

SAMOAobserver

Thursday 04th January 2018

\$2.50

Government's new Chief Statistician

JOYETTER LUAMANU

A new woman has been appointed and endorsed by Cabinet to take charge of the Samoa Bureau of Statistics (S.B.S.).

After serving 30 years in the statistical services, Ali'imuanua Malaefono Talaloga, is the government's new Chief Statistician.

She succeeds one of Samoa's longest serving C.E.O., Muagututi'a Sefu'a Keupe'a.

Speaking to the Samoa Observer yesterday, Ali'imuanua said she's overwhelmed with joy "as the new Government Statistician or C.E.O. after spending all my working life, since 1987 in the statistical services".

Ali'imuanua thanked the outgoing C.E.O, Muagututi'a, for all the challenges and milestones they have been through together in the development of statistical services in Samoa.

"I will continue his good work and look forward to improve working in partnership with our stakeholders, private sector, civil societies, technical and international partners and all users of statistics," she said.

Ali'imuanua was the A.C.E.O. of Census, Surveys and Demography Statistics Division.

According to Ali'imuanua, their goal is to continue to provide relevant, quality statistics for the benefit of Samoa.

"I thank the almighty God for all the wonderful blessings that I have achieved in my life," she said.

Ali'imuanua lost both her parents, the late Tana'a Paafeti Fuataga Penita of Lalomani, Saanapu and Ruta Ioaipo Natoaalofa of Motara and Safotu.

▶ Page 11



CONGRATULATIONS: Ali'imuanua Malaefono Talaloga, new C.E.O. of the Samoa Bureau of Statistics.

Landslide scare on east coast

VATAPUIA MALAVA

A landslide on the east coast of Upolu interrupted traffic momentarily yesterday morning. The landslide blocked a section of the east-coast road of Upolu, heading from Apia towards Piula. What triggered the landslide, which brought down massive boulders of rocks, could not be

confirmed. It led to delays with the road blocked as authorities tried to clear the debris. The Police were immediately involved and diverted traffic for a brief moment. The incident occurred between the villages of Luatuanu and Solosolo. According to the Disaster

Management Office, members of the public need to be aware as there are still risks when driving along the area. "Large boulders are still present on the roadside and therefore we would like to remind the public to be cautious when travelling along this route," D.M.O said. The debris had been cleared at press time last night.



ROAD BLOCK: Some of the boulders the landslide dropped on the road. Photo: Fefiloi Kerstin.

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NEW



LOCAL

Abusive father drives boy from home

IOANA TUPAI

A 14-year-old boy has spoken out about why he left his home to seek refuge in the Samoa Victim Support Group shelter as a result of being abused by his father.

The boy, whose village and his name are withheld, said he was tired of the abuse and he was afraid for his life.

"My mother left because my father used to beat her up," he said.

"Then my father married the second woman, however this time he is with his third wife."

Being the eldest of three siblings, he said life was hard for him because he had to earn income for his family.

"Every morning I wake up and I go get coconut coir and then I have to go sell it for \$2 tala and popcorn for \$1 tala."

He says he has never been part of any formal education programme in his whole life because his priority was the financial stability of his family.

"I don't go to town. I usually go around our village to sell coconut coir and my popcorns. I usually start selling from the afternoon until 6pm."

He said if he didn't sell all the coconut coir and popcorns his father would beat him.

According to the boy, his father used to hold a bush knife or throw stones at him.

"From these beatings, I have a scar on my head, my hand and on my back."

"One day I went for my usual routine and then I met this other woman who asked me why I am not in school. I told this lady that I was told by my father to sell these goods."

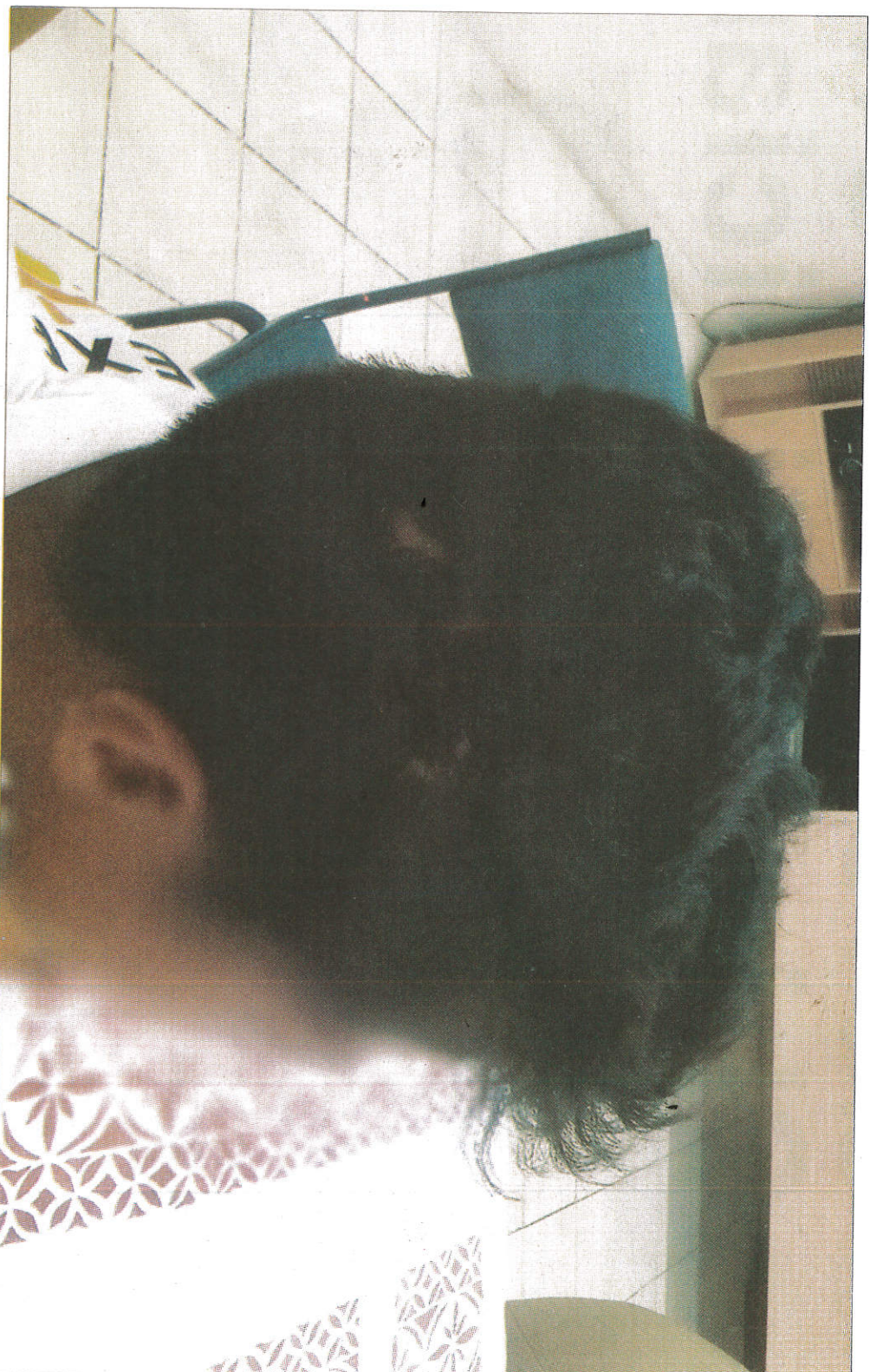
"She was the one who called the Samoa Victim Support Group help line and I was brought in under their care in 2016."

He said it was the best decision ever because he finally got a feel of the education system.

"I am now able to develop other talents such as joining the Aialoa club which I am so happy to be a part of."

He admits that he still misses his home.

"I want to go back to my family because my father and his wife are



RUNNING AWAY FROM HOME: The young boy left their house saying he became tired of the abuse.

no longer staying there," he said.

"I know I am facing a lot of challenges in life, but I still love my father. In the mean time, I am also hoping that one day I will again meet my mother."

"I am thankful for the work that Samoa Victim Support Group has done for me, which I am hoping one day I will pay back what they have done by working for them, lending my help to other children."

It is a different story for 16-year-old Sam from the United States of America.

Sam is back on the streets after being housed at the S.V.S.G.

"I do not like staying there because we are not allowed to go outside the gate," he said.

"I do not have any parents here, I am here by myself."

Sam was spotted selling soft drinks and snacks at the Savalalo Flea market yesterday.

Gordon Lemisio, a member of S.V.S.G. Juniors says for their first project this year, the S.V.S.G. Juniors will open the School of Hope to these vendors.

"The newly-built school that was funded by some colleges from Australia and was opened last year will be made available for these students," he said.

"We do know that it is going to be hard to approach parents of these children to allow their children to come to school, but we have to find a way to do it."

"Our focus is to empower youths of Samoa because they are the future of their families, village and Samoa as a whole."

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Lawyer calls on Govt. to legalise marijuana

JOYETTER LUAMANU

A Senior Lawyer, Unasa Iuni Sapolu, has called on the government to consider legalizing marijuana.

In her view, it will help Samoa's economy through the export of medicinal marijuana, especially coconut oil and marijuana fibre.

She also believes this will help reduce the number of inmates housed at Tafa'igata Prison.

"Furthermore it will save costs to Samoa when all those imprisoned for possession of marijuana etc. are no longer fed in jail, no longer accommodated in jail and there are no more criminal offenses relating to marijuana," she said.

"For health reasons, those with cystic fibrosis, epilepsy, cancer, depression and other health problems can be treated with marijuana."

She told the Samoa Observer the government is wasting money and the Court's time.

"Stop listening to white agendas, colonized minds, it's just a plant, legalize and reduce government indebtedness," she said.

According to Unasa, there is a need to legalise marijuana for medicinal and recreational use.

"Boost revenue from tourism by recreational use of marijuana and it will help cure some illnesses through using marijuana," she said.

As reported last year, opium is the only legal drug that is allowed under Samoa's Narcotic Act. It is classified as a Class B narcotic together with marijuana and it's considered an illegal drug.

Under section 10 of the Act, it prohibits importing, prepared opium into Samoa unless a license has been granted by the Ministry of Health's C.E.O.

This is according to the Samoa Law Reform Commission (S.L.R.C.) report on the review of the Narcotics Act 1967 released in July, 2017.

In 2015, the S.L.R.C. received a term of reference from the Office of the Attorney General noting concerns that the current Act is outdated.

The S.L.R.C. report says the



TAKING A STAND ON MARIJUANA: Lawyer Unasa Iuni Sapolu.

Narcotics Act does not expressly provide for the situations in which members of the public can apply for illegal drugs to be used for medicinal purposes.

"However, this mechanism does exist in practice and can be utilized if the prescribing physician deems it necessary to request the particular drug, particularly opium."

"This system has been rarely utilised in Samoa."

"Conversely, overseas jurisdictions such as New Zealand and Australia utilize this option more routinely and have concrete mechanisms in place to facilitate these applications."

According to the report, opium is used to produce morphine and codeine and is commonly used for pain relief.

"In New Zealand, methadone is also used in drug treatment. Many other drugs are used

in tranquilisers, sedatives, stimulants and antipsychotics."

"Aside from medicinal opium, the Narcotics Act is silent on situations where an illegal drug can be requested for medicinal purposes."

The Narcotics Act only provides for the supply of opium by the C.E.O. of Ministry of Health to registered persons already addicted to the quasi medicinal use of opium before the Act was

passed.

The Act provides that the C.E.O. may supply a certain quantity of medicinal opium to a person on the register whom he/she thinks is fit to be supplied thereof.

"Accordingly, the conditions in which a person in Samoa can be prescribed opium are incredibly limited as they are only provided to persons on the register."

"Opium is classified as a Class B narcotic together with marijuana, thus it is considered an illegal drug, and Section 10 prohibits importing prepared opium into Samoa unless a licence has been granted by the C.E.O."

"On the other hand, opium can be used for medicinal purposes if it has undergone the processes necessary to adapt it for medicinal use."

The S.L.R.C. report also points to other medicinal drugs there is scope under the Narcotics Regulation 1967 for an approved licensee to prescribe drugs, for example medicinal marijuana.

"Preliminary consultations with M.o.H. revealed that patients have requested medicinal drugs from their doctors."

"There has only been one request for medicinal marijuana in 2015. This request involved a woman who was diagnosed with breast cancer. She requested the supply of medicinal marijuana (cannabis oil) for pain relief."

When a request is filed, the M.o.H. must submit the application to the International Narcotics Control Board (I.N.C.B.) for approval.

The M.o.H. will find an importer and apply for a licence from the I.N.C.B. to allow for the import of narcotics.

"Once the licence is approved, the drug is then imported for medicinal use in quantities specified by the treating physician. These licences can only be used in controlled situations and are valid for three months only," says the S.L.R.C. report.

According to M.o.H, the supply of opium and other medicinal drugs is rare in Samoa. However, once people are aware of this option for pain relief, M.o.H. anticipates more requests of this nature in the future, says the report.

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LOCAL

Police issue warning after near fatal road incident



POLICE SUPERINTENDENT AND MEDIA SPOKESPERSONS: Auapa'au Logoitino Filipo.

JOYETTER LUAMANU

The dangers of drunk driving are real. That's the warning from the Samoa Police Service following an incident where a drunk driver ran over two women before driving away at Moata'a on New Year's day.

This was confirmed by Police Superintendent and Media Spokesperson, Auapa'au Logoitino Filipo.

The pedestrians were two females walking on the side of the road when they were struck.

"Two women were admitted into the hospital when a drunk driver struck them," he said.

"The driver had since been arrested and charged for driving under the influence and operating a vehicle without a license."

"The two women, one was 20 and one was 40. The 40-year-old woman was released as of yesterday, however for the younger female her injuries were severe."

Auapa'au said the incident once more highlights the dangers of driving under the influence.

He told the Samoa Observer that when consuming alcohol it affects the way you are and it changes your judgement.

"It's easy to think you are driving normally when truly you are not," he said.

"If you get into an accident your life could be lost as well as any pedestrians."

He told the Samoa Observer that aside from this incident, it was a peaceful New Year holiday.

"At the end of our holiday operation, we saw a reduced number of drunk drivers on the road compared to last year," he said.

According to Auapa'au, another man filed a criminal complaint after his residence in Fataoia was robbed.

"The culprit(s) took the man's passport and his phone. The victim, a New Zealander, is in Samoa on holiday."

"Now the police are trying to track down who took the passport and the cell phone."

Road trouble at Tiavea

VATAPUIA MALAVA

2018 has kicked off on the wrong gear with yet another road crash.

A truck was spotted overturned on its side on Tuesday afternoon.

It was confirmed by Police authorities that the incident occurred along the Tiavea road and the cause of the accident was not alcohol related.



OVERTURNED TRUCK: Truck which lost control along Tiavea road. Photo / Fefi'oi Kerstin.

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Govt. welcomes New Year with prayer

**JOYETERLUAMANU
PHOTOS: SAMOA GOVERNMENT**

On the first day of the New Year, Samoa committed everything to God in prayer.

At the first prayer service of the year, the Head of State, His Highness Tuimaleaifano Va'aletoa Sualauvi II and the Masi'oto, Her Highness Fa'amausili Leina'oto, were among officials who attended.

Samoa was one of the first countries to welcome the New Year and like everything in Samoa, 2018 was welcomed with a prayer.

The annual service was held at the Matafele Methodist Church and was led by Reverend Ioane Tolai. Also present at the church service were Prime Minister Tuilaepa Dr. Sa'ilele Malleleagaoi, Cabinet Ministers and government employees.

Thanksgiving prayer was conducted by Si'ufaga Catholic Catechist, Ma'itaga Iosefo, for forgiveness segment was prayed by Father Henry Bryce and Reverend To'eaina Fiti Aloalii of the Congregational Church of Jesus in Samoa (C.C.J.S.).

During the sermon, Reverend Tolai says the theme of this year's service is "Wake up Call".

He spoke about one of Samoa's heart-breaking days, 29 September, 2009, when a Tsunami struck and took numerous lives.

"Many lives were taken; this led the government to host awareness programs for the public on what to do when a disaster strikes."



THANKSGIVING PRAYER: Samoa committed to God upon welcoming a new year, during a prayer service held at the Matafele Methodist Church.

"When alarm bell rings throughout all of Samoa, it's an indication that you need to move to high grounds."

"This is one of the bells that you cannot ignore, if you want to live."

Reverend Tolai reminded the government officials the importance of heeding God's

commands and living by it.

"If you don't obey and do what you're told, it will not end well, you'll encounter predicaments," said Reverend Tolai.

He reminded that God's call is very important, quoting the Bible verse: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten

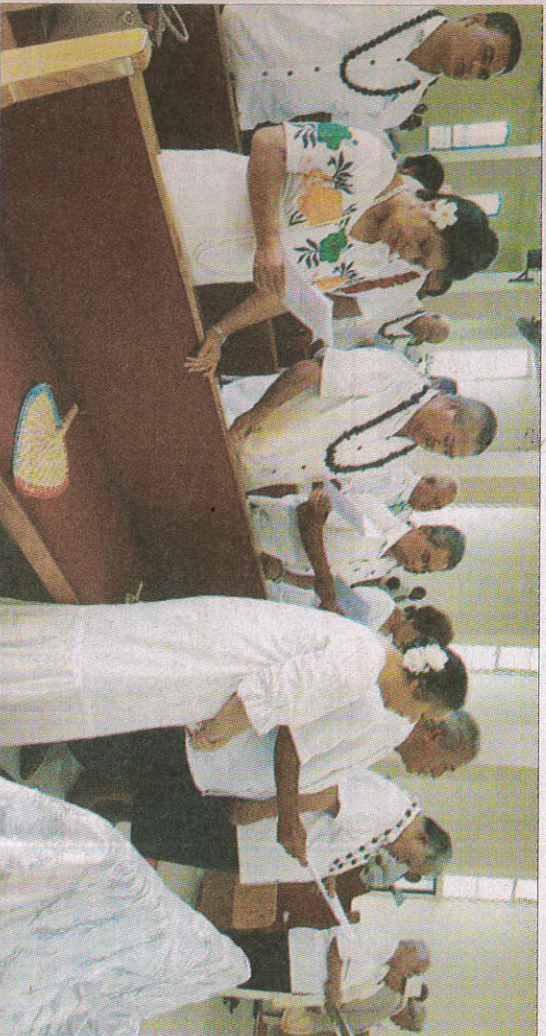
son and whosoever believeth in him shall not perish but have everlasting life."

"The love of God is not just words, but he acted upon it and it was evident at the cross where he called out that it has been done," said Reverend Tolai.

According to Reverend Tolai,

the first week of the New Year will not be easy, however nothing is impossible with God.

"There will be tribulations and trials on our pathway, however listen on for God's calling and let him lead the way," he said.



The prayer service was well attended by the Head of State, His Highness Tuimaleaifano Va'aletoa Sualauvi II and Masi'oto, Her Highness Fa'amausili Leina'oto, the Prime Minister, Cabinet and government employees.

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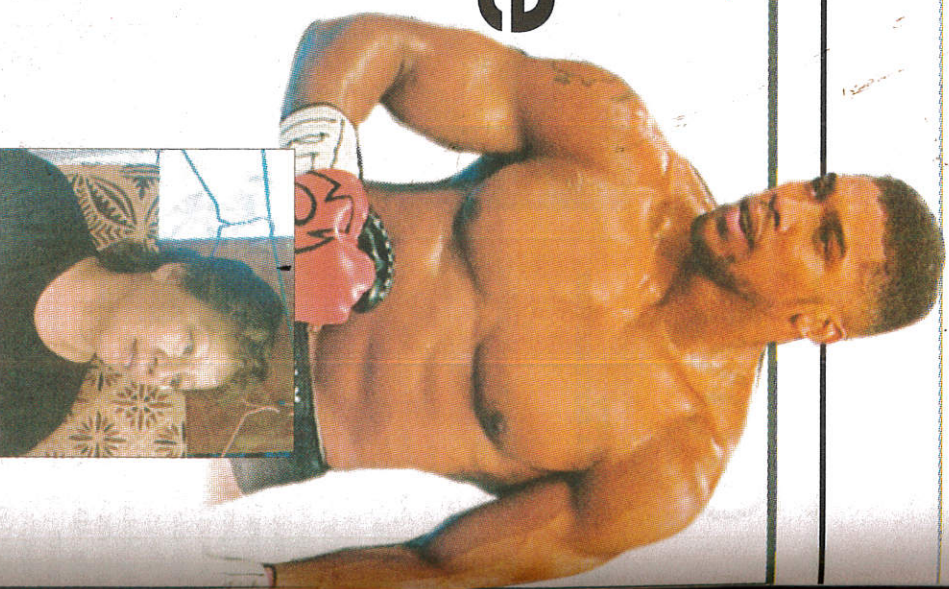
LOC



UPI VELESILU
VAVAU, 62

One thing is certain and that we will never neglect our own people, the ones who are going out into the open representing our homeland. We are all with Parker and whatever challenge that he will be facing and no one in our nation would cheer for someone who is not from here. With the hopes that we have with this young boxer, we rely mainly on our heavenly father for His support, strength and guidance. There are many other children from this nation who are talented boxers. The secret in winning is hard work.

Parker or Joshua: The questions



FOU AH CHING
TALIMATAU, 49

I am the one who supplies Joseph's necklace; we go to the same church so I fully support Joseph. Go Joseph, I know you will do us proud. He should not lose hope; his whole country is right behind him. Joseph should just go for it, no human being should be afraid of another human being. We are all humans at the end of the day. I know if Parker is going to give his 100 percent, the fight would not doubt finish by the second round.



MUAAYA AFITU
FAGALOA, 58

Fitness is everything that is required with this sport, if Parker is slow and he is not fit then we have to accept the outcome of this fight. If Parker is very fit, the harder his punches will be, the possibility there is for a knockout. Overall the main focus that he should have in mind is God because when we are out of energy, He is the source of strength in times when we cannot even find solutions. Never depend on what we can do, but look to God; He knows what is best for each and every one of us. Both of them are bringing their A game to the ring so it is going to be a tough fight. I think that Parker would win by points.



TAUJILILI SLAVE
MANUNU, 40

Being a Samoan means a lot to the many of us and we always take pride in our nation. Without any doubt, our whole country would rally behind Joseph. We support him and hopefully he will win a good fight and God's name be praised for his win. I know he will win and with God by his side, nothing is impossible. Anthony is strong and we have seen him fight, but I trust that Joseph would definitely do great.



JUNIOR MOEIOA
SALEIMO'A, 21

In my opinion, Joseph Parker will win. There is no Samoan person that would go for another boxer who is not from the same homeland as I am. To win depends on his training. Just by watching Joseph fight, I think that he is fast and quick in the ring but Anthony is strong, that is the difference between the two. So for Parker, he should come fully prepared because if Parker is going to win, then it is by points if Anthony wins, then it will be through a knockout.



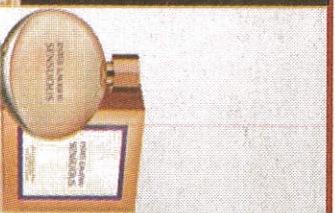
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Staying Fresh with Top Cuts

ELIZABETH AH-HI

Step into "Top Cuts Barber" shop to get your hair shaped, lined up and faded, with barber, Danny Malala, who recently took up premises in town after working out of home in Vaitvase 'Iai for the past two years.

Word of mouth and social media has kept this Barber busy enough to take his craft into the central business district of Apia and also earned him a nomination at the 2017 S.B.N. Business Innovation and Young Entrepreneur awards for best online Presence - Health and Beauty Services.

His reputation for "sharp, clean cuts with seamless fades" have earned him a large and loyal following online not just in Samoa, but from American Samoa, to New Zealand, Australia, and even as far as the U.S.A. with expats making sure to book with Danny for their yearly visits to Samoa.

New clients from overseas was one of the reasons Danny decided it was time to find a more central place for business.

"I've moved into this place because it's more central for people, especially tourists from like, New Zealand and Australia. I have a Facebook page and so people are trying to find me and so telling them I was in Vaitvase 'Iai was a little harder for them to find."

You could say that Danny was born with silver shears in his hand because he is a third generation barber. Barbering is something that was passed on through his paternal family line and over the past 13 years, he has perfected his craft and developed his own unique style.

"Barbering runs in my family. My grandfather, Galu Taito Te'u, was a famous barber here and my dad, Ot Malala, was a barber in the military. When I was growing up I was always at the barber shop watching them and learning from them. Then after that, I would cut the boys hair from school and then family members and then it became my thing."

Moving from American Samoa to New Zealand and then a stint in Australia afforded the 32-year-old barber the opportunities to learn different techniques and learn different styles which have given him the edge here in Samoa.

"I've been doing this for 13 years and I used to work at hairdressers in Australia, so being involved with Palagi barbers as well helped



BORN TO CUT: Top Cuts Barbershop Owner, Danny Malala, believes that a good fade can change a man's life and makes a big difference to an unattractive person.

me with learning new techniques and keeping up to date with the new hair styles. I also look online at what's new and up and coming so that I stay fresh. There are a lot of picky guys out there who tell me they need a certain hairstyle and then when they come back they change their minds and they want something else. So I have to keep up with the styles.

"Sometimes they need to be consistent here in Samoa. Hopefully I'd be able to teach at a barbering school that teaches authentic traditional barbering

with all the hygiene as well as using the good quality tools. Because the people overseas, they want the same thing when they come here. They guys tell me that they feel like it's just like back home in New Zealand."

Danny has been in the business long enough to know that a good fade can change a man's life.

"A simple cut can make a difference. I don't mean to be sad, but a good cut can make all the difference to an unattractive person. If they keep coming back and maintaining that cut, the more

he feels confident."

According to the Top Cuts barber, repeat clientele is based on two key things, one is creating an environment that ensures a good experience for the client and the other is going the extra mile for your client.

"One of my clients, he was losing hair and then I told him 'sole try coconut oil, apply it every day' now he's got his hair back and he's real confident. I'm like, okay coconut oil and confident that's the one sole I think that's why he keeps coming back now."

"The other thing too is that I'm trying to introduce other local barbers and get people to support them. Other barbers come to me for a haircut and watch what I do. One last thing, support your local barbers and always look fresh!"

Top Cuts Barbershop is located across from Ace Hardware Store. It's between Lucky Food town and Blue bird. Follow him on Facebook "Top Cuts Barber684" to contact him.

The shop is open six days a week from 9am to 5pm. Mornings are usually reserved for appointments only and walk ins are welcome after 12pm until 5pm.



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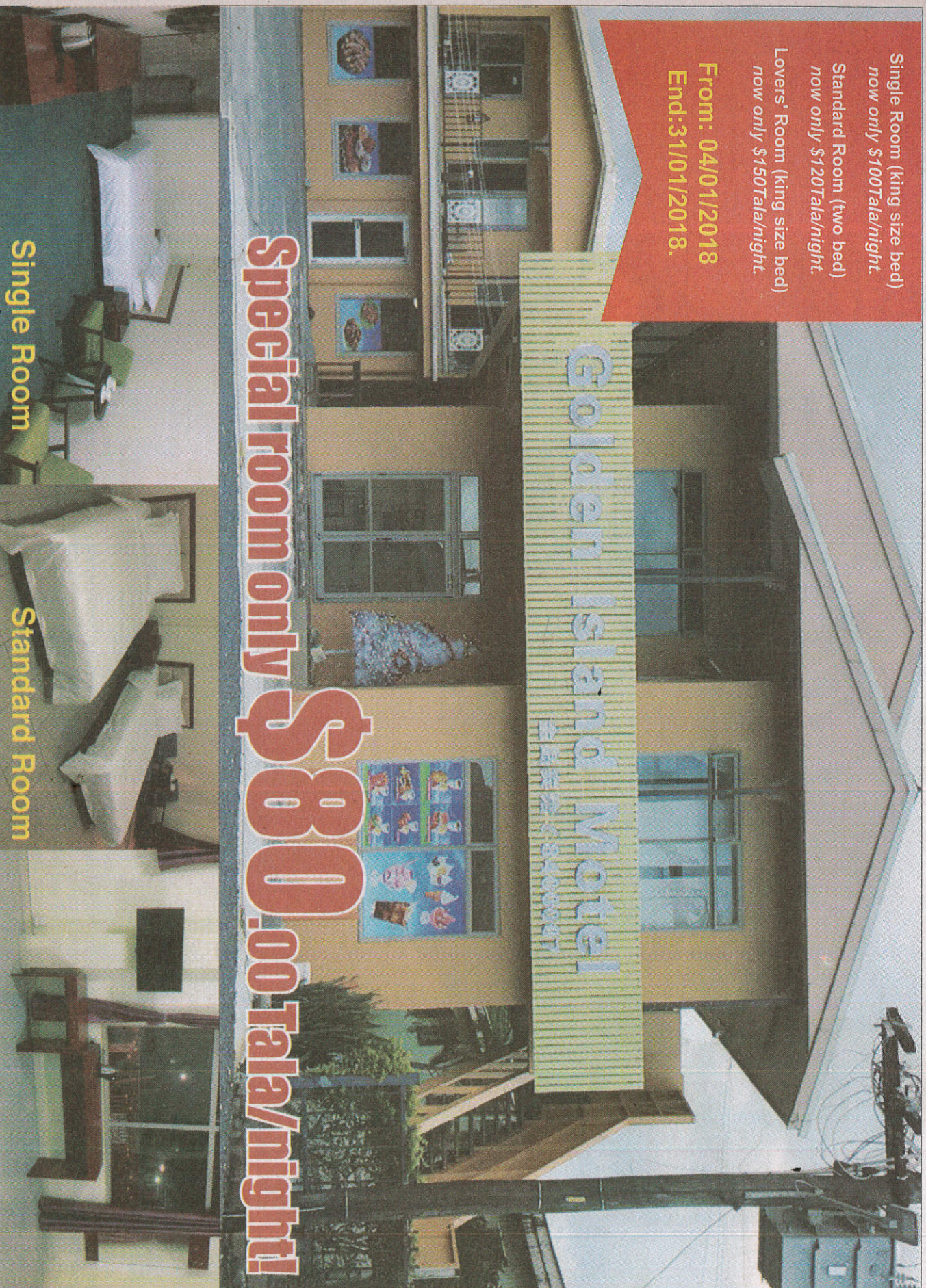
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LOCAL

Fuimaono-Sapolu's rugby drug tweet turns heads



REVEALING TWEETS: Eliota Fuimaono-Sapolu and Karmichael Hunt.



Former Manu Samoa player, Eliota Fuimaono-Sapolu, has turned heads once more with a tweet about cocaine use in professional rugby.

The outspoken former Manu Samoa was responding to a tweet from Paul Williams, which said "Karmichael Hunt caught with sniff, again. Wasting/ wasted his career."

That's when Fuimaono-Sapolu claimed that "loads of ballers do it," primarily due to its low-calorie count when compared to beer.

"One beer has close to the same fat content as a Big Mac," said Fuimaono-Sapolu.

"Cocaine has zero."

"Dudes want the high without the fat."

Fuimaono-Sapolu also claimed that drug use was rampant in Super Rugby circles, saying cocaine is used "heaps in super rugby including some of your favourite All Blacks."

Even more astonishing was his claim that we may have witnessed test matches where players have

been under the influence of cocaine at the time.

Replying to a reply to his tweet which said "cocaine fuelled test matches would be interesting. Egos and bravado completely out of control.... I'd watch!"

"You've already seen them," replied Fuimaono-Sapolu.

According to Rugby Pass, the news broke last week that Wallabies star Karmichael Hunt had been arrested in Brisbane for the possession of cocaine.

Hunt was arrested and released by Queensland Police in the early hours of Saturday morning, with the 31-year-old set to appear in court January 29.

In a statement released Sunday, Rugby Australia said Hunt will be stood down from training and playing, including any involvement with Super Rugby outfit the Reds, during pre-season.

"Queensland Rugby Union, Rugby Australia and Karmichael Hunt have today agreed that it is in the best interests of all parties that Karmichael is stood

down immediately from any team-related Rugby activities, including training and playing commitments," the statement read.

"The parties are awaiting information from the Queensland Police pertaining to the circumstances of the recent allegations before any next steps or return to Rugby activities will be contemplated."

"Karmichael Hunt is cooperating fully with the Rugby Australia Integrity Unit and Queensland Rugby Union investigation and, given that this is an ongoing police matter, there will be no further comment from the parties."

Hunt had been charged with cocaine possession in a previous incident back in 2015, where he received a \$30,000 fine.

The versatile Australian is not the first person to have found himself in hot water over the drug. Just last year fellow Wallaby James O'Connor and former All Black Ali Williams were arrested while attempting to purchase two grams

of cocaine.

79 times capped veteran Phil Waugh, believe it's unlikely Hunt will play for the Wallabies again, given it's his second offence in three years.

"The sad thing is that Rugby Australia and Cheika and the Reds really struck by Karmichael when him out the first time, although it happened before they actually took him on board," said Waugh.

"They picked him in squads that perhaps people questioned whether he should have been in."

"He's had opportunities that other players haven't had."

"It's just a wasted opportunity for such a talented athlete."

"There are so many other players who would just do anything to get this opportunity."

"And they watch instances like this and they go, 'why would you throw it away?'"

"This is just poor behaviour and a bad choice."

WEATHER FORECAST



EVENING DISTRICT FORECAST FOR SAMOA

ISSUED BY SAMOA METEOROLOGY DIVISION AT 5:30PM WEDNESDAY 3RD JANUARY 2018

SITUATION

A trough of low pressure lies to the Northeast of Samoa, with associated cloud and showers affects the group at times.

UPOLU



TODAY

Some isolated evening showers.

TOMORROW

Generally fine weather.

SAVAII



TODAY

Some isolated evening showers.

TOMORROW

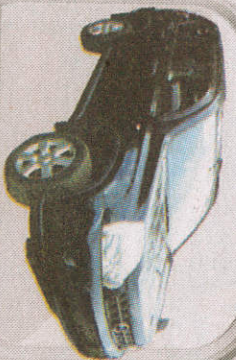
Generally fine weather.

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March 31 likely date for Parker vs. Joshua

March 31 has firmed as the likely date for Lupesolai Joseph Parker to fight Anthony Joshua with contract negotiations for the world heavyweight boxing title unification bout making pleasing progress, Duncan Johnstone of Stuff reported yesterday.

Lupesolai's promoter Segalali David Higgins and Joshua's boss Eddie Hearn have been in discussions since it was revealed last week that paperwork to make the dream fight happen was now in the hands of both camps.

Segalali has been going through the contract with his legal advisers and told Stuff on Wednesday he had a fruitful 35-minute chat with Hearn overnight.

"It's all been pretty cordial. We raised contractual points we felt needed addressing," Higgins said, expecting to receive a fresh marked up contract from Hearn in the next day or so as they work through the fine print.

They continue to work on the fight venue, but March 31 appears to be the preferred date.

Cardiff's Principality Stadium appears the most logical choice given that time of year in Britain though stadium options in London and Manchester have also been on the table along with other "quirky" European venues.

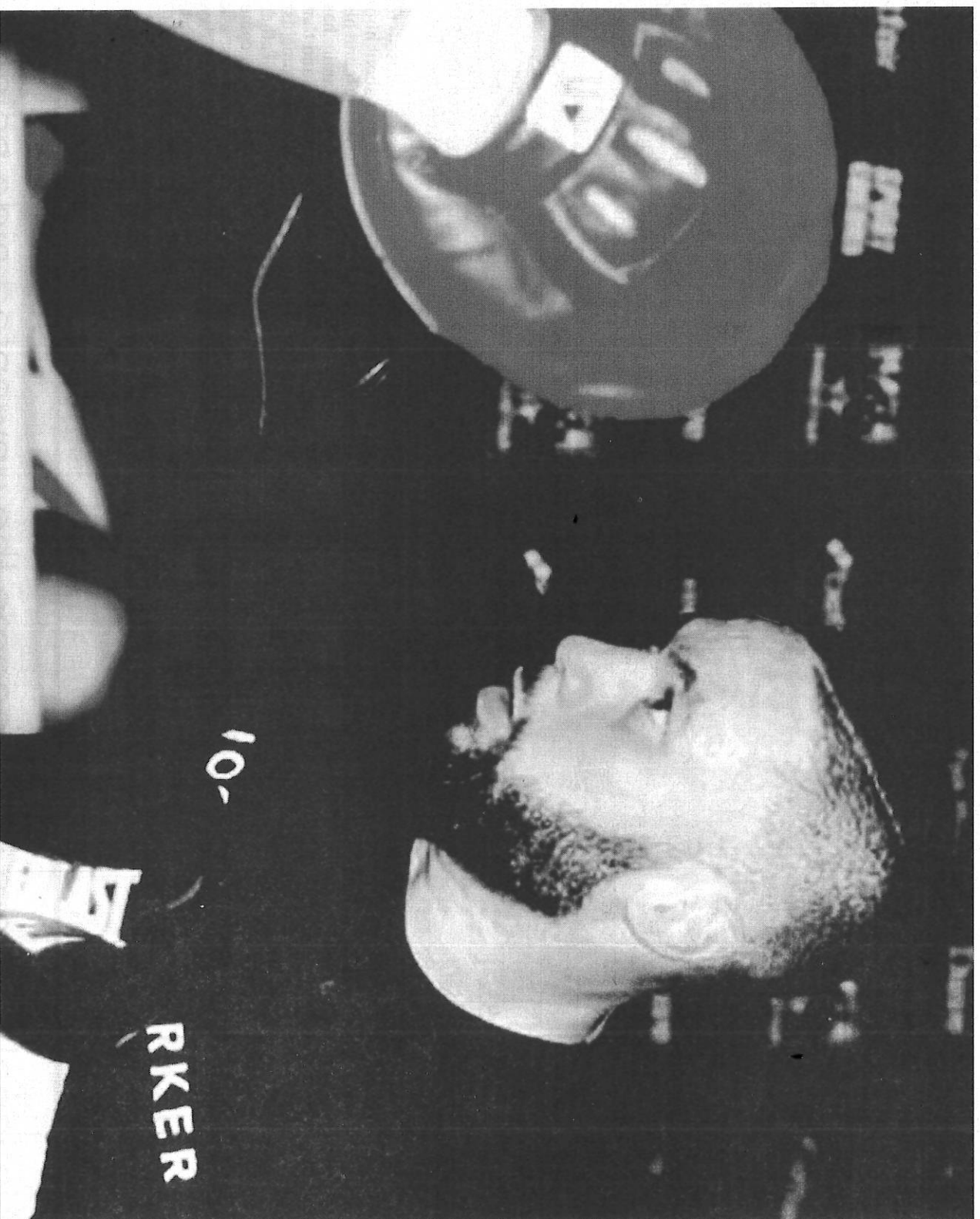
Stiff understands that if talks continue to progress at this rate, there's a good chance Segalali will head to Britain by the end of the week for face-to-face meetings with Hearn to get the fight over the line.

Lupesolai has been holidaying in Samoa on the back of his December training camp in Auckland that has given him a head-start with his fight preparations.

Joshua has been holidaying in Dubai.

If and when the fight is signed off, the pair will front each other in Britain for what could be an entertaining promotional opportunity before burying themselves in their training camps.

Lupesolai has bemused Joshua by claiming the big Brit has a "glass chin" and that is sure to be the focus point of their first public meeting, especially in front of the volatile British media.



PREPARATION TIME: Lupesolai Laulilemaleletoa Joseph Parker in beast mode.

Asked about the fight last week, Lupesolai told the Samoa Observer: "How do I feel about the fight? I'm excited."

"The reason I say that is because I have been chasing Joshua for a long time, for two years now. I believe Joshua is a good fighter; strong, powerful, but I back myself

with anyone I get into the ring with.

"I'm not scared, I don't care what he has, I don't care if he is strong, fast or whatever, I back myself and I believe that I have the ability to beat him."

And for all the naysayers who believe that Lupesolai is not

ready for Joshua, he says those comments would only push him to train harder and perform better.

"As a fighter or as a sports person, you've got to take in the good and the bad," he said. "The good, you appreciate it and you accept it; and the bad you use it as motivation to push you to train

harder and fight harder and be prepared, the most prepared you can be.

"You can't take away from people that sort of don't believe in you. You've just got to just accept it and use it as ammo."

Government's new Chief Statistician

► **From front page**

"I just wish that my late parents, my sister, Eseta Hope and grandmother, Ala and grandfather, Tanielu, were still alive to celebrate this achievement because they were my mentors who always cheered and pushed me beyond my limits," she said fighting back her tears.

All'imamua holds a Master's Degree in Demography from the Australian National University, Postgraduate Diploma in Population Studies and B.A. in Economics and Administration from the University of the South Pacific.

She is a graduate of Samoa

College.

An award winner in her line of work, All'imamua received the Samoa Public Service Innovation and Excellence Individual Award for Organizational Development and Capacity Building Initiative in 2015.

She also attended the prestigious Kish Fellowship in Sampling Programme for Survey Statistician, Michigan University in U.S.A. which was for eight weeks.

She also holds a Postgraduate Sampling Course from U.N.E.S.C.O. Fellowship Bank Programme with the Massey University, New Zealand, in 2003.

All'imamua is the co-author of the Sydney University School of Public Health on research about

patterns of risk: a cross sectional analysis of associations between socio-demographic factors, diet and weight in Samoan women from the 2014 Samoa Demographic and Health Survey.

Highlights of her career include, successfully conducting and analyzing of four Population and Housing Censuses for S.B.S. in 2001, 2006, 2011, 2016.

This contributed to the provision of regular and timely population data to meet increasing demands for population information for planning, policy-making and program interventions such as community projects on water and environment, youth and women's programs, employment programs, S.D.G.s, S.D.S. and many others.

The new C.E.O. was also involved in the analysis of the Demographic and Health Survey 2014 and Disability Surveys 2014 for the first time which S.B.S. took over from M.O.H.

This survey contributed to provision of regular and timely health data to meet increasing demands for health information for planning, policy-making and program interventions by M.O.H., N.H.S, Family Planning agencies, Nutrition agencies, Health Education agencies, S.D.G's and S.D.S.

Married to Ta'aloga, they have five children, Rusetā, Ala Talei, Anderson, Faasulu and Faateu. All'imamua is thankful to her family for their sacrifice and

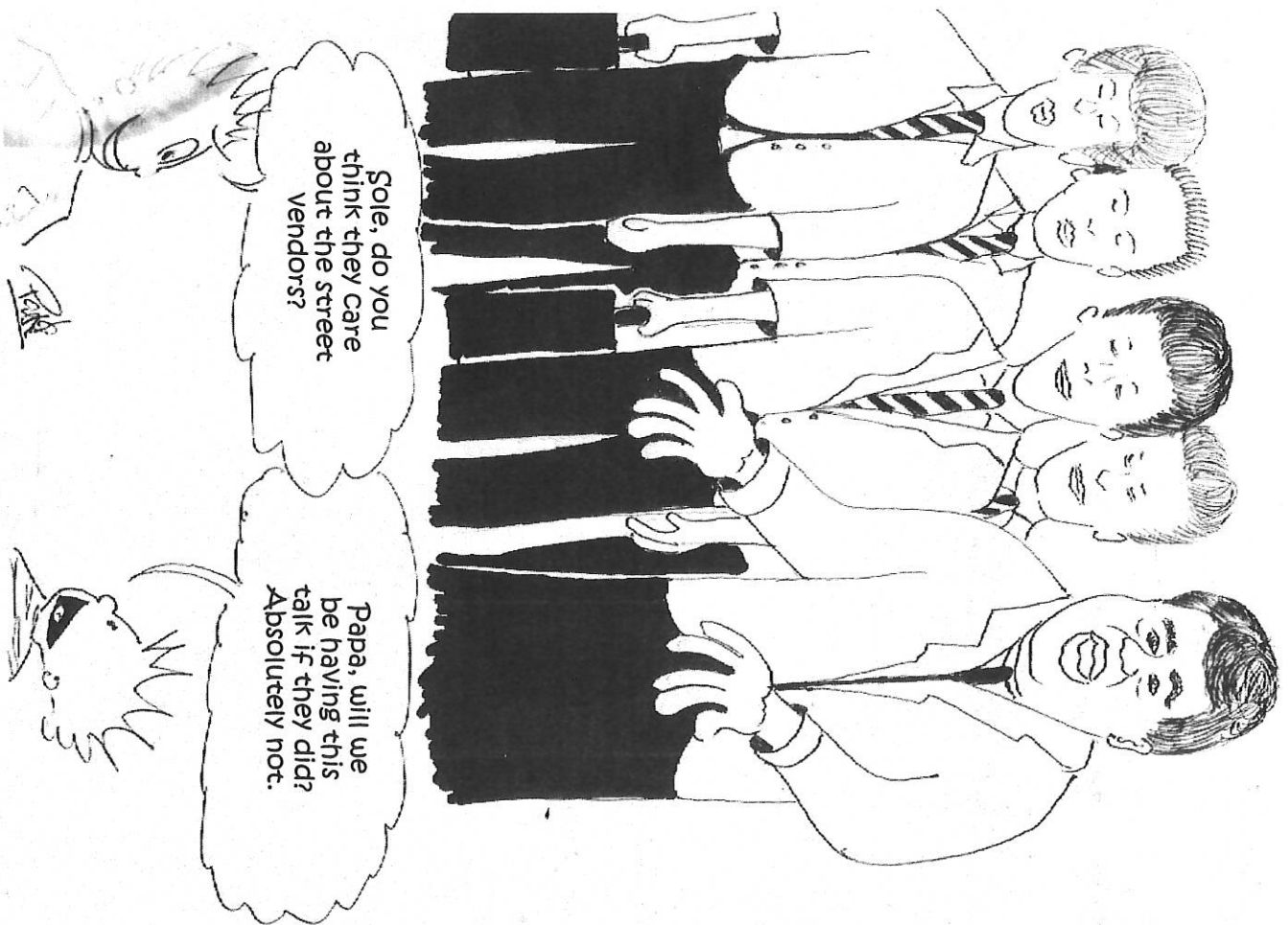
enduring her absence from home because of the long hours of work. "I also thank all my families, friends and colleagues for their loyalty and support."

The new C.E.O's chiefly title, All'imamua, comes from her father's Multialo ancestors at Saanapu. She is actively involved in family matters and also holds the treasurer position for our Women's family development activities.

"I am also a proud member of the Savai Village Women's Committee and the Talomua Committee from 2007 to present at my husband's village," she said.

All'imamua is also a member of Moata'a E.F.K.S. Church and is also a committee member for deacons and pastors wives since 2008.

CARTOON



THINK A MINUTE

The good-for-nothing

Think a minute... Guiseppe's Papa came from a family of fishermen. In fact, for 300 years the men in his family had been fishermen in the country of Sicily. His Papa eventually moved to San Francisco where he continued their fishing business. Eventually they had 9 children. All the boys from the time they could walk helped Papa on his fishing boat. All the sons, except Guiseppe! Guiseppe simply could not go because he got so terribly seasick. His stomach just could not take the motion of the boat, or the strong smell of fish. But even when his dad saw how sick Guiseppe got on the boat, he did not accept it. He always told his son Guiseppe that he was good-for-nothing. Guiseppe was very hurt by his father always criticizing and putting him down. But he still tried his best to help his family in some way. So as a young boy he went out on the streets and worked every job he could find to bring money back to his father. But instead of his Papa being proud of his hard-working son, he kept telling Guiseppe he was lazy and good-for-nothing. Finally, Guiseppe just gave up on ever pleasing his dad. He got involved in sports and discovered that he was a very talented, natural athlete, especially in baseball. In fact, he became the most successful son in his whole family. That young boy whom his Papa had always called good-for-nothing, became one of the greatest professional baseball players in history. You may have even heard of Guiseppe by his American name, Guiseppe... Joe... DiMaggio.

You see, Guiseppe Joe DiMaggio refused to believe all the bad things his dad said about him. He never stopped trying until he finally found his special abilities. So even if your own family has told you that you'll never be successful and that you're good-for-nothing, don't believe them. Just forgive them and know that your heavenly Father created you for great things. You CAN become successful and reach your full potential. Just ask Jesus Christ to take control of your life every day, and He'll help you to forgive and forget the past hurts, so you can move on to become all He made you to be. Just Think a Minute...

OPINION

National anthem has become the unwanted side salad you feel you have to have with the large, juicy haka

EMMA KEELING STUFF

It's a time of new beginnings and hope for the sporting year ahead. All Black fans have reluctantly peeled off their jerseys for the annual wash. Sun, sand and surf has rejuvenated our bodies, exhausted after a year of supporting our country's best. Our fingers are itching to feel the TV remote once more. And yet, a shadow looms, a feeling we cannot quite place. Embarrassment? Dread?

And then the realisation dawns because with sport must come God Defend New Zealand. Instead God should defend those within earshot from the torture that is the mangled dirge we call our anthem.

In April, the Gold Coast will host the Commonwealth Games.

One reason I'm not worried about our athletes' chances is because the anthem is played after the medal ceremony, so cannot destroy the chances of our fastest and strongest.

How they find inspiration from the funeral-march pace it's played at is a testament to how incredibly talented they are.

You can feel the will to win drifting away with the final bars. The will to live is closely on its heels, frantically searching for the exit.

It's true we're not the most patriotic of countries. We don't start frothing at the mouth and get all teary-eyed when our flag is raised. Or contemplate invading something.

And while more athletes are adopting the hand on heart approach, it's more American than Kiwi although I'm all for it if it helps hit the high notes.

Our 'yeah, nah' approach to pride in our little country seems to change when it comes to the haka. Our anthem has become the unwanted side salad you feel you have to have with the large, juicy haka which puts your iron count through the roof.

Such passion can be unearthed only in the usually mild mannered after a dozen beers and Th' Dudes rabble rouser. Bliss.

Change the words to God defend our beer garden and New Zealand might become a republic! I'm troubled the problem of torpid anthem singing seems to exist only out Australasia way. Australia was colonised by convicts, the New Zealand taken over by the

tone-deaf?

The English, Scots, Irish, Welsh and French effortlessly belt out a stirring call to sporting arms.

I almost supported France in their end of year test in 2016 against the All Blacks in Paris as La Marseillaise shocked the stadium and my patriotic core. Could it be the excessive amount of time we have to spend on planes has shrunk our vocal chords?

Or maybe it's climate change? I'm no scientist but I think I'm on to something here.

I mean, how do you explain Australians' overdeveloped nasal cavities?

As usual there is always a much simpler solution - let's learn the words.

There's nothing more shameful than watching a crowd mumble through the first verse because they haven't bothered to learn the Māori words.

I know, I know, you've only had since the early 2000s when it was included and some of you aren't Māori so you shouldn't have to learn it because it's only our second language not our first and anyway you know a bit of French which is important to know because how else can you sound very cultured when you order a

croissant.

Skin colour is confusing. If only we had a Dulux colour chart so we could figure out who has to sing the Māori verse.

Maybe we could ask the South Africans what chart they use to work out who sings the five languages in their anthem?

It doesn't have to be this way. This could be the moment when we are not humbled by our anthem but inspired!

Our athletes, unburdened by the pre-game mental torture, would be using those bonds of love to run faster and jump higher.

Kiwis! I entreat you to no longer hold your hands over your ears but over your hearts and lift your voices of a thousand beers, leaving all nations at our feet.

If we have to hire Welsh singers to swell our sound we will. If we have to ask the SPCA to add an 'adopt-the-tone-deaf' to their adopt-a-kitten campaign, we will make that change!

It's time to guard Pacific's triple star rather than ignoring it to wait for the haka.

This is our time to rise with one voice! And if that's not enough encouragement, then just think how much it will annoy the Aussies.

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Awards
Mata'afa Keni Lesa
Editor

• 2017: *Bertram Award for Journalism*
Xatras Food and Agriculture Organisation (240)

• 2016: *I.P.W.S. (I/P/W/S Gender Campaign)*

• 2014: *Samoa Order of Merit*

• 2012: *Robert Louis Stevenson Museum Award*

• 2010: *I.P.W. World Press Award*

• 2001: *PINA/PNG Media/Press Freedom Award*

• 2000: *"World Press Photo Award"*
International Press Institute

• 1998: *Gold winner, International Press Award*
Supported by International Press Censorship

• 1997: *Pacific Investigative Journalism Award*

• 1994: *Pacific Press Photo Award, Pacific Island News Award*

EDITORIAL

Plight of street vendors old problem in new year



MATAVAFA KENI LESA

The story titled "Plight of the poor in times of happiness" published on the front page of the Samoa Observer last Friday is the sort of stuff not many of us would be keen on in times like this.

Which is understandable. What with parties, feasts and many joyful occasions to keep ourselves occupied, why should we bother with the plight of the poor? Why should we care?

Truth be told though, it's impossible to ignore their plight, especially when it involves such innocent young people - including a pair of young sisters. It's the sort of story that should make us all stop and think about the reality that is masked in false security being created in Samoa today.

There is no doubt that Apia is a changed town. We have many new and impressive buildings. We have more cars, more palaghi houses and

many more shops.

But we also have more problems. Among them is the issue of the growing number of young people being thrown onto the streets by their desperate families to sell things so they can contribute to their upkeep.

According to the story in question, many of the children are less than 10 years old. They are out there at all sorts of hours, night and day.

"We all have to do our part to help our family," Meki said.

Young girls have increasingly become part of the mix. Take Mena and Kalolaha for instance.

"We normally go home at 10 p.m.," Mena said. "My twin sister and I are selling earbuds and boxes of matches for \$2 tala a packet. The money we get from here we give it to our parents at home."

"When it is time to go home, my sister and I have to catch a lift. So whoever stops for us on the road, we get a ride with them because we have to be at home."

"We are used to it; we just have to make sure that we get a lift to our village."

Let me remind you that we are talking about two young girls here. They are flagging a ride home at 10 p.m. Can you just stop to imagine

what could happen to them if someone with bad intentions picks them up?

Now down at the Marina at Matautu, it was well after 11 when the Samoa Observer saw another young boy who identified himself as Lesi. Asked what he was doing out so late, he said it wasn't late.

"This is normal for me," he said. "I sometimes go home at 12 or 1 in the morning. This is what I do to help my parents."

Asked if he's not afraid of bad and drunk people, he said: "I'm used to dealing with drunken people. I just let them say whatever as long as I get my money."

Wow, shocking, isn't it? What kind of parent allows their children to be subjected to such an environment?

The worry in Samoa today is that the cry for the government to do something about the plight of these poor people seems to be falling on deaf ears. We've warned time and time again that this problem will only get worse. And it has already.

We are reminded that this time last year, a video of street vendors beating a homeless man surfaced and it raised many questions. One of the most obvious ones was what were these three young

boys doing on the dark streets of Apia at 3 a.m.? Shouldn't they be soundly sleeping in the safety of their homes?

Typical of the government, Prime Minister Tuilaepa strongly downplayed the incident, cracked a few dry jokes about it and then it disappeared.

Now we are in 2018 and we still see the same thing.

Which brings us to the question of when will the government wake up and do something about this?

It's sad that because from where we stand, more and more young people are resorting to a life of begging and selling petty goods on the streets to help their families get by.

In the meantime, the government has continued to ignore the waste of millions in projects that don't work - or projects that are derailed by abuse, mismanagement and corruption. These millions could easily make a massive difference in the lives of the poorest people in this country today, including those young kids on the streets.

Which is sad because we are in a new year and yet an old problem continues to haunt us. What do you think?
Have a great Thursday Samoa, God bless!

OPINION AND LETTERS

Plenty of people
will be feeling
let down by
Karmichael Hunt

JIM TUCKER
FOR THE COURIER MAIL

The Queensland Reds, the Wallabies and Test coach Michael Cheika all copped flak for giving Karmichael Hunt a second chance in 2015.

So a fresh conviction would amount to a real slap in the face to those who supported him.

Rugby union's leading figures took their player welfare role seriously and ushered Hunt into a drug education and rehabilitation program after his first cocaine drama.

At the time, Hunt said: "I made a terrible mistake ... and will return to the game in a way that sends a clear message to sports fans of all ages that the use of illicit substances has no place in sport."

He will not become rugby's Mr Third Chance if found guilty when his latest court process starts on January 29.

Hunt had been warmly welcomed into a debut for the Wallabies in June when it appeared his troubles were in the past.

He played six Test matches this year and was re-signed on a lucrative two-year deal in November because he was seen as a valuable factor for the 2019 Rugby World Cup in Japan.

He is at grave risk of having thrown all that away, and not a

club in Australia, in any of the three codes he has played, would likely touch him if the latest charges resulting from an incident in the Valley early succeed.

Written large in any Hunt contract will be a "no more stuff-ups" clause.

A conviction would leave Cheika feeling horribly let down as he has been staunch in backing Hunt, when others never wanted to see him in a Wallabies jersey, as he told The Courier-Mail in May last year.

"Things go wrong sometimes. Forgiveness is also a very Christian value," Cheika said.

"He acknowledges he made a mistake so why wouldn't you help guys get over errors they make, or do more of it as a society?"

Samoa needs
more of these

Dear Editor,
Re: New Year's eve glamorous party

Congratulations of a very successful New Year's eve party.

This is a good way to attract people to celebrate New Year's Eve at your hotel. You have to glamour up more for everyone. It is a very special occasion that people need to celebrate well.

Besides just going to church, Samoa needs to have a little bit of everything for people to enjoy.

This year should have fireworks in town and hopefully every year after.

Moaga Nuusa

Congratulations
Lufi Rasmussen

Dear Editor,

Very interesting read about Lufi Rasmussen in your People of Year edition.

My two cents worth just as a reader... firstly good on you!

The U.S. is a huge market, branding aside (you seemed to have ticked that box) it's price point, supply quantity and delivery that is critical.

Secondly if it "hits" what's your capacity or suite of strategies to respond - this will make or break you.

Luamannu M.

P.M. Tuilaepa
and justice

Dear Editor,

Re: P.M. Tuilaepa's New Year message

Happy New Year. Prime Minister Tuilaepa, you cannot please all the people all of the time; you can only please some of the people some of the time.

Many consider that you have been found wanting but God the All-Knowing knows you "must" be trying your best.

Good luck during 2018.

Accept my highest

Your people need to see justice be done and be seen to being done.

Y.L.N.

You get more
satisfaction

Dear Editor,

Re: From land to the sea, no rest for hard working man

I wish most of the people begging in town could have same attitude.

Working in an office is so stressful compared to working in your own garden. You get more satisfaction from seeing and eating and sharing fruits of your sweat. Well done.

Margaret R.

WRITE
TO US

Columns are welcome. They can be handed in at our offices in Savalalo or at Vaitele. All letters to the editor should contain the author's real name with daytime contact details. Anonymous letters will be rejected. The editor retains the right to edit letters for brevity, taste or legal reasons.

ONLINE COMMENTS

What about
sugar?

Dear Editor

Re: Sapolu's cocaine claim

What about sugar? What is the sugar content of cocaine?

Sugar is worse than fat. Speaking about my time in the village rugby team, I was always conscience of sugar content in my food.

P.S. Jeffrey

Interest of the
poor

Re: Happy New Year Samoa

I somehow romanticize antiquity by going back in time and drawing from the wisdom of the past to correlate with the present.

The infamous Socrates comes to mind when he adamantly said, "You need to question the government in everything, don't just go along to get along." We the people are the enemy of the state.

The interest of the poor was never in the interest of the government and its cronies. It never was and it never will.

L.R.B.

My Master
Jesus

Re: Samoa and Israel

My master [s] Jesus Christ who died on the Cross for our sins. If you don't believe this but all the things this earthly world is providing you then read Matthew 16:23.

On another matter, one day while I was lying on my bed I asked Jesus Christ to please say something to me, just anything. I got the answer back. Read John 14:15,16,17.

He, Jesus Christ, is talking directly to me and to everyone in this world.

No Politics. No Religion. No location.

John 14 starts like this...

"Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.

"In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you.

I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you,

I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also..."

Siaosi Siomia

LOCAL

Women reap benefits from empowerment programme

“This training is different because it not only teaches the participants livelihood skills, but also improved self-esteem, encouraging the nofotane women to enjoy the socio economic benefits of being empowered” - Lei’ataua Katifa Faletoese Bryce

Continuous learning leads to self-development.

For the nofotane (woman who marries into and stays with her husband’s family) women of Saaga, Siunu East, Siunu West, Maninoa and Mulivai who attended the 16th training session, some of them were able to earn a living from the skills being trained on before the training team left Siunu.

For one of the elderly nofotane, she managed to earn \$50 from selling coconut jam in her village on her way to the training, and the smile on her face says it all.

It is all about taking advantage of the opportunities and having the courage to realize the socio economic benefits of these opportunities.

Close to 80 nofotane women attended the session at Siunu.

All of them are unemployed relying solely on their husbands, farming or fishing for a living. While handicraft, eiei printing and commercial cooking were the most popular skills selected by the nofotane to be trained on, the women were also encouraged to realize the monetary value of the skills they possess such as sewing, weaving, producing coconut oil and others.

When the Nofotane Livelihood training team left Siunu, 43% of the nofotane women have registered to start small businesses from the skills they have learnt with five of them already earning from selling pork buns, coconut jam and donuts by the end of the week’s training.

S.V.S.G. village representatives for the villages covered by this session will continue to monitor the progress of these upcoming entrepreneurs, and we will update you on their successes.

This is the economic empowerment of nofotane women, and this is a step towards achieving the project goal, ‘for nofotane women of Samoa to have improved access to sustainable employment and increased



ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT: Nofotane women take a step towards achieving a project goal. The progress of their work will be monitored by the S.V.S.G. representatives for the villages.

participation in domestic and community matters.

“This training is different because it not only teaches the participants livelihood skills, but also improved self-esteem, encouraging the nofotane women

to enjoy the socio economic benefits of being empowered,” said Lei’ataua Katifa Faletoese Bryce of Siunu.

For the project, its goal remains that “a nofotane woman will always be a nofotane; the project

is not attempting to change this cultural aspect of the Faasamoa.”

“The project merely aims to improve the economic empowerment of women and to increase their participation in domestic and community matters,

as these are some of the important contributing factors to achieving gender equality,” said Silihiu Lina Chang, President.

1/2 acre section on Bank Street, Vaoala. Located in a very nice neighborhood. Section is elevated and has veivws.

Price : \$350,000.00 ono. Contact : 7524342

RYS - Malaga



Nofotane women of Saaga, Siunu East, Siunu West, Maninoa and Mulivai at the training.

Baby Tiara Samoa's first for 2018



FIRST BABY: Mother Chara Fatu holding her newborn baby, Tiara New Year-Fatu, with family and hospital staff sharing in on the joy. Baby Tiara was Samoa's first baby of 2018, born at the stroke of midnight. And

because Samoa is among the first countries to welcome the new year, the baby boy could possibly be the world's first baby in 2018. The parents of the baby, Chara and Fiaula Fatu, hail from the village of Satapuala.

Alert in Pago as woman accused of being tax fraudster visits

**FILI SAGAPOLUTELE
SAMOA NEWS**

An American Samoan woman accused of filing false tax returns with the U.S. Internal Revenue Service for local residents is required to surrender her passport to the American Samoa Attorney General's Office upon arrival in Pago Pago for her 30-day holiday visit with family in the territory, according to federal court records.

Corina A. Ifopo, pleaded guilty at the Federal Court in Anchorage, Alaska on Dec. 12 to 28 counts of making false claims to the United States government. Sentencing is set for Mar. 7, 2018.

The defendant had also sought to amend her release to allow travel for the holidays to American Samoa and was granted under several conditions — but an official court order was not yet issued.

Last week Friday, U.S. Magistrate Judge Kevin F. McCoy, sitting at the Anchorage federal court, signed the order allowing Ifopo's travel outside of Hawaii — where the defendant resides — and Alaska. According to the court order, Ifopo is permitted to travel to Pago Pago on or after Dec. 25, 2017 and return from Pago Pago on or before Jan. 27, 2018.

Within twenty-four hours of Ifopo's arrival in Pago Pago, she is

directed to surrender her passport to the A.S.G. Attorney General's Office, which shall return Ifopo's passport to her so she may travel back to Hawaii.

Attorney for Ifopo is required to inform the federal Pretrial Services of the defendant's itinerary, names of any travel companions, and the location where Ifopo will be staying while in Pago Pago.

Court documents also show that the defendant has already posted a \$25,000 unsecured bond allowing travel to American Samoa.

Ifopo is accused of filing fraudulent tax returns with the IRS for local residents, who do not qualify for the federal Earned Income Tax Credit (E.I.T.C.). The

federal government claims that Ifopo's crime occurred between 2013 and 2015 with the first I.R.S. refund check issued May 20, 2014 and the last one on Feb. 20, 2016. Ifopo filed tax returns on behalf of over 200 other individuals living in American Samoa — all these individuals don't qualify for the E.I.T.C.

The federal indictment against the defendant shows 28 individuals, identified in court documents by their initials, with the dates of when the returns were filed with the I.R.S. or when the IRS refunds were issued.

Total loss to the I.R.S. — shown in the indictment — based on the amounts for the 28 individuals is

\$167,000, although the U.S. Justice Department had an estimated loss of more than \$1.3 million.

Meanwhile, more local residents continue to raise with Samoa News concerns over people still filing local taxes in the U.S. in order to get a much higher tax refund, through the EITC. The latest concerns were raised this past week with three local residents pointing out that they are aware of either friends or relatives expecting tax refunds from the U.S.

And with next tax filing season for tax year 2017 to start next month, some residents claim to know people who plan on filing off island "again."

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LOCAL



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GRAND WELCOME TO 2018: It's only the beginning of the year but the party of 2018 might have already been had if you were at the Gold Masquerade Party hosted at Sheraton Samoa Aggie Grey's Hotel on Beach Road. The event which attracted a huge crowd welcomed

the New Year in style where party revelers enjoyed great music and fantastic company until the early hours of the morning. Here are some more photos from the evening. Photos / Corey Keil.



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Paris Fa'apulou leads by example

Parris Faapulou is not your typical 18-year-old New Zealand Samoan born.

As the oldest grandchild in the growing Falaniko's household in Taranaki, New Plymouth, Parris is mindful that he must lead by example.

Fresh out of High School with honors in carpentry as the New Plymouth High 2017 Top Wood Tech Award recipient, Parris is holding his own and now a full-time employee.

His career choice is to follow his father Faapulou Faapulou's shoes as a professional rugby player.

Now retired, Faapulou Senior wore Manu Samoa's colors in the 1999 Rugby World Cup until he retired from international rugby in 2002.

He is one of the pioneer locally based Samoan who played professional rugby in Europe for a number of years before Manu Samoa scouts picked him up for his natural flair and unpredictable back line surges.

And Parris following those footsteps and already turning heads in the Taranaki Rugby circles. He thundered into scene wearing #8, alongside cousin Malakai in the black and yellow under 20 side that ended their long losing drought to arch-rivals from Auckland in 2017.

And late last year, Parris was named in the Under the 20's, New Zealand Manu Samoa 7's.



UPCOMING STAR: Parris Faapulou (middle) flanked by grandfather Fai Falaniko and grandmother Sue with the artists Christmas present that Parris drew reflecting his passion for rugby and success.

For Parris, while rugby is his passion, he is mindful that there is no guarantee that he will realize his career choice taking into consideration the hundreds of young players all sharing the same dream.

He has decided whether to represent Samoa or New Zealand as he is looking at his options. But one thing is for certain, Parris is a tradesman and continuing to take courses while working to ensure that he has the needed certification to secure a solid job outside of rugby.

His sports idol is Sonny Bill Williams while his inspirations are his parents Josie and Faapulou and grandparents, Sue and Fai Frank Falaniko.

"My elders made the ultimate sacrifice to leave Samoa and stake their claim in New Zealand to secure a future for their children and grandchildren," says Parris a devout Catholic with the Our Lady Help of Christians Bell Block Parish.

"They have braved the cold and the early hours for us to have the luxuries that we enjoy today."

"And as the eldest grandchild, I feel obligated to meet their expectations to lead by example."

"Whatever the future holds, I leave that to the Almighty and in the meantime, I will do my best to realize my dream and make my family proud."



The Faapulou Family taking five during the New Year holidays.



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VILLAGE VOICE

Mother needs water tank help



NO RUNNING WATER: Mataiva Ki, 73 years old from Fasitō'o Uta.



ULIMASAO FATI

A 73-year-old mother is seeking assistance for a water tank.

Mataiva Ki, from the village of Fasitō'o-uta, told the Village Voice team yesterday that life is hard enough trying to deal with the expensive cost of living in Samoa. But to have no running water is an added burden.

"It is really hard living here without running water because water is something we really need for our daily survival," she said. "We have just moved here for more than three months now and we still haven't had water and it's the same at the place where we used to live."

"We moved here so that we can have running water, so far the water connection ends at the two houses located on the coastal side from us."

"We have cleared the land here for us to settle on and everything here has been good in terms of growing crops, but water is the real issue."

"So far we are collecting water from our neighbours and most times we collect rainwater." "My four children here are all

working and they are the ones who support our family." "My other children have moved out with their own families and we

usually meet during the holidays." Mrs. Ki adds life in her new home is very much simple, except for water.

"All is well here, we have enough land for us to grow food and to survive from."

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VILLAGE VOICE

Govt. urged to place people's needs first

“It’s a new year, but the challenges and the struggles are still around. It’s time to make some change and I believe it should start from the government. They should lower the cost of living just a little bit and prioritize what needs to be done first” – Ielu Itamua

DEIDRE TAUTUA – FANENE

It is high time the government prioritizes what’s important. So says Ielu Itamua of Falealunuu and Toamua.

Speaking to the Village Voice yesterday, Itamua has welcomed another new year, but certain issues such as the expensive cost of living continue to be a problem. He said the cost of living is ridiculously expensive.

“We can barely afford it and the problem is the cost of living goes up while people’s salary stay the same,” Mr. Itamua told the Village Voice team yesterday.

“It’s a new year, but we are still faced with the same challenges and the struggles.”

“It’s time to make some change and I believe it should start from the government.”

“They should lower the cost of living just a little bit and prioritize what needs to be done first.”

“Life is getting harder and harder by the day and we cannot go on like this forever.”

“We have families and the fact of the matter is that the people are suffering, but it’s just that the government is turning a blind eye on issues that matter the most.”

Mr. Itamua says working hard is the best way to cope with the struggles of life.

“If we don’t work, we won’t be able to provide for our family,” he said.

“With the high cost of living nowadays, we will do anything to look after our family and it also means any kind of job will do.”

“We are from Toamua, but I got a job that requires me and my family to move here to Falealunuu to look after a sheep farm and the family land that belongs to one of the most popular family in Samoa.”

“I started off by working at their shop, but it has been a year since I moved here and it’s been good.” “I get paid \$250 per week. So it’s just my wife and my two children who are still young so they are not

yet in school.” “It’s just enough for me and my family and we sometimes visit our

family in Toamua.” Mr. Itamua said for families like his, with the expensive cost of

living, most would barely make it through. “I mean for me, it’s okay, \$250 is

just enough for me and my family but for most families, it will be a struggle.”



HIGH COST OF LIVING: Ielu Itamua.

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VILLAGE VOICE

New Year same old struggles

66 We haven't asked the government, but we have asked our Member of Parliament and he told us before the election that if he does win, he will help us with our problem and we will have access to water"



WATER IS NECESSITY WE DO NOT HAVE: Fau Ropati, 65 year old of Fasitoo-Uta.

DEIDRE TAUTUA – FANENE

The number of the year might have changed but for many of the poorest families in Samoa today, the struggles with basic needs remain.

Such is the story of 65-year-old Fau Ropati of Fasitoo-Uta.

Ms. Ropati is a mother of nine and her eldest son lives with a disability. The most difficult challenge is not having a steady supply of water.

"It's hard living without water, especially when we are far away from the main land which takes about an hour walk to reach there to collect water," she said.

"My husband and I got married in 1968 and then we had our eldest son who is now 47 and we still live here together because he cannot walk."

"That's also the number of years that we have been carrying this great burden."

"My children now have families of their own, we are grandparents and great grandparents and yet we are still living like this."

"As you can see we have a sick son who is unable to walk and his condition is very critical, he has to eat morning, afternoon and in the evening and he needs a bath all the time too."

"My husband and I are old as well, we are not the same in terms

of strength, so it's hard for us to walk a long way."

Ms. Ropati says water is a necessity.

"We have a water tank that was donated by the Red Cross for my sick son," she said.

"It helps in times of rainy days, but when it's a sunny day, that's when we struggle so badly."

"We haven't asked the government, but we have asked our Member of Parliament and he told us before the election that if he does win, he will help us with our problem and we will have access to water."

"However, up until now nothing has been done it's just promises after another and yet nothing has

been done."

Asked how they fetch water, she said they pay \$100 for a truck to deliver water.

"This truck comes through Alesia and we pay \$100 in order to get water," she said.

"But even that truck coming for one round is just not enough, it will only fill the water tank and not the other gallons."

"Most times we tell the truck driver to deliver water three times a week and that's \$300 for the three trips."

"However, there is nothing we can do we need water."

"Nobody works in our family, but we have a plantation that helps us and then my children overseas

they help us when we call them."

"But I don't want to keep calling them because I know that they are struggling just as much as we are here, but at least with us we can turn to our plantation."

"If we spend \$300 on the water truck then we eat just the fati'a and laumoli that week it's just a struggle."

"Life is so hard but we thank God for His love and guidance that we are able to get by every day."

"We are living by the grace of God."

If you are willing to help the Ropati family, please contact them on cell phone number 7796138/7240289.

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VILLAGE VOICE

Family struggles to budget \$200 a fortnight

ULIMASAO FATA

Even \$200 a fortnight doesn't really cut it given the expensive cost of living in Samoa these days. That's what a mother, Heta Pani, believes.

The woman from Nu'u-Fou shared with the Village Voice team her son's earnings and spoke about how they struggle to budget it every week.

"We only have one person in our family who works and provides for us and that is my son," the 49-year-old mother said.

"He works at one of the Chinese Construction Company and basically that is where we get money from."

"My son earns \$200 a fortnight and that is the only money we use to survive in terms of food, cash power, water bill and everything."

Mrs. Pani said the cost of living has not been friendly to the people of Samoa.

"The cost of living here in Samoa has been so high and expensive especially for families like mine," she said while on her way to get medicine yesterday.

Mrs. Pani said her son's salary

doesn't match her family's expenses.

"So if we over spend it on food, we might as well get our water disconnected because the money we have is not enough."

"In our church we don't have to show support financially and we do not have to give in money for anything."

"So our church is helping us in terms prioritizing our family."

Mrs. Pani also mentioned that she and her husband have stepped up to contribute to their family's welfare.

"My husband and I have

started growing vegetables like cucumbers, cabbage and so forth around our house.

stepped up and helped him."

"After seeing our family struggle with my son's earnings, we have

"Right now we are selling our vegetables to get money because things are getting expensive every day."



FINANCIAL STRUGGLES: Heta Pani of Nu'u Fou.



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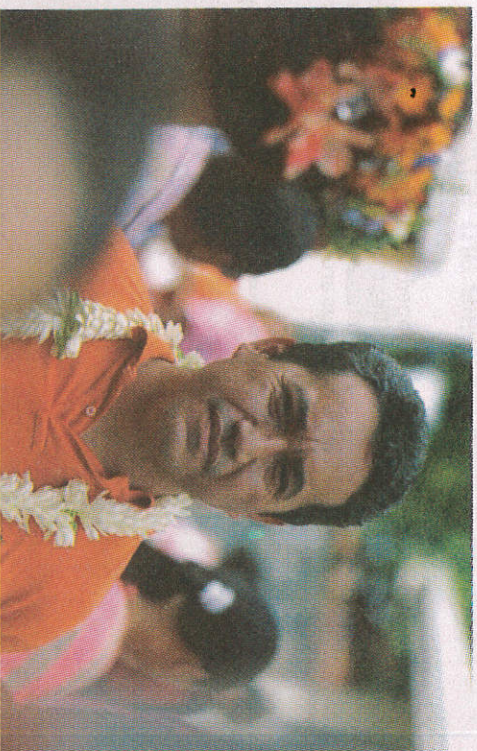
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Region

New party launched in French Polynesia



Marcel Tuhihani Photo: AFP PHOTO / GREGORY BOISSY

(RNZI) - A new political party has been launched in French Polynesia to contest the territorial election in April.

Marcel Tuhihani, who is the president of the territorial assembly, said in November that he would form a party but declined to divulge its name.

He has now announced it will be called Te Ora Api no Porheta. No policies of the new party have been announced but Mr Tuhihani said he wanted to unite the people.

In June, Mr Tuhihani quit the

anti-independence Tahaeraa Hutratra party led by Gaston Flosse but remained in the assembly.

Mr Tuhihani is yet to name candidates but said he had financial backers who for the time being do not want to be identified.

In the 2013 election, the Tahaeraa won an overwhelming majority but it has since faded after defections and expulsions.

All anti-independence parties are led by former Tahaeraa members.



ACCUSED FLINDERS STREET RAMPAGE DRIVER: Saeed Noori leaves Melbourne West Police Station after being released from hospital. Photo / (Mark Stewart/heraldsun.com.au)

Australian driver charged with murder after pedestrian dies

MELBOURNE, Australia (AP) — A man accused of deliberately ramming a car into pedestrians in a busy Australian city street was charged with murder on Tuesday after one of the injured died.

Saeed Noori had been charged with 18 counts of attempted murder and one count of conduct endangering life alleging he drove an SUV into pedestrians on Dec. 21 on a sidewalk in downtown Melbourne, Australia's second-largest city.

An attempted murder charge was upgraded in the Melbourne Magistrates Court to murder because an 83-year-old man died after eight days in hospital. Another three victims remain in hospital. Murder carries a potential maximum sentence of life imprisonment, while

attempted murder carries a 25-year sentence.

Noori, 32, has been refused bail and has yet to plea to any charge.

An Afghan refugee with Australian citizenship, he has a history of drug abuse and mental health issues, and his lawyers have said Noori's mental impairment and fitness to plea would be explored as part of his defense.

It was the second alleged use of a car to assault pedestrians in downtown Melbourne in 2017. In January, six people were killed and more than 30 were injured when a car was driven up a pedestrian mall. The defendant in that case pleaded not guilty to murder and other charges last month, and his defense lawyers have also questioned his mental health and fitness to enter a plea.

Police have not defined either a terrorist attack, though other vehicle attacks around the world last year were allegedly linked to terrorism.

In October, a man drove a truck down a New York City bicycle path killing eight people. The driver accused of providing material support to the Islamic State group among other charges, included murder.

In August, 13 people were killed and more than 100 were wounded when a vehicle rammed into pedestrians in Barcelona, Spain. Two attacks in London last year were allegedly linked to Islamic extremists and another was seen as a reprisal attack outside a mosque, killing 13 people altogether.

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REGION

Australian man charged over Cambodian sex demand



AUSTRALIAN ACCUSED: James Bernard King, 69, has been arrested in Cambodia for allegedly locking up his girlfriend and demanding sex from her sister and niece. Photo / (Cambodian National Police).

(AAP) - An Australian man in Cambodia has been arrested and charged for allegedly locking up his girlfriend, her younger sister and her niece and then demanding sex.

James Bernard King, 69, was arrested on December 28 in the coastal town of Sihanoukville, the Cambodian National Police said in a media statement.

It's alleged he refused to let the women leave the house unless the sister and niece had sex with him.

Police were called to the house on December 27 on a report of illegal confinement, according to the release.

When officers arrived, King allegedly locked the door forcing a stand-off for two hours before police forced their way in, freeing

the three women and some children.

Sihanoukville Provincial Court Prosecutor Chab Sok Raksmeay has told the Phnom Penh Post that King was charged with illegal confinement, which carries a one to three-year prison term.

King, who is in the country on a tourist visa, is in custody ahead of the case going to court.

Seaplane crashes into Sydney river, killing all 6 on board



CRASH TAKES 6 LIVES: This image made from a video, shows search and rescue teams on back of boats in Hawkesbury River, New South Wales, Australia Sunday, Dec. 31, 2017. A seaplane crashed into the river in Sydney on Sunday afternoon, officials said. Photo / (Australian Media Pool via AP)

SYDNEY (AP) — A seaplane crashed into a river in Sydney on Sunday afternoon, killing all six people on board, officials said.

The plane was carrying five passengers and a pilot when it crashed into the Hawkesbury

River. Police divers recovered the bodies of all six victims a few hours later, New South Wales police said.

The cause of the crash was not immediately clear. The Australian Transport Safety Bureau said it would investigate the incident.

The aircraft belonged to Sydney Seaplanes, which has been offering passengers the chance to see some of Sydney's most popular sights for 80 years, according to the company's website.

Guam raises smoking age

HAGATNA, Guam (AP) — Guam has raised its smoking age from 18 to 21.

Starting Monday, it is illegal for individuals under 21 to smoke cigarettes or vape or access tobacco products, the Pacific Daily News reported.

The new rule was unanimously passed by the Legislature and became law without the governor's signature.

Those who are caught smoking illegally will be required to go through a mandatory education program that includes smoking cessation, according to the law.

Smoking rates in the island have declined in the past few years but remain higher than the national average, according to the American Cancer Society.

Health care professionals who supported the law cited a report by the Institute of Medicine which predicts tobacco use in the country would drop by 12 percent if the legal smoking age was raised to

21.

The law also had the support of young adults who signed petitions and spoke in favor of it, said Speaker Benjamin Cruz.

"This bill became law because young people, not in spite of them he said.

Johnny Lujan, 17, believes the law will lead to more people smoking illegally.

If he can be charged for a crime as an adult when he turns 18, he doesn't see why he should not be allowed to smoke.

"It just seems really dumb," Lujan said.

Cristopher Naputi, 20, who has been smoking since he was 12, agrees.

"I don't like it," he said. "Everyone has an opinion about it, but (smoking's) not hurting anybody." Naputi does not plan to smoke illegally. Instead, he said he will use the month leading to his 21st birthday to decide whether he wants to continue smoking or quit.

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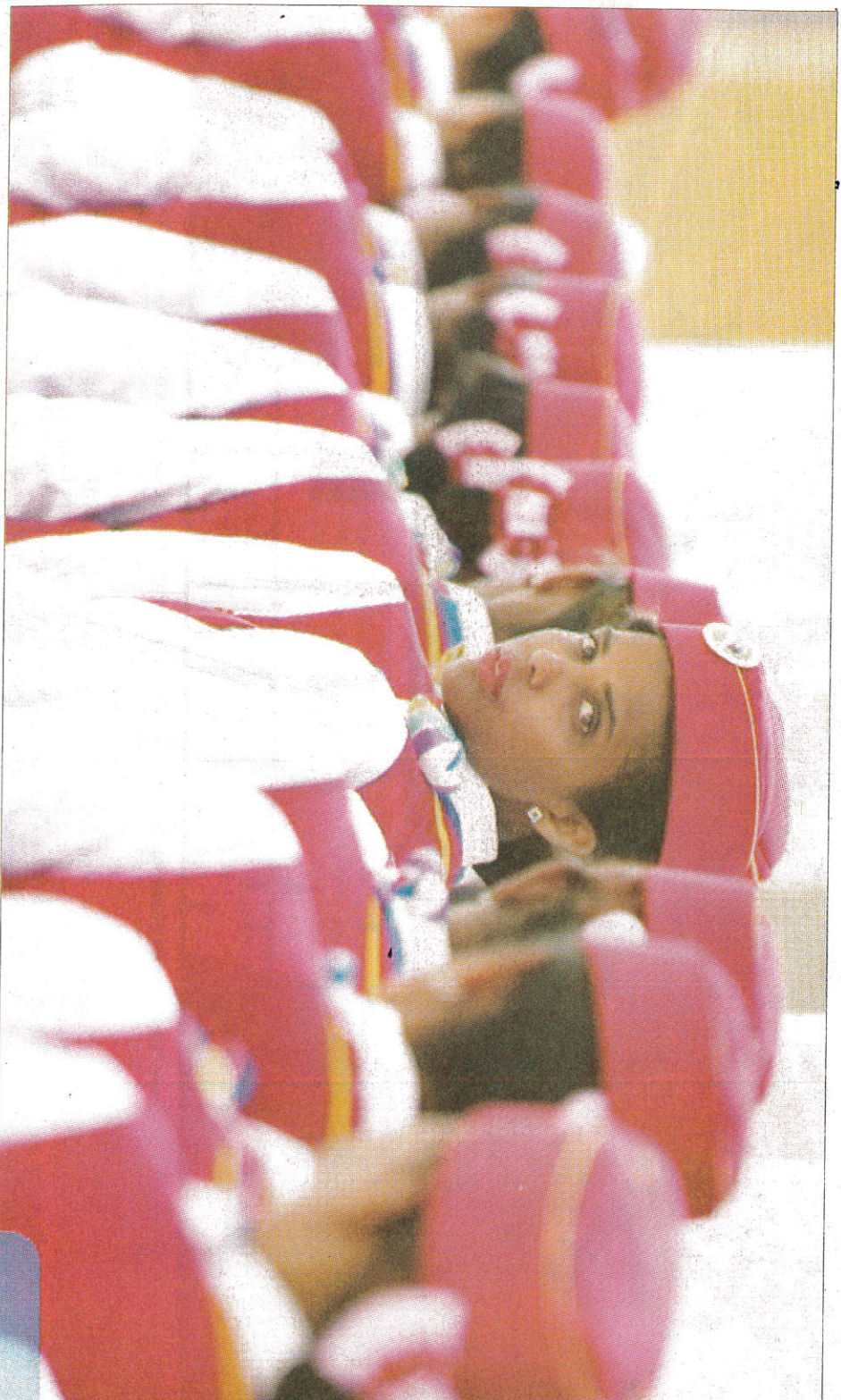
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China Today

Chinese-built Ethiopia-Djibouti railway begins commercial operations



BETTER RAILWAY SERVICES: Ethiopian attendees participate during the opening ceremony of Ethiopia-Djibouti railway at the Lebu station in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on Oct. 5, 2016. Photo / (Xinhua/Sun Rubo)

ADDIS ABABA, Jan. 1 (Xinhua) -- The Chinese-built 756-km electrified rail project connecting landlocked Ethiopia to Djibouti officially started commercial operations on Monday with a ceremony held in Ethiopia's capital Addis Ababa.

Contracted by two Chinese companies, the first 320 km of the rail project from Sebeta to Mieso was carried out by the China Rail Engineering Corporation (CREC), while the remaining 436 km from Mieso to Djibouti port section was built by the China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation (CCECC). Speaking on the occasion, Ahmed Shide, Ethiopian Minister of Transport, hailed the standard gauge project as a milestone in

China-Africa cooperation.

In addition to further enhancing economic ties as well as the people-to-people links between Ethiopia and Djibouti, it will have significant contribution to the ongoing development efforts of building a new Ethiopia, said the minister.

The minister urged local people, especially residents living by the line of the rail, to take care of it for its successful and sustainable operation.

Emphasizing on its huge significance and importance, Tan Jian, Chinese Ambassador to Ethiopia, noted that the project would contribute to the industrialization and diversification of the Ethiopian economy, and also towards the country's growth and

transformation plan.

"It is the first trans-boundary and longest electrified railway on the African continent. We, the Chinese, see this as earlier harvest project of the Belt and Road initiative. It is regarded by many as a lifeline project for both countries, for Ethiopia and for Djibouti. And we see this as a railway of development, as a railway of cooperation, and as a railway of friendship," he said.

The ambassador has reiterated China's commitment to further cooperating and closely working with Ethiopia and Djibouti to the railway's smooth operation.

The Addis Ababa-Djibouti railway project has been carried out with an investment of 4 billion U.S. dollars, and China's Exim Bank

has provided a loan.

Speaking on his part, Djibouti Ambassador to Ethiopia, Mohamed Idriiss Farah, said the railway project would have significant contribution to the economic integration between Djibouti and Ethiopia.

"This is important corridor, important railways between Djibouti and Ethiopia; we are working for our economic integration between our two countries. And this project was part of the economic integration, but not only economic integration but also connecting the peoples of Djibouti and Ethiopia," said the ambassador.

The railway provides both passenger and freight services between Addis Ababa and Djibouti.

Century-old textile mill to be revived as culture zone

TAIYUAN, Jan. 2 (Xinhua) -- The government of Jinzhong City in north China's Shanxi Province is cooperating with enterprises to revive its century-old Jinhua Textile Mill by turning it into a culture zone.

The local government has raised more than 300 million yuan (46 million U.S. dollars) to renovate the plant and introduce craftsmen as well as traditional workshops to this piece of industrial heritage, according to Qin Yanru, an official with Jinzhong Cultural Affairs Bureau.

Qin said that the renovations and reinforcements of the plant's Western-style office building, workshops, warehouses and gates were almost completed.

It will also become an industrial cluster for research institutes and cultural companies to revive Chinese traditional craftsmanship such as painted sculpture, murals, colored glass and wood carving. It will also hold exhibitions and cultivate talent.

Once the largest textile plant in Shanxi, Jinhua Textile Mill was listed as a county-level protection site owing to its historical role and fine combination of Chinese and Western elements in its architecture.

The plant was set up in 1919 by a group of politicians and merchants from Shanxi who wanted to revitalize the national industry. It was put into production in 1924 and went bankrupt in 2009.

New amphibian and reptile species found in China

KUNMING, Jan. 2 (Xinhua) -- A total of 21 new amphibian and reptile species as well as two new subspecies were discovered in China last year, according to a recent academic report.

The new species and subspecies belong to 16 genera in 10 families, four orders, the report said.

Unlike in 2016 when most newly-discovered species were from southwest China's Yunnan Province and Tibet Autonomous Region, the new species found last year had a vast distribution, stretching more than 10 municipalities and provinces, according to Wang Kai, author of the report and researcher with the Kunming Institute of Zoology.

Wang said researchers also spotted a further two amphibian and reptile species that were never before seen in China.

China was home to 465 amphibians and 481 reptiles at the end of 2017, Wang said.

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CHINA TODAY

China's film industry sees growth in 2017

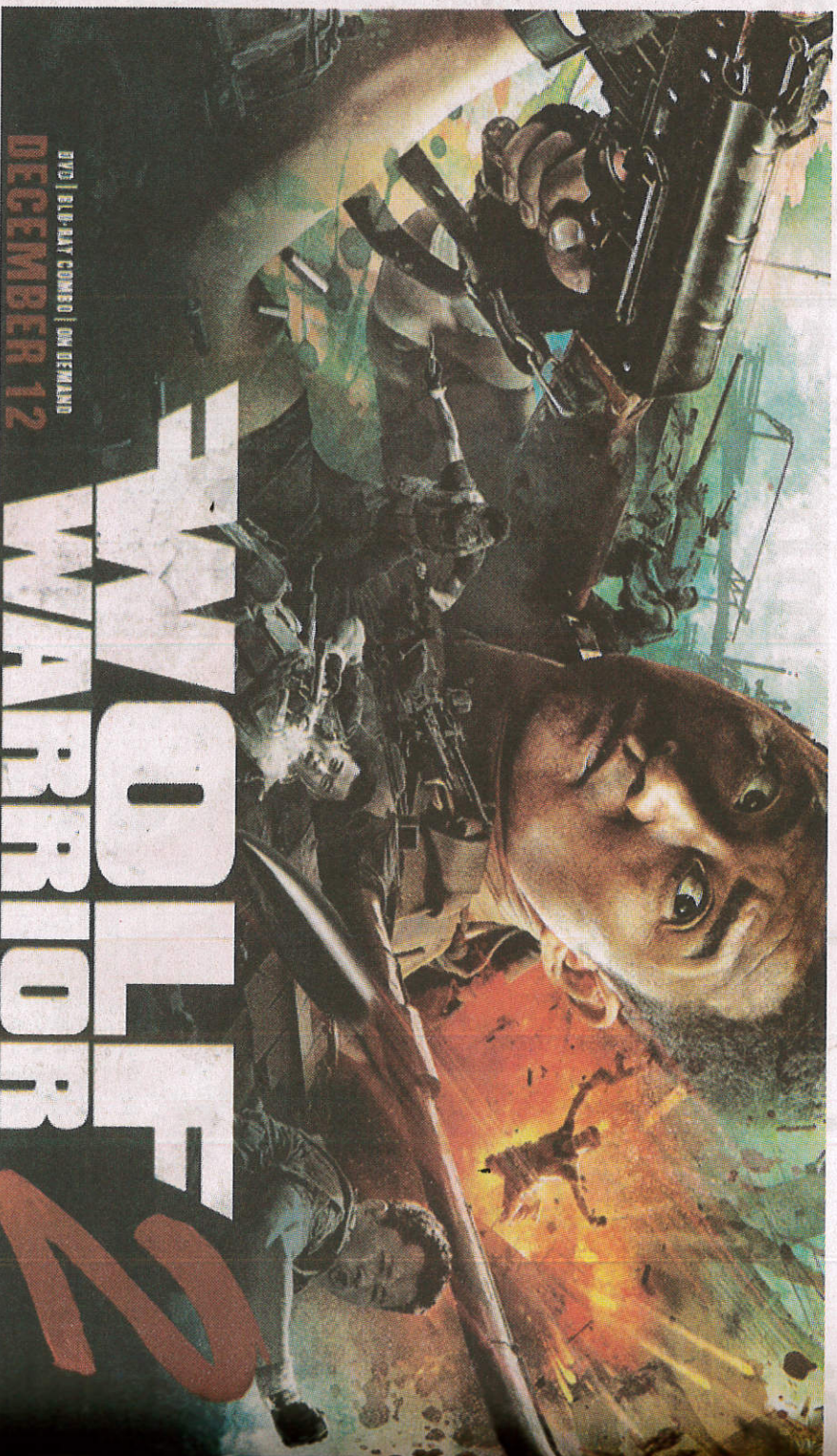
BEIJING, Jan. 2 (Xinhua) -- China's film industry achieved rapid growth in 2017, with both novice and veteran directors producing works catering to increasingly diverse demands.

China's movie box office revenue rose 13.45 percent in 2017 to more than 55.9 billion yuan (8.6 billion U.S. dollars), with domestic films contributing 53.84 percent to the market, according to the State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television (SAPPRFT).

Domestic action movie "Wolf Warrior II" was top of the list, becoming the country's highest-grossing film ever, raking in 5.68 billion yuan in ticket sales.

Four other domestic movies made it to the top 10 list: "Never Say Die" in third place, "Kung Fu Yoga" in fourth place, "Journey to the West: The Demons Strike Back" in fifth, and "Youth" in eighth place.

Blockbusters by renowned Chinese directors were released successively through the year. "Journey to the West: The Demons Strike Back" by Tsui Hark and Stephen Chow debuted during Chinese Spring Festival. "The Founding of an Army" by Andrew Lau was released during the summer holiday, followed by Wong Jing's "Chasing the Dragon," Feng Xiaogang's "Youth" and Chen Kaige's "Legend of the Demon Cat" ushered in the new year



TOP OF THE LIST: Domestic action movie "Wolf Warrior II" became the country's highest-grossing film ever, raking in 5.68 billion yuan in ticket sales.

season. Chinese novice directors also made their contributions to box office revenue. Besides the success of Wu Jing's "Wolf Warrior

II," other films also thrived -- "Never Say Die" by Song Yang and Zhang Chiye raked in 2.2 billion yuan, and Han Han's "Duckweed" took over 1 billion yuan.

"Compared with their predecessors, the new filmmakers pay closer attention to the balance between commercial appeal and artistic expression, thus

promoting the competence of China's film industry," said Chen Xuguang, professor at the school of arts Peking University.

Several low-budget films won unexpected praise in 2017. "Twenty-Two" featuring the first Chinese documentary to surpass 100 million yuan at the box office, and "Seventy-Six Days," an adventure film targeted at outdoor enthusiasts and young art-lovers, also raked in more than 100 million yuan.

"In recent years, more and more Chinese audiences are calling for diversified content," said Li Jifeng, producer of "Seventy-Six Days."

Li stressed the importance of artistic thought and human touch in the productions, saying the ultimate winners would be films which show faith and passion, their content and meet the needs of the audience.

China has more than 44,000 movie screens, more than that in North America.

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CHINA TODAY

Quality, innovation strength for future growth

FUZHOU, Jan. 2 (Xinhua) -- Instead of travelling abroad, Chinese consumers are having more choices at home as the country's enterprises speed up innovation to supply quality products for users.

Jomoo, a bathroom fittings firm from east China's Fujian Province, is one of them. Jomoo has developed new products which perform health checks on users, such as body fat tests, through an mobile phone app. High-end products have become

the focus of the company, said Lin Xiaofa, chairman of Jomoo. One of its luxury models are priced at 30,000 yuan (4,600 U.S. dollars).

The company, founded in 1990, made 7 billion yuan in 2016 and expects to have made 10 billion yuan in 2017.

Supply-side structural reform remains the centerpiece of China's economic agenda, but priorities have shifted. New technology, industries and business models will provide the strength for future growth, with the emphasis on

quality rather than speed.

In Jinjiang City, Fujian, China's largest production center for sports shoes, footwear makers are trying to access the high-end market, some pinning their hopes on new material graphene.

Jinjiang has more than 3,000 footwear companies, producing 40 percent of the country's sports shoes and 20 percent of the world's. By adding graphene powder to soles, shoes are self-sterilizing and deodorizing and only weigh 120 grams each, according to Xu Zhi of

the Graphene Industry and Technology Research Institute in Jinjiang.

"Mass production is under way," claimed Xu, adding the weight of each shoe will soon be cut to no more than 100 grams.

"Our products are very comfortable and very light," said Xu. Improving quality, efficiency and fostering new engines are

important to high-quality development. High-tech and equipment manufacturing sectors grew by 13.4 percent and 11.6 percent in the first three quarters of 2017.

"For higher quality and efficiency, China needs to motivate people to create new things and set up new businesses," said Wang Jun, an economist with Zhongyuan Bank.

China expects snow, rain

BEIJING, Jan. 2 (Xinhua) -- China is preparing for the first snow of the year, in central, eastern and northern regions.

The meteorological center of northwest China's Shaanxi Province issued a warning for blizzards on Tuesday morning. It forecast that several cities will be under ten centimeters of snow and the provincial capital Xi'an will see five centimeters from Tuesday to Wednesday.

Xi'an has organized 1,000 staff ready to remove snow and ice. More than 120 snow removing machines are on standby. Jiangsu Province, in the east, will

also see snow and rain from Wednesday to Thursday. Farmers take measures to protect crops and remove snow from greenhouses in a timely manner.

The nearby Anhui Province will have its heaviest snow of the winter with several cities seeing up to 30 centimeters, according to the provincial meteorological authorities.

Central China's Henan Province will see two rounds of snow from Tuesday to Sunday. Some places, south of the Yellow River, will be battered by snowstorms. Temperatures in the province have been comparatively high this

winter, so the snow will improve the water content of the soil and help wheat to resist insect damage.

However, snow will affect traffic, power supplies, agriculture facilities and people's lives.

Central China's Hubei Province will also be hit by gales, snow and rain from Tuesday to Saturday.

Besides calling for measures in terms of traffic, agriculture, water and power supplies, local meteorological authorities suggested that efforts should be made to prevent snow disasters in the mountainous areas.



TACKLING THE ISSUE: China ban on ivory sales begins Sunday, aims to curb elephant poaching.

W.W.F. lauds China's action of ending ivory trade

GENEVA, Jan. 2 (Xinhua) -- The world's leading conservation organization World Wildlife Fund (WWF) has applauded China's landmark ban on ivory sales.

Starting from Sunday, it will be illegal to process or sell ivory and its products in China.

WWF said in a statement that with the doors to the ivory trade closing in China, the world starts 2018 "a step closer to a land free of the slaughter of endangered animals".

"China's actions, more than those of any other country, can reverse the trend of elephant poaching and illegal ivory trafficking, and have a significant impact on the future survival of African elephants," it said.

A recent WWF survey shows that the ban has widespread support from a strong majority of consumers surveyed and that it is likely to substantially reduce ivory purchase.

Dr. Fred Kwame Kumah, Director of WWF Regional Office for Africa, commented that "China has shown great leadership on this urgent issue".

"This ban means we start 2018 a step closer to a world where the demand for ivory is extinct not elephants," Kumah said.

State Forestry Administration has said that by honoring its commitment to ending commercial processing and sales of ivory by the end of 2017, China has sent a "new year

gift to the elephant".

Chinese government figures show that the move will affect 34 processing enterprises and 143 designated trading venues, with all of them to close, in the world's once largest ivory market.

John E. Scanlon, Secretary General of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), also praised China's latest move and commented that "there is certainly reason for hope".

"The world still needs to do more to tackle both supply and demand to put an end to the poaching of elephant and trafficking in ivory," he said.

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CHINA TODAY

Sri Lankan P.M. undertakes inspection tour of China-funded Port City project

COLOMBO, Jan. 2 (Xinhua) -- Sri Lankan Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe on Tuesday made an inspection tour of the mega Port City which is being constructed close to the Colombo Harbour in the island country's capital.

The Colombo Port City, which will be the first of its kind in South Asia, is being constructed by China Harbour Engineering Company Ltd (CHEC).

Wickremesinghe, who was accompanied by several ministers, was briefed by the Port City management on the overall project and the present stage of construction.

This project which is also expected to be a financial center, will convert Sri Lanka into a global hub in the region, Wickremesinghe told reporters at the site of construction.

"The CHEC is reclaiming land from the sea to construct this city and we must make use of it. In the future, this Port City will have at least 75,000 people residing here and 200,000 people moving in and out of the city on a daily basis," Wickremesinghe added.

The prime minister added that



SRI LANKAN PRIME MINISTER: Ranil Wickremesinghe.

the Colombo Port City will have many facilities and bring in new

life to the Sri Lankan economy.

"The Colombo Port City will be one of a kind and we thank CHEC and the Megapolis and Western Development Ministry for their dedicated work towards the Port City," the prime minister said.

The Colombo Port City, launched in September 2014, will have

many unique features such as a strong solar and wind power system, waste recycling and a treatment to harvest rain water.

There will be several pedestrians and cycle lanes while the city will be connected to Colombo through a Light Rail Transport system. The Port City will also include

residential buildings, schools, banks, shopping malls, a market, parks, hotels and public beaches. Once completed, the project is expected to attract 15 billion U.S. dollars worth of investment into Sri Lanka.

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All key parts of Beidou satellites made in China: chief designer

BEIJING, Jan. 2 (Xinhua) -- All the key components of China's Beidou navigation satellites are made in China, ending reliance on imports, Xie Jun, chief designer of the Beidou system, said on Tuesday.

Key components such as traveling-wave tube amplifiers, microwave switches, and high-

power current source controllers are now all made in China instead of being imported, Xie said.

Xie also said his team has mastered all the core technologies for the global Beidou network of satellites, aiming to make it as good as the Global Positioning System (GPS). China plans to make Beidou a

global positioning and navigation system by around 2020, making the third country after the United States and Russia with its own navigation system. In 2018, China plans to launch 18 Beidou-3 satellites to expand navigation services to countries along the Belt and Road routes.

Chinese people celebrate New Year's Day with sports activities

BEIJING, Jan. 2 (Xinhua) -- Standing in front of the Gongshika waterfall on the Gongshika snow peak in Qinghai province, which lies 4,000 meters above the sea level, after several hours' climbing, Geng Ru believed that there was no better way for her to start the new year.

The 27-year-old outdoor enthusiast was participating in the annual national-wide fitness program - New Year Mountain-climbing and Body Building - which was organized by sports bureaus across the whole country on the same day. Since the first edition in 1996, this event has become a significant sports activity in China and has attracted millions of people in the past 20 years.

"I have arrived at the Gongshika snow peak, I feel that it is of great significance for me to mountaineer on the first day of the new year and eventually come here," Geng wrote on the social media. "I was shocked when I came here, I like climbing mountains because it's a good sport and also help us to understand the nature."

In Geng's home city, Xining, there was another sports event held on the New Year's Day. The 44th edition of the Tour of Xining running event attracted about 10,000 runners, ranging from seven years old to 80, to kick off the new year.

It was the fifth time for the 68-year-old Zhang Zengru to take part in the event. He said he was getting older and older but he felt he was still young thanks to running.

What happened in Xining was just an epitome of the popularity

of sports in China. With the rapid development of economy, many Chinese people have already realized the importance of health lifestyles and participating in all kinds of sports activities has become a fashion in the country.

In China's most famous metropolis Shanghai, over 60,000 citizens came out to play the sports in the riverside area which featured many walking trails and cycle routes.

"I really enjoy exercising here. The government offered good facilities and the cityscape is really beautiful. I wish all my family members and friends be healthy in the new year, so I decided to start the year by a healthy lifestyle (running)," said Wu Dingyi, who took part in a family run activity together with his granddaughters.

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Trump accuses D.O.J. of being part of 'deep state'

WASHINGTON (AP)—President Donald Trump accused the Justice Department Tuesday of being part of the "deep state" and urged prosecution against a top aide to former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and former FBI Director James Comey.

He also claimed that U.S. sanctions on North Korea were having a "big impact" and that he was responsible for preventing commercial aviation deaths in 2017.

Trump's latest tweets pressed familiar arguments for the president, who is set to begin his first full year in office with the victory of tax legislation but the Russia investigation still hanging over his administration.

"Crooked Hillary Clinton's top aid, Huma Abedin, has been accused of disregarding basic security protocols. She put Classified Passwords into the hands of foreign agents," Trump tweeted in an apparent reference to a report by the conservative Daily Caller.

"Remember sailors pictures on submarine? I'll Deep State Justice Dept must finally act? Also on Comey & others," he added.

As he remains shadowed by the special counsel's Russia investigation, Trump has seized on recent revelations of anti-Trump behavior by some FBI officials, including some who once worked on special counsel Robert Mueller's probe of Russian meddling in the 2016 presidential election, to claim bias against him.

The president's reference Tuesday to "Deep State Justice Dept" suggests that federal law enforcement is part of an entrenched bureaucracy that Trump and his supporters say didn't want him to be elected and is actively working to undermine his presidency.

Trump's reference to sailors likely referred to a Navy sailor convicted of taking photos of classified areas inside a submarine.

Trump's blast at the Justice Department came after he returned to the White House from



U.S. PRESIDENT: Donald Trump arrives to board Air Force One at Palm Beach International Airport, Monday, Jan. 1, 2018, in West Palm Beach, Fla. Photo / (AP Photo/Evan Vucci)

a holiday getaway to face legislative challenges, midterm elections and global threats. He issued confrontational tweets targeting Iran, which in recent days has been rocked by anti-government protests, and Pakistan.

"The people of Iran are finally acting against the brutal and corrupt Iranian regime. All of the money that President Obama so foolishly gave them went into terrorism and into their 'pockets.' The people have little food, big inflation and no human rights. The U.S. is watching!"

On Monday, Trump slammed Pakistan for "lies & deceit," saying it had played U.S. leaders for "fools" by not doing enough to control militants.

"The United States has foolishly given Pakistan more than 33 billion dollars in aid over the last 15 years, and they have given us nothing but lies & deceit, thinking of our leaders as fools. They give safe haven to the terrorists we hunt in Afghanistan, with little help. No more!" Trump said.

Pakistani officials, including Foreign Minister Khawaja Asif, said the country would make clear "the difference between facts and fiction."

It was not immediately clear what prompted Trump to comment on Pakistan. The U.S. has long accused Pakistan of allowing militants to operate relatively freely in its border regions to carry out operations in neighboring Afghanistan. The U.S.

said in August that it would hold up \$255 million in military assistance for Pakistan until it cracks down on extremists threatening Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un said Monday the United States should be aware that his country's nuclear forces are now a reality, not a future threat. To that, Trump said only: "We'll see."

At home, Trump is hoping for more legislative achievements after his success on cutting taxes. He plans to host Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky and House Speaker Paul Ryan of Wisconsin at Camp David next weekend to map out the 2018 legislative agenda.

Trump lashes out at Vanity Fair over Clinton video

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. (AP) — President Donald Trump is lashing out at Vanity Fair, after the magazine said an online video mocking Hillary Clinton "missed the mark."

On Twitter on Thursday, Trump said the magazine was "bending over backwards in apologizing for the minor hit."

The video posted over the weekend shows editors of Vanity Fair's Hive website offering toasts and New Year's resolutions for Clinton, including that she vow to take up knitting, volunteer work or any hobby that would keep her from running again for president.

The backlash was swift. Among those to respond was actress Patricia Arquette, who tweeted her own proposal — stop telling women what they should or can do. In a statement Wednesday, the magazine said the video was an attempt at humor that regrettably "missed the mark."

Trump added that Anna Wintour "is beside herself in grief & begging for forgiveness!"

Wintour is the editor-in-chief of Vogue, not Vanity Fair. She is also the artistic director of parent company Conde Nast, which publishes both titles.

Trump threatens to cut off U.S. aid to Palestinian Authority

WASHINGTON (AP)—President Donald Trump is threatening to cut off U.S. aid money to the Palestinian Authority and acknowledging that the Middle East peace process appears to be stalled.

Trump says in a pair of tweets that "we pay the Palestinians HUNDRED OF MILLIONS OF DOLLARS a year and get no appreciation or respect. They don't even want to negotiate a long overdue ... peace treaty with Israel."

He adds that, "with the Palestinians no longer willing to talk peace, why should we make any of these massive future payments to them?"

Trump infuriated many when he announced late last year that the U.S. would consider Jerusalem the capital of Israel and move its embassy there.

Trump has long said he wants to broker Mideast peace, calling it "the ultimate deal."

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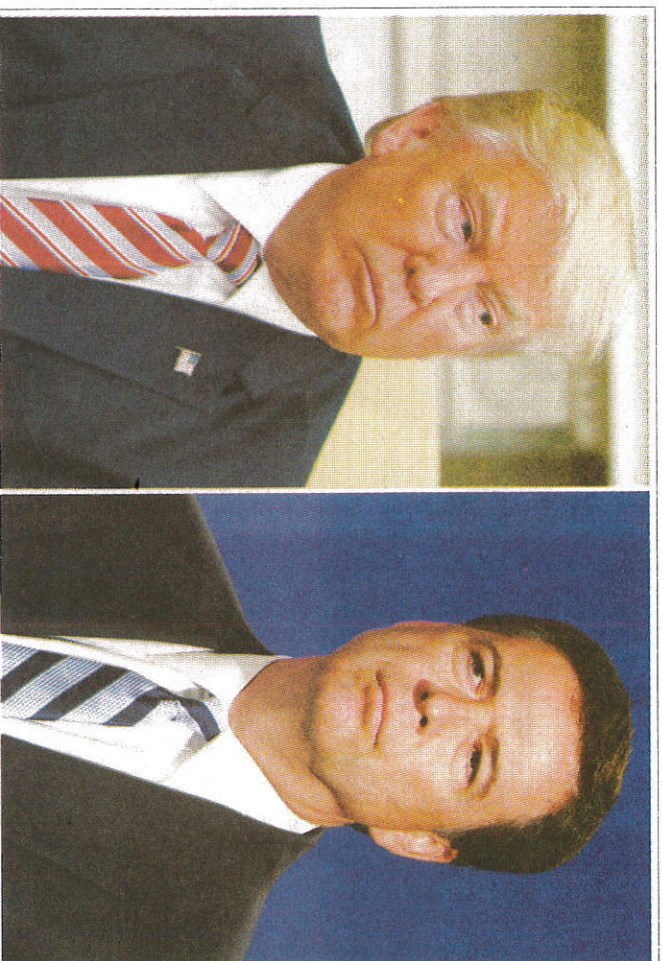
Trump's Clinton tweets cut against Comey firing explanation

WASHINGTON (AP) — When President Donald Trump fired James Comey in May, he said he was acting on the recommendation of Justice Department leaders who had faulted the FBI director for releasing “derogatory information” about Hillary Clinton at the conclusion of the email server investigation months earlier.

Yet with each tweet about the Clinton probe, Trump seems to be further undermining his administration’s stated rationale for a termination that’s now central to special counsel Robert Mueller’s Russia investigation.

The disconnect between Trump’s attacks on Comey’s handling of the email investigation and the criticism of Comey by his own Justice Department could muddy the explanation for exactly why Comey was fired, and may complicate efforts by the president’s legal team to present a coherent narrative as Mueller and his prosecutors examine whether the dismissal could support obstruction of justice allegations.

Trump has complained for months about the FBI’s decision not to pursue criminal charges against Clinton, his Democratic opponent in the 2016 presidential election, for her use of a personal email server. He has suggested the criminal investigation was rigged in her favor, claiming in one October tweet that Comey “totally protected” her. He recently seized on the revelation of politically charged text messages from an FBI agent who worked on that probe to again deride the investigation. And in a Saturday tweet that appeared to suggest Clinton should have been prosecuted, Trump caustically



In this combination photo, President Donald Trump, left, appears in the Oval Office of the White House in Washington on June 30, 2017, and FBI Director James Comey appears at a news conference in Washington on June 30, 2014. With each tweet about the Clinton probe, Trump seems to be further undermining his administration’s stated rationale for the termination of Comey. Photo // AP Photo/Evan Vucci, left, and Susan Walsh, file.

referred to “33,000 illegally deleted emails.” Yet those attacks are increasingly hard to square with a Justice Department memo that the White House held up as justification for firing Comey. That document, authored

by Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein, cited an unusual July 2016 news conference in which Comey described Clinton and her aides as “extremely careless” as well as Comey’s notification to Congress, days before the election, that the investigation was being revisited because of the sudden discovery of additional emails.

“From the beginning there’s always been serious doubt that the memo from the deputy attorney general was the actual reason the president fired the FBI director,”

Trump: My ‘nuclear button’ is bigger than Kim Jong Un’s

AP - U.S. President Donald Trump says his nuclear button is bigger than North Korean leader Kim Jong Un’s “and my button works.”

Trump tweeted in response to a speech by Kim on Monday, in which he said that the entire US mainland was within the nuclear strike range of his country.

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un just stated that the “Nuclear Button is on his desk at all times.” Will someone from his depleted and food starved regime please inform him that I too have a Nuclear Button, but it is a much bigger & more powerful one than his, and my Button works!

— Donald Trump (@realDonaldTrump) January 3, 2018

Trump does not actually have a nuclear button on his desk. The nuclear “football” is carried by a rotating group of military officers everywhere the president goes.

Kim said during the speech on New Year’s Day that “the US should know that the button for nuclear weapons is on my table.”

“The United States can never start a war against me and our country.” Kim said North Korea had achieved the historic feat of “completing” its nuclear forces.

Trump had sounded open to the possibility of an inter-Korean dialogue after the North Korean leader made a rare overture toward South Korea in his New Year address.

But US officials also voiced scepticism about Kim’s intentions and repeating the demand that the North give up its nukes.



U.S. President Donald Trump.

Using his derisive nickname for Kim, Trump says: “Rocket man now wants to talk to South Korea for first time. Perhaps that is good news, perhaps not - we will see!”

In 2013, Trump sent a tweet warning “horrendous leadership could unknowingly lead us into World War III,” referring to Barack Obama’s announcement that he was ready to order a limited strike on Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad’s forces. Obama planned to seek approval from Congress before the strike.

After the president’s button jibe on Wednesday, the tweet began to work its way around the internet again.

Be prepared, there is a small chance that our horrendous leadership could unknowingly lead us into World War III.

— Donald Trump (@realDonaldTrump) August 31, 2013

Trump’s first major military order after taking office was to order a limited strike on the same forces Obama targeted.

Trump, in Washington, doesn’t get out much

WASHINGTON (AP) — After living in Washington for nearly a year, President Donald Trump has yet to enjoy a single non-working meal at a restaurant that doesn’t pay him rent. He hasn’t taken in a performance at the Kennedy Center, hasn’t been to a sporting event, hasn’t toured most of the sights.

It’s one of the peculiarities of the Trump presidency and one of a long list of ways in which he’s changing the office, as well as its relationship with the District of Columbia.

“I would say that Trump has been the least present of any of the most recent presidents,” said Phil Mendelson, chairman of the Washington, D.C., City Council and a Democratic member of the council since 1999.

It’s not just restaurants, says Mendelson. Trump has been less engaged on the local charity circuit than other recent presidents, with no stops at local food banks or to help elementary school reading drives. First lady Melania Trump has been venturing out more often, appearing with Jordan’s Queen Rania at a girls’ charter school, attending a holiday toy drive sponsored by the military and visiting with patients and staff at Children’s National hospital.

But the hombody president rarely goes out — and when he does it’s almost always to properties that bear his name.

Trump has spent at least part of more than 100 days of his presidency at properties

said Scott Frederickson, a Washington criminal defense lawyer and former federal prosecutor. “These tweets,” he added, “probably don’t help the president in the regard.” A lawyer for Trump did not return a phone message seeking comment. Mueller’s team has been interested for months in the circumstances of Comey’s firing, with prosecutors obtaining an initial White House memo, drafted but never released, that purported to lay out a basis for Comey’s removal.

The final memo to the White House released on May 9, signed by Rosenstein, castigated Comey for announcing that criminal charges were not warranted against Clinton even though such determinations are generally left to Justice Department prosecutors. He also faulted Comey for comments made during that news conference, which Rosenstein said broke with Justice Department protocol by issuing “derogatory information” about someone who was investigated but never charged. Though he did not explicitly say it, his assessment seemed in line with that of Clinton and her supporters — that Comey’s statements and actions during the investigation had harmed her election prospects.

“The Director laid out his version of the facts for the news media as if it were a closing argument, but without a trial,” Rosenstein wrote. “It is a textbook example of what federal prosecutors and agents are taught not to do.”

In a single-page letter to Comey released alongside Rosenstein’s memo, Trump said he had accepted the Justice Department recommendation for termination.

From the start, though, that explanation has been tough to reconcile with Trump’s blistering attacks on Clinton, and his repeated assertions on the campaign trail and as president that she should have been prosecuted.

he owns — taking winter weekends at his private Mar-a-Lago club in Florida and summer weekends in Bedminster, New Jersey, or at his Virginia golf club.

Those weekends that he does spend in Washington, Trump has dined at just one restaurant: BLT Prime in the Trump International Hotel, which opened last year just a few blocks from the White House. Trump’s visits have thrilled the tourists who flock to the hotel, building buzz and earning revenue. But most often, Trump, who is known to prefer well-done steaks with ketchup to snootier fare, chooses to eat in.

“I love the food in the White House. The White House is the greatest restaurant in the most beautiful,” he told the *Late O’Connor* radio show last month. “They do such a beautiful job.”

Trump took office as arguably the most prepared of recent presidents for the constraints of living and working in the White House and its Secret Service-enforced security bubble, having spent decades ensconced at Trump Tower in New York.

“The reason my hair looks so neat all the time is because I don’t have to deal with the elements. I live in the building where I work. I take an elevator from my bedroom to my office. The rest of the time, I’m either in my stretch limousine, my private jet, my helicopter, or my private club in Palm Beach, Florida,” he once wrote.

TRUMP U.S.A. TODAY

Trump sounds open to Korea dialogue, says Kim feels pressure

WASHINGTON (AP)

President Donald Trump sounded open Tuesday to the possibility of an inter-Korean dialogue after North Korean leader Kim Jong Un made a rare overture toward South Korea in a New Year's address. But Trump's ambassador to the United Nations insisted talks would not be meaningful unless the North was getting rid of its nuclear weapons.

In a morning tweet, Trump said the U.S.-led campaign of sanctions and other pressure were beginning to have a "big impact" on North Korea. He referred to the recent, dramatic escape of at least two North Korean soldiers across the heavily militarized border into South Korea. He also alluded to Kim's comments Monday that he was willing to send a delegation to the Winter Olympics, which will be hosted by South Korea next month.

"Soldiers are dangerously fleeing to South Korea. Rocket man now wants to talk to South Korea for first time. Perhaps that is good news, perhaps not - we will see!" Trump said, using his derisive moniker for the young North Korean leader.

In response to Kim's overture, South Korea on Tuesday offered high-level talks on Jan. 9 at the shared border village of Panmunjom to discuss Olympic cooperation and how to improve overall ties.

North Korea did not immediately react to the South's proposal. If there are talks, they would be the first formal dialogue between the Koreans since December 2015. Relations have plunged as the North has accelerated its nuclear and ballistic missile development that now poses a direct threat to



NORTH KOREAN LEADER: Kim Jong Un speaks in his annual address in undisclosed location, North Korea. North Korean leader Kim said Monday, Jan. 1, 2018, the United States should be aware that his country's nuclear forces are now a reality, not a threat. But he also struck a conciliatory tone in his New Year's address, wishing success for the Winter Olympics set to begin in the South in February and suggesting the North may send a delegation to participate. Photo / (KRT via AP Video)

America, South Korea's crucial ally.

The U.S. administration, however, voiced suspicions that Kim was seeking to drive a wedge between Seoul and Washington. Pyongyang could view a closer relationship with Seoul has a way for reducing its growing international isolation and relief from sanctions that are starting to bite the North's meager economy. "We won't take any of the talks seriously if they don't do something to ban all nuclear weapons in North Korea," U.S. Ambassador Nikki Haley told reporters at the United Nations.

"We consider this to be a very reckless regime. We don't think we need a Band-Aid, and we don't think we need to smile and take a picture."

In his New Year's address, Kim repeated fiery nuclear threats against the United States. He said he has a "nuclear button" on his office desk and warned that "the whole territory of the U.S. is within the range of our nuclear strike."

North Korea has been punished with unprecedented sanctions at the U.N. over its weapons programs, and Haley warned Tuesday of more measures if the North conducts another missile

Trump criticizes China after report of North Korea oil transfer

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump criticized China on Thursday following reports that Chinese ships transferred oil to North Korean vessels at sea in violation of U.N. sanctions over the North's nuclear weapons program. Trump said on Twitter that China had been "Caught RED HANDED," adding he was "very disappointed that China is allowing oil to go into North Korea."

"There will never be a friendly solution to the North Korea problem if this continues to happen!" the president said, without citing the source of his information. He later told The New York Times, "It was reported this morning, and it was reported on Fox."

China accounts for the vast majority of North Korea's external trade and oil supplies. Just two weeks ago, Trump credited China for its help in the U.S.-led pressure campaign against Pyongyang, including support for three U.N. Security Council resolutions this year — the latest last week — over the North's nuclear and missile tests.

However, on Tuesday the South Korean newspaper Chosun Ilbo

cited unidentified South Korean government officials as saying U.S. reconnaissance satellites have spotted Chinese ships transferring oil to North Korean vessels some 30 times since October in seas off China. That report was picked up by some U.S. media outlets, including Fox News.

China's foreign ministry has defended its enforcement of U.N. sanctions against North Korea. A ministry spokeswoman said Wednesday she had no information about the latest report, but said China has strictly enforced trade restrictions.

The State Department did not immediately respond to a request for comment on that report. But in a commentary Thursday, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson urged Beijing to exert "decisive economic leverage" on Pyongyang.

"China has applied certain import bans and sanctions, but it could and should do more," he wrote in The New York Times.

Ship-to-ship trade with North Korea at sea is prohibited under U.N. sanctions adopted Sept. 11. The latest sanctions adopted Friday, in response to the test of a North Korean intercontinental ballistic missile, also impose sharp

reductions on imports of refined oil products by the isolated nation.

Last month, the Treasury Department sanctioned six North Korean shipping and trading companies and 20 of their vessels, and published photos of what it said was a North Korean vessel on Oct. 19 possibly transferring oil to evade sanctions.

The statement did not specify whether Chinese vessels were involved in the transfer. At that time, the U.S. also blacklisted four Chinese-based companies and one Chinese individual said to have deep commercial ties with North Korea.

Trump has blown hot and cold on China's efforts on North Korea, which despite a dramatic increase in sanctions has made major progress this year on perfecting a nuclear-tipped missile that could strike the United States.

On Dec. 15, Trump said Russia — another significant trading partner with North Korea — had failed to help, while China had

"China is helping. Russia is not helping. We'd like to have Russia's help — very important," Trump told reporters after a phone conversation with President Vladimir Putin.

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TRUMP U.S.A. TODAY

Trump throws full U.S. support behind protesters in Iran

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Trump administration on Tuesday threw the weight of the U.S. government behind the protesters taking to the streets of Iran, rooting them on despite the risk of helping Iranian authorities dismiss a week of major demonstrations as the product of American instigation.

As Iran's supreme leader accused "enemies of Iran" of trying to destabilize his country, the State Department pressed Tehran to unblock social media sites used by the protesters. It even offered advice to tech-savvy Iranians on circumventing state internet controls.

President Donald Trump declared it was "time for change" in Iran, and other officials floated the possibility of additional sanctions. At the United Nations, Ambassador Nikki Haley sought a Security Council meeting to show support for those protesting in the Islamic Republic.

"We want to help amplify the voices of the Iranian people," said Haley, who appeared before cameras to recite the chants of protesters across Iran. She said Iran's claim that other countries were fomenting the unrest was "complete nonsense," describing the dissent as homegrown.

Borrowing from a response playbook it has used before, Iran's government blamed the U.S., Saudi Arabia and Britain for the protests. Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the 78-year-old supreme leader, said Iran's enemies were using money, weapons, politics and spies "to create problems for the Islamic system, the Islamic Republic and the Islamic Revolution."

Trump was undeterred, praising Iranians for "finally acting against the brutal and corrupt Iranian regime." In an allusion to possible sanctions in response to human rights violations, Trump said the United States would closely monitor the situation.

"The U.S. is watching!" the president tweeted.

Beyond rhetoric, though, it wasn't clear what the Trump administration could do substantively to empower the protesters, who are rallying against



IRANIAN SUPREME LEADER: Ayatollah Ali Khamenei speaks in a meeting in Tehran, Iran, Tuesday, Jan. 2, 2018. The Trump administration is calling on Iran's government to stop blocking Instagram and other popular social media sites as Iranians demonstrate in the streets. Photo / (Office of the Iranian Supreme Leader via AP)

corruption, mismanagement and economic woes including higher food prices. His support also sets up a potential test of his presidential leadership if the protests — already deadly — grow more violent.

At least 21 people have died and hundreds have been arrested over six days of demonstrations, the largest in Iran since the "Green

Movement" that erupted in 2009 following a disputed presidential election. The new outbreak started in Mashhad, Iran's second-largest city, and has expanded to many others.

Iranian authorities have sought to suppress the protests in part by shutting down key social media sites protesters use to communicate,

including Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and the messaging app Telegram. On Tuesday, Undersecretary of State Steve Goldstein urged Iran's government to unblock the sites.

"They are legitimate avenues for communication," Goldstein said. He said the U.S. has an "obligation not to stand by."

Iranians seeking to evade the blocks can use virtual private networks, Goldstein said. Known as VPNs, the services create encrypted data "tunnels" between computers and can be used to access overseas websites blocked by the local government.

The primary U.S. goal is to ensure enough global attention to deter Iranian authorities from violently cracking down on protesters with impunity, said a senior State Department official involved in Iran policy. The official wasn't authorized to comment by name and demanded anonymity.

For Trump, the protests have served as an unexpected but welcome opportunity to rally the world against Iran, and U.S. officials said the administration was actively encouraging other countries to back the protests. Early U.S. attempts to get European allies to coordinate their messaging with the U.S. ran into obstacles, but several countries including France and Italy have joined in expressing concerns.

In the U.S., Trump's full-throated support for the protesters has renewed the debate about how best to encourage change in Iran, whose government Trump deems a top national security threat. Under President Barack Obama, the U.S. took a more cautious approach during the last major wave of anti-government protests. It was concerned about enabling Iranian authorities to exploit longstanding suspicions of the U.S., dating back to American and British support for a 1953 coup toppling Iran's elected prime minister.

Ben Rhodes, Obama's former deputy national security adviser, said "too much ownership" of the protests by Trump would likely be counterproductive.

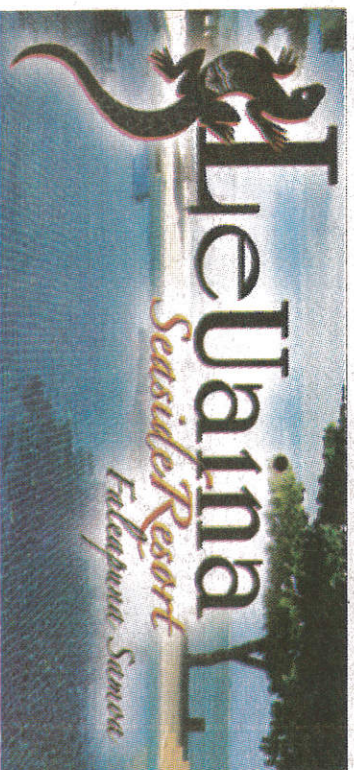
"I can't imagine that the people marching in the streets of Iran are looking to Donald Trump for inspiration or support," Rhodes said. "I just don't think it helps things for the White House to make this into a U.S.-versus-the-Iranian-government circumstance."

But former Sen. Joe Lieberman, a staunch Iran critic, said it's a given Tehran will portray dissent as externally provoked.

"That's a very weak excuse for American inaction and inconsistency with our own interests and values. I'm glad President Trump is not following that advice," Lieberman said in an interview.

It wasn't immediately clear what effect Trump's support was having on the protests, although Iran's state TV reported his tweets and some Iranians shared them online. When it comes to supporting the Iranian aspirations, Trump's credibility may be dented by his hostility to the 2015 Iran nuclear agreement and his inclusion of Iranians in his travel bans.

Trump's insistence in an October speech on using the term "Arabian Gulf" in place of the Persian Gulf also was criticism of Secretary of State Rex Tillerson for saying America was working with people in Iran for a "peaceful transition of that government."



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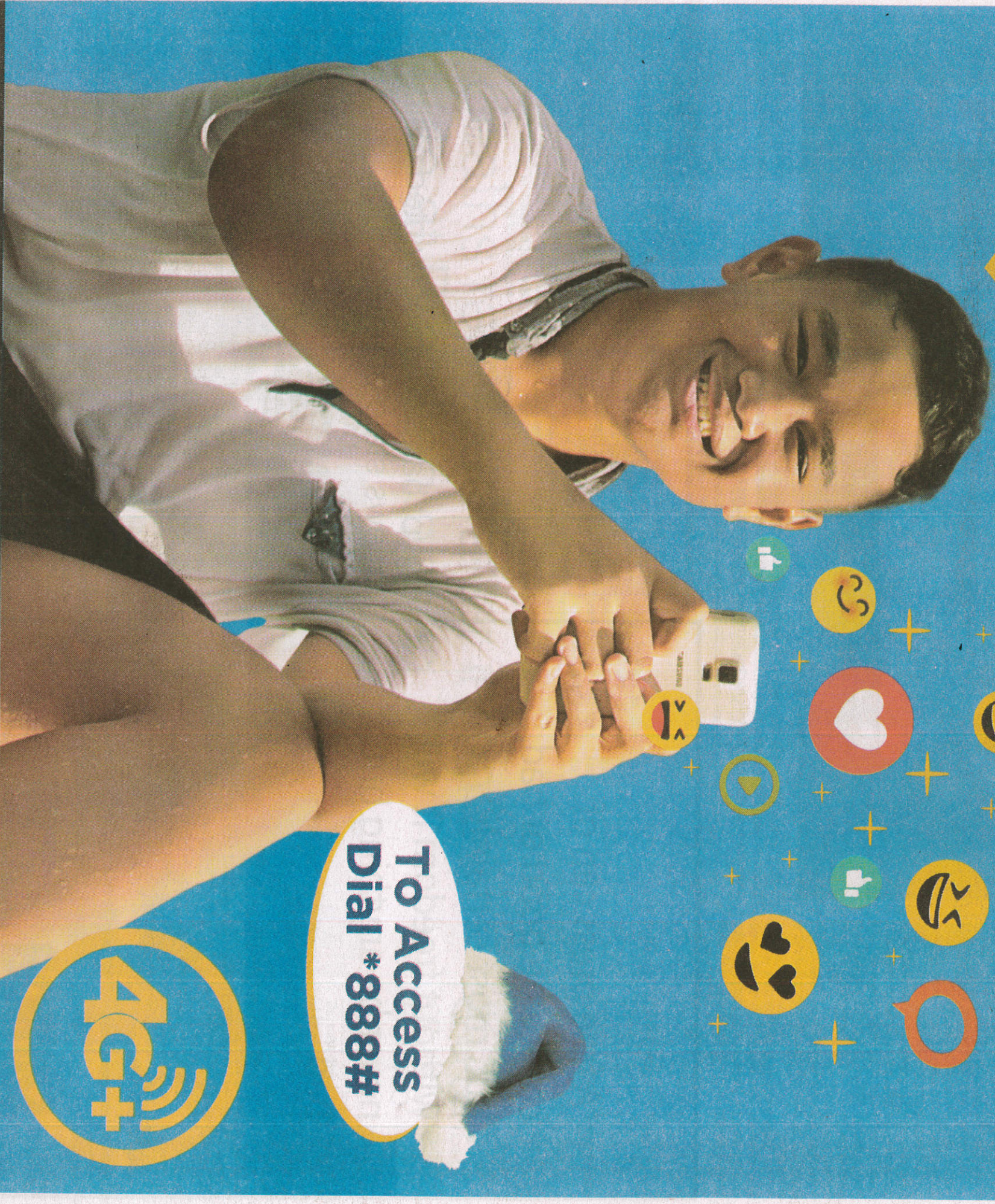
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World

Kim says U.S. should know North Korean nuclear force a reality

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korean leader Kim Jong Un said Monday that the United States should be aware that his country's nuclear forces are now a reality, not a threat. But he also struck a conciliatory tone in his New Year's address, wishing success for the Winter Olympics set to begin in South Korea in February and suggesting the North may send a delegation to participate.

Kim, wearing a Western-style gray suit and tie, said in his customary annual address that his country had achieved the historic feat of "completing" its nuclear forces and added that he has a nuclear button on his desk.

"The U.S. should know that the button for nuclear weapons is on my table," he said during the speech, as translated by The Associated Press.

"The entire area of the U.S. mainland is within our nuclear strike range. ... The United States can never start a war against me and our country," Kim said.

He also called for improved relations with the South, an idea mentioned in speeches more often than it is met. He said the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics would be a good opportunity to showcase the status of the Korean nation.

He also said the two Koreas could meet urgently to discuss the North sending a delegation.

"The Winter Olympic games that will be held soon in the South will be a good opportunity to display the status of the Korean nation and we sincerely wish that



Visitors walk by a TV screen showing a TV news program reporting about North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's New Year's speech, at the Seoul Railway Station in Seoul, South Korea, Monday, Jan. 1, 2018. The letters read on top left, "Kim Jong Un delivers New Year's speech." Kim said the United States should be aware that his country's nuclear forces are now a reality, not a threat. Photo / (AP Photo/Lee Jin-man)

the event will be held with good results," he said.

South Korea's presidential office said it welcomed the proposal to hold talks between government officials over the issue of North Korea sending a delegation to the Olympics. The office of President Moon Jae-in said the successful hosting of the Pyeongchang Olympics would contribute to peace and harmony not only on the Korean Peninsula and in Northeast Asia, but in the entire world.

The New Year's address is an annual event in North Korea and is watched closely for indications of the direction and priorities

Kim may adopt in the year ahead.

This year's speech was seen as particularly important because of the high tensions over Pyongyang's frequent missile launches and its nuclear test in 2017. The tests were the focus of fiery verbal exchanges between North Korea and President Donald Trump, who has derisively called Kim "little rocket man."

Kim also stressed North Korea's economic achievements during the speech, and noted the importance of improving the nation's standard of living.

"A free press can of course be good or bad, but, most certainly, without freedom it will never be anything but bad."

Albert CAMUS

French-Algerian author (1913-1960)

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Egypt hangs four convicted militants, renews state of emergency

CAIRO (AP) — Egypt on Tuesday executed four alleged Islamic militants following their conviction by a military tribunal in the killing of three military academy students in a 2015 bomb attack.

Authorities also renewed a nationwide state of emergency first imposed after deadly bombings targeted two churches in April. A decree issued by Abdel-Fattah el-Sisi, Egypt's general-turned-president, extended the state of emergency for three months.

Egypt has struggled to combat an Islamic State-led insurgency based in the northern Sinai Peninsula that has carried out attacks across the country, mainly targeting security forces and the country's Christian minority.

The 2015 attack took place outside a stadium in the Nile Delta city of Kafr el-Sheikh as the military cadets were waiting for a bus to take them to the academy.

Tuesday's executions by hanging at a prison in the Mediterranean port city of Alexandria bring to 19 the number of convicted militants executed over the past week.

Authorities executed 15 militants on Dec. 26 after a military court convicted and sentenced them to death over a 2013 attack on a military checkpoint in the Sinai

Peninsula that killed an officer and eight soldiers. Six militants were hanged in a separate terror case in 2015 after being convicted by a military tribunal.

Eleven Egyptian rights groups have condemned the latest executions, saying the legal process is flawed. They protested the expanded jurisdiction of military courts and the "political use" of capital punishment, calling for an end to the death penalty.

The groups include the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights, the Nadim Center Against Violence and Torture, and the Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms. The spate of executions follows an uptick in high-profile attacks and repeated vows by el-Sisi to use "brute force" to crush the insurgency.

On Friday, a gunman killed at least nine people when he attacked a Christian church in a Cairo suburb and a nearby Christian-owned shop. The attacker was arrested and has been charged with murder and illegal possession of a firearm.

On Dec. 19, militants fired a guided rocket that damaged a helicopter at the airport of el-Arish during a previously unannounced visit by the defense and interior ministers to the coastal city in northern Sinai.

At least 36 dead when bus plunges onto rocky beach in Peru

LIMA, Peru (AP) — At least 36 people were killed when a bus tumbled down a cliff onto a rocky beach Tuesday along a narrow stretch of highway known as the "Devil's Curve," Peruvian police and fire officials said.

The bus was carrying 57 passengers to Peru's capital when it was struck by a tractor trailer shortly before noon and plunged down the slope, said Claudia Espinoza with Peru's voluntary firefighter brigade.

The blue bus came to rest upside down on a strip of shore next to the Pacific, the lifeless bodies of passengers strewn among the rocks.

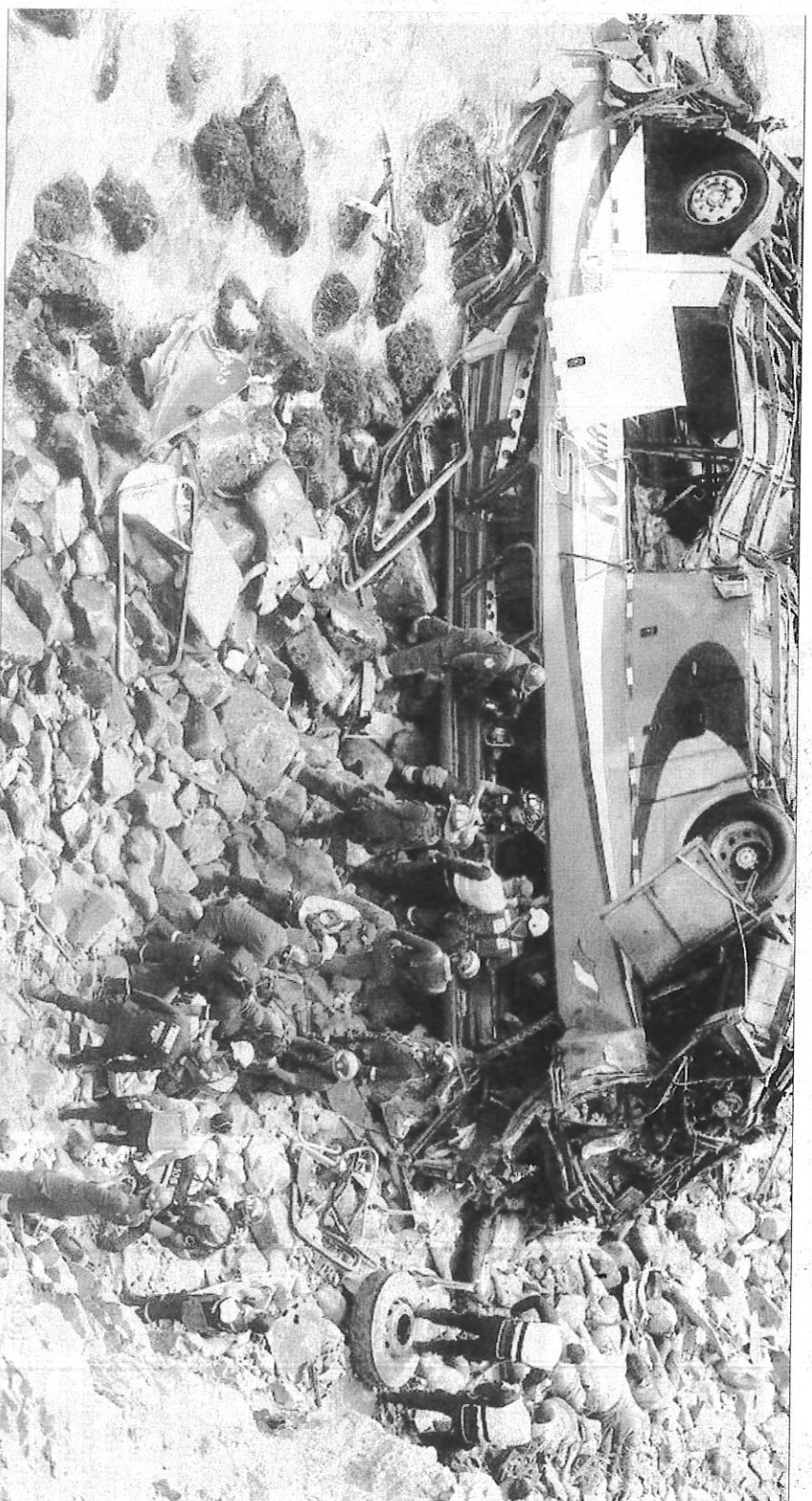
"It's very sad for us as a country to suffer an accident of this magnitude," Peruvian President Pedro Pablo Kuczynski said in a statement.

Rescuers struggled to pull out victims from the hard-to-reach area in Pasamayo, about 70 kilometers (43 miles) north of Lima.

No road leads directly to the beach, complicating rescue efforts, Espinoza said, though police and firefighters managed to transport six survivors with serious injuries to nearby hospitals by helicopter.

Traffic accidents are common along Peru's roadways, with more than 2,600 people killed in 2016. More than three dozen died when three buses and a truck collided in 2015 on the main coastal highway. Twenty people were killed in November when a bus plunged off a bridge into a river in the southern Andes.

The nation's deadliest traffic crash on record happened in 2013 when a makeshift bus carrying 51



EDS NOTE GRAPHIC CONTENT - In this photo provided by the government news agency Andina, firemen recover bodies from a bus that fell off a cliff after it was hit by a tractor-trailer rig, in Pasamayo, Peru, Tuesday, Jan. 2, 2018. A Peruvian police official says at least 25 people died, and that there were more than 50 people on the bus. (Vidal Tarky, Andina News Agency via AP)

Quechua Indians back from a party in southeastern Peru fell off a cliff into a river, killing everyone on board.

Espinoza said the passengers in Tuesday's crash included many returning to Lima after celebrating the New Year's holiday with family

outside the city.

"The highway is known as the 'Devil's Curve' because it is narrow, frequently shrouded in mist and curves along a cliff that has seen numerous accidents. Police said the bus fell an estimated 80 meters (262 feet).

Miguel Sida, a transportation expert in Peru, said that while road conditions in the Andean nation have improved in recent years, lack of driver education and little enforcement of road rules still lead to many fatalities each year. He called on authorities to

9 deaths reported after inmates battle at Brazilian prison

SAO PAULO (AP) — Inmates from rival gangs battled at a prison in Goias state Monday, leaving nine dead and 14 injured, authorities told the Brazilian news site G1.

Officials said the violence at the Colonia Agroindustrial prison in the Aparecida de Goiania Complex apparently erupted when inmates from one cellblock invaded three others where prisoners from rival gangs are housed. The attackers set mattresses on fire when they entered the neighboring corridors and burned the bodies of those who were killed, authorities said. Firefighters were able to contain the fire.

Authorities confirmed the number of dead, but said identifications had not yet been made, G1 reported.

Local media said about 106 inmates escaped during the riot, and officials had recaptured 29. The reports said 127 other inmates fled during the violence but returned voluntarily.

Officers from the Special Penitentiary Operations Group regained control of the prison with the support of military police about two hours after the riot started.



Injured prisoners receive medical care in an ambulance after a rebellion at the Colonia Agroindustrial prison in the Aparecida de Goiania Complex in the state of Goias, Brazil, Monday, Jan. 1, 2018. Inmates from rival gangs battled at the prison Monday, leaving several dead and more than a dozen injured, authorities told the Brazilian news site G1. (Claudio Reis/O Popular via AP)

Exactly one year ago, a prison riot at the Anisio Jobim Penitentiary Complex in Amazonas state caused 56 deaths. A day later, four

prisoners were killed at the Puraquevára Prison Unit in the same state. Thirty-three more inmates died Jan. 6 in a riot at a

prison in Roraima state, and 26 were killed Jan. 14 when inmates rebelled at Alcacuz prison in Rio Grande do Norte.

42 survive boat capsizing off Indonesia's Borneo

JAKARTA, Indonesia (AP) — A speedboat carrying 51 people capsized off Indonesia's part of Borneo Island on Monday, killing at least eight, an official said.

The accident happened when the boat, called the Anugrah Express, was traveling from Tanjung Selor, the capital of North Kalimantan province, to Tarakan in the same province.

Manangap Djumala, a search and rescue official in Tarakan, said that in addition to the deaths, several other people were believed to be missing. Unconfirmed reports said 40 people were rescued.

According to the boat's manifest, the boat was carrying 48 passengers, including five children, and three crew members, Djumala said, adding that infants were usually not listed in the manifest.

Police are investigating the cause of the accident. Boat accidents are common in Indonesia because of poorly enforced safety regulations in the world's largest archipelago nation, where ships are a popular and relatively cheap form of transportation.

WORLD

Pope on 2018: forget life's useless baggage, work for peace

VATICAN CITY (AP) — Pope Francis on Monday recommended jettisoning life's "useless baggage" in 2018, including what he called "empty chatter" and banal consumerism, and focusing instead on building a peaceful and welcoming world, particularly for refugees and migrants.

Francis offered his reflections on parting down non-essentials as he celebrated New Year's Day Mass Monday in St. Peter's Basilica and later greeted some 40,000 people in St. Peter's Square.

His advice included setting aside a moment of silence daily to be with God. Doing so would help "keep our freedom from being corroded by the banality of consumerism, the blare of commercials, the stream of empty words and the overpowering waves of empty chatter and loud shouting," Francis said.

"At the beginning of the year, we too, as Christians on our pilgrim way, feel the need to set out anew from the center, to leave behind the burdens of the past and to start over from the things that really matter," he said.

The Catholic church designates Jan. 1 as World Peace Day, and in his comments after Mass to the crowd in the square outside the basilica, Francis noted that this year's focus of the day was the search for peace by migrants and



A CALL TO ASSURE PEACE: Pope Francis celebrates a new year's Mass in St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican, Monday, Jan. 1, 2018. Photo / AP Photo/Andrew Medichini

refugees.

"I desire, yet again, to speak for these our brothers and sisters who invoke for their future a horizon of peace," Francis said. "For this peace, which is the right of everyone, many of them are willing to risk their life in a voyage that is in the great majority of cases long and dangerous, willing to face hardships and suffering," the pontiff said.

In the past few years, hundreds of thousands of migrants have crossed the Mediterranean from northern Africa in human traffickers' unseaworthy boats, desperate to reach European shores.

The pope's foreign travels in 2017 included a voyage to Myanmar and Bangladesh, where the suffering of minority Rohingya Muslims, who have fled from the first country to take refuge in the second, was a central concern of his pilgrimage.

Francis in his appeal Monday said of refugees and migrants: "Let us not extinguish the hope in their hearts. Let us not suffocate their expectations for peace." He called for all to make commitments "to assure the refugees, the migrants, everyone, a future of peace."

The pope then prayed that people "work in this new year with generosity to realize a world that is more united and welcoming."

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2. The PAIP TFSU, on behalf of the Samoa Airport Authority (SAA), now invites sealed bids from eligible bidders for the supply of: **Air Traffic Control Equipment, Power Supply, Airfield Lighting and Cabling.**

3. Bidding will be conducted through the International Competitive Bidding procedures as specified in the World Bank's *Guidelines: Procurement of Goods, Works and Non-Consulting Services Under IBRD Loans and IDA Credits & Grants by World Bank Borrowers*, revised July 2014 ("Procurement Guidelines"), and is open to all eligible bidders as defined in the Procurement Guidelines. In addition, please refer to paragraphs 1.6 and 1.7 setting forth the World Bank's policy on conflict of interest.

4. A complete set of bidding documents in English will be made available electronically free of charge upon request to TFSU Procurement Officer, Henry 'Aho of hcho@pccitfsu.com.

5. The Bidder's designated representatives are invited to a pre-bid meeting that will take place in Samoa on **December 8, 2017**. The purpose of the meeting is to clarify issues and to answer questions on any matter that may be raised at that stage.

6. Bids must be delivered to the address below on or before 11:00 (Samoa Time), **23 January 2018**. Electronic bidding will not be permitted. Late bids will be rejected. Bids will be publicly opened in the presence of the bidders' designated representatives and anyone who chooses to attend at the address below on 23 January 2018, immediately following Bid Closing.

7. All bids must be accompanied by a Bid Security (in accordance with the format provided in the Bidding Documents)

8. The address referred to above is:

The Tender Box
Level 4, Central Bank Building
Apia, Independent State of Samoa

Technology

Five African tech trends to look out for in 2018

The BBC's Clare Spencer picks five African tech trends to look out for in 2018.

Land registry you can't tamper with

The idea: Documentation is often lacking in parts of Africa, leading to land disputes because it isn't clear who owns the land. Even when there are records, sometimes they have been tampered with. A record that cannot be deleted, using something called blockchain, could be used to prevent these disputes. Blockchain is a method of recording data - a digital ledger of transactions, agreements, contracts - anything that needs to be independently recorded and verified. What makes a big difference is that this ledger isn't stored in one place, it's distributed across several, hundreds or even thousands of computers around the world. Everyone in the network can have access to an up-to-date version of the ledger. So it can be an open, transparent auditable and verifiable record of any transaction.

The application: Cybersecurity company WiSeKey is using blockchain technology for the land registry in Rwanda.

What happened in 2017: WiSeKey announced a partnership with Microsoft to support the Rwandan government in adopting blockchain technology, reports technology news site CTOinvest.

What can we expect for 2018: The first step in adopting blockchain in Rwanda is digitising the Rwanda Land Registry, African tech blog reports. The company is opening a blockchain Centre of Excellence in Rwanda, reports the New Times, which could go as far as developing a Rwandan cryptocurrency, similar to Bitcoin.

Outsourcing I.T.

Work to Africa

The idea: The world has a scarcity of software developers. Meanwhile, Africa has a growing young population. Training software developers in Africa who US and European firms can hire taps into that human capital.

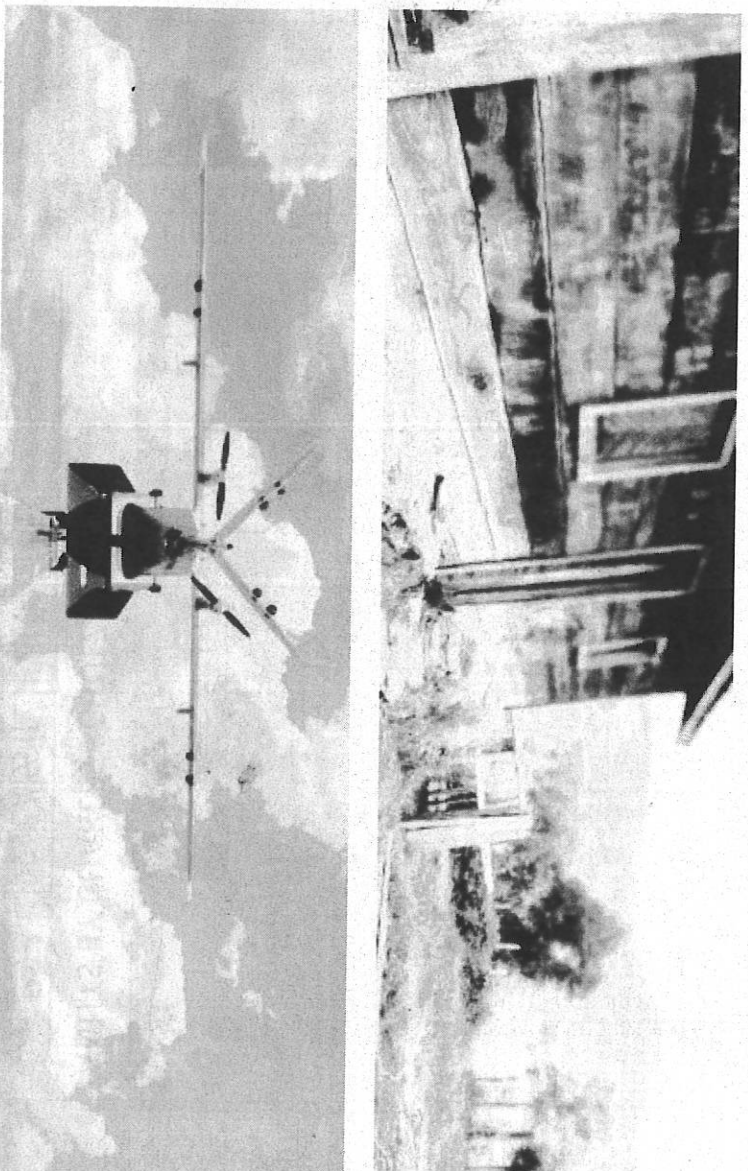
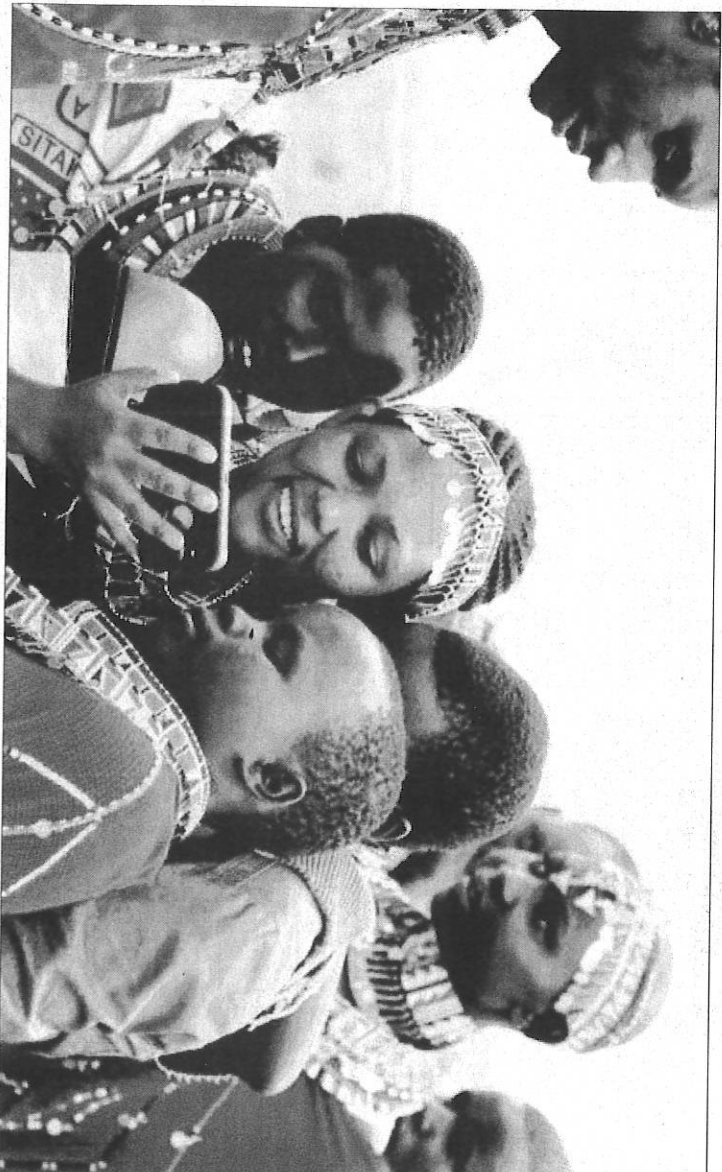
The application: Andela is a startup company that trains developers in Nigeria and hires them out to global tech companies. The original idea was to teach people a practical skill and then use the money they make to pay for their education, Yin Aboyeji, one of the founders of Andela, explained to the Starta podcast.

What happened in 2017: In October Andela raised \$40m in funding, reports TechCrunch. The previous year it had raised \$24m from Mark Zuckerberg, reports Forbes.

What can we expect for 2018: There are rumours that it is going to open up in Egypt, according to iAfrican.

Making it easier to pay for things

The idea: Many people across Africa don't have bank accounts. Mobile money - sending money via

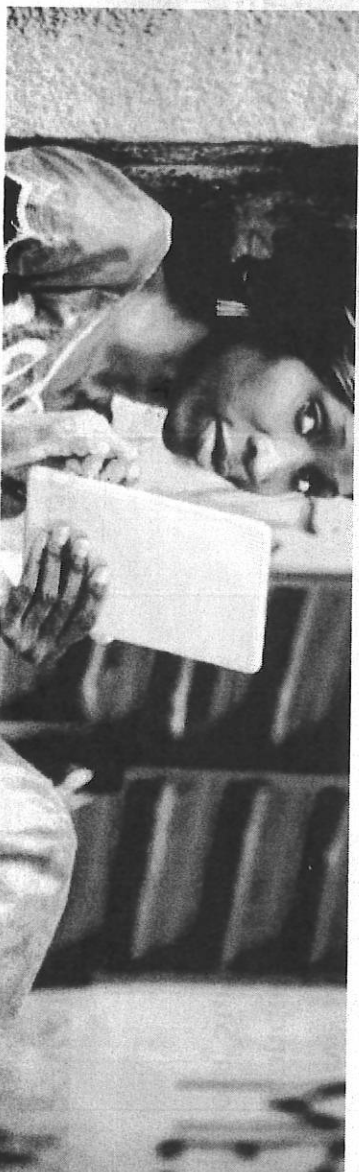


your phone - has already proved a very successful alternative to cash. Africa has become the global leader in mobile money with more than 100 million people having mobile money accounts in 2016, according to McKinsey research. Mobile financial services now include credit, insurance, and cross-border remittances. The problem is that there are too many different systems which do not always work with each other. This means lots of people in Africa can't pay for

products online. The application: Flutterwave is one of the new innovations coming through. It makes it easier for banks and businesses to process payments across Africa. It lets customers pay in their local currencies and allows people to send money from the US to a mobile money wallet, charging sellers a small service fee, which it shares with banks.

What happened in 2017: In the first quarter of 2017 Flutterwave processed \$444m in transactions across Nigeria, Ghana and Kenya, it told BBC. From the start the company has processed more than \$1.2bn in payments across 10 million transactions, reports CNN. The company received \$10m of funding from the US this year, CNN adds.

What can we expect for 2018: The new funding will be used "to hire more talent, build out our global operations and fuel rapid expansion of our organization



across Africa," Flutterwave says. With that, it hopes that more people in Africa can buy things they are not currently able to pay for, like on online retailer Amazon. As the firm's boss Yinoluwa Aboyeji puts it: "If we are successful, we might just inspire a new generation of Africans to flip the question from: 'What more can the world do for Africa?' to 'What more can Africa do for the world?'"

Getting things

delivered by drone

The idea: There is a global race for commercial drone deliveries of small packages, which have been restricted in the US and Europe because of aviation rules. In comparison, some parts of Africa, such as Rwanda, are welcoming drones. The combination of rural roads and vast amounts of land which is not on a flight path make parts of Africa perfect for developing delivery drones.

The application: The logistics company Zipline runs drones which can deliver small packages like blood, vaccines and antivenom.

What happened in 2017: The world's first drone port opened in Rwanda in October 2016 and Zipline announced it was going to expand to Tanzania.

What can we expect for 2018: Zipline's Tanzania operation is expected to begin in Dodoma, in early 2018, reports Forbes. It will have four distribution centres across Tanzania, offering a range of medical supplies. Forbes says this will be the largest drone delivery system in the world.



Turning the lights

on when you're off-grid

The idea: National grids are struggling to provide for the people who have access to them, let alone extend to the people in hard-to-reach areas. Renewable energy presents an opportunity for people to create energy nearer home.

The application: Peg Africa is one of the companies that sells solar panels to people who are not on the national electricity grid. Solar panels are just too expensive for lots of people so they pay it back in instalments through small payments on mobile money when they want electricity.

What happened in 2017: PEG Africa raised \$13.5m, reports Technorati.

What can we expect for 2018: PEG Africa is expanding in Ghana and Ivory Coast.