

THE



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What I want for Christmas

Anna Murphy's essential fashion gift list **Times2**

How sailing helped us after cancer struck

Times Christmas Appeal News, page 27



TIMES PHOTOGRAPHER JACK HILL

In full voice During the Christmas season the choristers of St Paul's Cathedral, London, will sing to more than 20,000 people, half at services from December 23 to 25

BBC gives all religions primetime TV boost

Kaya Burgess
Religious Affairs Correspondent

The BBC is to increase its primetime coverage of non-Christian festivals such as Eid, Passover and Diwali to address concerns that it does not reflect British society.

Under proposals to inject more religious themes into mainstream TV and radio, viewers will see the protagonists of popular dramas grappling with dilemmas caused by their faith, and Hindu, Muslim, Sikh and Jewish holy days will be marked on popular programmes including *The One Show* and Chris Evans's Radio 2 breakfast show.

The BBC report, seen by *The Times* and published today, comes after a year-long review that was told that people of all faiths were "often absent, poorly presented or satirised". The changes will be made despite research showing that a record 53 per cent of Britons say they have no religion.

There will be primetime documentaries on religious and ethical issues featuring celebrity hosts and guests. The BBC newsroom will expand its global religious affairs team and the Thought for the Day slot on Radio 4 will be more closely linked to news items. More women, young people and figures from a wider range of religions will be invited to contribute.

Lord Hall of Birkenhead, director-general of the BBC, said its commitment to covering Christianity would be undiminished as the corporation would find innovative ways to cover Christmas and Easter. He added: "[The plans] will ensure the BBC better reflects the UK, the world and the role that religion plays in everyday life. They will also raise understanding of the impact religion has on decisions made at home and abroad."

The BBC Religion and Ethics Review consulted more than 150 faith leaders and experts including the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Chief Rabbi and senior Muslim figures as well as "secular belief groups" including Humanists UK. It heard complaints that BBC programmes "don't reflect the everyday role of faith or [the] diversity of communities in mainstream drama and comedy". The corporation has also

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Threat to rape inquiries as second trial collapses

● Police withheld key evidence for four months ● Met announces review of every live investigation

David Brown
Chief News Correspondent
Fiona Hamilton, George Sandeman

Britain's biggest police force launched a review of evidence in all current rape and sex abuse cases last night as a second case within a week collapsed.

The Metropolitan Police said it would assess whether it was obeying laws on disclosure in hundreds of potential prosecutions after officers failed to divulge evidence proving that a girl making rape allegations was a liar.

Isaac Itiary, 25, spent four months in jail awaiting trial until all charges were

dropped yesterday when it was revealed that police had text messages from the girl's mobile that fundamentally undermined the prosecution case.

On Friday *The Times* revealed the collapse of the trial of Liam Allan, 22, a criminology student accused of rape, after a two-year ordeal. Police had failed to disclose texts from a woman that showed she had lied and proved Mr Allan's innocence.

Detective Constable Mark Azariah, 37, the investigating officer in both rape cases, remains on full duty in the sexual offences investigation unit. He has been a police officer since at least 2009.

The cases are an embarrassment for Cressida Dick, the Met commissioner, and the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS). They will increase pressure for a full inquiry into claims that police are "unconsciously biased" against men accused of rape and that there is a lack of funding for defence lawyers, risking miscarriages of justice.

Mr Itiary, from Walworth, southeast London, was charged in July with six counts of sexual activity with a child between November 2016 and May this year, two counts of rape and one count of making indecent photographs. The girl was aged 14 and 15 at the time of the

alleged offences and the prosecution applied for Mr Itiary to be remanded in custody while police prepared evidence because he was considered to be a risk to the public. Mr Itiary, who was due to stand trial next month, said that he believed the girl was 19.

The defence asked for details of the girl's text messages in September but they were provided only this week. They showed that she routinely posed as a 19-year-old. All charges were dropped at an emergency hearing at Inner London crown court after Mr Itiary's barrister, Mary Aspinall-Miles, **Continued on page 2, col 3**

IN THE NEWS

Warships withdrawn

Britain has no major warships on operations anywhere in the world for the first time in living memory in what has been described as a "strategic embarrassment". **Page 4**

Council tax to rise

Households face council tax rises of more than £100 a year on average after the prime minister raised the cap on charges to relieve pressure on local services. **Page 8**

Terror plot foiled

Four men have been arrested by armed police in Sheffield and Derby on suspicion of planning an Isis-inspired attack that may have targeted Christmas shoppers. **Page 17**

Power struggle

Cyril Ramaphosa, the ANC's new president, is fighting to influence key positions in South Africa's ruling party as he seeks the early exit of President Zuma. **Page 36**

Bitcoin hack attack

The collapse of a digital currency exchange after an attack by hackers was said to have resulted in heavy losses and has heightened fears of a bitcoin bubble. **Page 47**

Six Nations blow

A potential six-week ban for Manu Tuilagi and injury setbacks for three other England rugby players have dealt a blow to Eddie Jones's Six Nations plans. **Page 76**