesday, Bolsonaro has used executive orders to open up Brazil's economy, crack down on violent drug gangs and redraw the country's



RIO DE JANEIRO: Rio de Janeiro Governor Wilson Witzel (left) and Brazil's Economy Minister Paulo Guedes (right) attend the ceremony where economist Roberto Castello Branco took office as president of the Brazilian oil company Petrobras at the company's headquarters in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. — AFP

foreign policy while pushing conservative social measures. Bolsonaro, a 63-year-old former Army captain and admiral of Brazil's 1964-1985 military dictatorship and U.S. President Donald Trump, has quickly deepened ties with the United States and Israel, with plans to move the Brazilian embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

In a television interview on Thursday night, Bolsonaro said he would be open to the possibility of the United States operating a military base in Brazil, a sharp shift in a foreign policy that has traditionally stressed neutrality.

He said he is worried about Russia's closeness with Venezuelan leftist President Nicolas Maduro, whom he has repeatedly called a dictator. A visit to Venezuela by two Russian nuclear-capable strategic bombers in December infuriated the US government and alarmed Brazil's military. "I have discussed this internally and with interest in other countries in South America," Bolsonaro told reporters on Friday when asked about hosting a US base. "We have to worry about our security and our sovereignty," he said, adding: "I consider the American people our friends."

### Gangs strike

On Friday, Justice Minister Sergio Moro ordered elite federal police to the northeastern state of Ceara, where suspected drug gang members have carried out dozens of attacks against banks and police barracks, and torched several buses. No deaths of bystanders have been reported. Gangs across Brazil typically carry out such actions to spread fear and in response to police crackdowns on the streets or in prisons. Ceara state officials in recent days have said they would start sending prisoners to whatever jails had space, and not separate those incarcerated according to gang affiliation. Critics blasted the proposal, saying that it will result in immediate and bloody prison uprisings. — Reuters

## Global stocks soar on dovish Fed, strong US jobs data

NEW YORK: Global stocks shot higher on Friday following a strong US jobs report and dovish comments from Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell on the prospects for higher interest rates.

Those back-to-back market-friendly developments helped US and European stock bourses surge higher and set aside for now nervousness over trade wars, a US government shutdown and a slowing economy that have pressured stocks for most of the last month.

"A solid set of job numbers and some comfortable words from the chairman of the Federal Reserve have been just the ticket to get markets into bullish mode," said Chris Beauchamp, chief market analyst at online trading platform IG. The Dow finished up 3.3 percent, or nearly 750 points, to end the week at 23,433.16, more than making up for the 2.8 percent slide on

Thursday amid worries over slowing growth.

Bourses in Paris, Frankfurt and London all surged at least two percent, also boosted in part by the US momentum. Earlier, Japan's Nikkei had slumped 2.3 percent, due in part due to a strengthening yen, which advanced further on the US currency following Powell's dovish commentary. The losses in the Japan also followed Thursday's grim Wall Street session, which saw major indices end down more than two percent after Apple slashed its revenue forecast on weak demand in China and a US report showed manufacturing activity slumping to a two-year low.

### Dovish tone

Employment data showed the US added 312,000 jobs in December, much above analyst expectations, strengthening the case of those who have argued that markets have overreacted to signs that US growth may have peaked. Stocks rallied further after Fed Chair Jerome Powell told a gathering of economists that the US central bank had no "pre-set" plan for interest rates and was carefully monitoring economic conditions.

"Markets are expressing concerns about global growth in particular and trade negotiations," Powell said. "We're listening with-sensitively to the message that markets are sending and we'll be taking those downside risks into account as we make policy going forward." — AFP

## Canada jobless rate unchanged at 5.6% in Nov

OTTAWA: The Canadian economy generated 9,300 new jobs in December while the unemployment rate remained unchanged at 5.6 percent, a 42-year low, the national statistics institute said Friday.

"Employment held steady in December," Statistics Canada said in a statement. That followed 94,000 net hires in November. The 5.6 percent unemployment rate is the lowest since 1976 when comparable data were first kept. In December, jobs were created in the

manufacturing, transportation, warehousing and health and social assistance sectors, while the retail and public administration saw job losses. The positive data nevertheless contained signs of weakness in the Canadian economy, with economist noting that all new job growth was attributable to self-employment, and that there were fewer full-time jobs than the month before.

The private sector lost 20,000 jobs between November and December, and public sector employment was down by 17,000. The total number of unemployed was up slightly to a bit more than 1.1 million people, while workforce participation in the labor market was unchanged at 65.4 percent. In 2018, overall employment rose by 163,000 or 0.9 percent, a weaker pace of growth than in 2017 (2.3 percent) and 2016 (1.2 percent), according to Statistics Canada. — AFP

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Business

# KFH: 220 CSR initiatives confirm leadership in social development

Al-Ruwaieh: Paradigm shift in strategy of sustainable development in 2018



Information Minister praises Baitak's activities for youth



At Hawally Park

**KUWAIT:** "Kuwait Finance House (KFH) has successfully wrapped up the year 2018 by offering nearly 220 initiatives and contributions in the corporate social responsibility. This encompassed the fields of health, education, sport, youth, people with special needs, and people with outstanding achievements in inventions, science, cultures and other fields", said Executive Manager Group Public Relations and Media at KFH, Yusef Abdullah Al-Ruwaieh, indicating the Bank is keen to implement inclusiveness and diversity in the strategy of social responsibility.

**Youth**

Since the youth are a key pillar of KFH's strategy, the Bank launched a comprehensive and integrated youth campaign, which included a variety of services, products, events, activities and surprises. It also included awards and unprecedented rewards to this segment.



Yusef Al-Ruwaieh

KFH also continued its strategic partnership with the Youth Empowerment Symposium dedicated for empowering the youth and granting them the opportunity to benefit from global leaders' expertise and their success stories.

He indicated that the group of national champions who joined KFH program under the theme "KFH entrepreneurs" has expanded. This incarnates the Bank's keenness to recognize those who contribute in raising the Kuwaiti flag high in the international forums and championships, while confirming its instrumental role in the corporate social responsibility.

**Students**

Al-Ruwaieh continued: "KFH prioritized the youth and is the leading supporter for them at all levels. KFH sponsored the students and youth specialized clubs at the University of Kuwait and other private universities. The bank sponsored the graduation projects for the students of Engineering and Petroleum College. It organized many lectures and seminars for university students, not to mention hosted international scholars to participate in job fairs and different students' activities. This reiterates the Bank's endeavors to support the youth, students and the educational process. Moreover, KFH organized an honoring ceremony to recognize 120 students of the distinguished graduates of the secondary schools for the academic year 2017/2018.

**Encouraging startups**

KFH offered a KFH People's Choice Start-Up Award to the winner of startup battle competitions in the Arab Net conference. KFH issued its annual Corporate Social Responsibility CSR Report. This report generally highlights the bank's initiatives and accomplishments. It can be a reference for other institutions to follow suit.

**All-New Quran App**

KFH launched the high-quality version 4 of the Holy Quran Application available on App Store for iPhone and iPad users with enhanced features of which are a novel display design, compatibility with different languages and screen orientation; horizontal and vertical. This is a gift from KFH to all users around the globe.

**Health**

Al-Ruwaieh added that KFH has signed strategic partnerships with many institutions to support several activities in the health and medical field for its significant role in the life of individuals and development of society. KFH pays great attention to this vital field as it represents a main pillar for comprehensive development. KFH participated in the cancer and diabetes awareness campaigns and organized many events to raise the awareness among society individuals. Moreover, the Bank sponsored scientific and medical forums and conferences to raise the awareness of some widespread diseases. KFH has been honored and recognized by several official bodies such as the Ministry of Health, Dasman Diabetes Institute in addi-



الشهر العالمي لسرطان الثدي  
Breast Cancer Awareness Month

tion to several hospitals and medical institutions in recognition of its key role in participating in the events that are meant to raise the health awareness in the society.

**Environment**

He stressed the importance of environment noting that KFH pays great attention towards keeping the environment clean and healthy in collaboration with concerned official authorities and bodies. KFH signed a cooperation agreement with 'Agrivage'; a startup business created by a group of Kuwaiti students, with the purpose of preserving the environment by recycling food waste and converting it into usable rich soil. KFH uniquely sponsored a pioneering environmental project Umnia for Plastic bottles recycling. This small project has now become a factory for recycling. The Bank took part in many other environmental activities and events such as cleaning the beaches, planting of greenery and holding events for school students to encourage planting and greening.

**Distributing 27000 Iftar meals**

KFH Ramadan Campaign witnessed great success and received huge recognition. The bank launched a plethora of initiatives of which were feeding fasting people, serving worshippers during Qiyam prayer in the Grand Mosque. Also, KFH distributed 27000 iftar meals and participated in distributing 100000 iftar meals in collaboration with "Ramadan Aman" campaign.

**Awards and recognition**

KFH was hailed by several local and global institutions in recognition of its pioneering role in strengthening the pillars of sustainable social development. The awards are: "Humanitarian and Voluntary" award from Arab Media Forum, in addition to "Excellence in Public Relations" Award, and "Excellence in Social Responsibility" award



Honoring outstanding high school students



Honoring winners of Holy Quran reciting competition

from the Advertising Creativity Conference 2018. Also, KFH received "PR Star 2018" award by the Arab Media Forum - observer member of the Council of Arab Information Ministers and the Standing Committee for Information.



Baitak voluntary team



Visiting kids at hospitals



Fire Directorate



Presenting girgean gifts to kids



Services during the last ten days of a Ramadan

Health & Technology

# Huawei raps staff for sending New Year tweet via iPhone

SHANGHAI: Chinese telecom giant Huawei has punished two employees for posting a New Year greeting on the company's official Twitter account using an iPhone made by arch rival Apple, an internal memo showed. Huawei dislodged Apple last year from its position as the world's second biggest smartphone-seller, below global number one Samsung.

But in a public relations gaffe, the Chinese company wished followers a "Happy #2019" in a tweet on New Year's Day—marked sent "via Twitter for iPhone".

Video producer Marques Brownlee shared a screenshot of the post with his three million Twitter followers before Huawei deleted it and sent another, this time marked "sent via Twitter Media Studio".

One unnamed employee and Huawei's director of digital marketing were demoted and had their monthly salary slashed by 5,000 yuan (\$730), according to the memo widely shared on China's Twitter-like platform Weibo and seen by AFP.

As well as the pay cut, the digital marketing director was also hit with a salary freeze and no promotions for the next 12 months. Although the blunder was made by a third-party social media company called Sapient, the pair were disciplined for the "negative impact" on the Huawei brand caused by the incident, which highlighted "procedural

incompliance and management oversight", the memo said.

In the memo dated Thursday, Huawei's corporate senior vice president Chen Lifang said the gaffe took place when Sapient used an iPhone with a Hong Kong SIM card to send the Twitter greeting after experiencing "VPN problems". Twitter—and other major foreign sites like Facebook and Google—are blocked in China and users need a virtual private network (VPN) connection to circumvent Beijing's internet controls.

Huawei did not reply to AFP's request for a comment on the incident.

The company has come under fire in 2018, with Washington leading efforts to blacklist Huawei internationally. The arrest of its chief financial officer Meng Wanzhou in Canada in early December—on a US extradition request linked to sanctions-breaking business dealings with Iran—has led to a surge of patriotism in China with companies encouraging staff to buy Huawei smartphones.

Several companies are offering employees subsidies for Huawei phone purchases, while others have even warned staff against buying Apple products, AFP found.

Huawei in December said it expects to see a 21 percent rise in revenue for 2018 despite some of its telecommunications equipment being banned in several countries due to security concerns. — AFP



BEIJING: Pedestrians walk past a Huawei store in Beijing. — AFP

## Russia demands explanation over US snub to space chief

MOSCOW: Russia's space agency yesterday demanded an explanation after NASA put off a planned visit to the United States by Russia's controversial space chief.

Dmitry Rogozin, a firebrand nationalist politician known for his anti-Western rhetoric, was set to visit the US in February but NASA said Friday that it was postponing his visit indefinitely.

Rogozin, appointed by President Vladimir Putin in May last year and previously a deputy prime minister, is blacklisted and under US sanctions over Russia's actions in Ukraine.

Russia's Roscosmos space agency said in a statement that "it expects official explanations of NASA's position" and stressed that Rogozin's visit was planned "in accordance with an invitation received earlier."

It added a veiled warning that preparations for talks on cooperation with the US on the ISS programme and deep space exploration are "so far not suspended."

The row comes as space exploration remains one of the few areas where Washington and Moscow continue active cooperation despite political tensions. The US needs Russia to ferry astronauts to the International Space Station.



Dmitry Rogozin

NASA said in a statement Friday it had told Roscosmos that Rogozin's visit would "need to be postponed" and a new date "has not been identified," USA Today reported.

Plans for Rogozin to visit NASA's Johnson Space Center in Houston had prompted protests from US senators.

Democratic Senator Jeanne Shaheen said in a statement Wednesday that NASA's invitation to Rogozin "undercuts our message and undermines the United States' core national security objectives."

The rescinded invitation came after NASA chief Jim Bridenstine visited Russia in October, his first trip after he took up his post.

He observed the failed launch of a Soyuz rocket carrying two Russian and NASA astronauts who managed to make an emergency landing.

He told TASS state news agency at the time that NASA had managed to temporarily lift US sanctions on Rogozin to allow him to visit.

Rogozin has clashed with the US, suggesting American astronauts should use trampolines instead of Russian rockets to reach the ISS after Washington imposed sanctions over Moscow's 2014 annexation of Crimea. He recently joked Russia would send a mission to the Moon to "verify" whether NASA lunar landings ever took place. — AFP

## School girls in Kenya undergo compulsory tests for pregnancy

NAIROBI: Girls in western Kenya returning to school after the Christmas break are undergoing compulsory tests for female genital mutilation in a move to crack-down against the illegal and harmful practice, a senior government official said on Friday.

They are also being tested to see if they are pregnant. George Nantembeya, commissioner for Narok County, said many girls were being forced to undergo female genital mutilation (FGM) during the school vacation, and pregnancies following this traditional "rite of passage" were common.

"We have the highest rates of teen pregnancies in the country, and FGM is widespread in some communities in Narok, but it is difficult to detect these cases as it is all underground and secretive," Nantembeya told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. "The tests will help us to better support girls who often have to hide their pregnancies and health complications after undergoing FGM. We will also be able to prosecute men who defile them, and go after their parents who force them to undergo FGM." Since primary and secondary schools opened in Narok on Thursday, Nantembeya said girls

aged between 9-17 years were being given pregnancy tests and examined for FGM by trained medical professionals in local schools and clinics. Girls will be given support to return home if they are pregnant and guaranteed admission to school after giving birth, he said.

Those who had undergone FGM would be given counseling and medical attention, he added.

The move has sparked outrage among women's rights campaigners who said the compulsory tests are demeaning and would further victimize and traumatize girls. "The Narok county commissioner's efforts to fight FGM in the past are to be commended, but this is not the right way. This is demeaning and violates a girl's right to dignity and privacy," said Felister Gitonga from the campaign group Equality Now.

FGM, which usually involves the partial or total removal of the external genitalia, is prevalent across parts of Africa, Asia and the Middle East – and is seen as necessary for social acceptance and increasing a girl's marriage prospects.

It is usually performed by traditional cutters, often with unsterilized blades or knives. In some cases, girls can bleed to death or die from infections. It can also cause lifelong painful conditions such as fistula and fatal childbirth complications. Kenya criminalized FGM in 2011, but the deep-rooted practice persists. According to the United Nations, one in five Kenyan women and girls aged between 15 and 49 have undergone FGM.

Nantembeya rejected criticism from rights groups saying a more radical approach was required to curb FGM. "We have to take this to another level now and go after the parents and traditional cutters as this will help act as a deterrent," he said. — Reuters

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What's On

# ACK hosts Fire Safety Day event

As a part of its ongoing commitment to corporate social responsibility, the Australian College of Kuwait (ACK) held a Fire Safety Day event in order to raise awareness on important safety issues. Fire Safety Day is the third in a series of Health and Safety related events that have been held by ACK since 2016 as a part of its commitment towards the promotions of healthy lifestyle choices and habits for students, staff and the Kuwaiti community in general. Among the attendees was the Australian Ambassador, HE Jonathan Gilbert, who met ACK management when he arrived and joined them while enjoying the event programs.

The event focused on the important aspects of fire safety and how to properly handle building and kitchen fires. The Kuwaiti Fire Department gave attendees important lessons on how to react to fires and provided hands-on instruction on how to use a fire extinguisher. This was the first time that the Kuwaiti Fire Department brought equipment to an entity in the educational sector.

Besides the safety awareness elements, the event also included a stage show and various booths which were organized by ACK's School of Business



(SOB) students. ACK chose to organize it through the SOB in order to strengthen school pride and to give practical experience to business students in event management. The students also organized



activities for families and children, with a host of games and attractions provided such as giant tic-tac-toe, an inflatable slide, tug-of-war and a small animal petting area. The proceeds from the event

ticket sales were donated to the Cancer Aware Nation (CAN). The amount totaled 1,200 KD, which was the highest amount raised so far by a Health and Safety Day event.

## Nandhanam conducts Rangapravesham 2018

Nandhanam Kuwait conducted "Rangapravesham 2018" at the Sabah Al-Salem Theater, Khaldiya on 14th December 2018. The program was inaugurated by Shri Sanjeev Salkalani, Second Secretary (Consular and Education) Indian Embassy, who appreciated Nandhanam, for their efforts to demonstrate the artistic culture and heritage in its original form. Anu Sithara, prominent Malayalam Film Artist and a professional classical dancer was the special guest for the event. Dr Joy Krishnan, choreographer, dancer and trainer of Classical Dance, who was also a special guest for the event. Smt. Nayana Santhosh, Director of Nandhanam Kuwait, delivered the welcome speech, which was followed by the Kuwait national anthem.

This year over 90 students had completed their Arangeetram in BharataNatyam, Mohiniyattam, Kuchipudi dance forms. The event kicked off with a lovely rendering of a

Ganesha Sthuthi by the live accompaniment team. There on, the students performed the Arangeetram Kacheri to the Thillana followed by Padam, Varnam, Keerthanam lasting for over 3 hours brilliantly supported by the Live Accompaniment team. The faculties of Nandhanam, Kalamandalam Soumya Prakash, Sujith SS (Swathi Thirunnaal), RLV Kavya Pushparajan and Kalaikaviri Veena Vijayan accompanied on the Nattuvangam.

AnuSithara expressed her gratitude in inviting her to this wonderful event and she appreciated the efforts of Nandhanam in promoting Indian culture and values in Kuwait. Dr Joy Krishnan appreciated the teachers for their tremendous effort in preparing the students for their arangeetram. Nandhanam Kuwait directors - Mrs. Nayana Santhosh and Mrs. Bindhu Prasad honoured Anu Sitha and Dr Joy by presenting them a token of appreciation. Nandhanam Kuwait also appreciated the makeup artists Shri Jayan V Narayanan and Shri Ajith Kumar in the evening. As a gesture of appreciation and respect to Arangeetram students, the Nandhanam family of junior students from Mangaf, Salmiya, Abbasiya, Reggaie and Abu Khalifa batches performed a chain group dance to bring the evening to a beautiful close.



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Also, our guests will enjoy a free access to our state-of-the-art Health Club and its diverse range of activities which includes a well-equipped fitness area, outdoor heated pool and indoor courts for basketball and squash. The club is open daily from 06:00 - 22:30 so guests may fit it into their schedule when it is convenient for them.

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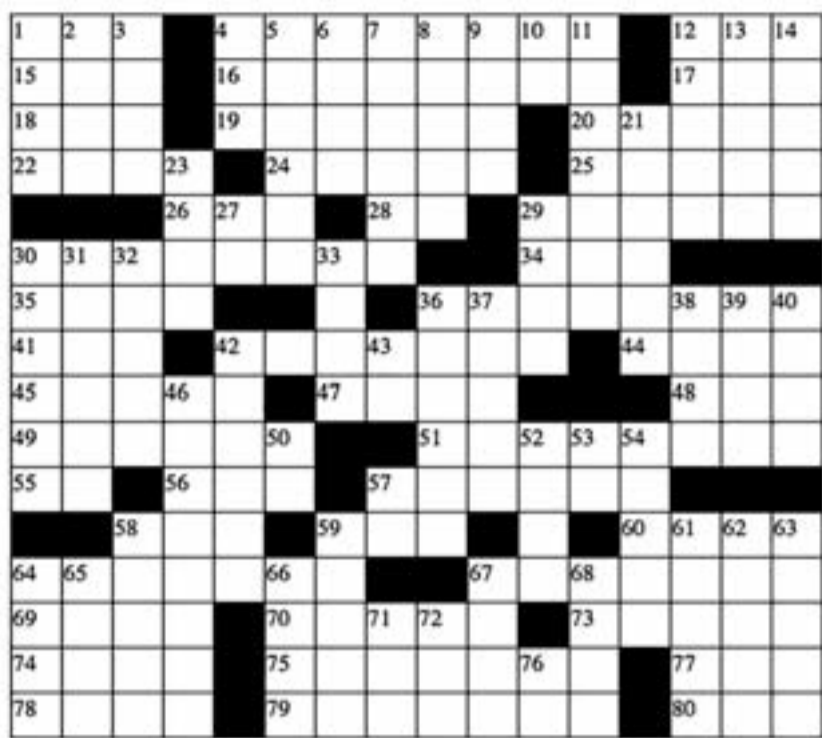
## Happy Birthday!

We wish you a very happy birthday Ibrahim Ismael Al-Shennawi and may your future be ever bright. Much love and best wishes from Father, Mother and the entire family.



Stars

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- ACROSS**
- A bachelor's degree in naval science.
  - Raspberry native to eastern North America having black thimble-shaped fruit.
  - A guided missile fired from shipboard against an airborne target.
  - Resinlike substance secreted by certain lac insects.
  - Frivolous banter.
  - An index of the cost of all goods and services to a typical consumer.
  - Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
  - Declared as fact.
  - A British doctorate.
  - A sock with a separation for the big toe.
  - The boy whose upbringing was described by Jean-Jacques Rousseau.
  - A resident of Iowa.
  - A metric unit of volume or capacity equal to 10 liters.
  - A state in southeastern United States between the Atlantic and the Gulf of Mexico.
  - Process for producing permanent prints in a carbon pigment.
  - Any of various long-tailed rodents similar to but larger than a mouse.
  - Any of numerous local fertility and nature deities worshipped by ancient Semitic peoples.
  - A Kwa language spoken by the Yoruba people in southwestern Nigeria.
  - Representation of the cross on which Jesus died.
  - An artistic form of nonverbal communication.
  - Small deer of Japan with slightly forked antlers.
  - A federal agency established to coordinate programs aimed at reducing pollution and protecting the environment.
  - A blood vessel that carries blood from the heart to the body.
  - (of the feet of some animals) Not webbed.
  - A hard malleable ductile silvery metallic element that is resistant to corrosion.
  - A former monetary unit in Great Britain.
  - The basic unit of money in Bangladesh.
  - The capital of French Polynesia on the northwestern coast of Tahiti.
  - Using speech rather than writing.
  - Spiritual being attendant upon God.
  - Jordan's port.
  - The activity of persuading someone to buy.
  - Of or relating to Linnaeus or to the system of taxonomic classification that he proposed.
  - An adult male person (as opposed to a woman).
  - The basic unit of money in Western Samoa.
  - A region in northernmost Europe inhabited by Lapps.
  - A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
- DOWN**
- Cry plaintively.
  - Kamarupan languages spoken in north-eastern India and western Burma.
  - Someone who works (or provides workers) during a strike.
  - (computer science) A computer that is running software that allows users to leave messages and access information of general interest.
  - In the recent past.
  - (Old Testament) In Judeo-Christian mythology.
  - Accustom to urban ways.
  - The sound of a bell rung slowly to announce a death or a funeral or the end of something v.l.
  - (of a young animal) Abandoned by its mother and raised by hand.
  - A soft white precious univalent metallic element having the highest electrical and thermal conductivity of any metal.
  - A tricycle (usually propelled by pedalling).
  - A neutral middle vowel.
  - Relating to or having the characteristics of bees.
  - English writer of stories for children (1882-1956).
  - A craftsman who shapes pottery on a potter's wheel and bakes them in a kiln.
  - A material effigy that is worshipped as a god.
  - A highly unstable radioactive element (the heaviest of the halogen series).
  - Toward the mouth or oral region.
  - Medium-sized tree-dwelling monkey of the Amazon basin.
  - Aggravation by deriding or mocking or criticizing.
  - Either of two large muscles of the chest.
  - A Bantu language spoken in western Kenya.
  - A woody climbing usually tropical plant.
  - United States physiologist (born in Germany) who did research on parthenogenesis (1859-1924).
  - A slow pace of running.
  - (Babylonian) God of storms and wind.
  - An organism especially a bacterium that requires air or free oxygen for life.
  - A light strong gray lustrous corrosion-resistant metallic element used in strong light-weight alloys (as for airplane parts).
  - Pygmy marmosets.
  - A soft silvery metallic element.
  - English writer and a central member of the Fabian Society (1858-1943).
  - Half the width of an em.
  - A dyed fabric.
  - (astronomy) The angular distance of a celestial point measured westward along the celestial equator from the zenith crossing.
  - A fragment broken off from the edge or face of stone or ore and having at least one thin edge.
  - A narrow headband or strip of ribbon worn as a headband.
  - Small terrestrial lizard of warm regions of the Old World.
  - Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
  - A city in southern Turkey on the Seyhan River.
  - A particular geographical region of indefinite boundary (usually serving some special purpose or distinguished by its people or culture or geography).
  - Great in vertical dimension.
  - Evergreen trees and shrubs having only one-seeded fruits.
  - Relating to or characteristic of or occurring on land.
  - Former measure of the US economy.
  - An inflammatory complication of leprosy that results in painful skin lesions on the arms and legs and face.
  - An associate degree in nursing.

Friday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Out with the old. Bring on the new, exciting and wild. What a rebel you are! If it goes against tradition you are all about it today. You crave excitement and the same old, same old, just isn't going to cut it for you. Change is in the air. A new hairstyle, a new outfit, or a visit to a new place tonight may be just what you need to add a little excitement to your life. Go have some fun!



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

You are focused and very goal oriented today. It is as if you are on a mission and will let nothing stand in your way. You are motivated and determined to fix all that is around you this not just as you think it should be. You want things your way and refuse to settle for less. This day reveals itself to be a perfect time to spend with a lover or someone close to you as you are feeling a desire to be needed and admired. You will find this will fulfill your needs and leave you with a sense of completion. Your most productive time today will be spent at home, Taurus.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

You may have been so focused lately you have been missing out on a social life. Today is a great day to get out and about. Hit the town but choose your company wisely as not to experience any conflict while doing so. Surround yourself with like-minded friends. Choose friends who are positive and share your love of life. You may find yourself experiencing a real spiritual awakening and the desire to share this with others. You should be pleasantly pleased at how receptive your friends are. A great day for you where the lines of communication open in all aspects of your world.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

You may find yourself becoming overly comfortable with your position in life. This could be careerwise or this could be concerning a relationship. Be careful not to let things become boring. Remember the grass is not always greener on the other side. You may find today brings many options and temptations into your world. Take time to make careful choices and take all consequences into consideration before making a move. You will find comfort in knowing you are financially sound and things seem to be going your way in this aspect today. Actions have consequences. Cancer, keep this in mind today.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Out with the old and in with the new. Your focus is on ambition, security, and responsibility are areas in your life where you have placed major focus. There are big decisions in your life concerning these areas that need to be made. Knowing you have fallen short of goals in the past has you extremely determined at this point in your life. The easy way is not always the best way. You may reap great reward from your determination. Remember, you can only count on yourself to accomplish your goals. We live in a "what's in it for me" kind of world.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

No decision will be made without deep thought and research. You are well aware your actions have consequences. You are extremely focused and determined to set the stage for great success. You may find yourself accounting for every detail. You seem to be taking life very seriously now. You could find your health and career to be a major focus for you. Be sure and take some time to relax as you know what they say about "all work and no play!"



Libra (September 23-October 22)

This is a time to come back to reality. Focus on the here and now. Shed the illusions - fast. Open your eyes to what is going on in your close relationships. You will see change is needed. This may concern your living situation. Be realistic and think through every move you make now. This is not the time to sugar coat the things that are going on your world. Speak up and be heard. Make others aware that you clearly know what is going on.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

If an emotional argument is what you are seeking today may just in fact be your day. You may feel a lack of support and blocked at every turn. Use your imagination and ability to think outside of the box to find your answers. Others may see you detached or cool on a personal level today. Your tolerance levels may be low and your temper short. You are drawn now to the unique and unusual in this world. Make your ideas count. Now is a great time to try new things and visit new places. You should find today as one where you are able to make new friends and have great conversations with everyone you cross paths with.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Love would not begin to describe the feelings you are experiencing now. This is more like an obsession. You crave something that makes you feel alive. Feelings such as passion, jealousy and possession may come into play in your world. It seems as if you know exactly what/who you want and you will not let anything nor anyone stand in your way. You HAVE TO HAVE IT! Keep your focus and your determination will lead to you having exactly what your heart desires.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

You may be feeling emotionally detached from your surroundings at this time. You tend to be viewed as detached by others when you are in all reality your mind is highly focused and your wheels are turning. You are fascinated by the unusual and are finding yourself lost in your thoughts. You may find it hard to focus in the workplace today. Today may not be the best day for important decisions in the work place as you have lost yourself in your thoughts. You are quick witted and are no stranger to finding yourself having to apologize for having offended someone. Bite your tongue, keep it to yourself today as this could result in a battle of words with someone close to you. Capricorn, settle in with a book tonight and give your mind a break from reality. This will provide a much-needed escape for you.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Today may bring a sense of isolation your way. This is not always a bad thing. Time spent alone can be used in prayer or meditation. A time to truly get in touch with yourself. Spend some time working on you. Sometimes you get so caught up in caring for others you forget to give yourself the same time and attention. Embrace the silence that surrounds you today and really listen to what your mind and body are telling you. You may need rest. You need to feed your soul just as you feed your body. Spend a quiet evening of escape alone. Run a bath, light the candles, and dim the lights. Breathe in the peace that surrounds you. Curl up with a good book and turn in early. Allow only that which is peaceful and positive into your world.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

You know what you want and you will not let anything stand in your way. You have your eye on the prize. This has gone way beyond a want. You are actually obsessed.

Wordsearch Puzzle

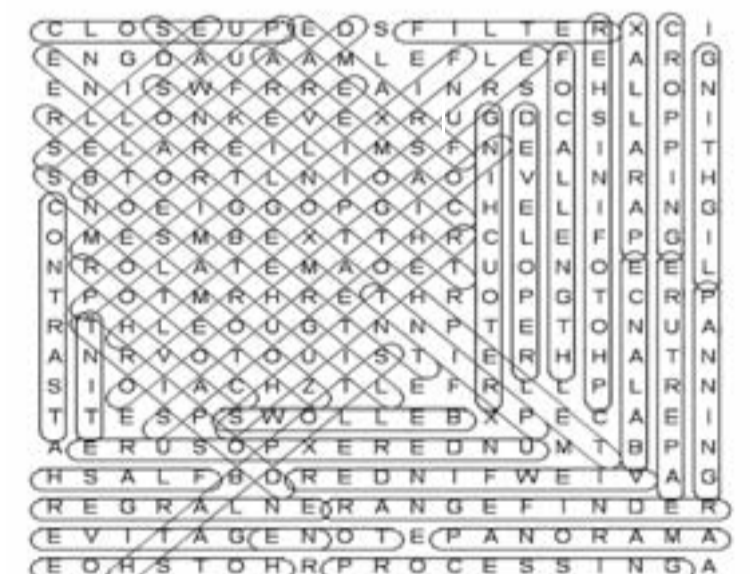
Physics 1

Find and circle all of the words that are hidden in the grid. The remaining 30 letters spell an Albert Einstein quotation.



- |              |                |            |               |
|--------------|----------------|------------|---------------|
| ACCELERATION | ELECTRON       | LAWS       | QUARK         |
| BALANCE      | ENERGY         | LENGTH     | REFRACTION    |
| BELLOWS      | ENTROPY        | LEVER      | SOUND         |
| BLOWUP       | EXPERIMENT     | MASS       | STRING THEORY |
| CAMERA       | FARADAY        | MECHANICS  | TESLA         |
| CLOSE UP     | FREEZING POINT | MOMENTUM   | THERMOMETER   |
| COLOR        | FULCRUM        | NEWTON     | TRAJECTORY    |
| CONTRAST     | GRAVITY        | OPTICS     | VECTOR        |
| CROPPING     | HAWKING        | PASCAL     | VISCOSITY     |
| DARKROOM     | IMPEDANCE      | PENDULUM   | WAVE          |
| DEVELOPER    | DOPPLER        | POWER      | WEDGE         |
| EINSTEIN     | KELVIN         | PRINCIPLES | WORK          |

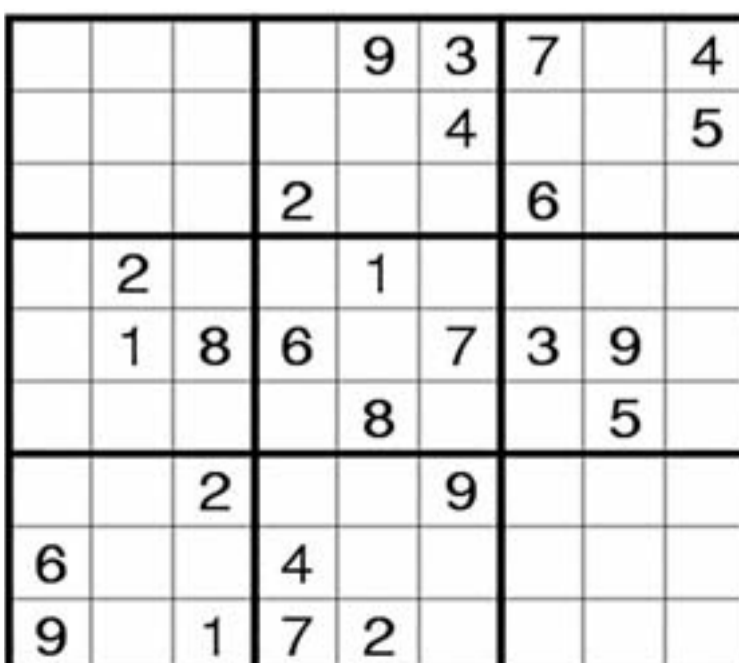
Photography



- |           |              |               |                |
|-----------|--------------|---------------|----------------|
| APERTURE  | ENLARGEMENT  | OVEREXPOSURE  | SATURATION     |
| BALANCE   | ENLARGER     | PANNING       | SHUTTER        |
| BELLOWS   | FILTER       | PANORAMA      | SLIDE          |
| BLOWUP    | FIXING BATH  | PARALLAX      | STOP BATH      |
| CAMERA    | FLASH        | PHOTOFINISHER | TELEPHOTO LENS |
| CLOSE UP  | FOCAL LENGTH | POSITIVE      | TINT           |
| COLOR     | FRAME        | PRINT         | TRIPOD         |
| CONTRAST  | HOT SHOE     | PROCESSING    | UNDEREXPOSURE  |
| CROPPING  | LIGHT METER  | RANGEFINDER   | VIEWFINDER     |
| DARKROOM  | LIGHTING     | RETOUCHING    | ZOOM LENS      |
| DEVELOPER | NEGATIVE     | SAFELIGHT     |                |

The hidden sentence is: SINGLE LENS REFLEX CAMERA

Daily SuDoku



Friday's Solution



# Lifestyle

SUNDAY, JANUARY 6, 2019



This picture shows flamingoes feeding off a beach north of Kuwait City. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

## French literary bad boy Houellebecq returns with 'yellow vest' novel

Provocative French author Michel Houellebecq's highly anticipated new novel, in which he appears to foretell the "yellow vest" revolt, looked set to become an instant bestseller after going on sale Friday. Houellebecq, a fierce eurosceptic, became a pin-up of the far right after his last book, "Submission", which envisioned a France subject to sharia law after electing a Muslim president in 2022. The deeply depressed hero of his latest book "Serotonin" is an agricultural engineer who returns to his roots in a provincial France devastated by globalization and European agricultural policies. He finds a resentful rural populace who are "virtually dead" yet ripe for rebellion and who rise up to block motorways, much as the "yellow vest" movement has done for real since late November.



Copies of French award winner writer Michel Houellebecq's seventh new novel "Serotonin" are displayed in a book store in Paris. — AFP photos



In this file photo French author Michel Houellebecq presents his new book "Soumission" ("Submission") before a reading as part of the LitCologne literature festival, at Schauspielhaus in Cologne, Germany.

Houellebecq's seventh novel, written long before protesters in high-visibility vests began barricading roads to protest against President Emmanuel Macron's policies, has been hailed by critics as eerily premonitory. Anticipating runaway demand Flammarion publishing house has issued a first print run of 320,000 copies for the French language edition — 64 times that of the average novel. "It's all I've been selling since this morning," a sales assistant at Delamain bookshop in central Paris told AFP. At

another bookshop in the capital's 15th district, Chantal, a 67-year-old Houellebecq fan who did not wish to give her full name, said she bought a copy as soon as the store opened.

Confessing to a liking for his "nihilistic, discerning" outlook, she said: "There are few authors that have this vision of society." The book, which will be published in German, Spanish and Italian next week, only comes out in English in September. Houellebecq, 62, shot to worldwide fame with nihilistic novels depicting misogynistic men trapped in loveless existences and hooked on casual sex. "Serotonin" is not the first to be seen as a cautionary tale. His 2001 novel "Platform", about sex tourism in Thailand, features a terror attack on a nightclub popular with Westerners.

A year after its release, Islamist radicals attacked a bar and nightclub on the Indonesian tourist island of Bali, killing 202 people. Houellebecq has however denied being a prophet, telling a French literary magazine in 2015 that he was merely making "projections" based on his observations. The theme of Western decline runs throughout his work and his latest book is no exception.

### 'Dying of sadness'

Houellebecq, who was awarded the Legion of Honor by Macron on January 1 for his services to French literature, rails against politicians who "do not fight for the interests of their people but are ready to die to defend free trade". His hero—a typically Houellebecqian narrator called Florent-Claude Labrouste who is a thinly veiled cipher for the author—also blames feminism for what he sees as the West's demise. "This is how a civilization dies, without dangers or drama and very little carnage," says Labrouste, a 46-year-old "dying of sadness" whose Japanese partner hates him and whose career is all but over.

In his native Normandy, where he goes in search of his ex-wife who left him when he slept with another woman, Labrouste finds factory workers being laid off and failing farmers committing suicide. France's L'Obs magazine has called "Serotonin"—a reference to the antidepressant the narrator takes—Houellebecq's best book, "a beautiful work of infinite sadness". Germany's Die Zeit weekly said it had long seen the "anti-liberal convictions of France's greatest living author as a literary device". "Now, he must be taken seriously," it wrote.

### Catholic nostalgia

Houellebecq revels in his role as literary arch-provocateur. In October he raised eyebrows by presenting the Oswald Spengler prize, named after the German fascist philosopher who wrote "The Decline of the West". At the ceremony he said France should leave the euro, that "Muslims were a problem" in Europe, and it would be better if "the Catholic Church were back on top".

In a recent essay in Harper's Magazine, a New York-based monthly, he praised US President Donald Trump for his protectionist trade policies, calling him "one of the best American presidents". His last book "Submission" came out on the same day in January 2015 that jihadists attacked the Paris offices of Charlie Hebdo satirical magazine, killing 12 people, including a close friend of Houellebecq.

It immediately shot to the top of the bestseller list, selling nearly 800,000 copies in French and over half a million in German. In September, the author who has written that "love makes one weak", married Qianyum Lysis Li, a woman of Chinese origin 20 years his junior. — AFP

## New York's Met welcomed record 7.4 million visitors in 2018



In this file photo a banner for the upcoming 'Golden Kingdoms: Luxury and Legacy in the Ancient Americas' exhibition hangs outside The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. —AFP photos

New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art welcomed almost 7.4 million visitors in 2018, figures showed Friday, a new record for the venerable institution which in March began charging a fixed fee for out-of-towners. The figure represented a rise of 5.1 percent compared to 2017, itself a record-setting year. The bump in attendance was in large part thanks to the "Heavenly Bodies" exhibit which explored the links between fashion and the Catholic Church and attracted 1.7 million people.

Also of note were exhibitions dedicated to Michelangelo and David Hockney, both of which took place in late 2017 and early 2018. The 2018 figures included visitors to the museum's main building, located on the eastern side of Central Park facing 5th Avenue, as well as its two other Manhattan locations, the Met Cloisters and

the Met Breuer. Attendance did not suffer as a result of a new pricing policy that was introduced March 1, which broke for the first time the tradition of allowing everyone to pay however much they wished.

Now, those who live outside New York must pay \$25, though New Yorkers are still subject to voluntary donations. The figures published Friday showed that 32 percent of visitors were New Yorkers, 34 percent from the rest of the United States and 34 percent were foreign tourists. China was the best represented country and accounted for 5 percent of the foreign contingent. Despite its successes, the Met remains far behind the Louvre in Paris, which saw 10.2 million visitors in 2018 — also a record. — AFP



In this file photo the dress ensemble spring/summer by Alexander McQueen is exhibited during the press preview for the annual fashion exhibition "Heavenly Bodies: Fashion and the Catholic Imagination" at The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

## Lifestyle | Gossip



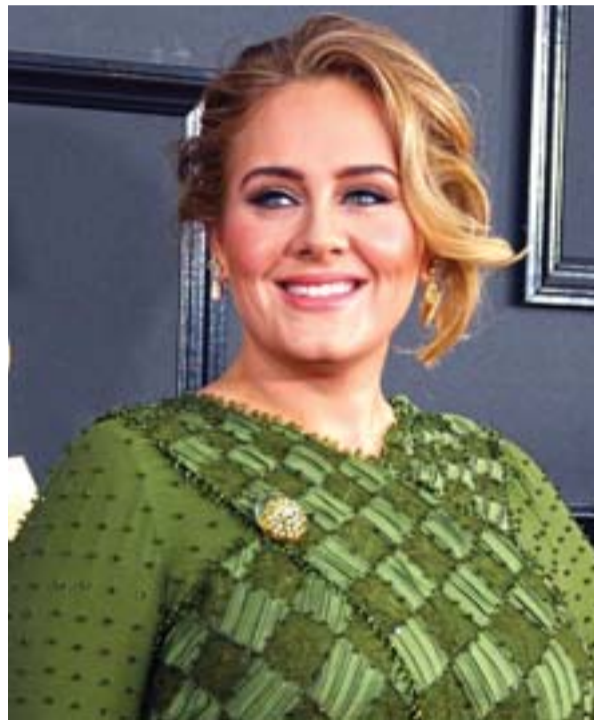
## Ariana Grande's next single called 7 Rings

**A**riana Grande's next single will be called '7 Rings'. The 25-year-old singer took to Twitter this week to share bloopers from her recent music video for hit single 'Thank U, Next', but just before the video was released, she sneakily revealed the title for her next release. When one fan asked her what her next single would be, Ariana simply replied: "it's 7 rings (sic)" The singer had previously spoken about the rings in the song, when she replied to a now-deleted tweet from a fan in which she listed who the seven pieces of jewelry belong to. She wrote: "me, vic, courtney, alexa, tayla, njomza, kaydence (and my mom and nonna so technically nine but they got theirs after song was done) (sic)" And then when asked who had the idea for the song, the 'No Tears Left To Cry' hitmaker insinuated that the track was written after her break-up from fiancée Pete Davidson, as she said the inspiration came after a "pretty rough day" in New York. She

said: "well ..... 'twas a pretty rough day in nyc. my friends took me to tiffany's. we had too much drinks. i bought us all rings. it was very insane and funny. & on the way back to the stu njomza was like 'this gotta be a song lol'. so we wrote it that afternoon. (sic)" Ariana didn't reveal a release date for '7 Rings', but she could be set to perform the new track when she takes to the stage at Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival in April this year, as she was recently announced as one of the headline acts. The 'God is a Woman' singer, Tame Impala, and Childish Gambino will all perform twice at the annual music extravaganza, which is held over two weekends, between April 12 and April 14, and April 19 and April 21 in Indio, California.

## Sheeran will face court over plagiarism claims

**E**d Sheeran will face court over claims that he plagiarized Marvin Gaye's 'Let's Get It On'. The 27-year-old musician previously denied that his 2014 single 'Thinking Out Loud' imitated the 1973 hit - however his bid to dismiss the lawsuit over his own song has been rejected, meaning a jury will decide whether or not he is guilty. It has been reported District Judge Louis Stanton made the decision as he believed there were "substantial similarities between several" of the two works' musical elements. According to the BBC, the US judge went on to assess similarities between the tracks including bass lines, percussion the "aesthetic appeal" to listeners. Stanton added that jurors "may be impressed by footage of a Sheeran performance which shows him seamlessly transitioning" between the two songs. The pop star's defence team have argued that the songs differ where Ed's track is a "sombre, melancholic tones, addressing long lasting romantic love" while 'Let's Get It On' is a "sexual anthem". The action has been brought against Ed, Sony/ATV Music Publishing and Atlantic Records by the estate and heirs of the late producer Ed Townsend, who co-wrote the track with Gaye. This isn't the first time Ed has been accused of copying the iconic single, as in 2016, heirs of Ed Townsend, who co-wrote the song with Marvin - both of whom are now dead - claimed the two tracks were "strikingly similar". The lawsuit states: "The defendants copied the 'heart' of 'Let's' and repeated it continuously throughout 'Thinking'. "The melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic compositions of 'Thinking' are substantially and/or strikingly similar to the drum composition of 'Let's'." At the time, Ed denied the allegations and no further action was taken.



## Adele shuts down touring firm

**A**dele has closed down her touring firm. The 30-year-old singer told fans in 2017 that she didn't know if she would "ever tour again" following 15 months on the road in support of her 2015 album '25', and it seems she's now made her decision, as she has closed down her touring firm Remedy Touring LLP. According to The Sun newspaper, the 'Hello' hitmaker has applied to have her business - where she logged her earnings from her live performances - put into voluntary liquidation, which would shut down the business. The firm's most recent accounts, which were filed in February last year, revealed she had a £142 million turnover from shows performed between 2016 to 2017, after she performed 123 shows to more than 1.5 million people worldwide on her 'Adele Live' tour. But despite being a huge hit on the road, the 'Rolling in the Deep' singer - who has six-year-old son Angelo with her husband Simon Konecki - said that touring "doesn't suit" her, and she would rather continue making music without the pressure of heading out on tour. In a handwritten note inside the program for her Wembley Stadium shows in 2017, Adele wrote: "So this is it after 15 months on the road and 18 months of 25, we are at the end. "Touring is a peculiar thing, it doesn't suit me particularly well. I'm a real homebody and I get so much joy in the small things. Plus, I'm dramatic and have a terrible history of touring. Until now that is! "I've done 119 shows and these last four will take me up to 123, it has been hard but an absolute thrill and pleasure. "I only ever did this tour for you and to hopefully have an impact on you the way that some of my favorite artists have had on me live. "And I wanted my final shows to be in London because I don't know if I'll ever tour again and so I want my last time to be at home."



## Bring Me The Horizon struggled with Limp Bizkit studio sessions

**B**ring Me The Horizon couldn't get Limp Bizkit star Fred Durst into the vocal booth during their studio sessions. Frontman Oli Sykes has revealed the 'Drown' rockers struggled when they were hired to produce a new record by the nu-metal stars last year, and admitted there were difficulties. He told the Daily Star newspaper: "I think I had delusions of grandeur when it came to working with Limp Bizkit. "I felt like I could guide them to being the band they need to be. Even if I could have got Fred into the vocal booth, things change. "We gave it our best go and when it ended there was no anger." After flying out to Los Angeles to produce the LP, Oli revealed it just "didn't pan out", but added there were no hard feelings. He said: "We went to LA to work with them for quite a while, but it didn't pan out very well. There were no personal problems or anything like that, it was just not the right time." The 'Break Stuff' band released debut album 'Three Dollar Bill, Y'all' in 1997 when Oli, now 32, was just 10 years old. They later found success in the early 2000s with hits like 'My Way' and 'Rollin' (Air Raid Vehicle)'. Despite getting to work with a big name in the rock world, Oli - whose own band will release their new album 'amo' on January 25 - added that the sessions made him realise he didn't want to be a producer for other artists. He explained: "That was my first foray into producing someone else, and kind of made me think: 'It's hell, I don't want to do this. "It just made me realize what a big challenge it is to take on someone else's band - it's almost like you have to work twice as hard."



## McFly to work on first album in nine years

**M**cFly are set to work on their first album in nine years, according to bassist Dougie Poynter. The 'Love Is On The Radio' hitmakers haven't released an album since 2010's 'Above The Noise', and after the long wait has left fans unsure about their future, bassist Dougie has confirmed the group will "at least start writing" new tracks this year. He said: "McFly will at least start writing by the summer and I can't wait. I love that band and I love the guys. It's awesome." McFly's comeback was originally supposed to take place last year, but after the members - including Dougie, plus Danny Jones, Tom Fletcher, and Harry Judd - spent two years with Busted members James Bourne and Matt Willis in form supergroup McBusted, the '5 Colours In Her Hair' musicians wanted to take a much

needed break. Dougie added: "We decided to take some time off after we did McBusted because it was a two-year tour and there was naturally some other things everyone wanted to do. "It actually worked out really well because all the other guys had kids in that time, so they've all been home for their kids. "It almost happened last year but someone had a project or something that was coming up smack bang in the middle. And we just didn't think there was any point." And although the band - who formed 15 years ago - are planning to write their album as a group, Dougie already has some songs up his sleeve. Speaking on the 'Sappenin' podcast, the 31-year-old musician said: "I secretly kind of am, I've got a bunch of ideas so I'm waiting for when we go in."



## Fleur East thinks her fans want something new



**F**leur East thinks fans are "ready for something new" four years after she released 'Sax'. The 31-year-old star is back with new single 'Favourite Things', the follow-up to her huge debut track - which hit number three in the UK Singles Chart back in 2015 - and she has insisted she isn't nervous about matching the success of her first big hit. Appearing on 'This Morning', she said: "I think there's been enough time since 'Sax' for people to be ready for something new. "I think I've matured as an artist - I've still got that feel-good energy but it's in a different kind of way." The star - whose debut LP 'Love, Sax and Flashbacks' also came out in 2015 and followed her 'X Factor' runner up stint the previous year - thinks fans will react well to her latest tune. Describing the track, she added: "It's very anthemic, quite tribal - it's got a lot of influences from West Africa where my mum is from, in Ghana. I feel like it's more connected to me." 'Favourite Things' is Fleur's first release since leaving Syco Records in October and later joining new label Hunter Corp Records. She recently admitted she found it "really tough" not being able to deliver the music she had made to her fans, who began labeling her a "flop" online. Fleur said: "So ultimately, on social media, the fans were going, 'you're a flop. What are you doing? Where's your music? We voted for you to release music, what is this?' And that was really tough, and I was very, very... very low after that. "And that's another thing, 'oh Fleur's been dropped, Fleur's a flop'. All that stuff, that's really horrible to hear. And it's like 'guys, there's so much more to this story'. I just kept thinking, 'I want to release the music'. It's not as easy as people think."

## Eminem and West top Spotify's best workout rankings

**E**minem and Kanye West have topped Spotify's list of the best workout songs. The two rappers make up four of the top five songs to exercise too - found by using the platform's streaming stats - with Slim Shady's 'Till I Collapse' at number one for the third year in a row. Eminem follows himself in second place with his adrenaline fuelled 2002 hit 'Lose Yourself' follows in second place. Kanye's track 'Stronger' is third in the all-time rankings, while his song 'Power' is also on the list, with 'Can't Hold Us' by Macklemore & Ryan Lewis rounding off the top five. The news comes after it was recently reported that 'All Day' hitmaker Kanye, 41, allegedly pulled out of a headline slot for Coachella 2019 because the staging was "artistically limiting". An insider told TMZ: "These 40060 stages are so archaic. It's the same type of stage on which Shakespeare's works were performed hundreds of years ago." 2018 saw Beyonce, Eminem and The Weeknd headline. The 'Halo' hitmaker reunited with her Destiny's Child bandmates Michelle Williams and Kelly Rowland to perform a show-stopping surprise medley during the singer's headline slot - comprised of 'Lose My Breath', 'Say My Name' and 'Soldier' - for their first live performance together in three years. This year, Ariana Grande, Tame Impala and Childish Gambino will appear on both Fridays. Sharing her excitement for the headline slot on Twitter, Ariana, 25, wrote: "Humbled and excited as hell Coachella. Thank u. (sic)"



Lifestyle | Gossip



**Atwell** learnt invaluable acting lesson from **Jodie Whittaker**

**H**aley Atwell learned to question her scripts from Jodie Whittaker. The 'Christopher Robin' actress studied alongside the 'Doctor Who' star at London's Guildhall School of Music and Drama and was always impressed with the way her friend was never afraid to speak up if she was uncertain about something in her lines. She said: "I'm so proud of Jodie! At university, she was equal parts tomboy and girlie girl - we'd go to fancy dress parties together. But she was also really good at going, 'I don't understand that word in that script, what does that mean?' I'd be too embarrassed to ask. She taught me it's OK to not get things." While the 36-year-old star made her movie debut in 2007's 'Cassandra's Dream', she still feels like an "apprentice" and is open to making mistakes on her career path. Speaking to Marie Claire magazine, she said: "When people think you've made it for this long, this far, I get the sense they're not going to mess with you ... I'm still very much an

apprentice. And I want to make mistakes and burst any bubbles about what an 'actor' - she pronounces the word with humorous hamminess - should be." Haley also recalled how a "powerful film director" told her early in her career that she could lose her job if she went to her grandmother's funeral, and though she went anyway, she was determined not to put a foot wrong afterwards in order to not give the filmmaker an excuse to fire her, and she learned a lot from the experience. She said: "I was still skint then, paying off my student loan, and terrified. I remember on the plane back learning my lines perfectly, thinking, 'I'm going to blow his mind because he's going to be waiting to catch me out.' It was awful. But the point of the story is not to name names and go into gossip, but to realize that moments like that are potentially life-changing and character-building - and that you can grow from them."

**Cynthia Erivo** 'too scared' to tell **Serena Williams** about movie dream



**C**ynthia Erivo has set her sights on playing Serena Williams in a film about her life - but is "too scared" to talk to her about it. The 'Widows' actress - who was recently nominated for the EE Rising Star Award ahead of the BAFTA Film Awards - would love to portray the tennis superstar because she has helped her to "feel normal" for having muscular arms, and loves the 37-year-old star's "representation of work". Speaking at the EE Rising Star Award nominees announcement at BAFTA HQ in London's Piccadilly, she exclusively told BANG Showbiz: "I haven't ever spoken to her about it. I think I'm too scared, because it's weird, and she's so awesome and cool. "I think it's one of those pipe dreams. "I love her representation of work about how women can really be powerful. Not just in work, not just in sport, like physically she's wonderful. "As a woman who is also very muscular and very sporty, she was the woman I looked up to and she was the person who made me feel normal for having muscular arms, because she had muscular arms. "I feel like that's mostly why I would love to play her, because I feel like I understand that feeling of both feeling out of place, but having to learn to own that power, that strength." The 'Color Purple' star admits she has some tennis talent, but would "happily" go into training to up her game ahead of portraying Serena, who is widely regarded as one of the greatest female tennis players of all time. She added: "I'm OK at tennis, but I would definitely go into training, for sure. Happily, I would go into training." Cynthia has made a great start to the year after receiving a nomination for the Rising Star Award alongside Jessie Buckley, Barry Keoghan, Lakeith Stanfield and Letitia Wright. And the 'Bad Times at the El Royale' actress - who has won an Emmy, a Grammy and a Tony award for her role in musical 'The Color Purple' - cannot believe how successful she has been in her career. She added: "It's very surreal to be nominated. It's another thing on the list of a very surreal, crazy year in 2018. "This is awesome, it's a really wonderful way to start 2019. "I was telling a friend that if I wrote down all the things that have happened to me and told it to a complete stranger they would probably think I was crazy. "They would probably say, 'Wishful thinking. There, there, I wish you luck, darling.' That would be the response. "I've had to pinch myself a couple of times to remind myself this is happening for real."

**Blunt** only knows the 'basics' of the **A Quiet Place 2** plot

**E**mily Blunt "knows the basics" of the 'A Quiet Place 2' plot. The 35-year-old actress starred Evelyn Abbott in the original movie, which was directed by and co-starred her husband John Krasinski, and has said that despite being married to the movie's helmer, she doesn't know every detail about the upcoming sequel, because John is still keeping certain things close to his chest. Speaking to 'Entertainment Tonight', she said: "I know all: I know everything. No, I know enough. But he's also writing, so he's in that sort of vortex. And then I'm sure I'll read stuff eventually. But I know the basics." Her comments come after John claimed he was "mind-tricked" into writing a sequel for the 2018 flick, which sees Evelyn and his character Lee - along with their two children Marcus (Noah Jupe) and Regan (Millicent Simmonds) - in a post-apocalyptic world that has been taken over by blind monsters with an acute sense of hearing. John says it was never his intention to create a sequel, and he was duped into writing his idea for the next movie. He said: "I'll be honest with you: I really

didn't want to do the sequel. It was never built to launch sequels, which we all knew, and the studio knew too. But also, I'm a realist. "I know that when you have a success like this, everyone wants to make another one. I told them to go find another filmmaker and writer, and they said, 'But don't you have an idea?' I said, 'Yeah, I have a tiny idea,' so they said, 'OK, while we're talking to other people, keep thinking about it'. They basically mind-tricked me into wanting to write it. "But the idea for it is pretty simple. I'm writing now - I don't have it fleshed out - but the thought that occurred to me, that really excited me about it, was that most sequels are about the return of a hero or a villain. You take this character that people loved once and you bring them back, and you have to create a new world around them. "We have the exact opposite setup. We have the world, and you can drop whoever you want into that world and everyone feels connected to it. The reason I decided to go back, in the end, was this world is so rich, and it's so much fun to explore."



**Ronan** says playing Queen Mary gave her 'strength'

**S**aoirse Ronan says playing Mary Stuart gave her "strength" as an actress. The 24-year-old star plays the titular role in historical drama film 'Mary Queen of Scots' and has revealed that being asked to lead the movie by director Josie Rourke helped her in both a "personal and professional sense" as she was thrown into a world that was alien to her previously. In an interview with the Daily Mail newspaper, she said: "Making the film was brilliant for me in a personal as well as a professional sense. I was being prepared to be thrown out into the world in a way I hadn't been before. With that comes fear. The fear of having to make decisions that hadn't really been laid on me before. "The kind of decisions that weren't going to make that person over there happy, but one that's right for me. Honestly playing Mary gave me that strength. "Ultimately when it came to work, I always knew what I wanted to do and what I didn't want to do. But it's very easy to say this is the thing I want to do, and hard to say this isn't what I want to do." The central plot of the movie is the fractious relationship between Mary and her cousin Queen Elizabeth I - the ruler of England and Ireland who is played by Margot Robbie - and the 1569 conflict between their two kingdoms. Saoirse says the dynamic and differences between her character and Margot's alter ego were fascinating to her. The 'Lady Bird' star said: "One essentially wants anything that a man has been afforded: lovers, the ability to rule, a family, friends, being able to enjoy her life and art and music and drink and whatever else. "And then, there's Elizabeth, who's the one who ends up having the longest reign because she cuts herself off from anything human that will get in the way."

**Bullock** thinks streaming has changed film for the better

**S**andra Bullock thinks streaming has changed the movie industry for the better. The 54-year-old actress stars in Netflix's acclaimed thriller 'Bird Box' and she thinks that "streaming has elevated the bar" in terms of opportunities for actors and allowed more work for "women and people of color". In an interview with The I Paper, she said: "Cinema is not going anywhere, streaming has elevated the bar. Before, if you were a superhero, you were able to get a movie made; anything else was not getting made. Now, with streaming, we have all kinds of work available. The movie business is changing, and providing so many more opportunities for women and for people of color." The 'Ocean's 8' star went on to explain that she feels the industry is changing in all ways and said she saw a notable difference in attitudes towards women before and after filming the all-female heist flick. She said: "We started that film before #MeToo and we ended it during. I saw a noticeable difference." Despite changing attitudes, the 'Proposal' actress also noticed a difference while filming 'Bird Box' due to the presence of a female director, Susanne Bier. She explained: "Because the boss was a woman, I did see a lot of fear in our crew members. The men were walking on eggshells so I said 'Guys you're allowed to joke I'll tell you when you've gone too far.'" The spine-chilling drama follows a pregnant woman in a dystopian future, where people are forced to wear blindfolds to avoid witnessing their biggest fears, and Sandra has shared the thing she fears the most. She confessed: "It's something happening to my kids. Becoming a mother has made me much more fearful."



**McFarlane** promises 'dark' **Spawn** film



**T**odd McFarlane says his 'Spawn' movie will be "dark and ugly". The 57-year-old comic book creator is bringing his Image Comics character to the big screen in what will be his directorial debut and McFarlane has vowed that he will not be making the demonic titular character lighter for the big screen like the films in the Marvel Cinematic Universe. In an interview with website Nerdist, he said: "There's no joy. There's gonna be no fun lines in it, and it's just gonna be this dark, ugly two hours' worth of movie, which is essentially what a lot of supernatural/horror movies are anyway. There's not a lot of funny in them. And that seems to be a weird hurdle for a lot of people in this city to get over because they sort of go into a superhero/Avengers default all the time." Jamie Foxx has been cast as main character Al Simmons, a CIA black ops soldier who is murdered by his own friend and partner and then when he is sent to hell makes a deal with evil being Malebolgia to become a Hellspawn warrior so that he can return to Earth and see his wife. But he's left devastated when he finds out the love of his life has moved on and married his best friend and he is stuck in the body of a demon. Spawn then embarks on a battle against lowlifes residing on Earth, Heaven and Hell. Jeremy Renner - who plays superhero Hawkeye in the 'Avengers' films - will also star in the Blumhouse movie as Detective Maximilian 'Twitch' Williams who becomes aware of Spawn's activities. Discussing the motivation behind the castings, McFarlane previously said: "As a first-time director, I wanted to surround myself with the most talent and the most skilled people I can on all fronts. I was lucky enough to land [producer] Jason Blum and then Jamie Foxx, and I knew the person on screen the most is this police officer, Twitch' Williams. We needed as strong a person as possible because he will be the face of the film. "I took my naive Hollywood approach again, and said let's start at the top and work down. Jeremy was at the top. I'm a huge fan of his." There is no official release date for the 'Spawn' film but it is hoped it will be in cinemas before the end of the year. — Bang Showbiz



**Danny DeVito** to star in **Jumanji 2**

**D**anny DeVito is set to star in 'Jumanji 2'. The 74-year-old actor has been lined up for a role in the sequel to Sony's 2017 movie 'Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle', which was in itself a sequel to the 1995 movie 'Jumanji', which starred the late Robin Williams and was based on the 1981 children's book of the same name by Chris Van Allsburg. News of DeVito's casting, which was first reported by Variety magazine, follows the recent addition of 'Crazy Rich Asians' star Awkwafina, who will be joining a star-studded cast of returning faces from the 2017 flick, with Dwayne Johnson, Jack Black, Kevin Hart and Karen Gillan all reprising their roles. Speaking about the casting choice, Johnson told Variety: "The magic of 'Jumanji' is who becomes who. And the idea of Danny DeVito joining our cast was too irresistible and something we knew we wanted to deliver to our audience this upcoming Christmas. Dwanta Claus loves everyone." Plot details for the new movie are not yet known, but the original book and 1995 movie both told the story of a magical board game in which wild jungle animals came into the real world. In 'Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle', that concept was updated by making the game into a video game and having four teens transported into its world, where the kids then transformed into avatars portrayed by Johnson, Black, Hart and Gillan. As of the time of writing, both DeVito and Awkwafina's roles are not known to the public, but sources recently claimed the 29-year-old actress was set to have a "key" and "significant" part. Directed, written, and produced by Jake Kasdan - who also worked on 'Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle' - the sequel will be co-written by Scott Rosenberg and Jeff Pinkner, and co-produced by Matt Tolmach and Johnson's Seven Bucks.

## Modern witch-hunts terrorize New Guinea highlands

A spate of brutal witch-hunts has plunged parts of Papua New Guinea's highlands into a state of terror, as fearful tribes blame dark forces for their rapidly changing world. In one particularly horrifying incident, an elderly woman writhes and pleads hysterically as she is mercilessly beaten, raped and tortured on a hut floor, before her naked body-bloodied and nearly lifeless—is dragged outside, where a village mob beats and burns her until movement ceases. Almost everyone joins in. No one bothers to obscure their face. No one tries to stop it. The crowd believe what they are doing is right: the only way to stop a non-human sorcerer who has killed their clansman and devoured his heart.

The graphic scene was captured by cell phone video that was obtained by AFP. Dozens of similar videos have been gathered as evidence by the Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary showing the brutal reality of modern-day witch-hunts. There have been at least 20 murders linked to sorcery accusations in this part of the highlands in the past few years, and dozens more violent

cued accused sorcerers, some as young as six.

Other researchers say widespread lynchings are new in Enga, and the extreme brutality and sexual nature of the attacks is unheard of. "We did have ancient beliefs about ghosts and ancient beliefs about stones that could talk and all kinds of interesting things," Lutz said. "But this practice of accusing a woman of causing a death and torturing her sadistically and sexually for hours until she dies, that is a new thing." "It began about five years ago," he said. "We had a serious rise last year. It just seemed like there was an attack happening every week, every fortnight."

According to Lutz, each spasm of violence seemed to begin with a death that locals found difficult to explain. Heart attacks, diabetes and HIV/AIDS are becoming more common, but are still not well understood. The death of an otherwise healthy person was more easily blamed on sorcery than cholesterol. Even a recent drunk driving crash that killed eight people prompted a violent witch-hunt, as people tried to explain why some passengers survived and others did not. The sheer number of people involved in the mob attacks ensures that news spreads quickly, as does fear, due to the widespread belief that witches don't act alone. The emergence of "Glasman"-opportunist "diviners" who travel the countryside detecting witches for money—also exponentially increased the rate of killings. So too did tribally ordained retribution.

### 'Silent prayer'

Like the old woman in the video, 55-year-old mother-of-two Rachel, was accused of "sanguina"—sorcery. Her story shows how quickly suspicion can turn into violence. Her life changed suddenly in April 2017, when she went with her family to pay her respects at a funeral service for a member of a neighboring tribe. She was getting ready to leave, looking for her children, when she was grabbed by the dead man's son.

Unbeknown to Rachel, another woman had been accused of involvement in his death and under torture named Rachel as part of a covenant. Rachel pleaded innocence. But she was stripped and, like the murdered woman in the video, violated and burned with hot machetes, spades and rods for a full day by people she knew who were trying to make her "return the heart" of her "victim". "The pain was beyond endurance," she recalled, speaking to AFP as a crowd of locals—some curious, others appearing suspicious—gathered near her hut. "I thought I would die." With her mouth gagged, and the pain too much to bear, she managed only a silent prayer: "You gave me



This photo shows neighbors gathering near the home of 55-year-old mother-of-two Rachel in the Tsak Vally in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea after she told AFP about when in April 2017, she was accused of sorcery and tortured with hot machetes, spades and rods for a full day by people she knew. — AFP photos

the job of caring for my children, but if I die, who will care for them?" Only a dispute among the mob, estimated at around a thousand people, saved her life.

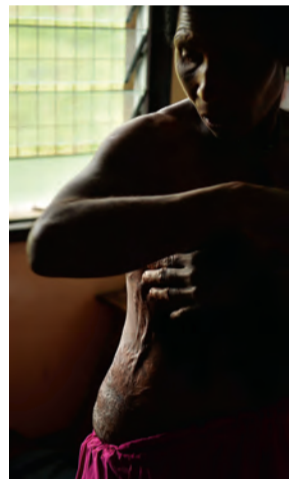
### Patterns of culture

Across Papua New Guinea the specifics of witch-hunts are bafflingly different. In Enga, the victims of violence are almost exclusively women. But on Bougainville island they are almost always men. In Port Moresby, where violence linked to sorcery accusations has also increased, men and women are targeted. Researcher Miranda Forsyth at the Australian National University, who has studied hundreds of such cases, sees grim patterns emerging. She describes a "script" of violent responses to suspected sorcerers that is spreading across Enga.

Part of the phenomenon is people trying to deal with "high levels of uncertainty due to dramatic economic, social and cultural changes", Forsyth said. Authorities know the toxic brew will

be difficult to remedy. In the meantime, fear has "turned the whole place into a paranoid mess", said Lutz. Almost two years after Rachel's attack, she can walk again and has returned to her village, although even among her own people, she still lives in fear. "The situation is still tense," she said in a near whisper.

The burns she sustained in the attack had only partially been treated when a mob came to the clinic where she was recuperating, forcing her to flee. She still complains of skin being tight and painful around her torso. "Even though I still need surgery, I am afraid my attackers might kill me if I go. So I live with the pain." "I hope that things will calm down so that I can go to the hospital, but for now, the way is closed." — AFP



Rachel at home in her village in the Tsak Vally in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea, showing the scars from wounds inflicted on her when in April 2017 she was accused of sorcery.



55-year-old mother-of-two Rachel at home in her village in the Tsak Valley in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea.

attacks. In places like the remote Tsak Valley, attacks have spread "like bushfire", said Senior Inspector Epenes Nili, even resulting in an attack on the country's then chief justice.

Belief in sorcery and witchcraft has long been common across Enga province and Papua New Guinea, but these lynchings are not some ancient rite or custom. "This is a new phenomenon," insisted Anton Lutz, a Lutheran missionary who has spent his life in Enga Province and has res-

## In Siberia, Chinese demand for prehistoric tusks fuels 'mammoth rush'

Crouching near a wooden shed in his snowy backyard, Prokopy Nogovitsyn lifts up a grey tarpaulin and takes out a vertebra the size of a saucer: part of a mammoth skeleton. "Some friends found this in the north and wanted to sell it," says Nogovitsyn, who lives in a village in the northern Siberian region of Yakutia. "But it lacks tusks, so nobody wanted it." Mammoth bones are widespread in Yakutia, an enormous region bordering the Arctic Ocean covered by permafrost, which acts as a giant freezer for prehistoric fauna.

But over the last few years this part of the world has experienced something of a mammoth rush: after China banned the import and sale of elephant ivory, its traditional carvers turned to the tusks of the elephants' long-extinct ancestors. Russian exports amounted to 72 tonnes in 2017, with over 80 percent going to China. Some Chinese buyers come to Yakutia to buy tusks directly, while some Russians also export them.

Thousands of woolly mammoths roamed the Pleistocene-era steppe tens of thousands of years ago and their remains are preserved in Yakutia's permafrost. Authorities estimate that 500,000 tonnes of mammoth tusks—known as "ice ivory"—are buried here. Local hunters and fishermen have long picked up mammoth bones along river banks and sea coasts but prices dramatically increased over the last decade, leading fortune-seekers on arduous Arctic quests.

The new industry has created a new source of revenue and led to an increase in paleontological discoveries. While tusk hunters can obtain licences, the trade is still not fully regulated and some complain of pressure from the authorities and confiscation of their finds.

### 'Tusks to the people!'

Collecting tusks is a complicated affair prepared months in advance. Equipment has to be shipped hundreds of kilometers (miles) to the north. Yakutia covers three million square kilometers (1.2 million square miles), an area five times the size of France, much of which has no roads. Collectors purchase licences for particular areas. Some use powerful water jets to burrow prospecting tunnels into river banks, creating labyrinthine icy mines. Good-quality mammoth ivory can sell in China for over \$1,000 (\$77 euros) per kilogram and locals see it as



Valery Plotnikov, a paleontologist at the Yakutia Academy of Sciences, studies a rare prehistoric cave lion cub.

the only way to achieve financial security in northern Yakutia, where jobs are scarce and the climate makes agriculture impossible.

"There is a mammoth rush now," said one collector, who has worked with a licence for over a decade but requested anonymity due to the industry's current vague status. A bill to fully regulate prospecting and the trade in tusks was introduced in the Russian parliament in 2013 but inexplicably has still not been voted on, he complained.

Exporting tusks from Russia has lately become more difficult. "Ordinary people should know that they can pick something up off the ground, sell it, pay a tax, and live in peace," he said. Last year, collectors staged a protest in the region's main city of Yakutsk, accusing authorities of confiscating their ivory haul even though they had the necessary permits. They held up placards saying: "Return tusks back to the people!"

"The situation is at a dead-end" as long as Yakutia can't persuade Moscow to pass the proposed bill, says regional lawmaker Vladimir Prokopyev. He argued that while digging up the permafrost is harmful, 90 percent of collectors simply pick up tusks from the ground and Yakutia's proposed bill forbids the damaging use of water jets.

### 'Mammoth oligarchs'

Collectors are especially worried after a recent docu-



Prokopy Nogovitsyn shows part of a mammoth skeleton in the backyard of his house.



Valery Plotnikov, a paleontologist at the Yakutia Academy of Sciences, stands among mammoth tusks confiscated from collectors who operate illegally.

mentary on state television painted them as millionaire poachers. The documentary called "Island of Skeletons", shown on Rossiya 24 channel, accused Yakutia authorities of turning a blind eye to prospectors' "criminal" trade. Prokopyev alleged the film was "ordered by (Russian) mammoth oligarchs who used to be monopolists" in buying up tusks from locals and reselling them to China, but have now lost out to Chinese dealers who come to buy them direct. The film claims that prospectors "barbarically" destroy archaeological sites.

But Valery Plotnikov, a paleontologist at the Yakutia Academy of Sciences, said that the mammoth rush had been beneficial to science by providing specimens that the academy could not otherwise afford. He was studying a rare prehistoric cave lion cub that a collector found last summer. "We have a symbiosis with licensed collectors," he said, adding that they provide researchers with valuable items for free but remain owners of specimens and stand to profit when their finds are exhibited abroad.

He also receives tusks confiscated from collectors who operate illegally, without a licence or in protected areas. Those who have a licence and pay a customs levy should be able to export, he said. Yakutia governor Aisen Nikolayev said he hoped the bill regulating tusk collectors would be finally passed in 2019, though he acknowledged "there is some resistance" to it. Without a national law classifying mammoth ivory as a special natural resource, the trade remains in a "grey zone," he said.

For some in Yakutia, however, it's a source of pride that the region helps stop the hunting of elephants for tusks. "Our dead bones are saving living elephants," said Nogovitsyn. "Being able to gather them is important both for us and for Africa." — AFP



Valery Plotnikov, a paleontologist at the Yakutia Academy of Sciences, stands near collected tusks in his laboratory. — AFP photos

## Britney Spears announces career hiatus to look after ailing father

Pop superstar Britney Spears announced Friday she is placing her career on hold indefinitely to take care of her sick father. "I will not be performing my new show Domination," she wrote in an emotional post on Twitter which featured a picture of herself as a young child alongside her parents. The 1990s and 2000s icon had been due to kick off a series of concerts at the MGM resort in Las Vegas in February as part of a new residency in the city.

"I've been looking forward to this show and seeing all of you this year, so doing this breaks my heart," the 37-year-old continued. "However, it's important to always put your family first... and that's the decision I had to make. "A couple of months ago, my father was hospitalized and almost died. We're all so grateful that he came out of it alive, but he still has a long road ahead of him." As a result, she said, she had decided to "put my full focus and energy on my family at this time." Reports indicated Spears' father Jamie suffered a colon rupture but is expected to make a full recovery. Spears had previously held a Las Vegas residency between 2013 and 2017. — AFP



In this file photo honoree Britney Spears accepts the Vanguard Award from Ricky Martin (center) and J.J. Totah (left) onstage during the 29th Annual GLAAD Media Awards at The Beverly Hilton Hotel in Beverly Hills, California. — AFP

# Classifieds

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## Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

**BY DAY:** Mostly Sunny with light to moderate north westerly wind to light variable wind, with speed of 06 - 28 km/h.

**BY NIGHT:** Clouds will increase gradually with light variable wind to light to moderate south easterly wind, with speed of 08 - 32 km/h with a chance for mist forming over some areas.

WEATHER WARNING			No Current Warnings		
STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.	SFC. CHART 05/01/2019 0000 UTC		
KUWAIT CITY	21 °C	13 °C			
KUWAIT AIRPORT	20 °C	07 °C			
ABDALY	21 °C	07 °C			
BUBYAN	00 °C	00 °C			
JAHRA	21 °C	09 °C			
FAILAKA ISLAND	20 °C	11 °C			
SALMIYAH	19 °C	13 °C			
AHMADI	19 °C	12 °C			
NUWASIB	22 °C	10 °C			
WAFRA	20 °C	07 °C			
SALMY	19 °C	06 °C			

4 DAYS FORECAST						
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Sunday	01/06	Partly cloudy to cloudy	21 °C	12 °C	SE-S	15 - 45 km/h
Monday	01/07	Cloudy to partly cloudy with a chance for scattered light rain later on	20 °C	11 °C	N-NW	15 - 40 km/h
Tuesday	01/08	Partly cloudy to cloudy with a chance for scattered rain	20 °C	13 °C	NW-VRB	10 - 30 km/h
Wednesday	01/09	Cloudy to partly cloudy	19 °C	12 °C	VRB-NW	12 - 40 km/h

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	05:19
Sunrise	06:43
Zuhr	11:53
Asr	14:45
Sunset	17:04
Isha	18:26

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	20 °C
MIN. Temp.	10 °C
MAX. RH	99 %
MIN. RH	35 %
MAX. Wind	N 46 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

## 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
Salmya	25746401

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**Airlines**

Kuwait Airways	171
Jazeera Airways	177
Wataniya Airways	22 066 536
Turkish Airlines	1884918
American Airlines	22087425
	22087426
	22924455
Jet Airways	22414400
FlyDubai	22423888
Qatar Airways	22425747
KLM	22418064/5/6
Royal Jordanian	22425635
British Airways	22430224
Air France	22921555
Emirates	22438184
Air India	

**Flight Schedule**

Directorate General of Civil Aviation Home Page ([www.kuwait-airport.com.kw](http://www.kuwait-airport.com.kw))

## DIAL 161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

Arrival Flights on Sunday 6/1/2019				Departure Flights on Sunday 6/1/2019			
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	Airlines	Flt	Route	Time
JZR	254	Amman	00:05	KAC	515	Tehran	12:00
JAI	572	Mumbai	00:15	JZR	221	Riyadh	12:00
FEG	1241	Alexandria	00:30	JZR	213	Jeddah	12:00
THY	772	Istanbul	00:50	JZR	405	Kochi	12:45
JZR	734	Cairo	00:50	JZR	113	Doha	13:30
KAC	102	London	00:50	SAW	702	Damascus	13:30
PGT	858	Istanbul	01:00	JZR	123	Dubai	13:40
KAC	504	Beirut	01:15	MSR	611	Cairo	14:10
DLH	625	Dammam	01:25	UAE	872	Dubai	14:15
UAE	853	Dubai	01:45	AXB	394	Kozhikode	14:15
IGO	1757	Kochi	01:55	JZR	103	Bahrain	14:40
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	02:15	QTR	1079	Doha	15:00
JZR	722	Alexandria	02:15	FDB	060	Dubai	15:10
RBG	551	Alexandria	02:25	GFA	222	Bahrain	15:25
KLM	446	Bahrain	02:30	KAC	673	Dubai	15:40
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:30	SVA	501	Jeddah	15:45
QTR	1086	Doha	02:40	KAC	775	Riyadh	15:50
OMA	643	Muscat	02:55	KNE	530	Jeddah	16:00
RJA	648	Amman	02:55	KAC	615	Bahrain	16:05
KKK	1268	Istanbul	03:05	KAC	619	Doha	16:10
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:05	KAC	563	Amman	16:10
PGT	860	Istanbul	03:10	ETD	304	Abu Dhabi	16:20
MSR	612	Cairo	03:15	KAC	283	Dhaka	16:30
JZR	1736	Cairo	03:30	OMA	646	Muscat	16:35
QTR	1076	Doha	04:00	KAC	785	Jeddah	16:40
LMU	510	Cairo	04:00	JZR	261	Beirut	16:40
KAC	414	Bangkok	04:00	ABY	128	Sharjah	16:45
IGO	1751	Chennai	04:10	KAC	675	Dubai	17:05
KAC	418	Manila	04:25	KAC	503	Beirut	17:15
KAC	784	Jeddah	04:30	FDB	052	Dubai	17:40
DHX	170	Bahrain	04:35	UAE	858	Dubai	17:45
FDB	069	Dubai	05:00	QTR	1073	Doha	17:50
KAC	382	Delhi	05:05	KAC	331	Trivandrum	18:00
THY	770	Istanbul	05:10	KAC	343	Chennai	18:00
KAC	1544	Cairo	05:10	JZR	721	Alexandria	18:00
JZR	404	Hyderabad	05:10	JZR	733	Cairo	18:10
KAC	284	Dhaka	05:15	SVA	511	Riyadh	18:15
JZR	112	Doha	05:25	GFA	216	Bahrain	18:20
KAC	332	Trivandrum	05:40	KAC	621	Doha	18:25
KAC	344	Chennai	05:50	JZR	127	Dubai	18:35
JZR	402	Mumbai	06:05	JZR	501	Lahore	18:40
KAC	302	Mumbai	06:25	JZR	403	Hyderabad	18:40
KAC	678	Dubai	06:55	KAC	381	Delhi	18:55
BAW	157	London	07:05	JZR	253	Amman	19:15
JZR	708	Luxor	07:15	FDB	064	Dubai	19:20
QTR	8511	Doha	07:20	MSR	621	Cairo	19:30
KAC	358	Kochi	07:35	UAE	876	Dubai	19:30
FDB	053	Dubai	07:50	QTR	1081	Doha	19:55
KAC	384	Delhi	08:00	RJA	641	Amman	20:00
UAE	855	Dubai	08:35	SYR	342	Damascus	20:00
JZR	408	Ahmedabad	08:45	RBG	556	Alexandria	20:05
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	09:05	ABY	124	Sharjah	20:05
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:05	GFA	218	Bahrain	20:15
QTR	1070	Doha	09:30	FDB	058	Dubai	20:35
IRA	665	Shiraz	09:40	KAC	345	Ahmedabad	20:40
IGO	1753	Ahmedabad	09:40	KAC	301	Mumbai	20:55
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40	KAC	353	Bengaluru	20:55
IRC	528	Ahwas	10:00	JZR	401	Mumbai	20:55
SVA	512	Riyadh	10:00	KAC	357	Kochi	21:00
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40	OMA	648	Muscat	21:20
JZR	702	Asyut	11:05	DLH	624	Dammam	21:30
JZR	116	Doha	11:10	FEG	1344	Sohag	21:45
JZR	122	Dubai	11:20	DHX	171	Bahrain	21:50
QTR	1074	Doha	11:35	QTR	089	Doha	22:00
JZR	216	Jeddah	11:45	ETD	308	Abu Dhabi	22:10
MEA	404	Beirut	11:55	KAC	1543	Cairo	22:15
KAC	614	Bahrain	12:25	MEA	403	Beirut	22:20
SAW	701	Damascus	12:30	ALK	230	Colombo	22:25
JZR	714	Sohag	12:35	GFA	220	Bahrain	22:30
UAE	871	Dubai	12:50	KAC	383	Delhi	22:30
KAC	742	Dammam	12:50	KAC	783	Jeddah	22:55
MSR	610	Cairo	13:10	UAE	860	Dubai	23:00
AXB	393	Kozhikode	13:15	JAI	573	Mumbai	23:00
				KAC	411	Bangkok	23:00
				ETD	310	Abu Dhabi	23:05
				QTR	1083	Doha	23:20



A young Palestinian protester, wearing a Guy Fawkes mask painted in the colors of the Palestinian flag and holding a Palestinian flag in his hand, uses a slingshot during clashes following a demonstration near the border with Israel east of Gaza City on Friday. — AFP

## Iran approves anti-money laundering bill to ease trade

**LONDON:** A powerful Iranian council approved an anti-money laundering bill yesterday, state media reported, a major step towards reforms that would bring Iran into line with global norms and could facilitate foreign trade in the face of US sanctions. Iran has been trying to implement standards set by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), an inter-governmental organization that underpins the fight against money laundering and terrorist financing.

Foreign businesses say Iran's compliance with FATF standards and its removal from the organization's blacklist are essential if they are to increase investment, especially after reimposition of the US sanctions on Tehran. However, Iranian hardliners have opposed passing legislation toward compliance with the FATF, arguing it could hamper Iranian financial support for allies such as Lebanon's Hezbollah, which the United

States lists as a terrorist organization.

Parliament last year passed the anti-money laundering bill, one of four amendments Iran needs to implement to meet FATF requirements, but the Guardian Council, a vetting body, rejected it, saying it was against Islam and the constitution. Yesterday, the Expediency Council, a body intended to resolve disputes between parliament and the Guardian Council, approved the bill with some changes, state news agency IRNA said, quoting a member of the council.

A previous bill on the mechanics of monitoring and preventing terrorist financing was signed into law in August. Two others - allowing Iran to join UN conventions against terrorist-financing and organized crime - have been approved by parliament but are still being delayed by higher authorities, including the Guardian Council.

The move came after Ayatollah Sadeq Amoli Larijani - the chief of hardline judiciary - was appointed last week as the head of the Expediency Council. He is the brother of Ali Larijani, the speaker of the parliament. Seven months after his harsh dismissal of parliamentary efforts to adapt FATF and other international conventions on money laundering, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei seems to have warmed to the reforms, a reversal that experts say is aimed at preventing Iran's economic collapse.

In recent months, cities have been rocked by demonstrations as factory workers, teachers, truck drivers and farmers protested against economic hardship. The sanctions have depressed the value of Iran's rial currency and aggravated annual inflation fourfold to nearly 40 percent in November. US President Donald Trump withdrew from a nuclear deal with Iran

last year and reimposed the sanctions on its banking and energy sectors, hoping to curb its missile and nuclear programs and counter its growing influence in the Middle East.

European signatories of the nuclear deal are still committed to the accord and seek to launch a mechanism, a so-called special purpose vehicle (SPV), aiming to sidestep the US financial system by using an EU intermediary to handle trade with Iran. The director general of Iran's Strategic Council on Foreign Relations, an advisory body set up by Khamenei, voiced his support for the FATF-related bills on Friday. "It is better to finalize the FATF and CFT (counter financing of terrorism regimes) in the earliest time, so the Europeans have no excuse not to implement the (SPV) mechanism," Abdolreza Faraji was quoted by semi-official ISNA new agency. — Agencies

## Trump slams profane vow...

Continued from Page 1

there and we're gonna impeach the mother\*\*\*\*\*". The crowd roared, and Tlaib hugged supporters. Salty language by US lawmakers - or presidents, for that matter - is nothing new. Trump, hardly the paradigm of verbal decency, last year derided African nations as "s\*\*hole" countries, after all. But when Trump was asked about his critic's comments, he said they were "disgraceful" and "highly disrespectful to the United States of America". "I think she dishonored herself and I think she dishonored her family, using language like that," he added.

The timing and optics of Tlaib's outburst are notable. Democrats have just won control of the House of Representatives, after eight years in the minority. Tlaib, 42, is one in a cadre of ebullient, media-savvy rising stars - the self-described "radical" Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez is another - who aim to shake up Washington's status quo. Such progressives will be eager to push back against an administration they believe has abused its authority in the nearly two years since Trump's inauguration.

Doubling down on her outburst, Tlaib - the first Palestinian-American elected to Congress - tweeted Friday: "I will always speak truth to power. #unapologeticallyMe." But she dodged reporters repeatedly asking about her remarks. Tlaib found support on Twitter, where #ImpeachTheMF was a trending item in

the United States on Friday night, with more than 110,000 tweets.

As the chamber's new speaker, the 78-year-old Pelosi is challenged with keeping Trump - as well as the more radical elements of her own party in check. Pelosi sought to downplay Tlaib's potty mouth. "I probably have a generational reaction to it. But in any event I'm not in the censorship business," she said in comments aired Friday on MSNBC. "But I don't think it's any worse than what the president has said."

Republicans have bridled at Tlaib's comments, using them to portray Democrats as seeking politically-motivated retribution against Trump rather than common ground. "We watched a new freshman stand up, use this language, get cheered by their base, and we watched a brand new speaker say nothing to her," top House Republican Kevin McCarthy said. "That action should not stand."

Democrats who support impeachment have argued that Trump obstructed justice by firing former FBI director James Comey, and that hush payments to at least two women made by his personal attorney during the presidential race violated campaign finance laws. As a long-time Trump critic, Tlaib made calls for his impeachment central to her campaign - and was once arrested for heckling the then-candidate during his White House run.

"The time for impeachment proceedings is now," she wrote in a co-authored op-ed published in the Detroit Free Press newspaper the morning of her entry into Congress. House Democrat Brad Sherman agrees, and on Thursday formally introduced impeachment measures against Trump. They are unlikely to get a vote on the House floor, at least for now. — AFP

can be arranged as early as the first quarter of this year, the official said.

Another key issue for discussion with the Gulf states is the nearly four-year-old war in Yemen, in which a Saudi-led, US-supported coalition supporting Yemen's government has battled with Iran-supported Houthi rebels over control of the country. Both sides recently agreed to a ceasefire in the port city of Hodeida while UN envoy Martin Griffiths seeks to bring about a new round of talks between them.

A key stop for Pompeo will be in Riyadh, whose relations with the US have been strained by the murder of Khashoggi by Saudi agents in Istanbul last year. Khashoggi was a US resident and was writing for The Washington Post when he was killed. While the US sees Riyadh as "an important pillar of regional stability," Washington wants more "accountability and credibility" in its handling of the murder investigation, according to the State Department. — Agencies

## Tuna sells for record \$3m...

Continued from Page 1

Opened in 1935, Tsukiji was best known for its predawn daily auctions of tuna, caught from all corners of the world, for use by everyone from Michelin-star sushi chefs to ordinary grocery stores. Wholesalers and sushi tycoons have been known to pay eye-watering prices for the biggest and best fish, especially at the first auction of the new year.

Despite the relocation, the auction ritual remained intact: Before dawn, buyers in rubber boots were inspecting the quality of the giant fresh and frozen tunas by examining the neatly cut tail end with flashlights and rubbing slices between their fingers. At 5:10 am, hand bells rang to signal the auction was underway and the air filled with the sound of auctioneers yelling prices at buyers, who raised fingers to indicate interest. Kimura went head to head with a rival in a thrilling back-and-forth for the prize tuna, with a scrum of spectators giving out a loud roar as the auctioneer's hammer came down after Kimura's winning offer.

Later in the day sushi chefs sliced up the giant fish with special knives resembling Japanese swords at

Kimura's main restaurant just outside Tsukiji, where demolition work is under way. Hundreds of sushi lovers queued for a taste. "I have come here every year to eat New Year sushi but this tuna is tastier than ever," Reiko Yamada, a 71-year-old housewife, told AFP. Japan consumes a large portion of the global bluefin catch, a highly prized sushi ingredient known as "kuro maguro" (black tuna) and dubbed the "black diamond" by sushi connoisseurs because of its scarcity. A single piece of "otono", or the fish's fatty underbelly, can cost dozens of dollars at high-end Tokyo restaurants.

The new market at Toyosu has already opened a balcony allowing visitors to witness the organized predawn chaos in an attempt to attract tourists who previously visited Tsukiji. "I sincerely hope this market will be loved by many people," said Tokyo governor Yuriko Koike, who attended the sale, wearing the white rubber boots favored by auctioneers.

The relocation of the market was a lengthy and controversial process. Few would contest the fact that Tsukiji was past its prime, and there were concerns about outdated fire regulations and hygiene controls. In contrast, the new market, located around two kilometres to the east at Toyosu, boasts state-of-the-art refrigeration facilities and is nearly twice as big as Tsukiji. But Toyosu is located on the site of a former gas plant and the soil was found to be contaminated, forcing local authorities to spend millions of dollars to clean it up, delaying the move. — AFP

## Qatari football team heads to...

Continued from Page 1

the 2022 World Cup host - of supporting terrorism and seeking closer relations with Iran. Qatar denies this and claims its regional rivals are seeking regime change in Doha. It is the first time Qatar's team has travelled to the UAE since the diplomatic crisis began.

Leading Qatari official and tournament organizer, Saoud Al-Mohannadi, was allegedly barred from entering the UAE on his first attempt, though officials in Abu Dhabi disputed this. A statement by the Asian Football Confederation on Thursday said it was "aware of reports that [Mohannadi]... was unable to travel to the United Arab Emirates from Muscat in Oman". The AFC had said it was "investigating the situation".

A Qatari official told Reuters that Mohannadi was on Thursday stopped from boarding an Oman Air flight to Abu Dhabi from Muscat. He was told by the airline that

his name was not on a list held at Abu Dhabi airport, another source said. An AFC spokesman said Mohannadi had arrived in Abu Dhabi on Friday. It was not immediately clear which route he had taken.

However, Aref Hamad Al-Awani, the Emirati Local Organizing Committee tournament director denied to AFP that anyone had been stopped from entering the country. "The news is not true," he said. "Saoud (Al-Mohannadi) arrived today to Abu Dhabi and preparing himself for his meetings. We did not see any evidence that Al-Mohannadi was denied entry. And the proof (is) that he is here today. This issue has political purposes, and we try to keep sports away from politics."

Five Qatar-based journalists also claim they were not allowed into the UAE to cover the tournament, after allegedly being kept waiting at Dubai airport for 13 hours before returning to Doha. It all comes at a time when FIFA president Gianni Infantino is pressing for the Qatar World Cup to be increased from 32 to 48 teams, a move which would likely mean Doha having to share tournament games with neighboring countries. Qatar has said it will only decide on any expansion of the World Cup after seeing a FIFA feasibility study expected by March. — Agencies

## Pompeo heading to Kuwait to...

Continued from Page 1

to see the withdrawal from Syria of all Iranian-commanded forces."

State Department officials say Pompeo also hopes to fortify the alliance of the six countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council. The group was weakened in 2017 after Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman sought to isolate GCC member Qatar from other countries in the region, over its alleged support for extremist groups. The rift is "unhelpful", another US official said, opening a cleavage that Iran could exploit. To strengthen the group, the US is hoping a GCC summit



Sports

# Federer wins record third Hopman in dramatic fashion

## Swiss beat German pairing of Alexander Zverev and Angelique Kerber

PERTH: Roger Federer has become the most successful player in Hopman Cup history after leading Switzerland to a 2-1 win in an enthralling final of the mixed teams tournament in Perth yesterday. In what is tipped to be the final edition of the unique tournament, the best was saved for last as Federer became the first player to win three Hopman Cups, teaming with Belinda Bencic for the duo's second consecutive title.

For the second year in a row, the Swiss beat the German pairing of Alexander Zverev and Angelique Kerber by claiming a deciding mixed doubles rubber loaded with drama. It was Switzerland's fourth title overall, behind only the United States with six. Federer first won the Hopman Cup back in 2001 when he teamed with Martina Hingis.

The 37-year-old gave the Swiss the early ascendancy with a straight sets win against Zverev, before Kerber squared the tie by beating a dogged Belinda Bencic to set up the mixed doubles decider.

Federer was a dominant figure in an extraordinary doubles match as the Swiss claimed the abbreviated format 4-0, 1-4, 4-3 (5/4) to clinch the title. Fittingly, it was

Federer who served out the match in the third set tie-break, having been unable to do so earlier in the set, when after an extended rally Zverev dumped a backhand into the net to hand the Swiss victory.

**HIGH-OCTANE**

In the men's singles, Federer bounced back from a November loss to Zverev in London to beat the big-serving German 6-4, 6-2 and make it a clean sweep of his singles matches in Perth for the second year running, less than two weeks before he defends his Australian Open title.

It was a high-octane match, with plenty of big serves and clean winners, but Federer was able to answer everything the 21-year-old threw at him. He broke Zverev in the 10th game of the first set and then tightened the noose on the German, with two more breaks in the second set.

Federer, who also beat Zverev in three sets in last year's Hopman final, clinched the match with a typically crisp forehand volley. He was pleased to maintain his unbeaten singles record during the week, during which he never dropped his serve.

"I am happy I was able to maintain the good, high quality tennis I showed all week," he said. "It is good to finish on a singles performance like this, I was able to come up with some good serve and volley and it all worked out today."

World number two Kerber appeared set for an easy win in her singles match against Bencic, taking the first set and then claiming an early break in the second. The German served at 5-4, but the match took a sudden twist as Bencic broke back, only for Kerber to immediately break again.

For a second time Kerber was unable to serve out the match, as Bencic forced it to a tie-break. Kerber had two match points at 6-4, but Bencic again hung on grimly and won the next two points. It wasn't until Kerber's third chance that a backhand winner secured the 6-4, 7-6 (8/6) win.

Critical was Kerber's ability to convert all four of her break points during the match, while Bencic was only successful on two of seven. Kerber praised Bencic's tenacity, saying she was always a determined opponent. "She was fighting until the last one (point)," she said. — AFP



PERTH: Roger Federer and his mixed doubles partner Belinda Bencic of Switzerland with the Hopman Cup after defeating runners-up Alexander Zverev and Angelique Kerber of Germany in the final on day eight of the Hopman Cup tennis tournament in Perth yesterday. —AFP

## Tsurenko defeats Osaka to book Pliskova final

BRISBANE: Reigning US Open champion Naomi Osaka said her poor attitude cost her during her 6-2, 6-4 loss to Lesia Tsurenko in yesterday's Brisbane International semi-finals. Osaka went into the match as firm favourite but looked flat from the outset as Tsurenko raced through the match in just 65 minutes.

The Japanese star, who burst to prominence with her eventful US Open final win over Serena Williams, made 26 unforced errors and was broken three times in a disappointing display. She said after the match that she didn't know how to cope once things started to go against her.

"If I'm being really frank, I just feel like I had the worst attitude today," she said. "I feel like I didn't really know how to cope

with not playing well. "I was sulking a little bit, and like there are moments that I tried not to do that, but then the ball wouldn't go in, and then I would go back to being, like, childish and stuff."

"I feel like last year I did a lot of that," she added. "I'm trying to change it more, and I think I have." But Osaka said yesterday's loss was probably a better learning experience than if she had made the final.

"I think today I learned... what I can do to improve the situation," she said. The 29-year-old Tsurenko, who will now rise to a career-high world ranking of 24, said she had adopted a new game plan during the off-season. "I feel better with my serve and that I am moving well," she said. "I feel more strong now, so I can kind of handle every kind of pressure on court, even when someone like Naomi is playing really strong. "I can really stay there and I can be aggressive also." Tsurenko will play Czech Karolina Pliskova in Sunday's final after the fifth seed beat Croatian Donna Vekic 6-3, 6-4. Pliskova had the edge over Vekic in a tight match and will go into the final as favourite.



BRISBANE: Lesia Tsurenko of Ukraine celebrates her victory over Japan's Naomi Osaka in their women's semi-final match at the Brisbane International tennis tournament in Brisbane yesterday. — AFP

But the 2017 Brisbane champion said she preferred that to being the underdog. "I think I'm the kind of player which needs

a little bit of the pressure because if I don't have it, I just don't try that much," she added. —AFP

## Nishikori powers through to Brisbane final

BRISBANE: Japanese star Kei Nishikori was in superb form as he demolished Jeremy Chardy 6-2, 6-2 in the Brisbane International semi-finals yesterday. The 29-year-old gave his French opponent no chance as he put on a commanding all court display to advance to the final for the second time in three years.

After his impressive straight sets quarter-final win over Grigor Dimitrov, Nishikori said he had set his sights on returning to the world's top five after falling to 39 last April due to a wrist injury at the end of 2017 that forced a break from the tour.

He showed all the qualities of a top five player in his 66-minute demolition at the Pat Rafter Arena. He only served two aces compared with the 11 sent down by Chardy, but Nishikori returned superbly and pressured the Frenchman's serve throughout, breaking him twice in each set.

Nishikori also moved around the court well, his speed not noticeably affected by the injuries that hampered him last year. "Everything was working well today," Nishikori said. "I felt like I was too fast on the court today-I felt very good."

"Physically and tennis-wise I think it was perfect. I served well, I returned well-I think that was the key today-and I was moving well, that was fantastic." Nishikori was runner-up to Dimitrov in 2017 and will go into Sunday's final against fourth seeded Russian Daniil Medvedev as firm favourite.

Medvedev reached the decider with a 7-6 (8/6), 6-2 win over France's Jo-Wilfried Tsonga. Medvedev came back from 0-3 down in the first set then saved two set points in the first set tiebreak before running away with the second.

The Russian, who stands at 1.98 metres, was able to withstand the huge serving of Tsonga and out-hit him from the baseline. "I was really nervous and he started amazing," Medvedev said. "I didn't do anything wrong. I managed to come back and had more opportunities." — AFP

## AlSayer renews sponsorship with Kuwait Drift Champion

KUWAIT: AlSayer Engineering, a subsidiary of ALSAYER Holding recently renewed their sponsorship contract with Kuwait Drift Champion Ali Makhseed for Motul oil their franchise brand of lubricants from France as well as Yokohama high performance tires. AlSayer's partnership comes as a title sponsor featuring Motul logos on Ali Makhseed's customized and fine-tuned drift racing car Toyota FT 86 along with supply of advanced Motul racing oil and Yokohama tires for the competitions.

On this occasion, a contract signing ceremony was held at ALSAYER Headquarters inviting Ali Makhseed in the presence of ALSAYER members including Mubarak Naser Al Sayer CEO, Vivek Kohli Senior Manager Oil, Paint and Garage Equipment, Stephen Patrick Cleary CMO, Bader Faisal Al Sayer Deputy Manager Advertising & Promotion, Mohammad Nasimi Senior Manager After Sales Marketing.

According to Mubarak Naser Al Sayer "We are pleased to support Ali for the drift racing events featuring technologically advanced products from Motul and Yokohama, globally top performing brands. The motor racing community in Kuwait recognizes Ali's past record



Signing ceremony

of achievements and we are confident that our partnership will support him to achieve even better results".

Earlier this year, Ali Makhseed was one of the top performers in Red Bull Car Park Drift Series Final which was held at SIRBB Circuit Kuwait recently. Ali had topped the leader board among the three drifters from Kuwait who participated in the local qualifier. The local Kuwaiti competitor impressed the judges to win the King of Smoke title.

Speaking to ALSAYER members after the contract

signing ceremony, Ali shared his positive comments about the reliable and track-ready performance of Motul and Yokohama products provided by ALSAYER Engineering and acknowledged the team support for extending the sponsorship agreement with him.

For customers in Kuwait Motul lubricants and Yokohama tires are available at ALSAYER Engineering's wide network of five centers for tires, oils and paints as well as in authorized dealers, co-ops, garages and Auto-repair shops across Kuwait.

## Penguins silences Jets for third shutout

PITTSBURGH: Matt Murray stopped 33 shots Friday for his third shutout this season and the ninth of his career as the Pittsburgh Penguins won their eighth straight game, blanking the visiting Winnipeg Jets 4-0.

Murray also tied his career best with a seven-start winning streak. Olli Maatta and Matt Cullen scored 33 seconds apart in the first period, Dominik Simon added a second-period goal, and Kris Letang scored an empty-netter for the Penguins. Cullen also added an assist. The Penguins, who have won 10 of their past 11 games, reached the midpoint of the season with 52 points. During their eight-game win streak, they have outscored opponents by a combined 32-9. Connor Hellebuyck made 29 saves for Winnipeg, which has lost three of its past four games.

**AVLANCHE 6, RANGERS 1**

Mikko Rantanen had two goals and an assist, Nathan MacKinnon had a goal and added two assists, and Colorado ended a six-game skid with a win over New York in Denver. Gabriel Landeskog also scored and had an assist, Alexander Kerfoot scored and

Philipp Grubauer stopped 24 shots for Colorado. Ryan Graves scored his first NHL goal late in the game. Ryan Strome produced the lone goal for the Rangers. Alexander Georgiev had 41 saves but allowed six goals.

**STARS 2, CAPITALS 1 (OT)**

Tyler Seguin scored a pair of goals, including the game-winner at 3:37 of overtime, and Anton Khudobin turned away 36 shots as Dallas defeated visiting Washington to secure a season sweep of the defending Stanley Cup champions. Khudobin stood tall through a feverish third period and in overtime before Seguin converted a pass from Alexander Radulov from behind the net for the deciding tally. Radek Faksa assisted on both goals for the Stars, who are 6-2-1 in their past nine games. Lars Eller had a goal for Washington, which got 27 saves from Phoenix Copley.

**RED WINGS 4, PREDATORS 3 (OT)**

Dylan Larkin scored with 26 seconds remaining in overtime to give host Detroit a victory over Nashville. It was Larkin's fourth overtime game-winner this season, and it snapped the Red Wings' six-game winless streak. Larkin received a Filip Hronek pass at center ice, then weaved through the defense before depositing a backhander past Nashville goaltender Pekka Rinne. Thomas Vanek scored in his 1,000th career game for Detroit. Andreas Athanasiou and Tyler Bertuzzi also scored, while Jimmy Howard stopped 27 shots. P.K. Subban, Craig Smith

and Ryan Johansen scored for the Predators.

**HURRICANES 4, BLUE JACKETS 2**

Greg McKegg scored a goal and added an assist in his first game with Carolina, a victory over Columbus in Raleigh, N.C. McKegg, a 26-year-old center, was playing with his fifth NHL team. Micheal Ferland, Dougie Hamilton and Sebastian Aho also scored for the Hurricanes. Aho's empty-net goal was the only scoring in the third period. Oliver Bjorkstrand and Artemi Panarin scored for the Blue Jackets, who failed to record a team point for only the second time in a 10-game span (7-2-1).

**DEVILS 3, COYOTES 2 (SO)**

Kyle Palmieri and Drew Stafford scored in a shootout as New Jersey pulled out a win in Glendale, Ariz. Nico Hirschier and Blake Coleman scored in regulation for the Devils, who won for the fifth time in seven games. Keith Kinkaid stopped 15 of 17 shots in relief of Mackenzie Blackwood, who sustained an injury in the first period. Conor Garland and Christian Fischer scored for Arizona, which lost its third game in a row. Darcy Kuemper made 33 saves.

**GOLDEN KNIGHTS 3, DUCKS 2**

Tomas Nosek had a goal and an assist, and Marc-Andre Fleury made 25 saves to pick up his league-leading 24th victory as Vegas moved into a tie for first place in the Pacific Division with a victory at Anaheim. It was the 11th straight game for Fleury without a regu-



DENVER: Kevin Shattenkirk #22 of the New York Rangers advances the puck against Nathan MacKinnon #29 of the Colorado Avalanche at the Pepsi Center on Friday in Denver, Colorado. — AFP

lation loss (8-0-3). Max Pacioretty and Nate Schmidt also scored goals for Vegas, which won its fifth consecutive game, equaling its season-best win streak. The Golden Knights improved to 16-3-3 over their past 22 games.

Daniel Sprong and Carter Rowney scored goals for Anaheim, which tied its longest losing streak of the season with its seventh straight loss (0-5-2). John Gibson finished with 39 saves for the Ducks. — Reuters

## Sports

# Struggling Australia throw away wickets in big run chase

## Another top order batting collapse in Sydney

**SYDNEY:** Australia blew a strong start with yet another top order batting collapse in Sydney yesterday, leaving themselves a mountain to climb to stay in the fourth and final Test against India. When play was abandoned half an hour early due to rain, they were 236 for six, still 386 behind with Peter Handscomb (28) and Pat Cummins (25) fighting a rearguard action after some soft dismissals plunged the hosts into deep trouble.

Australia went to lunch at 122 for one but meekly surrendered soon afterwards, losing three wickets for 24 runs, with spinners Ravindra Jadeja and Kuldeep Yadav doing the damage. Yadav ended with 3-71 and Jadeja 2-62.

While aggressive rookie opener Marcus Harris blazed a career-best

79, senior players Usman Khawaja, Shaun Marsh and skipper Tim Paine all failed to deliver when needed most. "I got a start and a few of us got a start but none of us went on to get a big score so it's pretty simple to work out what went wrong," said Harris.

"We're a young group and we're trying to work it out and think on our feet but we're playing against the number one side in the world, so it's not like it's an easy thing to do." Despite the task ahead, Harris remained optimistic.

"Obviously 600 is a big score to chase down or get a close deficit, but I think the more time we can occupy the crease, you never know what can happen." India took a stranglehold on the match over the opening two days, compiling a huge

622 for seven declared on the back of centuries from irrepressible Cheteshwar Pujara and livewire Rishabh Pant.

They lead 2-1 after victories in Adelaide and Melbourne and are fast closing in on a historic first-ever series win since they first toured Australia in 1947-48. Yadav said India's fielding and catching practice was paying off.

"I feel like we are the best side in the world now when it comes to fielding," he said. Skipper Virat Kohli's declaration left Khawaja and Harris to face 10 nervous overs before stumps on Friday, when they crawled to 24 without loss.

Khawaja was dropped on nought but failed to make the most of his second life. On a day when the Sydney Cricket Ground was a sea of pink to mark a breast cancer awareness initiative, he was dismissed for 27 after mistiming a shot off Yadav with Pujara taking an easy catch.



**SYDNEY:** India's Kuldeep Yadav (L) celebrates with teammates after dismissing Australia's captain Tim Paine (C) during the third day's play of the fourth and final cricket Test between India and Australia at the Sydney Cricket Ground YESTERDAY. — AFP

### SCOREBOARD

Scorecard at stumps on day three of the fourth and final Test between Australia and India at the Sydney Cricket Ground yesterday:

India first innings 622-7 declared (C. Pujara 193, R. Pant 159 no, R. Jadeja 81; N. Lyon 4-178)	
<b>Australia 1st innings (overnight 24-0)</b>	
M. Harris b Jadeja	79
U. Khawaja c Pujara b K. Yadav	27
M. Labuschagne c Rahane b Shami	38
S. Marsh c Rahane b Jadeja	8
T. Head c & b K. Yadav	20
P. Handscomb not out	28
T. Paine b Yadav	5
P. Cummins not out	25
Extras (b4, lb2)	6
Total (6 wickets, 83.3 overs)	236
To bat: Nathan Lyon, Mitchell Starc, Josh Hazlewood	
Fall of wickets: 1-72 (Khawaja), 2-128 (Harris), 3-144 (S.Marsh), 4-152 (Labuschagne), 5-192 (Head), 6-198 (Paine).	
Bowling: Shami 16-1-51-1, Bumrah 16-4-42-0, Jadeja 27.3-9-62-2, Yadav 24-6-71-3.	

### STUCK IN TWO FIGURES

At the other end the diminutive Harris, who has shown flashes of brilliance in his short four-Test career, quickly found a groove with some crisp shots. He survived a close call on 24 when a diving KL Rahul narrowly missed a catch and reached his second Test 50 with a single before smacking three fours in one Yadav over.

Harris went to lunch on 77 but added just two more before popping a Jadeja delivery onto his stumps, blowing a glorious chance

to press on and make Australia's first century of the series. So far, none of Australia's batsmen has reached three figures over the four Tests, with Harris' 79 the highest anyone has scored. In contrast, India have had a field day, compiling five centuries.

Australia gambled by picking inexperienced allrounder Marnus Labuschagne to come in at number

three and he settled in well, cracking seven boundaries in a stylish 38. But he was sent packing by a blinding reflex catch from Ajinkya Rahane at mid-wicket off Mohammed Shami's bowling.

Marsh scored a century in Sydney against England this time last year, but was out for eight, tickling an edge to Rahane at slip from a turning Jadeja ball. The day got

worse when Travis Head was caught and bowled by Yadav just before tea for 20 and as storm clouds gathered overhead Yadav clean bowled Paine for five.

It was left to Handscomb, recalled as a specialist in tackling spin, and paceman Cummins, who made a gutsy 63 in the third Melbourne Test, to try and repair the damage. —AFP

## Celtics rip Mavs wire-to-wire

**BOSTON:** Jaylen Brown scored a game-high 21 points to lead the Boston Celtics to a 114-93, wire-to-wire victory over the visiting Dallas Mavericks on Friday night. Jayson Tatum added 18 points and Marcus Smart had 17, including five 3-pointers, to pick up the scoring slack for Boston with leading scorer Kyrie Irving missing a second consecutive game with eye irritation. Gordon Hayward added 16 points, 11 rebounds and eight assists. The Celtics also played without forward Marcus Morris, who hurt his neck after a scary fall during a Wednesday game against the Minnesota Timberwolves. Harrison Barnes led Dallas with 20 points. Boston was challenged only once, when its 53-36 second-quarter lead got whittled down to 58-57 early in the third. But after Mavs rookie sensation Luka Doncic drained a 3-pointer to make it a one-point game, his 3-point attempt to grab the lead missed everything. The Celtics answered with a 21-6 run.

### KNICKS 119, LAKERS 112

Kevin Knox gave New York the lead for good by sinking two free throws with 3:45 remaining, and the Knicks held host Los Angeles without a field goal for the next 2 1/2 minutes en route to a victory that snapped an eight-game losing streak. New York's Tim Hardaway Jr. led all scorers with 22 points, and he made three 3-pointers in a 22-5, game-opening flurry. Brandon Ingram had 21 points and nine rebounds for the Lakers, who lost for the fourth time in five games since LeBron James sustained a groin injury on Christmas Day. The Lakers announced before the game that James also will not travel with the team for games at Minnesota on Sunday and at Dallas and Monday.

### THUNDER 111, TRAIL BLAZERS 109

Paul George and Russell Westbrook combined for 68 points to lift Oklahoma City to a victory at Portland. George scored 37 points and Westbrook added 31 as the Thunder snapped a six-game losing streak in their series with the Trail Blazers. Oklahoma City earned its third consecutive victory. Damian Lillard finished with 23 points and eight assists, and Jusuf Nurkic collected 22 points and eight rebounds for the Trail Blazers, who had won two straight.

### BUCKS 144, HAWKS 112

All five Milwaukee starters scored in double figures, and the Bucks presented coach Mike Budenholzer with a resounding win over his former team, thumping visiting Atlanta. The Bucks got 19 points each from Khris Middleton and Atlanta native Malcolm Brogdon, 16 points from Giannis Antetokounmpo, 14 from Eric Bledsoe and 10 from Brook Lopez. None of the starters played more than 22 minutes. Atlanta lost its third straight game. The Hawks got 19 points from DeAndre Bembry, 14 points from DeWayne

Dedmon, and 13 points and 10 assists from Trae Young.

### CLIPPERS 121, SUNS 111

Marcin Gortat had season highs of 18 points and 13 rebounds, and visiting Los Angeles extended its head-to-head winning streak over Phoenix to 11 games. Danilo Gallinari and Lou Williams scored 21 points each. Tobias Harris and Patrick Beverley each had 16, and Montrezl Harrell scored 15 for the Clippers. Devin Booker scored 23 points and T.J. Warren had 20 for the Suns, who dropped their fifth game in a row—all five at the start of a season-high, seven-game homestand. Richaun Holmes scored 16 points off the bench, and Mikal Bridges, Jamal Crawford and Josh Jackson finished with 10 points apiece for Phoenix.

### TIMBERWOLVES 120, MAGIC 103

Jeff Teague's return from an ankle injury boosted Minnesota to a win over Orlando in Minneapolis. Teague was back in the starting lineup after a nine-game absence, and he had 23 points and 10 assists in 28 minutes. Karl-Anthony Towns added 29 points and 15 rebounds for Minnesota. Towns is averaging 28.3 points and 16.8 rebounds over his past six games. Nikola Vucevic led the Magic with 22 points and seven rebounds, and Evan Fournier added 21 points. Orlando has lost two of its past three and is 3-6 in its past nine games. The Timberwolves are 5-9 in their past 14 games but have now won four of their past seven.

### PACERS 119, BULLS 116 (OT)

Victor Oladipo scored a game-high 36 points, including a 3-pointer from the top of the key with 1.2 seconds remaining in overtime, and visiting Indiana held on to win over Chicago. Oladipo banked in the go-ahead shot to give Indiana its sixth win in a row. Domantas Sabonis contributed a double-double with 23 points and 12 rebounds for the Pacers. Thaddeus Young (16 points), Bojan Bogdanovic (13) and Tyreke Evans (10) also scored in double digits. Zach LaVine led the Bulls with 31 points. Lauri Markkanen added 27 points and nine rebounds and Kris Dunn finished with 16 points and 17 assists for Chicago, which dropped its third in a row. LaVine drilled a 3-pointer with 3.9 seconds remaining in the fourth quarter to force OT, and he sank another that could have tied the game at the end of overtime, but it came just after the buzzer.

### HEAT 115, WIZARDS 109

Hassan Whiteside posted 21 points, 18 rebounds and two blocks, leading host Miami to a win over Washington. Whiteside helped the Heat enjoy a 62-46 edge in paint points. Bradley Beal, who scored a game-high 33 points, closed the Wizards' deficit to 110-109 on a 3-pointer with 67 seconds left. Beal added nine rebounds and seven assists in a stellar all-around effort. —Reuters

## Masood, Shafiq fight back for Pakistan

**CAPE TOWN:** Shan Masood and Asad Shafiq shared a century partnership as Pakistan fought to avoid an innings defeat on the third day of the second Test against South Africa at Newlands yesterday.

Facing a first innings deficit of 254 runs, Pakistan were 177 for three in their second innings at tea, 77 runs short of making South Africa bat again. The left-handed Masood made 61 and Shafiq was 73 not out.

The pair put on 132 for the third wicket after Pakistan had been reduced to 27 for two after strikes by Dale Steyn and Kagiso Rabada. Masood, who was promoted to open the batting in place of the struggling Fakhar Zaman, again looked the most organised of the Pakistan batsmen before he was caught behind off Steyn shortly before tea.

The slightly-built Shafiq played a wide variety of attacking strokes as he hurried to a half-century off 56 balls with seven fours and a six. Pakistan added 140 runs for the loss of Masood's wicket in 25 overs between lunch and tea.

Earlier, Mohammad Amir took three wickets for 19 runs as South Africa were bowled out for 431, losing their last four wickets while adding 49 runs in 8.1 overs. The left-armed Amir took the first three wickets of the morning and finished with four for 88. — AFP



**CAPE TOWN:** Pakistan batsman Shan Masood plays a shot during the third day of the second Test cricket match between South Africa and Pakistan at Newlands Cricket Stadium in Cape Town yesterday. — AFP

### SCOREBOARD

Brief scores at tea on the third day of the second Test between South Africa and Pakistan coach at Newlands on Saturday.

**Pakistan 177 and 177-3** (Shan Masood 61, Asad Shafiq 73 not out; D. Steyn 2-49)

**South Africa 431** (A. Markram 78, F. du Plessis 103, T. Bavuma 75, Q. de Kock 59; Mohammad Amir 4-88, Shaheen Shah Afridi 4-123)

**Match situation:** Pakistan trail by 77 runs with seven wickets remaining in the second innings.

## Thisara's 140 in vain as N Zealand snatch ODI series

**MOUNT MAUNGANUI:** A rollicking maiden century by Sri Lanka's Thisara Perera was ultimately in vain as New Zealand wrapped up the one-day series with a 21-run victory in the second ODI at Mount Maunganui.

With Sri Lanka chasing New Zealand's 319 for seven, they were on the ropes at 128 for seven when Perera opened up. He faced 74 deliveries and cracked 13 sixes and eight fours before he was the last wicket to fall and Sri Lanka were out for 298 with 22 balls remaining. Sri Lanka reached 112 for two when Ish Sodhi captured the wicket of Kusal Mendis for 20 to trigger a collapse which saw five wickets fall in six overs. But Perera refused to give up as he bludgeoned the New Zealand attack with brute force.

He made 58 in a 75-run stand with Lasith Malinga for the eighth wicket, and scored 45 of the 51 runs for the ninth wicket with Lakshan Sandakan. But when an seemingly impossible victory seemed on the cards Matt Henry had Perera caught by Trent Boult at long-on.

Opener Danushka Gunathilaka played his part at the top of the order with 71 but elsewhere the Sri Lankan batsmen failed to fire. It continued a dismal tour for Sri Lanka who also lost the Test series 1-0 and lost the first



**MOUNT MAUNGANUI:** Sri Lanka's Thisara Perera celebrates scoring a century (100 runs) during the second one-day international cricket match between New Zealand and Sri Lanka at Bay Oval in Mount Maunganui yesterday. — AFP

ODI by 45 runs. When New Zealand won the toss and elected to bat, Sri Lanka had their tails up when they removed first-match centurion Martin Guptill and Kane Williamson cheaply to have New Zealand at 39 for two.

But Ross Taylor (90) and Colin Munro (87) swung momentum New Zealand's way with a 112-run stand for the third wicket,

while all-rounder James Neesham lit up the tail with a whirlwind 64. Lasith Malinga was the pick of Sri Lankan bowlers with two for 45 while bowling for New Zealand Sodhi took three for 55. The final match in the series is in Nelson next Tuesday and the tour closes with a Twenty 20 match in Auckland on Friday. —AFP

## Sports

# Solari happy with Real progress despite Barcelona points gap

## Solari has won five out of seven Liga games

**MADRID:** Real Madrid coach Santiago Solari is pleased with the progress they have made despite the revival being punctured by Thursday's 2-2 La Liga draw at Villarreal, emphasising the difficult situation he inherited when he took charge in October.

Madrid are seven points adrift of leaders Barcelona with 17 games played and are fourth in the standings as they prepare to host Real Sociedad today.

While that may not be good enough for a team that has won the last three Champions League titles, Solari said they had made big advances since he succeeded Julen Lopetegui, who was sacked in October when Real were also seven points behind Barca.

"Our objective is to keep on climbing the table but we know that we had a very difficult start, we have risen from ninth place to fourth," Solari told a news conference yesterday. "We have to keep fighting and relish the challenge of taking on difficult situations, which is what we've been doing. We are happy with how we are doing and we have to keep on reducing the gap between us and the leaders."

Solari has won five out of seven Liga games since taking over from Lopetegui, who lost six of his 10 matches, and also earned a first trophy as a coach by winning the Club World Cup in December.

The Argentine said Madrid's critics had to take into account their unforgiving schedule and there was no shame in picking

up a point at Villarreal, who are one of Spain's top clubs despite being embroiled in a relegation battle this campaign.

"The players are not machines, and no team plays as many games as we do and it's difficult and the players keep showing commitment," he added.

"This is a competition, every team plays and we have one of the best leagues where no side gives anything away."

"Every team have players with talent to harm any team, it's a very competitive league and you shouldn't underestimate a draw against a team like Villarreal. "We obviously want to win, but the league is wide open. We played well in the first half against Villarreal, now we're going to try and get three points on Sunday." — Reuters



VILA-REAL: Real Madrid's Argentinian coach Santiago Solari applauds during the Spanish League football match between Villarreal CF and Real Madrid CF at La Ceramica stadium in Vila-real on January 3, 2019. —AFP

## Maradona out of hospital after internal bleeding scare

**BUENOS AIRES:** Argentine soccer great Diego Maradona was released from hospital after being admitted earlier on Friday with internal bleeding in the stomach which was discovered during routine examinations, his daughter Dalma said.

"For those who were really worried

about my dad I can tell you that he is well," Dalma wrote on twitter after fears over her father's health spread. "He is going home soon." The 58-year-old was having a routine medical in his homeland before returning to Mexico, where he is coach of second division side Dorados de Sinaloa, when doctors discovered the problem.

However, a source close to the family told Reuters the problem was not serious and that the former Boca Juniors, Napoli and Barcelona midfielder, who famously led his country to the 1986 World Cup title, was not in any danger.

Another source said Maradona, who left the hospital without talking to the media, may have to undergo more tests. Friday's scare was the latest for Maradona, who has suffered frequent

periods in hospital over the years, often due to the extravagant lifestyle that helped make him one of the most admired and iconic footballers of the 20th century.

He last fell ill at the 2018 World Cup in Russia, where he was filmed passing out in an executive box at the Argentina-Nigeria game. Argentina won 2-1 to reach the last 16, where they were knocked out of the tournament by eventual winners France. Maradona was taken into hospital in 2004 with severe heart and respiratory problems linked to cocaine use. He later underwent drug rehabilitation in Cuba and Argentina before a stomach-stapling operation in 2005 helped him lose weight.

In 2007 he checked himself into a clinic in Buenos Aires to help him over-

come alcohol abuse problems. In recent months he has walked with the aid of crutches due to problems with his knees. The unexpected news of his admittance to hospital on Friday came just hours after Maradona's lawyer confirmed he would coach in Mexico for a second consecutive season.

Maradona took over at struggling Dorados de Sinaloa in September and got them into the playoffs where they lost to Atletico San Luis. "Diego Maradona has arranged to continue with the Dorados de Sinaloa and will stay as coach of the team for the whole season," his agent Matias Morla wrote on twitter. The club said his assistant Jose Maria Martinez would lead the team until Maradona returned. — Reuters

## Shooting activities continue at Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Heritage Village

By Addellatif Sharaa

**KUWAIT:** For the seventh year running, shooting activities continued at Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Heritage Village, where village visitors enjoyed being at the shooting range over the past years, as tournaments are being held there on Fridays for all visitors who register their names, and the first three winners will be awarded gold medals and financial prizes.

Meanwhile, Secretary General of Kuwait and Arab Shooting Federation thanked the Amiri Diwan Affairs Minister Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah, and Advisor Mohammad Daifallah Sharaa, Chairman of the Higher Committee of Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad heritage village and all those officials of the village for their backing of the shooting range at the village.

Al-Osaimi said KSSC board of directors was keen on providing the technical and administrative staff in order to present the best service for village visitors, as specialized coaches are on hand.

Al-Osaimi said competitions will be held every Friday starting at 1:00 pm and there will be three winners in each competition.

Results of the first competition on Friday were won by Mishal Mohammad, Rawan Al-Mutairi, Mohammad Sharaf.



## Syria take field in Asian Cup with fans divided by war

**DAMASCUS:** Syria take the field this weekend for their first international football tournament in eight years of war, but not all fans are happy. The Qasioun Eagles take on Palestine today in their first game of the Asian Cup group stage, hoping to make up for the heartbreak of narrowly missing out on the World Cup finals in Russia last year.

Their qualification has thrilled Syrians in government-held territory, but angered fans in rebel areas who accuse the national team of playing for a regime they detest. After last year's disappointment, national team member Muayyad Ajaan said he was determined this time would be different.

"The pressures and the pains of war have had a positive impact on our spirits. We're determined to make the Syrian people happy," he told AFP. "Our qualification is a victory for everyone."

The team's participation in the Asian Cup has particular significance as Syria remains banned from hosting international fixtures. Maria Barud, 29, who works at a clothes store in Damascus, said she and others were in desperate need of some joy after gruelling years of war.

"I never thought a day would come when I remembered the name of a football player, but I've remembered all the names of players in the Syrian team," she said. "I follow what matches are when, and even bought the team shirt."

After years of devastating conflict that has killed 360,000 people and displaced millions, the regime today is back in control of two-thirds of the country. "I no longer see it as just a rough boys' game. It's become a sensitive national topic," Barud said.

"We dance when the team wins, and cry when it



SHARJAH: Syria's German coach Bernd Stange (L) and forward Omar Al Soma attend a press conference at Sharjah stadium in Sharjah yesterday, a day ahead of his team's match against Palestine in the 2019 AFC Asian Cup. — AFP

loses." Syria reached an advanced stage in qualifications for the 2018 World Cup, only to be denied at the last hurdle with a defeat to Australia.

Syria will face the Socceroos again in the group stage of the Asian Cup, as well as vying with Palestine and Jordan for a place in the knock-out phase. In late December, the national squad's last training session in Damascus drew thousands of fans.

In the stands, supporters held up their mobile phones to film or snap pictures of the players, under posters of President Bashar al-Assad and his father Hafez.

But not all Syrians are so enthusiastic. In areas that escape regime control, football fans are damning of a team they say only represents the government. "The team doesn't represent me in any way whatsoever," said Rami Mohammed, a resident of the northern rebel-held town of Azaz. "How am I supposed to cheer on players who support a murderer?" the 23-year-old asked.

After a series of Russia-backed regime victories around the country, many Syrians have fled their homes to territory still under opposition control in the north of the country. — AFP



### Matches on TV

(Local Timings)

#### SPANISH LEAGUE

SD Eibar v Villarreal CF	14:00
beIN SPORTS HD 3	
Sevilla FC v Atletico de Madrid	18:15
beIN SPORTS HD 3	
Real Madrid CF v Real Sociedad	20:30
beIN SPORTS HD 3	
Getafe CF v FC Barcelona	22:45
beIN SPORTS HD 3	

## Solskjaer says he will be judged on style at Man Utd

**MANCHESTER:** Ole Gunnar Solskjaer has suggested he will be judged on playing style rather than trophies if he is to land the Manchester United manager's job on a full-time basis. Solskjaer, appointed as interim boss last month to replace the sacked Jose Mourinho, has made clear that he would love to stay at Old Trafford beyond the end of this season, when his temporary arrangement is set to expire.

The former United striker, on a managerial loan from Norwegian club Molde, has not spoken to executive vice-chairman Ed Woodward about a longer stay. However, he feels that the key to being seen as a success is to return to the attractive, attacking football that the club played for much of Alex Ferguson's near 27-year reign as manager.

Ferguson won 38 trophies before retiring in 2013 but his United team were also renowned for their positive football, which many fans felt went missing in the final year of Mourinho's reign. Solskjaer, when asked what would constitute success and improve his chances of getting the job permanently, said: "If we get to the summer and people are talking about the way Manchester United are playing."

"If the style we're playing, it reminds us of Sir Alex's team, if it reminds us of the successful times," Solskjaer said he is keen to win trophies this season but suggested that the style, for now, was more important.

"It has to start with the way we play because results you cannot control," he said. "You can control how you approach the game and how you play. "And of course, it's about trophies-if you can get to the final of the FA Cup and get a trophy. Let's see in May if it's a success or not."

Solskjaer has won his first four matches at the helm, including a 2-0 victory at Newcastle on Wednesday, and hopes to extend that run when Championship strugglers Reading visit Old Trafford in the FA Cup yesterday.

However, he expects there to be setbacks as he attempts to improve United's Premier League position from sixth over the second half of the season. "When you win games of football, you're happy," he said. "There will be tougher times coming, there will be tougher games coming up, we know that."

"I thought the Newcastle game was a great example of us not just getting the first goal and sitting back to counter. We had to work for it and defend." One of Solskjaer's priorities is to improve the players' fitness, something he plans to work on when he takes his squad to Dubai for a warm-weather training break after the Reading match.

The former United striker said that high-intensity fitness training was a key part of United's success under Ferguson, allowing them to build momentum late in the season when chasing trophies.

"We can get fitter and we have to do that through the training sessions here but Dubai is a good chance because now is the first time we get a week of work together," he said. "I still have pictures in my mind every January, the gaffer (Ferguson) with the stopwatch timing us-all of those runs," he added. "That stood us in good stead towards the end of the season, so it is a time to work hard. Even though we've got plenty of games, we need to work." —AFP

**25** Federer wins record third Hopman in dramatic fashion



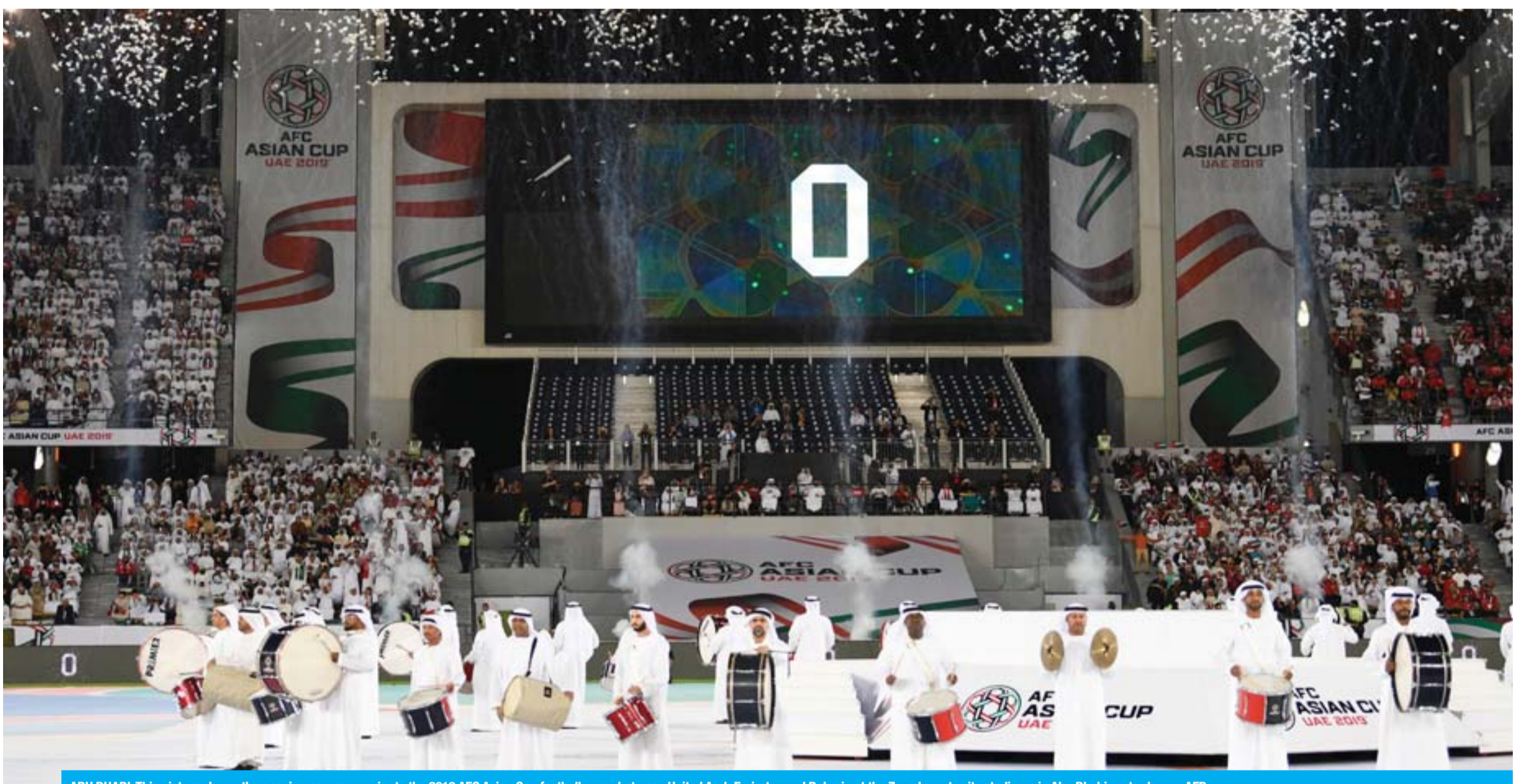
**26** Struggling Australia throw away wickets in big run chase



**27** Syria take field in Asian Cup with fans divided by war



## Late penalty gives hosts UAE 1-1 draw



ABU DHABI: This picture shows the opening ceremony prior to the 2019 AFC Asian Cup football game between United Arab Emirates and Bahrain at the Zayed sports city stadium in Abu Dhabi yesterday. — AFP



ABU DHABI: FIFA President Gianni Infantino (C) and UAE officials attend the opening ceremony prior to the 2019 AFC Asian Cup football game between United Arab Emirates and Bahrain at the Zayed sports city stadium in Abu Dhabi yesterday. — AFP

ABU DHABI: Hosts United Arab Emirates salvaged a controversial 1-1 draw in their Asian Cup curtain-raiser against Bahrain yesterday. Substitute Ahmed Khalil smashed home a late penalty harshly awarded for a handball after Mohamed Alromaihi had given Bahrain a shock lead in Abu Dhabi.

The Emirates scored after just 14 seconds when the two teams met at the 2015 Asian Cup in Australia but there was little danger of that in a scruffy first half. UAE's Ismail Alhamadi fired tamely at goalkeeper Sayed Alawi after six minutes before Ali Mabkhout blazed over. Bahrain went close just before halftime when Komail Alaswad fizzed a free kick just over the bar. The home side's profligacy

continued as Mabkhout lashed wide from point-blank range.

That wastefulness came back to haunt the UAE after 78 minutes when Alromaihi bundled home after his initial header appeared to have crossed the line. Sami Alhusaini almost equalised five minutes from time, only for Alawi to pull off a stunning block.

But Jordanian referee Adham Makhadmeh pointed to the spot five minutes from time for what appeared to be an unintentional handball to offer the hosts a lifeline. Khalil, appearing in his 100th international, stepped up to rifle the spot kick into the top corner and send a partisan crowd wild.

UAE coach Alberto Zaccheroni steered

Japan to the continental title in 2011, but his Emirates side have flat-lined in the run-up to this year's competition, scoring just 10 goals in 18 games under the Italian.

His hopes of going deep into the tournament have not been helped by the loss of mop-top talisman Omar Abdulrahman through injury. The Emiratis were beaten finalists the last time the country hosted the Asian Cup in 1996, losing on penalties to Saudi Arabia.

They take on India and Thailand in their next two Group A fixtures but will need to improve drastically if they have designs on emulating their run to the last four at the last tournament in Australia where they stunned holders Japan in the quarter-finals. — AFP

## Solskjaer's winning start at Man Utd continues in FA Cup

LONDON: Ole Gunnar Solskjaer enjoyed a fifth successive win in as many games as interim manager of Manchester United when his side beat Reading 2-0 in the third round of the FA Cup at Old Trafford yesterday.

The former United striker had already guided the Red Devils to a run of four straight Premier League victories since being appointed coach after controversial former boss Jose Mourinho was sacked last month.

That winning sequence was maintained against second-tier strugglers Reading, with the third round marking the entry into the FA Cup, the world's oldest senior knockout football competition, of England's top-flight clubs.

United, last season's losing finalists, were 2-0 up before half-time, thanks to goals from Juan Mata and Romelu Lukaku but Reading had their chances against a still suspect defence. Mata gave United, 12-times winners of the Cup, the lead in unusual fashion in the 22nd minute.

United initially had a goal disallowed for offside against Fred but referee Stuart Attwell, after a lengthy consultation with the video assistant referee, awarded the home side a penalty for a foul on Mata in the build-up. The Spanish midfielder then scored from the spot

himself, sending Reading goalkeeper Anssi Jaakkola the wrong way. Alexis Sanchez and Lukaku were both making their first United starts under Solskjaer and the pair combined to make it 2-0 deep into stoppage time at the end of the first-half. From Sanchez's through-ball, the onrushing Lukaku calmly rounded Jaakkola and scored from a tight angle.

Elsewhere, an all-Premier League clash saw Brighton win 3-1 away to south coast rivals Bournemouth. Brighton, beaten in a replay by United in the 1983 FA Cup final, scored with what amounted to their first attack of the game when Anthony Knockaert fired them into a 31st-minuted lead.

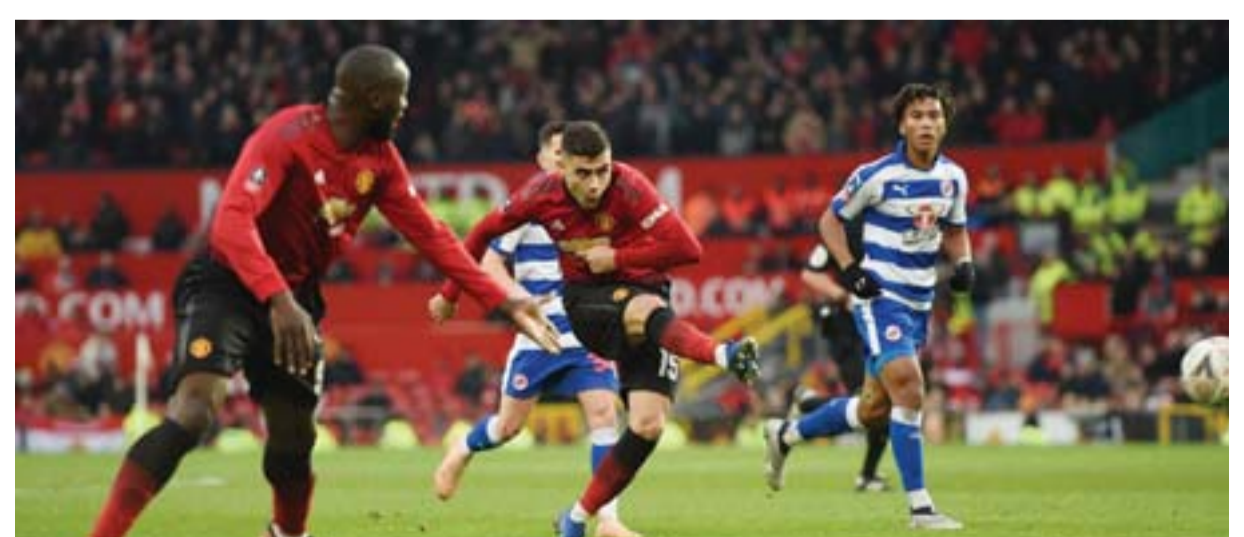
And three minutes later it was 2-0, when Yves Bissouma's long-range shot went in off the post. Bournemouth pulled a goal back through Marc Pugh's fine effort from 20 yards out but Brighton restored their two-goal lead in the 64th minute when Florin Andone headed in from the Seagulls' first corner of the game.

Marko Arnautovic had a bizarre match as West Ham beat Championship club Birmingham 2-0. The Austrian striker scored as early as the second minute. Yet Arnautovic was, for no clear reason, substituted after 19 minutes by Hammers boss Manuel Pellegrini.

But Andy Carroll, the man who replaced Arnautovic, made it 2-0 in the 90th minute when the forward's header saw him score his first goal since April.

West Ham's Samir Nasri, the former Arsenal and Manchester City midfielder playing 60 minutes on his debut for the east London side, having joined after completing a casting ban.

Premier League strugglers Burnley needed a late penalty from Chris Wood to see off third-tier Barnsley



MANCHESTER: Manchester United's English midfielder Angel Gomes (C) takes a shot but fails to score during the English FA Cup third round football match between Manchester United and Reading at Old Trafford in Manchester, yesterday. — AFP

1-0. Bakary Sako's goal was enough to give West Brom a 1-0 win over fellow Championship club Wigan, shock FA Cup-winners in 2013.

Former England striker Peter Crouch scored an equaliser for Stoke, now a Championship club, in a 1-1 draw with Shrewsbury, who are a division below in League One.

FA Cup holders Chelsea face Championship club Nottingham Forest in one of ties, with Arsenal-the

record 13 times FA Cup winners, away to third tier Blackpool in a 1730 GMT kick-off clash, Premier League champions Manchester City are at home to Championship side Rotherham today.

Liverpool, the Premier League leaders, play Wolves in an all-top flight clash at Anfield tomorrow. Tottenham Hotspur became the first club into the fourth round this season with a 7-0 rout of fourth-tier Tranmere on Friday. — AFP