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Kuwait Times



THE FIRST DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 4, 2015

MUHARRAM 22, 1437 AH

www.kuwaittimes.net

Debt for social status - luxury goods' impact on Kuwait society



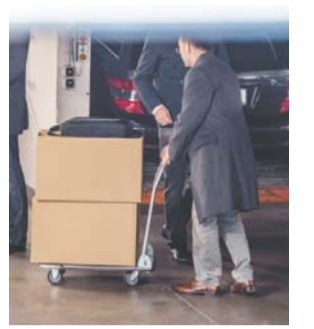
Gulf's private sector growth slows as price of oil falls



'Super-agers' study to reveal the secrets to staying young



German soccer HQ raided over 2006 World Cup payment



AMIR TO MAKE A 'LANDMARK' TRIP TO MOSCOW ON NOV 10

ECONOMIC TIES, REGIONAL ISSUES TOP AGENDA



Min 17°
Max 27°
High Tide 04:03 & 18:59
Low Tide 11:55

PAKISTANI KILLED IN A GHASTLY ACCIDENT



KUWAIT: A Pakistani man named Haidar was killed in a car crash on Fahaheel Road yesterday. According to security sources, he was allegedly speeding to sit for a supplementary exam and was fearful of being late. Due to over speeding and rainy conditions, he lost control of the vehicle. The crash was so severe that the car split into two.

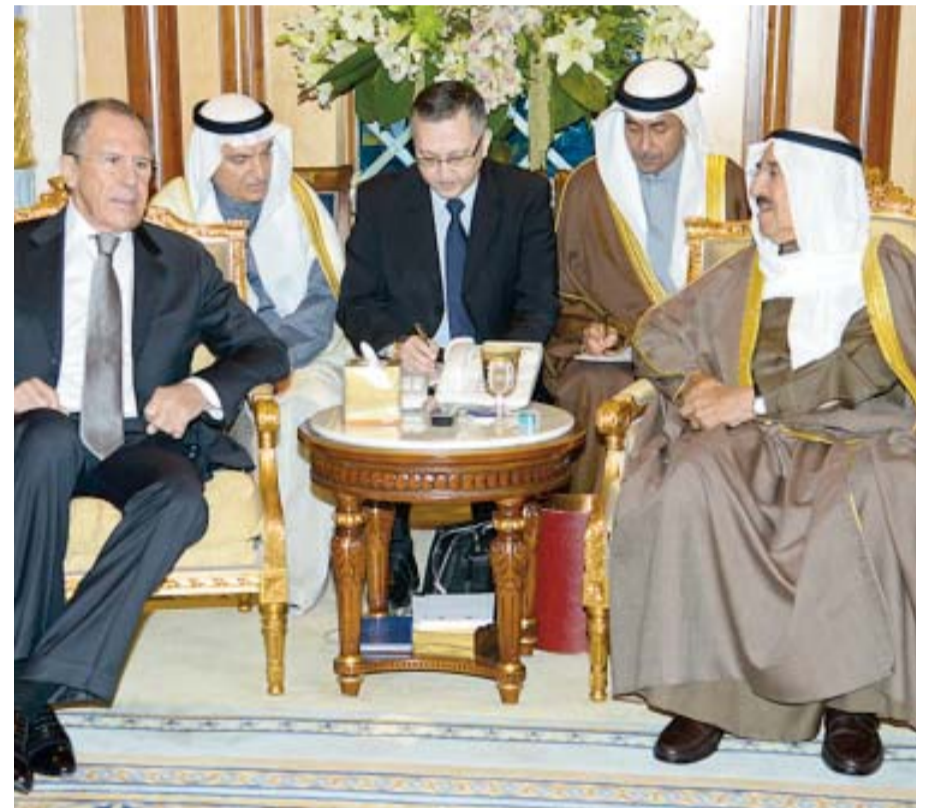
MOSCOW: The Kremlin announced yesterday that His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah will make an official visit to Russia upon an invitation from Russian President Vladimir Putin. This will be his first official visit to Russia since he assumed power in 2006. The visit - part of the top-level dialogue between the two friendly countries, is expected to give momentum to the bilateral ties in the economic and commercial fields and open new horizons for cooperation.

The Kuwaiti and Russian leaders will hold talks at the Black Sea resort city of Sochi on November 10, said a statement issued by the Russian presidential office. It added that the two sides will focus, among other things, on boosting economic and commercial ties, and on reviewing international issues, particularly those pertaining to the Middle East and North Africa.

Kuwait was the first Arabian Gulf state to establish diplomatic ties with the former Soviet Union in 1963 when the two countries opened their embassies in each other's capital city regardless of the then ideological considerations, and regional and international polarizations. Kuwait and Moscow showed interest in strengthening their friendship in the early years of the 20th century when the world's major powers were vying for the legacy of the Ottoman Empire.

Cables and letters exchanged by the Russian consuls general in Baghdad and Istanbul between 1908 and 1922 in the run-up to the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, indicate that the Russians had an eye on Kuwait and neighboring countries. The Russian naval ships called in Kuwaiti seaports and were warmly welcomed

Continued on Page 13



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives the Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov in Bayan Palace. — KUNA

MPS CLASH OVER IRAN AMID HEATED DEBATE

MP CALLS FOR AN END TO RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

KUWAIT: The first National Assembly working session in the new term got underway yesterday with fireworks over Iran as Shiite and Sunni MPs clashed over the Iran-linked terror cell and Tehran's relations with Kuwait. MPs Faisal Al-Kundari, Askar Al-Enezi and others were angered by remarks made by Shiite MP Faisal Al-Duwaisan about Iran and the alleged terrorist cell accused of plotting with Iran and Lebanese Shiite militia Hezbollah to carry out attacks on Kuwait.

Duwaisan praised the level of national unity following the June suicide bombing against the Shiite mosque, killing 26 worshippers but added that unity disappeared after the busting of the Iran-linked cell. He criticized the role played by the media claiming that the government let newspapers use unauthentic sources for their news on the issue. He said there are people who are attempting to involve Kuwait into unnecessary battles and criticized some statements made at public rallies.

He said this is not good for Kuwait and wondered why the government has remained silent. MP Kundari said that Duwaisan was attempting to simplify the impact of the Iran-linked cell. Duwaisan then accused Kundari of trying to trigger a sectarian debate. MP Enezi said he cannot

accept that some MPs exploit the sectarian feelings at the expense of national issues. At this stage, Enezi and Duwaisan exchanged heated arguments about relations with Iran with the latter insisting that he did not speak about Iran in that way.

Enezi and a number of other MPs said they wanted a clarification from the Amiri Diwan about remarks made on whether Iran is a friendly nation. Twenty-five Kuwaitis and an Iranian are on trial on charges of plotting with Iran and Hezbollah to carry out attacks on Kuwait. Islamist MP Hamdan Al-Abzemi also clashed with Shiite MP Abdulhameed Dashti over Dashti's alleged campaign against Kuwait abroad. Dashti denied the allegations.

MP Abdullah Al-Turaiji, meanwhile said that investigations have proved that all explosives used in the mosque bombing and those busted with the terror cell came from abroad and accordingly the government must raise border protection and customs inspection procedures. He said that investigations have shown that an Iranian diplomat at Tehran's embassy in Kuwait was the supervisor of the cell and this diplomat has been deported.

The heated arguments came during the debate over the Amiri address made at the opening of



KUWAIT: Kuwait Interior Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Sabah (top) and Kuwaiti Minister of Justice Yaqoub Al-Sanea attend a parliament session at the Abdullah Al-Salem hall in Kuwait's National Assembly yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

the National Assembly term last week. During his speech, MP Duwaisan criticized what he described as criticism against Christians in Kuwait for barring them from getting Kuwaiti citizenship. He said this must be rectified.

Continued on Page 13

QAEDA CALLS FOR LONE WOLF ATTACKS AGAINST THE WEST

WASHINGTON: Al-Qaeda leader Ayman Al-Zawahiri has called for lone wolf attacks against Western countries, in particular America, and praised recent Palestinian attacks against Israelis. Zawahiri spoke in a video released on Twitter and published and translated by US-based SITE, which monitors violent extremist websites. SITE noted that the video was broadcast on Twitter, on Sunday, rather than on extremist websites as is usually the case.

"The first matter is striking the West and specifically America in its own home, and attacking their interests that are spread everywhere," Zawahiri said, according to SITE. "The supporters of Israel must pay with their blood and their economy." As examples of

lone wolf attacks, he cited the 2013 Boston Marathon bombers Tamerlan and Dzhokhar Tsarnaev. Their attack with pressure cooker bombs killed three people and wounded 264.

The Al-Qaeda leader hailed the past month's attacks by Palestinians against Israelis in Jerusalem and elsewhere in Israel and the West Bank. He also repeated an appeal first launched in September for jihadists to unite from Turkey to North Africa, despite his rejection of the caliphate proclaimed by the Islamic State group, which controls large swathes of territory in Iraq and Syria. A US-led coalition of countries has been bombing IS positions since August 2004.— AFP

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KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem and senior legislators. —KUNA photos

AMIR RECEIVES SENIOR LEGISLATORS

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah yesterday received at Bayan Palace, National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem and members of the Parliament's Bureau of the fourth session of the 14th legislative term. The Bureau members who were presented at the Amir's diwan were the National Assembly secretary Adel Al-Kharafi, the supervisor Abdullah Al-Tamimi, chairman of the parliamentary committee of legal and legislative affairs Mubarak Al-Hrais, chairman of the financial and economic affairs commission Faisal Al-Shayea, Chairman of the priorities committee Dr Yousef Al-Zalzalah and the par-

liament secretary general Allam Al-Kanderi. The delegation visited His Highness the Amir on the occasion of the legislator's appointments to serve in these ranking posts.

Earlier, His Highness the Amir received His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

Separately, His Highness the Crown Prince received speaker Ghanem and members of the Parliament's Bureau of the fourth session of the 14th legislative term. His Highness also received Amiri

Diwan Advisor and President of the International Islamic Charitable Organization (IICO) Dr Abdullah Al-Maatouq, His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad and Information Minister, State Minister for Youth Affairs Sheikh Salman Sabah Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah.

In other news, His Highness the Amir sent a cable of congratulations to the President of the Republic of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, congratulating the president on success of the parliamentary electoral process. His Highness the Crown Prince and His Highness the Prime Minister sent similar cables to President Erdogan. —KUNA



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem and senior legislators.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets Amiri Diwan Advisor Dr Abdullah Al-Maatouq

BRITISH, EU INVESTORS URGED TO DIRECT CAPITAL TO KUWAIT

PLAN SET TO ATTRACT DIRECT FOREIGN INVESTMENTS: MINISTER

LONDON: British and European Union (EU) investors are welcome in Kuwait to contribute to the country's ambitious plan to diversify national economy, said Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah. Kuwait has set an integrated plan to attract direct foreign investments (FDI), in a bid to increase contribution of the non-petroleum sectors to 60 percent of the GDP, Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah said in a pre-recorded video address to the opening of a conference on investment awareness on Kuwait 2015 that was started in London yesterday.

The country aims to enhance the scientific research, and to raise its share in the GDP to 1 percent by 2020, he said, noting that boosting the flow of FDI into Kuwait would help attract modern technology, that will in turn secure economic diversification on the long-run. FDI can

also boost exports and consolidate competitiveness of small and medium-size enterprises (SMEs).

The Kuwaiti government has issued the proper legislations to back up the national development plan for diversifying sources of national income, Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah said, referring to the Kuwaiti qualified manpower that can cope with economic developments at home.

Legal privileges

The cabinet affairs minister urged businessmen and investors around the globe to make the utmost of the legal privileges offered by the Kuwaiti government in all sectors, education, transport, housing, health, tourism communication, media, renewable energy and environment.

He said that organizing the conference in London gives an impetus to bilateral ties, refer-

ring to the last state visit by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to Britain which contributed a lot to the 'historical relations.'

Meanwhile, the British Ambassador to Kuwait Mathew Lodge reiterated his country's support to help Kuwait implement its development plan which will allow the country to promote its economy and diversify sources of income. He added that the British government encourages businessmen to make the best of privileges offered to investors in Kuwait. Lodge noted that he had seen for himself how the Kuwaiti government is hard at work to improve the investment environment and streamline executive procedures for projects.

Political stability

In the meantime, chief of Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority (KAA) Abdulrahman Al-Nimesh said that for an economy to prosper, there need be an environment of political stability, bolstered by laws protecting investors' investments. Addressing the conference, Nimesh said the authority he heads is a safety valve for insuring lucrative and safe investment in Kuwait for foreign investors.

He said the KAA watches carefully all foreign direct investments in the country with the view to give the investors the peace of mind that their investments are well-protected through Kuwait's multiplicity of government oversight agencies and legislations favoring foreign investment. He affirmed the fact that the court system in the country is well-poised to handle with rigorous fairness all cases involving foreign investors and their rights and privileges.

He further said that KAA is working hard to see that new laws are enacted in favor of attracting foreign investors to the Kuwaiti marketplace, such as a law on divulgence of public information to anyone and another on prevention of conflicts of interest. He told the conference that Kuwait is more than ready to attract foreign investors into its promising market, underling its strong willingness to protect foreign investors in every way possible.

Ambitious plan

Earlier, Kuwait Ambassador to United Kingdom Khaled Al-Dowaisan said that the Kuwaiti government has an ambitious plan for attracting foreign investments and easing restrictions needed for investors. Al-Dowaisan made his remarks during a dinner banquet, held Monday night in honor of the Kuwaiti delegation participating in the conference. The ambassador stressed on importance of expanding economic and commercial cooperation between the two sides, and the need to improve investment opportunities.

"Investments in infrastructure projects will support development in the non-oil sector and the Kuwaiti government recognizes the challenges in diversifying the economy and improving the indexes in trade and governance," Dowaisan added. The ambassador noted that the Kuwaiti government will strengthen direct foreign investment and considers it a main strategic target. —KUNA



KUWAIT: National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem received yesterday the visiting Foreign Minister of Bosnia and Herzegovina Igor Crnadak. The two sides discussed bilateral relations, current developments in the region and on the international arena, as well as ways to bolster relations in all areas. —KUNA

KUWAIT CALLS FOR SUPPORT OF LEBANON WHICH HAS ACCEPTED SYRIAN REFUGEES

GENEVA: Kuwait has called on the international community in front of the UN Human Rights council panel to support Lebanon in confronting challenges the Lebanese have been facing, namely "the extraordinary circumstances resulting from the Syrian crisis."

"We must take into consideration Lebanon's hosting of the Syrian refugees, whose number has exceeded a third of (the Lebanese) population, in addition to the country's ongoing ferocious fight against terrorism," stated Kuwait Permanent Representative at the UN and International Organizations, Ambassador Jamal Al-Ghunaim.

Ambassador Ghunaim added that Kuwait also called for sustaining support for human rights issues and backing humanitarian work. The ambassador noted that despite the huge challenges facing Lebanon, reports in the council here show progress, as well as efforts, at the



Jamal Al-Ghunaim

level of bolstering basic and human rights in the country. He singled out boosting rights of people of special cases, combating human trade, eradicating all forms of gender discrimination and child rights. —KUNA

ARAB DELEGATES PREPARE FOR RIYADH SUMMIT

CAIRO: Permanent delegates at the Arab League held a consultative meeting at the Arab League in Cairo to discuss preparations and arrangements for the fourth Arab-South America summit due in Riyadh between November 10-11.

In a keynote speech, the head of the meeting and Saudi delegate at the league Ahmad Qattan hoped that the Arab-South America summit would contribute to further promoting relations

between Arab countries and South America in political, economic and social fields.

Meanwhile, the head of the Arab League's America section Ibrahim Mohieddin said the meeting which was attended by Secretary-General Nabil Al-Araby will discuss logistical and technical preparations for the Riyadh Summit. The conferees will also consider topics and subjects put on the agenda of the Riyadh Summit. —KUNA



LONDON: Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah addresses the opening session of a conference on investment awareness on Kuwait 2015. —KUNA



British Ambassador to Kuwait Mathew Lodge speaks at the conference.



Kuwait Ambassador to United Kingdom Khaled Al-Dowaisan speaks during a dinner banquet held in honor of the Kuwaiti delegation participating in the conference.

KUWAIT AMBASSADOR REPRESENTS PREMIER AT ISLAMIC FORUM

KUALA LUMPUR: Kuwait Ambassador to Malaysia Saad Al-Asousi took part in the inaugural session of the Islamic Economic Forum's 11th session, representing His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. Ambassador Al-Asousi, in remarks after the opening session, expressed gratitude to the Malaysian Government for organizing "this important forum that discusses a lot of substantial economic issues concerning the Islamic states."

He lauded Malaysian Prime Minister

Najib Razak's opening statement in which he underscored necessity of supporting small, medium enterprise and investments in general in the Islamic countries. He expressed hope that the three-day forum would end with tangible results, considering that its logo calls for building a global robust and balanced economy. The forum, grouping states' leaders, decision makers and academics, tackles investment opportunities from an Islamic economic perspective. —KUNA



KUALA LUMPUR: Representative of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Ambassador to Malaysia Saad Al-Asousi attends the inaugural session of the Islamic Economic Forum. — KUNA

MAN KILLED OVER MONEY DISPUTES

FIREMAN INJURED WHILE SAVING CAT

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: An Indian man was arrested yesterday on charges of killing another man over money. The suspect confirmed that he killed the victim, Afghani, over financial disputes. The exact nature of the dispute was not immediately known. A Kuwaiti man had called police, saying that he found a man dead in front of his house in Saad Al-Abdullah. The caller said that the killer was his driver. The body was recovered by the coroner and the suspect was sent to concerned authorities.



A police man stands next to the dead body hidden behind a car at the scene.

Fireman injured

A firefighter was injured during an accident which happened when he tried to save a cat that was stuck in the middle of the road. The fireman, a captain, had rushed to the cat's aid at Fahaeel Highway when he was hit by a car. He was taken to the hospital and his condition was described as stable.



A firefighter who was injured while saving a cat yesterday.

Wife robbed

An Indian doctor told Daeya police that her husband robbed her. In her statements to police, the woman said that she received text messages saying that cash had been withdrawn from her bank account. When she called her husband, the man, also a doctor who works in public hospital confirmed that he made the cash withdrawals without her consent. A case was filed for investigations.

Robbery

A Bangladeshi man accused five persons, including a Lebanese man, of beating him and stealing KD 250 and a smart phone from him. The prosecution asked Hawally detectives to investigate the case.

Fatal fall

An Egyptian man fell to his death from a height in a building under construction in Bayan. A case was filed to investigate the circumstances of the incident.

Campaigns

Farwaniya fire prevention center carried out an inspection campaign over investment buildings, shops and malls, in addition to basements used as warehouses. Many violations were found such as failure to renew fire licenses, bad storage, closing emergency exits and exposed electric wires. Warnings were given to have these violations corrected.



A man arrested for stealing a car in Kabad.

Car thief caught

Jahra detectives found a stolen car and arrested the thief in Kabad. Police arrested three citizens in total, including the thief who had attempted to escape using the stolen car.

Visa violators arrested

Residency detectives arrested 13 people for violating residency laws during a surprise campaign at cafes in Salmiya. Meanwhile residency detectives arrested 11 Asians on similar charges. The detainees were sent to the proper authorities for further action.



Eleven suspects arrested yesterday with expired visas.



Thirteen people arrested without valid visas in Salmiya.

EGYPTIAN'S DEATH CASE: MAIN SUSPECT REMANDED IN CUSTODY

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: The public prosecution office yesterday decided to detain three citizens in a case involving a fight that took place in Hawally and left one Egyptian man dead. The three include the main suspect who drove the vehicle that ran over the victim. The prosecution also decided to release four other citizens and detain 4 Egyptians to be examined by the forensic medicine department.

Death penalty

The Criminal Court yesterday sentenced a Kuwaiti man to death after he was found guilty of murdering a citizen in Fintas. Another suspect was

sentenced to three years in prison in the same case.

Citizenship withdrawal

The government refused to justify its decision to withdraw former MP Abdullah Al-Barghash's citizenship before the Court of Appeal, and explained that it only withdrew the citizenship certificate of Barghash himself, and not of his family members. The court set the next hearing on November 11 to make its verdict.

Laws review

The constitutional court yesterday set a hearing to be held November 11 to review seven contests on amending the penal law number 16/1960,

the GCC unified customs law, Zakat law, shareholding companies, the anti-corruption authority, disclosure statement and domestic labor.

Smuggling foiled

The official spokesperson of the General Customs Department said that three smuggling cases were foiled at Kuwait International Airport yesterday, including a case in which an Asian woman was arrested who was hiding 10 kilograms of marijuana in her luggage. Meanwhile, an Asian man was arrested for hiding 250 grams of marijuana in a meat bag he brought with him, while a third Asian suspect was arrested for smuggling 2 kilograms of heroin in his clothes.

DEBT FOR SOCIAL STATUS: LUXURIOUS GOODS' NEGATIVE IMPACT ON SOCIETY

KUWAIT: Owning a luxurious watch, sporting the most recent footwear, or owning the latest in smartphone accessory might send a message of how well off an individual is; however, when debt comes in the picture, a very rudimentary question comes to mind "is it all worth it?"

Recently, Kuwaitis, and especially youth, have been driven to buy the most luxurious goods to impress their peers and social surrounding but this recent 'craze' in consumer culture had its social and economic impact on society. With the increase in consumer loans by 20.4 percent last July according to statistics by Kuwait Finance House (KFH) and the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) instructions to banks to keep such loans at a maximum of KD 15,000, it seems that the forcible and over purchase of luxurious goods had a negative influence on the social and economic norms in Kuwait.

In interviews with KUNA, a number of citizens touched on the subject expressing various views on the necessity of buying luxurious items. Health Ministry employee Saad Ismail stressed that buying the most expensive items will guarantee him that the goods will last longer. Much cheaper goods and 'knock-offs' wear off quickly, said Ismail who added that he spends his money on highly priced goods for their durability.

Echoing a somewhat similar view, Kuwait University (KU) student Sarah Mohammad said that she was quite comfortable buying the latest signature goods, affirming that this reflected her personality and social status amongst her friends and family members.

Government employee Budour Mohammad said that she does spend a lot on buying pricy items and affirmed that she would never take a loan to cover her expenses. Budour Mohammad said that she refused to follow "what is hip" at the current moment, affirming that she only buys goods when she needs them.

Similarly, private sector Mohammad Shaker said that

buying expensive goods was not on the top of his priorities, adding he would never get a loan from a bank to buy any product. With the debate the controversial matter forever continuing; common sense would dedicate that buying an overpriced car through loans just to impress people around will mostly and surely end up with borrowers 'swamped in debt.' —KUNA

US ARMY PARTNERS WITH KUWAIT AMIRI GUARD FOR TRAINING

CAMP BUEHRING: US Army soldiers joined forces with Kuwait's Amiri Guard for training exercises in the country, the US Army announced. The exercises focuses on urban assault tactics, with an added emphasis on interoperability and readiness during combat. Units were partnered to work on building and maintaining a joint response force. First Lt James Greene, a platoon leader with 1st Battalion, 68th Armor Regiment and 3/4 Armored Brigade Combat Team said it was important for the two forces to work together.

"You never know where or what our next battle will be, and when we strengthen our strategic partners we strengthen the regional security," Greene said in a statement. "Knowing their tactics, techniques and procedures allows us to integrate better with them if we fight alongside them."

The training involved assaulting a building, and clearing each room within it. Amiri Guard snipers were tasked with rushing into a combat zone and engaging targets downrange. The United States maintains a strong military alliance with Kuwait, with the country designated as a major non-NATO ally. —UPI

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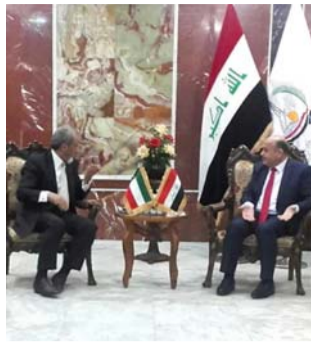
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In Brief

KUWAIT CONSULATE IN BASRA KEEN ON TIES

BASRA: Kuwait's Ambassador to Iraq Ghassan Al-Zawawi said Monday the Consulate of State of Kuwait in Basra was keen on providing facilities to traders from both countries to exchange expertise in different domains. Zawawi made the remarks during a meeting with Basra's Governor Majed Al-Nasrawi, as part of the two sides' desire to further promote economic cooperation. Nasrawi said the Governorate was keen on fully cooperating with the consulate, and commended efforts of Consulate General Yusuf Al-Sabbagh to communicate with the officials in Basra. — KUNA



HEALTH MINISTRY INVITES CONSULTANTS

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Health (MoH) announced that it will host in November international consultants in many specialties to provide advice and carry out major surgeries. The consultants are specialized in many domains like plastic surgery, heart, skin diseases, muscles, chemotherapy, ear, nose and throat, nuclear medicine, neurology, spinal cord, tumors and physical therapy, the MoH said in a statement. — KUNA



CHIEF OF STAFF MEETS ATTACHE

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Army Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Mohammad Khaled Al-Khuder yesterday held talks with Bulgarian military attaché Colonel Vasil Stankov, who is resident in Doha. During the meeting, Khuder and Stankov discussed top military topics of common concern, the Ministry of Defense Directorate of Moral Guidance and Public Relations said in a statement. Khuder emphasized mutual interest in promoting the deep-rooted bilateral ties, it added. —KUNA



Photo

of the day



KUWAIT: A plane flies through the clouds. Kuwait is expected to continue experiencing rainy weather through the weekend according to weather forecasts. — KUNA

SEMINAR DISCUSSES WOMEN'S RIGHTS

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: Preparations to create a civil society in Kuwait started in the 1960s and have since been promoted through the active efforts of civil society organizations as well as responsible citizens, a government official said. Minister of Justice, Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Yaqoub Al-Sane made those statements during a seminar titled "Women's role in politics" which was hosted by the Constitutional Unity Bloc (CUB) last Monday in Al-Salam. "We are capable of achieving the civil society goals, and women must be involved in this process," he said. "Kuwaiti women are known for their distinguished role in this regard."

Larger participation

Meanwhile, former MP Salwa Al-Jassar criticized the lack of programs that advocate women's rights in Kuwait, which she said had stopped after the election season. "It was an achievement on a global level when four women were elected into the National Assembly (in 2009)" she said, noting that the officials should allow for a larger participation of women leaders in the government; for example by appointing at least four female ministers.

From bad to worse

In the meantime, lawyer Najla Al-Naqqi said that the lack of forums which talk about the role of women in Kuwait was shameful. She stressed the need for political decisions that improve the level of women's participation in the parliament as well as in taking leadership positions. She also highlighted the importance of changing the current mechanism "because things are going from bad to worse," saying that this was the only way for women to gain their political rights. Naqqi also mentioned the example of Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him) who used to consult with his wives with matters pertaining with Islam. Furthermore, Naqqi made it clear that the Kuwaiti



KUWAIT: Minister of Justice, Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Yaqoub Al-Sane attends the seminar. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Constitution guarantees equality between men and women "but we live in a society that looks down upon women, although women played a significant role in Kuwait before the discovery of oil. When their husbands left for pearl diving women stayed at home looking after their families."

Cultural influence

Also, Dr Hala Al-Hamidi said that history shows that Kuwaiti women participated in many domains, especially the political ones, but the actual partici-

tion came almost ten years ago. "A lot has been achieved during this period, but (women's) share has been decreasing in the last two years," she said. Hamidi said that "women were still under the influence of the cultural heritage and the nature of the society. In addition to that, there are many people who work against women, putting hurdles in their political way. It is clear that there is a lack of political parties that belong to women. This matter will give women greater political success and emerging opportunities for those who have the potential."



Former MP Salwa Al-Jassar (fourth from left) speaks at the seminar.

THUNDER STORMS EXPECTED THIS WEEKEND

US EMBASSY WARNS OF 'POTENTIAL FOR HEAVY RAINS'

KUWAIT: Rainy weather is expected to calm down today before picking up tomorrow evening and continues until Sunday, a Kuwaiti meteorologist said yesterday. The Sudanese depression starts approaching Kuwait tomorrow morning, which results in thunderstorms that increase gradually the following day, Essa Ramadan said in a statement.

He urged fishermen to avoid going to the sea during the weekend. The Interior Ministry issued a statement meanwhile warning people to take caution due to the unstable weather conditions and call the emergency number (112) whenever necessary.

Meanwhile, the United States Embassy issued a message to inform US citizens in Kuwait that the Kuwait Meteorological Department has forecast the potential for heavy rains this week, particularly Tuesday through Saturday. "Heavy rains can quickly overwhelm the drainage systems in the country, which can result in flash floods, deep standing water, power outages, and road closures. US citizens living and traveling in Kuwait should take this information into account and be aware that localized weather conditions throughout Kuwait could change without warning," the statement reads.

"This time of year, US citizens living in or traveling to the area should routinely monitor local weather reports and follow directions from local officials. Updated information is available in English from the Kuwait Meteorological Department website.

"In the unlikely event of a weather-related emergency, be sure to locate

shelter, monitor media reports, and follow all official instructions. Carry your travel documents at all times (eg, US passport, birth certificate, picture IDs, etc) or secure them in a safe, waterproof location. The Embassy encourages US citizens to also contact friends and family with updates on your whereabouts in the event of an emergency. Additional information on storm preparedness may be found on the 'Natural Disasters' page of the Bureau of Consular Affairs website or at Ready.gov.

"We strongly recommend that US citizens traveling to or residing in Kuwait enroll in the Department of State's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP). STEP enrollment gives you the latest security updates and makes it easier for the US Embassy to contact you in an emergency. If you do not have Internet access, enroll directly with the US Embassy. Updated information on travel in Kuwait may be obtained from the Department of State by calling 1-888-407-4747 within the United States and Canada, or from overseas, 1-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8 am to 8 pm, Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except US and local holidays).

"Please continue to monitor the Embassy's website for updated information. Please consult the Country Specific Information page for Kuwait, available on the Bureau of Consular Affairs website. For any emergencies involving US citizens, please contact the American Citizens Services (ACS) Unit at the US Embassy in Kuwait," the statement concludes.

KUWAIT, BOSNIA DISCUSS BOOSTING BILATERAL TIES

KUWAIT: First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah met Monday with visiting Foreign Minister of Bosnia and Herzegovina Igor Crnadak and his accompanying delegation at the ministry's headquarters.

During the meeting, the two sides discussed ways to bolster bilateral relations in various fields, joint coordination towards regional and international updates, and issues of joint interest, the ministry said in a statement.

Afterwards, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled held a dinner banquet in honor of Crnadak and his accompanying delegation.

The meeting was attended by Deputy Foreign Minister Ambassador Khaled Al-Jarallah, Assistant Foreign Minister for Europe Affairs Ambassador Waleed Al-Khubaizi, Assistant Deputy Foreign Minister for the Minister's office Ambassador Sheikh Dr. Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah, Assistant Foreign Minister for Protocol Affairs Ambassador Dhari AlAjran, Assistant Foreign Minister for the Deputy Foreign Minister's Office Ambassador Ayham Al-Omar, Deputy Assistant Minister for the Minister's office Saleh AlLoughani, and Kuwait Ambassador to Bosnia and Herzegovina Nasser Al-Mutairi. — KUNA

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SEOUL: Kuwaiti and South Korean business leaders are pictured in a group photo. — KUNA

KUWAITI, KOREAN BUSINESS LEADERS DISCUSS LONG-TERM PARTNERSHIP

SEOUL: Kuwaiti and South Korean business leaders met in Seoul yesterday to discuss promoting bilateral trade and direct investment. The 2nd Kuwaiti-Korean Business Forum was held in the World Trade Center Seoul (WTC Seoul), and attended by representatives of the relevant government bodies in both countries.

The Kuwaiti delegation to the forum was led by Deputy Chairman of the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) Abdulwahab Al-Wazzan. It included Deputy Chairman of the Public Authority for Roads and Land Transport Saoud Al-Naqi, Director of Kuwait Metro Project Eng. Manal Al-Duwaisan, head of investor services at the Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority (KDI-PA) Mohammad Al-Sabbagh.

Others included Kuwait Industries Union (KIU) Board Chairman Hussein Al-Kharafi, KCCI assistant head for public relations and Kuwaiti diplomats in South Korea, besides a host of businessmen from both sides.

The Korean side included officials of the Korea International Trade Association and representatives of 50 firms, led by Hyundai Heavy Industries Chairman Kil Seon Choi and President and CEO of Daelim Industrial Chul Kyoong Lee. During the forum, the Kuwaiti delegation reviewed infrastructure projects comprised in the Kuwait 2035 vision, as well as the facilities and privileges offered through the new investment law, 116/2013, and by the Public Private Partnership Projects Authority.

Foreign investors

Sabbagh briefed the meeting on the large facilities the law presents to foreign investors. An investment license is issued in 30 days once an application is submitted, he said. Meanwhile, Kharafi said that the event aims in the first place to build a long-term partnership. Talking to KUNA, Kuwait's Ambassador to South Korea Jassim Al-Bedaiwi, referred to the 2nd business forum as a success, in terms

of participants and the key topics tackled. Bedaiwi pointed to the vital role of the private sector to promote bilateral ties. This 2nd forum is a natural flow of the first one held during the official visit to Kuwait by President Park Geun-hye last March, Ambassador of the Republic of Korea to Kuwait Shin Boonam said. He added that Kuwait's five-year term plan offers attractive investment opportunities to Korean firms that have already obtained deals worth \$16 billion till 2016. Further deals worth about \$30 billion are expected in for 2017.

KCCI's Wazzan said that the business leaders and government officials' visit to South Korea was impressive. Meetings with Korean counterparts showed high interest in investing in Kuwait's grand projects, he said. Bilateral trade hit \$19 billion in 2014, \$16 billion of which went for Korea's imports of Kuwaiti oil. This has placed Korea atop the list of world importers of Kuwaiti crude. Kuwait is also a major destination for Korean companies. — KUNA

UN WORKSHOP FOCUSED ON HOUSING, URBAN PLANNING

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: The UN Human Settlements Organization (HABITAT) organized yesterday at United Nation House in Mishref a workshop for GCC regional strategic policy titled 'For a better Urban Future'. The workshop aimed to review and re-evaluate the goals and identify challenges facing the international efforts to promote urban development in GCC.

Mona Rashidi representative of Arab Towns Organization (ATO), called for collaborative action. "This requires uniting and coordinating efforts to draw a roadmap for future action to create a better life for citizens. She shed light on the growing challenges facing the GCC due to the steadily growth of people who migrate to urban cities," she said.

Rashidi noted that GCC countries needed to exchange experiences in order to make the studies useful for other countries. "We have now more than 400 million who are in need of housing, and we should be prepared to make new homes for them. Residents of new urban communities must be provided with all proper services," she said.

Meanwhile, Tarek El Sheikh,



KUWAIT: Tarek El Sheikh, President of the United Nations Human Settlements Program speaks during the workshop. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

President of the United Nations Human Settlements Program said that the workshop aimed to identify the different experiences in the design of policies and strategies for housing. It was also intended to shed light on the multiple roles played by government to provide housing and create a suitable environment for the citizens so they can build their homes.

He added that GCC countries must learn how to take advantage of mar-

ket studies to draw strategies to enable the private sector housing construction and the introduction of the principle of partnership when making decisions on housing.

The workshop focused on urban planning issues that are currently present in GCC countries, and worked through the Gulf Consultative Human Settlements Committee to raise awareness to serve the urban communities in the Gulf region.

KUWAIT, EGYPT INK COOPERATIVE PROTOCOLS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

CAIRO: The Kuwaiti and Egyptian ministries of higher education have signed three protocols for bilateral cooperation in the fields of higher education and scientific research. The signing ceremony, which was held at the Kuwaiti Embassy in Cairo, was attended by educational officials from both sides, Kuwaiti Ambassador Salam Al-Zamanan and chief of the Kuwaiti Cultural Office in Egypt Freih Al-Enezi.

Speaking to KUNA following the ceremony, Enezi stressed the significance of promoting and reinforcing scientific relations among all Arab countries. He said that the signing of the protocols would lead to closer scientific and academic cooperation between Kuwait and Egypt.

Meanwhile, the Kuwaiti ambassador to Egypt, also speaking to KUNA, said Kuwait and Egypt have distinguished relations at all levels, especially in the educational domain.

He hailed the signing of the three protocols as a sign of strong cooperative and brotherly ties between both brotherly countries. — KUNA



CAIRO: Dean of the Higher Institute of Dramatic Arts Dr Fahd Al-Hajeri and Dean of the College of Arts at Alexandria University Dr Abbas Suleiman sign one of the agreements. — KUNA



Dean of the Higher Institute of Dramatic Arts Dr Fahd Al-Hajeri exchange agreements with Dean of the College of Arts at Ain Shams University Dr Suzan Al-Qelleni.



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Al-Qabas

EDUCATION WOES - PART 2

By Ahmad Al-Sarraf

As a continuation of yesterday's column, I say that until recently I shared Hamza's opinion that what Kuwait needs is education, education and also education! But the situation may not necessarily be that, though I admit that the education level in the state has become miserable to a dangerous point because of wrong policies. But if we suppose that residents of a house are complaining from extreme heat which keeps them from working, producing and sleeping, the solution is not only in buying some air conditioners and install them in the house, because the user's manual contains certain conditions that should be met to increase its efficiency, including closing windows, reducing sunlight coming into the house, and dim bright lights.

So, if we direct all state efforts towards providing the most prestigious education levels to students, and if we bring them the best teachers, and provide them with the highest scientific and classroom curricula, and provide them with excellent education environment, it is natural to suppose that we, few years later from now, will get outstanding students in their knowledge, manners, humanity and being less extreme religiously! Yet this is a dream that is far from reality. Those outstanding schools, and those brilliant teachers and modern curricula are not carrying out their mission in a separate environment from their society. Rather they are part of it, so how is it possible to create a good student that loves his country and knowledge, while he lives in an environment that is increasingly poisoned with the diseases of backward societies?

How can we get a university graduate such as a doctor, engineer or something else, while he is confident that without wasta (connections) from an influential person, minister a MP, he will not get the job he deserves, this is if he found a job to start with! So, the matter is more dangerous than believing that we develop education. The problem is more complicated.

We first are in need of an affirmative action law that forbids discrimination between citizens on the basis of ethnicity, color, religion or sect when they apply for a job, and there is a similar law in the United States. We are also, in my opinion, in need of cleaning the education system from all those belonging to religious political parties.

The issue also requires serious work without delay to eradicate all forms of discrimination and cleanse government departments. Also, there is a need to create a good working environment that relies on clean and free competition in accepting people for jobs and leave the 'wasta system' behind.

—Translated by Kuwait Times



Al-Jarida



Al-Anbaa

MIDEAST DIVISION: COINCIDENCE OR CONSPIRACY

By Sami Al-Nisf

I was recently interviewed by Arabia TV Channel's Montaha Al-Romhi on her interesting talk show, 'Panorama' to talk about the fall of Middle East countries and whether it was the result of conspiracies plotted by major international and regional powers that have aspirations in sharing our nations' fortunes, or if there were any other justifications behind the major regional incidents. She also wondered whether the old Mideast maps would ever return.

The answer was that most politicians, thinkers, educated people and peoples in general, usually view major historical incidents like world wars with one of two main perspectives. The first one is the 'Accidental View of History' which argues that incidents accidentally take place without any planning or as a result of ill planning, stupidity and the madness of some leaders. According to this theory, no one can do anything to stop disasters and wars because they are spontaneous and impulsive.

The second is the 'Conspiratorial View of History' which argues that such incidents take place as a result of meticulously planning them in advance and that everything has a doer and Satanic conspiracy without the public knowing

anything about such plans or conspiracies; which are planned and executed by leaders and promoted by thinkers and hired members of the media.

My answer on the show was that, even with the assumption of conspiring against our nations, such conspiracies were plotted from within by so-called 'revolutionary regimes' that had been oppressing their peoples and invading them before other countries did. Thus, they paved the way to dividing them by destroying their economies and starting civil wars during and after their reigns with the help of their intelligence officers who made allies with various terrorist organizations and militias. Therefore, all the destruction and fragmentation taking place in the Middle East was the direct result of their oppressive revolutionary leaders, and nobody else.

Finally, I believe that other countries might have benefited from those leaders' stupidity and mistakes. I also believe that there is no way back to the old Middle East and that we should therefore, whether we like it or not, accept the new Middle East and the birth of new countries with minimal blood shedding and destruction.

—Translated by Kuwait Times



Al-Anbaa

MUBADER

By Dekheil Al-Hajri

Someone who takes initiatives is the most effective in his society. Such a person would spend time, money and exert effort and use all potentials to carry out significant tasks. Using his/her strong will, such a person would also overcome personal wishes and weaknesses that may hinder achieving goals. He would plan and take the initiative to execute such plans without leaving oneself as a tool used by others to achieve their own goals.

Major industrial countries worldwide have embraced and nurtured people with initiatives out of their belief that countries never prosper without such people who form the fuel of both economy and industry.

One of those effective Kuwaitis with initiatives is Abrar Al-Masoud, the founder of the Mubader Initiative who, with absolute personal effort and without any govern-

Masoud managed to convince ministries, governmental and private bodies with the idea and its impact on Kuwait and on the entrepreneurs with small projects.

mental support, managed to launch this wonderful idea that enabled so many young people to come up with new projects and introduce them to the state and to investors.

With her strong will, Masoud managed to convince ministries, governmental and private bodies with the idea and its impact on Kuwait and as on the entrepreneurs with small projects. Those entrepreneurs had been seeking nurture and care for their projects and someone who would believe in their potentials and the feasibility of achieving success, yet had unfortunately found all doors locked before those projects because of bureaucracy.

Masoud was the only hope they had after Allah, and managed to open all doors and smash high walls for them. With super efforts, she managed to get those entrepreneurs and governmental and private officials together under one roof to discuss their initiatives and probe the problems they are facing in the course of bringing their projects to light.

—Translated by Kuwait Times

Crime

Report

HASHISH FOUND AT BORDER

KUWAIT: Customs detectives found one kilogram of Hashish near the inspection area of Abdali border crossing. Detectives believe that a person had disposed of the drugs upon entry to Kuwait. They are working on identifying the suspect.

Fugitive caught

A fugitive defended himself by spraying detectives with water when he was being arrested. The man was ultimately arrested and sent to concerned authorities to face charges.

Theft

A citizen told Qairawan police that a man who rents an apartment he owns stole ceramic pieces that were located in front of the house. He gave police details of the suspect, and detectives took over the case.

Documents found

Fahaheel policemen kept 34 Civil IDs and ATM Cards, three birth certificates, and 5 Saudi and Kuwaiti passports that a pedestrian found near a street. It is believed that a thief may have disposed of the items after stealing them. The owners of the documents are being called to be questioned on how they lost their belongings, and verify whether there are case filed against them. —Al-Rai

INDIAN MAIDS' VISAS SUSPENDED

KUWAIT: Kuwait has officially suspended issuing entry visas to Indian domestic workers - a stipulation that the Indian authorities had requested earlier. The Indian Ambassador to Kuwait had informed Kuwait's Foreign Ministry that the Gulf state has failed to comply with a condition requested by the Indian government, and by which contracts are signed with Indian domestic workers to guarantee their rights. Therefore, the Indian government requested that Kuwait stops issuing visas to Indian domestic helpers. The ambassador had went on in his letter to the Deputy Foreign Minister that Kuwait's Interior Ministry continued to issue visas to Indian domestic workers 'in crooked ways'. As such, the Interior Ministry's Assistant Undersecretary for Citizenship and Passports Affairs Major General Muzen Al-Jarrah issued a decision recently to reprogram the department's computers in order to deny access for procedures to issue entry visas to Indian domestic workers, according to a security source. —Al-Anbaa

RIGHTS TO BE TAKEN BY LAW: EGYPTIAN AMBASSADOR

KUWAIT: The Egyptian Ambassador to Kuwait Yasser Atef urged both Kuwaiti citizens and members of the Egyptian community in Kuwait to have self-restraint when facing any problems and to follow legal channels in order to claim their rights without resorting to violence. He added that concerned authorities should be notified whenever a violation takes place. Speaking to reporters at the sidelines of the Algerian embassy's national day ceremony recently, Atef stressed that the repeated recent incidents in which Egyptians were involved in fights and one of them tragically murdered were the result of 'rage outbursts' and taking actions without seeking legal help. —Al-Qabas



ZAIN CONCLUDES BREAST CANCER AWARENESS CAMPAIGN WITH EMPLOYEES

PINK THEMED EVENT AIMED AT RAISING AWARENESS

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading telecommunications company in Kuwait, recently concluded its eighth breast cancer awareness campaign during an internal event with its employees. The pink themed event gathered a large number of its staff in a family-oriented atmosphere that witnessed the presence of senior Zain executives.

The event came in line with Zain's solid Corporate Social Responsibility and Sustainability strategies that primarily focus on the wellbeing of the entire nation. The company engages its employees with all awareness campaigns it undertakes, and was keen to involve them in this global initiative by organizing a number of activities that drove awareness.

Zain recently took the opportunity to gather its partners from various leading

medical institutions in its pink corner at Mall 360, which saw the attendance of several experts who answered visitors' questions and informed the crowd on the importance of early detection.

It is worth noting that his year's breast cancer awareness campaign consisted of several strategic phases, including the distribution of awareness messages through the media and the highly acclaimed TVC that received overwhelming feedback on social media channels, in addition to the recently held interactive events.

Zain's solid Corporate Social Responsibility and Sustainability strategies focus on the wellbeing of the entire community. For that reason, the company has maintained its support to all kinds of initiatives that spread awareness and help make a difference.



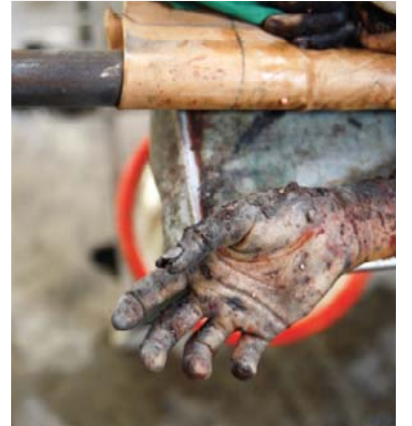
413 EXPATS DEPORTED SINCE JANUARY

KUWAIT: Recent Ministry of Interior (MOI) statistics showed that the total number of expatriates deported for traffic violations since the beginning of 2015 reached 413, including 297 deported for driving without a license. The statistics also showed that the expats were deported upon direct orders from Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Sabah for violating Kuwait's laws and disturbing law and order in general. In this regard, and responding to inquiries about using this measure excessively lately and fears that it

might be in a vexatious way, informed sources reassured that the right to issue 'administrative deportation' warrant was restricted to the interior minister himself, and then get endorsed by his undersecretary after he reviews full reports about each expat's violation. Expats are subject to deportation when they violate traffic laws by driving without a driver's license, disturb public security and order through involvement in harassment and fights and when rallying or raising religious or political issues in public, the sources added. —Al-Rai

29 FARMS REMOVED FOR RAILWAY PROJECT

KUWAIT: Twenty nine farms in Al-Wafra will be repossessed as part of the project to build Kuwait's part of the railway network that connects all six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. The farms were selected by a team that contains members from the Ministry of Finance and the Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources, which found out that their location conflicts with the railway's planned route, Al-Anbaa daily reported yesterday quoting sources. The team plans to start field tours next week to assess the repossession value at the designated farms, said the sources who spoke on the condition of anonymity. —Al-Anbaa



Syria rebels accused of using hostages as 'human shields'

AMERICANS ARE BECOMING LESS RELIGIOUS

BOKO HARAM GHOSTS HAUNT 'LIBERATED' AREAS IN NIGERIA'S NORTHEAST

RESIDENTS STILL FEARFUL DESPITE ARMY ADVANCES

MUBI: Life seems to be returning to normal in this northern Nigerian town a year after the army expelled the Islamist fighters of Boko Haram—shops bustle with customers and vendors hawk their wares in the pot-holed streets. President Muhammadu Buhari has vowed to crush Boko Haram by December and the army has recaptured much of the territory the jihadists seized in their six-year-old campaign to carve out an Islamic state in Nigeria's remote northeast. But a recent surge of suicide bombings and hit-and-run attacks makes residents doubt there is any end in sight to an insurgency that has killed thousands and displaced 2.1 million. Boko Haram has killed more than 1,000 people since Buhari was elected in May on a promise to crush the group.

"We are afraid that they might come back," said Abubakar Idris, 60, a farmer who fled with his two wives and 16 children when Boko Haram captured Mubi in October last year. "Anybody who has seen such a terrible thing must be afraid," he said, sitting in front of his single-storey house and recalling how Boko Haram fighters fired volleys of gunshots at random as they took over the town. The insurgency is the biggest security challenge facing Africa's top oil producer, already grappling with a severe economic crisis due to a plunge in oil revenues.

Like thousands of other residents, Idris returned to Mubi, which lies close to the border with Cameroon, when the army started a counter-offensive which has accelerated in recent months. Signs of fighting can still be seen, despite the buzz in the main market. Banks remain closed having been robbed by Boko Haram, while electricity is almost non-existent. Schools have reopened in the town but many are still shut in the countryside as the jihadists burned the buildings and killed the teachers. Boko Haram, whose name means Western education is sinful, abhors secular learning.

Progress

Diplomats say the army's performance has improved since Buhari took office pledging to "fix" Nigeria's legendary corruption and mismanagement. The former military ruler has appointed a new army leadership and moved its anti-Boko Haram command centre to Borno state, where the jihadists started their revolt. Residents say Buhari's anti-corruption drive has had an effect as army commanders are now less inclined to steal resources intended for the security forces,



MAIDUGURI: People look at blood stains from a damaged mosque following an explosion in Maiduguri, Nigeria. — AP

though it remains to be seen how long this trend will last. Better cooperation with neighboring Chad has helped the Nigerian government to regain several villages, although a long-planned regional cross-border force is still not operational.

Residents say the soldiers no longer run away when Boko Haram arrive in their pickup trucks. "The difference is that back then if there was a report of an attack we all ran with the security men," said 55-year-old Mohamed Joda, who makes a living repairing bicycles in Mubi. "But now they respond to reports

tanks and checkpoints. Every 10 km motorists must wait until called forward by a soldier asking where they plan to go. But in rural areas the army is spread more thinly, allowing Boko Haram to move around at will. Villagers living along the Mubi-Yola road stay close to their houses for fear of the jihadists. "I can no longer go hunting because I might run into them in the forest and get killed, so we have to resort to farming," said Murtala Maxwell, who lives in Gombi village south of Mubi.

He still stays close to home "so in case we see them coming, we can quickly get together and defend ourselves or run for safety", he said while playing a board game with two friends. A security expert said the army is getting help from South African mercenaries to navigate in the vast Sambisa forest, Boko Haram's main hideout in the northeast. Army brigade commander Victor Ezugwu said the military had cut off the forest, last week rescuing more than 300 people from villages that had been held by Boko Haram. "We are trying to meet the December deadline given by our president," he said. "We have cordoned off the entire forest."

Human rights activists have long accused the army of committing abuses such as looting, fuelling an insurgency in a poor region where many complain of neglect. This time Ezugwu makes an effort to talk to a group of rescued women, who applauded when he came to a camp in Mubi where they were receiving vaccinations. Three village elders shook hands with the commander.

"Boko Haram took over our village, they wanted to kill us, burn us," said Bukar Manipo, one of those rescued. "Soldiers heard what they were doing to us so they came to our village. They were shooting, some fell and died, some were shot, others ran into the forest."

But the commander warned the women that the enemy might strike again as suicide bombers. In September, a bomb attack blamed on Boko Haram killed around seven people in a camp for displaced people in Yola. "If you see any people who do not belong to your community report them immediately to us," Ezugwu told the crowd.

Officials want to close the camps in Adamawa state by December when Buhari's campaign is supposed to end but many inhabitants fear going home "Some youths who left a few weeks ago to resettle back in our village were killed when Boko Haram attacked the village again," said Laraba James, a woman in a Yola camp. — Reuters

Fear

The army is securing Mubi and the main road to the Adamawa state capital Yola, 200 km to the south, with patrols,

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SYRIA REBELS ACCUSED OF USING HOSTAGES AS 'HUMAN SHIELDS'

HOSTAGES PLACED IN CAGES TO DETER AIRSTRIKES

BEIRUT: Human Rights Watch has accused Syrian rebel groups outside Damascus of war crimes after they placed hostages including civilians in cages for use as "human shields" to deter government strikes. Video posted over the weekend showed dozens of captives, among them soldiers and civilians, in cages being transported to different parts of the Eastern Ghouta region outside Damascus. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said the powerful Jaish Al-Islam group had placed the caged captives in public squares to deter government bombing. Human Rights Watch said the practice "constitutes hostage-taking and an outrage against their personal dignity, which are both war crimes."

"Nothing can justify caging people and intentionally putting them in harm's way, even if the purpose is to stop indiscriminate government attacks," said HRW deputy Middle East director Nadim Houry. "Ending Syria's downward spiral requires international backers of armed groups as well as the government to make protecting civilians a top priority." The rights group noted that a similar practice was reported in September, in two government-held Shiite towns under rebel siege in Idlib province. There images emerged purporting to show captured rebels placed in a cage on a building in one of the villages to deter opposition shelling.

Eastern Ghouta is a rebel stronghold outside Damascus and a frequent target of heavy and bloody government air strikes and shelling. At least 70 people were killed and 550 wounded in government attacks on Douma, in Eastern Ghouta, last week, according to non-governmental organization Doctors Without Borders. Rebels in the region regularly bombard the capital, and rights groups have condemned both sides for their indiscriminate fire. More than 250,000 people have been killed in Syria since the conflict began in March 2011 with anti-government protests. All sides in the complex civil war have been accused of abuses of varying degrees, including the use of banned weapons, torture, arbitrary arrest and execution.

Gas attacks probe

Meanwhile, a UN panel will soon begin work on tracking those responsible for deadly gas attacks in Syria, but the head of the investigation says it will be difficult to come up with a complete list of perpetrators. Virginia Gamba stressed that the team of 24 multi-skilled experts she is assembling will adhere to "sound, objec-



DOUMA: Photo shows the burnt hand of a corpse lying inside a morgue in Douma, after a reported airstrike by Syrian government forces on the rebel-held town, on the eastern edges of the capital Damascus. — AFP

ive, impartial" guidelines "that no one can question" to find the culprits. "Will I have the name, surname, and age of a perpetrator? I have no idea," Gamba said in an interview at her new UN offices. "It's going to be very hard to do."

A disarmament expert from Argentina, Gamba heads the so-called Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM), approved by the Security Council in August after evidence surfaced of chlorine gas attacks on three Syrian villages last year. Describing herself as a "technician," Gamba was picked for the job partly because she has worked on two previous UN missions on chemical weapons use in Syria. But this panel is "a different kettle of fish," she stressed, with a broader scope and more challenging mandate to identify who is to blame for the attacks, using unassailable methodology.

The starting point for the international investigation are three fact-finding missions from the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons that concluded that chlorine was probably used as a weapon on the opposition-held villages, killing 13 people. But the OPCW stuck to its mandate and did not assign blame for the attacks in Idlib and Hama provinces, among the many horrors to have been documented in Syria's four-year war.

A very big canvas

Taking those reports, the panel has been asked to dig deeper with the aim of not only pointing the finger at those who carried out the attacks, but also identifying their co-conspirators, organizers, financial backers and sponsors. "This is what the intention is: to create a very big

canvas where everyone would be accountable either directly or indirectly from the very first round of accountability to the end," said the 61-year-old former head of the UN disarmament agency. "But it is difficult... this was a year ago."

The JIM is the most concrete UN effort to date to establish some accountability in the war that has left more than a quarter of a million people dead, and displaced nearly 12 million. The panel will be fully up and running around mid-November, with offices in New York, The Hague and Damascus, and a first report on its findings is expected in February. It has been set up initially for one year, but its mandate could be prolonged. Under an agreement being negotiated with Damascus, the team will be able to conduct field missions, speak to witnesses and collect evidence. — Agencies

EGYPT'S PRESIDENT SAYS IS JET CLAIM IS 'PROPAGANDA'

MOSCOW: Egypt's president has dismissed claims that a Russian passenger jet was downed by a branch of Islamic State as propaganda, after the airline said the crash which killed all 224 people on board was due to "external" factors. Analysis of the "black boxes," which could solve the mystery of what happened to the doomed jet, is expected to begin on Tuesday according to Egyptian officials. Russia's government commission overseeing the crash probe is also due to meet.

President Abdul Fattah El-Sisi's remarks came as a top US intelligence official said it was "unlikely" IS was involved in the crash of the Kogalymavia Airbus A-321 over the Sinai peninsula on Saturday. "When there is propaganda that it crashed because of ISIS, this is one way to damage the stability and security of Egypt and the image of Egypt," Sisi told the BBC, using an alternative acronym for IS. "Believe me, the situation in Sinai—especially in this limited area—is under our full control," he said. Both Cairo and Moscow have played down a claim by Egypt's IS branch that it brought down the plane which was bound for St Petersburg in Russia from the Red Sea resort of Sharm el-Sheikh. And on Monday, the US Director of National Intelligence James Clapper said that while he could not rule out IS involvement, he thought it "unlikely." "We don't have any direct evidence of any terrorist involvement yet," he said. Investigators are examining all possible causes as they comb the remote crash site as part of an Egyptian-led probe into the disaster that also involves experts from Russia, Airbus, and Ireland, where the aircraft was registered.

'External action'

Senior Kogalymavia executive Alexander Smirnov said Monday that "no technical failures" could account for why the Airbus 321 would have broken up in mid-air. "The only explanation is some kind of external action," Smirnov told a news conference in Moscow, without elaborating, adding that the jet was in "excellent technical condition." He said the firm had ruled out a technical fault or human error and that the plane had sustained "significant damage to its construction that did not allow it to continue the flight."

"The crew totally lost control and for that reason there was not one attempt to get in contact and report on the accident situation on board," Smirnov said. The plane was "flying out of control—that is, it wasn't flying, it was falling." Alexander Neradko, head of Russia's aviation authority, criticized the airline's comments, saying they were "premature and not based on any real facts." Russia said it hoped its crews would complete their search mission at the remote location on Monday evening, where so far investigators have found 12 segments of the plane's fuselage.

President Vladimir Putin has described the crash, Russia's worst air disaster, as a "huge tragedy." "Without any doubt everything must be done to create an objective picture of events so that we know what happened and can react accordingly," he said. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said that in the investigation Moscow "cannot exclude any version" of events but warned against "guessing" the cause of the crash. Analysts have dismissed claims the jet could have been shot down by IS-affiliated groups in the region if it was flying at its cruising height of 30,000 feet (9,000 meters), but did not rule out that a bomb might have been planted on board.

'Meticulous work'

Relatives of those who died in the crash have begun the painful process of identifying their loved ones after a first plane delivered the remains of 140 victims to Saint Petersburg. "The process of identification has begun. It is complex, meticulous work," Saint Petersburg deputy governor Igor Albin told journalists outside the crematorium where the remains are being stored. — AFP

ISRAEL KEEPS COUNSEL ON ASSAD AS BIG POWERS WADE INTO SYRIA

ISRAEL WON'T SAY WHETHER FOR OR AGAINST SYRIAN PRESIDENT

JERUSALEM: Israel is no longer taking a public position on Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad's prospects of staying in power, its defense minister said yesterday, citing the opposing goals of the United States and Russia as they intervene in the civil war. Seeing enemies on all sides of the insurgency that erupted in the neighboring Arab state in 2011, Israel has been formally neutral but initially called for Assad to be toppled, arguing this would deny its arch-foe Iran a key ally in the Levant. That view hewed to the strategy of the United States

and its Arab partners, which back some Syrian rebels and say Assad has lost legitimacy to lead. But with Assad holding on and now helped by a Russian military intervention, Israel has gone mum.

"What is our policy in Syria? We say: We do not intervene. We have an opinion as to what we would like to be there. But we are not in a position nor do we have the status, for sensitive reasons, to say we are in favor of Assad or against Assad," Yaalon said in a speech to a farm collective near Jerusalem. At a rare but inconclusive round of talks in

Vienna on Friday that brought together many of the main countries involved in Syria, "the Russians were in favor (of Assad), the Americans were against, the Turks were against, the Saudis were against, the Iranians were in favor," Yaalon said.

"We are not at that level. We deal with our own interests," he said, reiterating "red lines" that Israel says will trigger military action by it if crossed — attacks from Syria or attempted transfers to Lebanon's Hezbollah or other militias of advanced weapons systems or chemical warfare agents. To avoid accidentally trading fire and becoming entangled in the fighting, Israel has agreed with Russia to coordinate military action over Syria. Various forces clashing in Syria have at times tried to discredit each other with charges of collaboration with Israel.

Yaalon said Israel had armed no side in the civil war and provided only limited humanitarian aid to villages on the Syrian Golan Heights next to lines it holds on the strategic plateau. This assistance had been conditioned on the recipients pledging to keep Islamist insurgents away and not to attack Syrian Druze Arabs, whose brethren in Israel have pressed Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to help the imperiled community. "We do not supply weaponry, but humanitarian (aid), yes. On two conditions: You do not allow the jihadis to get to the (Golan) fence, and you do not touch the Druze, who are a sensitive issue for us. And it works — ad hoc agreements on the basis of common interests," Yaalon said. — Reuters



HASAKEH PROVINCE: A group of coalition forces, which includes People's Protection Units (YPG) Women's Protection Units (YPJ), Sutoro militia, a pro-government Syrian Christian movement, and other forces, monitor the area in Al-Hol in the Syrian Hasakeh province, some 650 kms northeast of Damascus, near the Iraqi border. — AFP

WEST VOICES 'CONCERN' OVER TURKEY ELECTION

ISTANBUL: Turkey's Western allies have voiced deep concerns over media intimidation in the run-up to the election that returned President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's party to power. The surprise outcome of Sunday's vote could further entrench power in the hands of Erdogan, the dominant figure in Turkish politics for more than a decade who critics warn is becoming more autocratic. In a turnaround that confounded pollsters, Erdogan's Islamic-rooted Justice and Development Party (AKP) reclaimed the majority it lost just five months ago, returning the Muslim majority country to single-party rule once more. Erdogan on Monday declared the outcome a vote for "stability" after renewed conflict with Kurdish rebels and a wave of bloody jihadist attacks, and called on the entire world to respect the result.

But the United States, a key ally, and two European observer missions expressed concern over the campaign,

particularly the crackdown on media critical of Erdogan. White House spokesman Josh Earnest said the US was "deeply concerned that media outlets and individual journalists critical of the government were subject to pressure and intimidation during the campaign." "We have both publicly and privately raised our concerns about freedom of the press, freedom of speech and freedom of assembly in Turkey," he said. His remarks echoed the findings of European election observers.

While voters were given a choice between genuine alternatives, "the rapidly diminishing choice of media outlets, and restrictions on freedom of expression in general" caused "serious concerns," said Ignacio Sanchez Amor, head of an Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe mission. "Unfortunately, the campaign for these elections was characterized by unfairness and, to a serious degree, fear," said Andreas Gross, head of the

Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) delegation.

'Victory of fear'

The clampdown on media continued Monday, with the arrest of the editor of Istanbul-based magazine *Nokta* over a cover story on Erdogan's win entitled: "The start of civil war in Turkey." The magazine was accused of inciting the public to commit a crime, the Dogan news agency said. Turkey's main opposition Cumhuriyet newspaper labeled the AKP win a "victory of fear." Columnist Can Dundar said Turkey's already highly polarized society was split between "those who are ready to die for Erdogan and those who cannot stand him anymore." The AKP secured almost half the vote to secure 317 seats in the 550-member parliament, according to the latest results. Turkish stocks and the lira soared on the results, which ended the months of political uncertainty stoked by the inconclusive June vote. — AFP



ISTANBUL: A supporter of Turkish Prime Minister and leader of the Justice and Development Party (AKP), Ahmet Davutoglu wears a headband with the name of Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, as she attends a welcome rally for Davutoglu at Ataturk airport, in Istanbul, yesterday. — AP

News

in brief

Guards at presidential palace clash in Yemen

ADEN: Guards at the presidential palace in Yemen's second city Aden clashed yesterday with militiamen providing security for the complex in a dispute over unpaid wages, a military source said. At least two members of the presidential guard were wounded in the shootout, the source said. The clash reflects a state of chaos that prevails in Aden, the country's main southern city which pro-government forces backed by Saudi-led coalition air strikes recaptured from Shiite rebels in July. The presidential guard is led by a son of President Abedrabbo Mansour Hadi, who returned briefly to Aden in September from exile in Riyadh, to where he has since gone back. Soldiers from the force clashed with fighters from the Popular Resistance, a group of southern factions that fought alongside Hadi loyalists against the Iran-backed Houthi rebels, the military source said. The fighters were protesting a delay in their wages, the source added. "The fighting has subsided, but tension remains at the Maashiq palace," the source added.

Iran arrests US-Lebanese man in espionage probe

DUBAI: Iranian authorities have arrested an American-Lebanese man who they were linked to the US military and intelligence agencies, state broadcaster IRIB said yesterday. It named the man as Nizar Zakka, an IT expert who Lebanese media reported last week had disappeared on Sept 18 after attending a conference in Tehran. The report, which cited informed sources, is the first official confirmation of his arrest. "Nizar Zakka has deep ties to the US intelligence and military establishment," IRIB quoted an unnamed source as saying. There have also been reports that Iran has arrested US-Iranian citizen Siamak Namazi, a Dubai-based businessman who disappeared in mid-October while visiting family in Iran. Reuters has not been able to confirm those reports. Intelligence Minister Mahmoud Alavi said on Monday the ministry had been discussing ways to combat foreign influence in the country as Tehran begins to implement a nuclear deal that will lift sanctions and open Iran to foreign businesses.

Fighting, airstrikes in Yemen city kill over 33

CAIRO: Yemeni security officials say fighting between Shiite rebels and their opponents has killed over 33 people in the past 24 hours in Taiz, Yemen's third-largest city. The officials said yesterday that 21 rebels, known as Houthis, died in airstrikes by a Saudi-led coalition that opposes them. Eight civilians died when their bus hit a land mine and four fighters from the anti-Houthi forces were killed in street clashes. The officials are independent in the conflict roiling Yemen. They spoke on condition of anonymity because they aren't authorized to talk to journalists. Yemen's fighting pits the Houthis and allies against forces loyal to the internationally recognized government as well as southern separatists and militants. At least 2,615 civilians have died since the anti-Houthi airstrikes began in March, according to the UN.

Lebanon seeks more US aid to clear landmines

WASHINGTON: Lebanon asked the United States Monday for more aid in eliminating landmines planted during the Lebanese civil war and in later conflicts. The State Department published Monday its yearly report on its program to destroy abandoned conventional weapons. It is a 2.5 billion dollar program dating back to 1993, and allotted around 140 million dollars last year. The United States said that makes it the world's top country in terms of eliminating unexploded ordnance like anti-personnel landmines. Speaking as the report was released, Lebanese Ambassador Antoine Chedid warned against "donor fatigue" in making land in formerly war-torn countries such as his safe to walk, farm, or build on. "This is very important, that the US will continue and even increase the level of assistance and it's absolutely very important also that the US puts pressure on other donors, international donors," Chedid told a news conference. "The reality is that Lebanon is contaminated with landmines," he added. This danger stems from the Lebanese civil war of 1975-1991 and fighting between Israel and Hezbollah in 2006 in south Lebanon.

Freedom still eludes Moroccan held 13 years in Guantanamo

RABAT: A former prisoner at Guantanamo Bay has been held for more than six weeks without formal charges in Morocco despite what his lawyers say were US government assurances that he would be quickly released upon his return home. Youssef Abdurrahman Chekkouri, who spent 13 years in Guantanamo without being charged, is expected to appear Wednesday before a Moroccan judge. His release from Guantanamo was part of a renewed push by President Barack Obama to make good on his pledge to close the detention center by releasing prisoners deemed to pose no threat. But his continued detention in Morocco has devastated his family and angered rights activists, who see it as a betrayal. Chekkouri's family says they have been in contact with him since he was jailed just outside of Rabat shortly after his return in September, but have not been given any information about why he is being held. "It is as if he is in Guantanamo again," said Ridouane Chekkouri, a brother who was also held at the US base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, but was released in 2004.



VIRGINIA: Supporters cheer at a rally for Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump held at a rally in front of the USS Wisconsin in Norfolk, Virginia. — AFP

TRUMP PUBLISHES A NEW BOOK 'CRIPPLED AMERICA'

BOOK OUTLINES THE ILLS OF MODERN-DAY AMERICA

NEW YORK: Donald Trump revs up his race for the White House yesterday, releasing a new book outlining the ills of modern-day America and telling voters why he should be president. "Crippled America: How to Make America Great Again," comes out as the billionaire real estate tycoon continues to top the polls, less than 100 days before the first statewide nominating contests. The manifesto runs to a modest 169 pages, then finishes with three extra pages about his personal finances and another 17-page section entitled "about the author." It is on sale as a hardback for \$25.

The billionaire glowers on the cover, a pose by his own admission "so angry and so mean-looking" that was chosen to reflect his "anger and unhappiness" about the current state of US affairs. Its release comes a week after the former reality TV star was accused, with his closest rival retired neurosurgeon Ben Carson, of peddling "fantasy" economic policies at the Republican debate. Neither is it being celebrated by an ordinary, bookstore launch party. Instead, he has invited the world media to a press conference at Trump Tower to be followed by a book signing from 12:00 pm (1700 GMT).

The tome fleshes out Trump's politics in 17 chapters, under headlines such as "Health Care Is Making Us All Sick" and "The Right To Bear Arms," mixed with copious grandstanding about his

business acumen. In it, he appeals directly to the American people, side-stepping the media and the political establishment, to set the record straight as the controversial mogul sees it. There are pictures of his photogenic family, an angelic-looking Trump as a child, one from his first communion and meeting the late president Ronald Reagan (a "great guy"), but half the illustrations are technicolor pictures of his real-estate projects.

'Terrible mess'

The businessman waxes lyrical on his tried and tested themes: an economy overtaken by China, simplifying the tax code, making a better, affordable health care system and ending illegal immigration. Kicking off with a preface called "You Gotta Believe," he is unrepentant for calling Mexicans rapists and drug dealers on the campaign trail, saying that illegal immigrants have taken jobs while more than 20 percent of Americans are un- or underemployed.

Trump stands by his controversial pledge to build a wall along the border citing as inspiration Israel's security barrier in the West Bank "hugely successful in stopping terrorists." In a chapter on foreign policy, he calls the world "a terrible mess" and quotes boxing legend Mike Tyson as saying "everybody has a plan until they get punched in the mouth." Trump calls for the

defeat of the self-proclaimed Islamic State extremist group in Syria and Iraq without spelling out how-quipping that their forces "probably wouldn't even fill the Yankee Stadium."

He outlines his opposition to the Iran nuclear deal and says that he wants to bill the British, Germans, Japanese, Saudis and South Koreans for some of the cost of hosting US military troops. Trump disputes climate change as "hot air," expresses support for fracking and roots for the right to bear arms, calling himself a nice guy and a "conservative Republican with a big heart." It is a treatise about what he stands for, peppered with personal anecdotes, love for his family and trumpeting his self-declared brilliance as a businessman worth more than \$10 billion.

Trump recounts a telephone conversation with Macy's CEO Terry Lundgren, who cut ties with Trump for insulting Mexicans, allegedly as he waited to speak to a large crowd in New Hampshire. Trump said it was an act of disloyalty. "I've been told that many thousands of people cut up their Macy's credit cards and mailed them back to the store because of this. The public gets it," he wrote. The book is published by Threshold Editions, a conservative imprint of Simon and Schuster, that has previously edited work by Republican hawk former US vice president Dick Cheney. — AFP

AMERICANS ARE BECOMING LESS RELIGIOUS: POLL

WASHINGTON: Americans are becoming less religious, judging by such markers as church attendance, prayer and belief in God, and the trend is more pronounced among young adults, according to a poll released yesterday. The share of US adults who say they believe in God, while still high compared with other advanced industrial countries, slipped to 89 percent in 2014 from 92 percent in 2007, according to the Pew Research Center's Religious Landscape Study. The proportion of Americans who say they are "absolutely certain" God exists fell even more, to 63 percent in 2014 from 71 percent in 2007.

The percentage of Americans who pray every day, attend religious services regularly and consider religion important in their lives are down by small, but statistically significant measures, the survey found. The trend is most pronounced among young adults, with only half of those born from 1990 to 1996 absolutely certain of their belief in God, compared to 71 percent of the "silent generation," or those born from 1928 to 1945. Younger people also are less likely to pray daily, at 39 percent, compared to "silent generation" adults at 67 percent. Young adults are also much less likely to attend religious services, the survey found.

On the other hand, 77 percent of Americans continue to identify with some religious faith, and those who do are just as committed now as they were in 2007, according to the survey. Two-thirds of religiously affiliated adults say they pray every day and that religion is very important to them, the survey found. The survey also found religious divides among the political parties, with those who are not religiously affiliated more likely to be Democrats, at 28 percent, compared to 14 percent of Republicans.

About 38 percent of Republicans identify as evangelical Protestants - the largest religious group in the party, the survey found. Catholics make up 21 percent of each major political party. Orianna O'Neill, 21, a student at Beloit College in Wisconsin who comes from a non-religious household but sometimes prays, said she thinks the anti-science, anti-gay rhetoric of some politicians may be turning some young people away from religion. "The idea of Republicans not believing in global warming is contributing to the notion that religious people are not intelligent," O'Neill said. Both the 2007 and 2014 studies surveyed more than 35,000 adults and had margins of error of less than 1 percentage point. — Reuters

TENSIONS RISE OVER 'AIRBNB VOTE' IN SAN FRANCISCO

SAN FRANCISCO: San Franciscans voted yesterday on a measure to limit short-term housing rentals in what is seen as a referendum on surging startup Airbnb. The vote is a key test of sentiment over a simmering housing crisis and on Airbnb in a city experiencing waves of investments in tech startups, pressuring an already tight real estate market. In the "Proposition F" referendum, property dwellers would see a 75-day limit per year for rentals under 30 days, regardless of whether the property is "hosted" or not. That would be a significant change in the current law allowing 90 days per year if the resident is absent and places no limits on renting a "hosted" spare room.

Airbnb, a San Francisco-based online service allowing property dwellers and owners to rent a room or entire home for short periods, would be the most affected if the law passes. That would not trouble backers of the referendum, who claim the "sharing economy" startup has exacerbated the housing crisis in the California city. "At a time when San Francisco faces a severe affordable housing crisis, an increasing number of existing apartments are being illegally offered and advertised as short-term rentals on websites, such as Airbnb and VRBO," the referendum text reads. According to the coalition backing the measure, Share Better SF, up to 10,000 homes in San Francisco are now listed as short-term rentals, 70

percent of which are entire units.

"This eliminates rent-controlled and affordable housing, driving up rent and causing displacement, including evictions of seniors and the disabled," says a statement from the coalition of renters, property owners and labor unions from the hotel and restaurant sector. Airbnb critics claim the service unfairly competes with hotels, which face stricter regulations and taxes. Some also claim the startup provides an incentive for property owners to toss out long-term residents and convert lodgings to short-term rentals, creating an upheaval in the traditional market for rentals. The referendum aims "to prohibit converting rental units from residential use to tourist use, and help preserve the availability of housing in San Francisco," according to the wording.

Driving prices up

Housing prices have been surging in recent years in the region around San Francisco and nearby Silicon Valley. Some former low-income neighborhoods of San Francisco are being transformed by the arrival of highly paid technology workers. According to the real estate website Zillow, the average rent in the city in September was \$4,390 per month, compared with less than \$3,000 five years ago and an average nationwide of \$1,386. — AFP



SANTIAGO: Miners from the group called 'The 33', Jorge Galleguillos (left) and Mario Gomez (2nd right) arrive at the courthouse in Santiago, on November 2, 2015. — AFP

NINE CHILEAN 'MIRACLE MINERS' SUE LAWYERS

SANTIAGO: Nine Chilean miners trapped underground in 2010 in an ordeal that captured world attention sued their lawyers Monday, accusing them of cheating them out of the rights to their story. The nine men, part of a group of 33 that spent 69 days trapped underground after a collapse at the San Jose mine in northern Chile, accused lawyers Remberto Rodrigo Valdes and Fernando Garcia of defrauding them with a dodgy deal to create a company to manage their rights.

"Today we're being rescued for the second time," said plaintiff Luis Urzua, the foreman who acted as the leader of the trapped miners and was the last to return

to the surface when they were saved. "We've been fighting for four years to show that our rights were violated." The nine plaintiffs said Valdes and Garcia "misled the 33, making them believe they would manage their own company, only to harm them and appropriate monies that rightfully belonged to them." The miners say the lawyers convinced all 33 men to set up a company to manage the rights to their story, and that they agreed to give up their rights for about \$5,700 each.

The lawsuit deepens a fissure that has emerged in the rescued group in recent years, accentuated last August by the

release of "The 33," a movie based on their misadventure and starring Antonio Banderas as miner Mario Sepulveda. The real-life Sepulveda, the most charismatic of the group, took issue with his comrades' lawsuit. "It's a shame they're being so ignorant and letting themselves be led astray by people who haven't read the contracts properly," he said. But one of the plaintiffs, Victor Zamora, insisted the dispute was not between the nine miners and the rest of the group. "It's not about fighting the (other) miners, because we're a very united group," he said. "The division we have within the group is because of what the lawyers have done to us." — AFP

NEBRASKA TRIED BUYING DRUG FOR EXECUTIONS FROM DOMESTIC FIRM

LINCOLN: Nebraska prison officials unsuccessfully tried to buy a key lethal injection drug from a Mississippi-based pharmaceutical company after spending months trying to import tens of thousands of dollars in execution drugs from India, according to documents obtained by The Associated Press. The Nebraska Department of Correctional Services ordered about \$825 worth of pancuronium bromide last month from Gulf Coast Pharmaceuticals Plus, which replaced a firm that was dissolved in 2013 after it faced disciplinary action in other states.

Documents obtained through an open records request show the order was placed Oct. 14, amid an ongoing challenge to lawmakers' decision to repeal

the death penalty in Nebraska, which hasn't carried out an execution in 18 years. The four-box order was cancelled a day later, after the company said the product wasn't available. Nebraska had already spent \$26,000 to buy 1,000 doses of the drug from an Indian distributor, along with 1,000 doses of the anesthetic sodium thiopental, but the shipment was blocked in India because it didn't have proper shipping papers. Similar orders by Arizona and Texas that made it to the United States were confiscated by federal authorities.

Both drugs are required as part of Nebraska's three-drug lethal injection protocol, but sodium thiopental currently has no legal uses in the US Nebraska

already has the third drug, potassium chloride, which is used to stop the heart. The latest attempted purchase reflects problems faced by many death-penalty states trying to buy drugs for executions amid a nationwide shortage. It also followed months of public statements by Republican Gov. Pete Ricketts that the state was working to import the drug from India-based Harris Pharma. The US Food and Drug Administration has repeatedly said states cannot legally import lethal injection drugs, but Nebraska and others have attempted to do so. A Nebraska Department of Correctional Services spokesman didn't return phone messages seeking comment Monday. — AP

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BRITAIN'S CAMERON WARNED OFF AIR STRIKES IN SYRIA

LONDON: Britain should not join air strikes on Syria until there is a clear strategy to defeat the Islamic State group and bring peace to the country, an influential committee of MPs said yesterday.

Prime Minister David Cameron's government wants to extend Britain's current involvement in US-led air strikes on targets in Iraq into Syria if it can get support from across the political spectrum in a House of Commons vote.

However, the Commons Foreign Affairs Committee said in a new report that Cameron's focus on joining air strikes was "incoherent" and "a distraction". "We are concerned that the Government is focusing on extending airstrikes to Syria...without any expectation that its action will be militarily decisive, and without a coherent and long-term plan for defeating ISIL [IS] and ending the civil war," said committee chairman Crispin Blunt, a senior MP for Cameron's Conservatives.

"There is now a miscellany of uncoordinated military engagements by an alarming range

of international actors in Iraq and Syria... These forces desperately need coordinating into a coherent strategy and that is where our efforts should be focused." Blunt urged the government to concentrate on supporting international diplomacy to end the conflict, which has killed over 250,000 people, following last week's talks in Vienna attended by 17 countries. Cameron has said he will only push a vote on Syrian air strikes in the Commons if there is a "genuine consensus" behind the plan.

Several newspapers reported late on Monday that Cameron had dropped his plan for a vote, in the wake of Russia's entry into the war by bombing to support the embattled regime of President Bashar Al-Assad. Cameron assessed that airstrikes would not now have the support of enough MPs to pass, given his Conservative party's slim majority of 12 in the House of Commons, the Guardian and Times reported.

A source in Cameron's office emphasized that he would not seek a vote without broad

support. "He's consistently said that we would only go back to the House on this issue if there was clear consensus," the source said. "Meanwhile, the government continues to work to bring the conflict to an end in Syria and we are working closely with our allies to inject greater momentum into efforts to find a political solution."

'Every tool available'

The government has argued that it is illogical to conduct air strikes in Iraq and not neighboring Syria, saying the two countries are "a single theatre of conflict". In his response to the report, Foreign Secretary Philip Hammond did not directly mention the possibility of a vote on Britain joining air strikes on Syria but said ministers would use "every tool available" to save lives in the region. "RAF air strikes against ISIL are not the sole solution but military action, in coordination with our coalition allies, is having a substantial impact in degrading ISIL in Iraq," he added. — AFP



British Prime Minister David Cameron



SENTILJ: Refugees and migrants wait to cross the Slovenian-Austrian border from the Slovenian city of Sentilj, yesterday. — AFP

'GERMANY NO EASY COUNTRY,' VC GABRIEL TELLS REFUGEES

BRITONS DO NOT WANT TO BE PART OF 'EVER-CLOSER' EUROPE

BERLIN: Germany is "not an easy country", Vice Chancellor Sigmar Gabriel yesterday warned refugees who have flocked to the EU's top economy, reiterating Berlin's pledge to welcome and integrate them. Gabriel, who is also economy minister, was speaking of challenges and opportunities as Europe's most populous country this year expects to take in between 800,000 and one million asylum seekers.

"Germany is not just any country, and not an easy country," he told a business forum in Berlin. "You don't become a world export champion without a relatively demanding work culture."

He said that while "everything you need to know" about German society and values "is summarized in the first 20 articles of our constitution, one does not become a constitutional expert just by crossing the border". He called on Germans of foreign origin, heirs of previous waves of immigration, to act as intermediaries and explain the country to newcomers. Germany, where about one fifth of the population is of foreign origin, took in many immigrant workers in the 60s and 70s, and citizens of the former Yugoslavia and Soviet Union in the 1990s.

Gabriel said the newcomers could fill gaps in the German labor market as the population is set to shrink and the pension burden will grow amid a very low birth rate and high life expectancy. On the migrant wave, he said that "we aren't taking them in because

we want to solve the demographic problem, but because they're fleeing war, civil war and repression".

"But, given that they're here, we would be crazy if we didn't try to make them the professionals of tomorrow. That's something we have to get better at. He added that "we are a country that can't deal well with chaos. We like order and have a regulation for everything-except for one million refugees in a single year."

Ever-closer EU

Britons do not want to be part of Europe's "ever-closer" union, British finance minister George Osborne said yesterday, arguing that the EU must protect the rights of non-euro members.

And as Britain heads towards a referendum on membership in the EU, due by late 2017, Osborne said taxpayers in non-euro countries must not be asked to bail out stricken euro-zone members.

"We must never let taxpayers in countries that are not in the euro bear the cost of supporting countries in the euro-zone," he said, months after EU and IMF leaders again bailed out debt-stricken Greece.

And participation in further European integration efforts, such as the banking union which is being formed, must remain "voluntary," he said.

Britain's chancellor of the exchequer was speaking at a Berlin meeting of the Federation of German

Industry which was also attended by Chancellor Angela Merkel and Economy Minister Sigmar Gabriel, a day after meeting his counterpart Wolfgang Schaeuble. He said London wants EU treaty change to safeguard the rights of non-euro-zone countries, to protect its taxpayers and its crucial financial sector.

This would include "the recognition that the EU has more than one currency and we should not discriminate against any business on the basis of the currency of the country in which they reside," he said. In return, London would not seek to block euro members as they seek closer economic and financial integration.

"Quite frankly, the British people do not want to be part of an ever closer union," Osborne said.

'British have to decide'

Merkel reiterated her view that "the UK should remain an EU member" and pledged Germany would help "wherever we can" to prevent a "Brexit", while recognizing that "the British have to decide" on the issue alone. British Prime Minister David Cameron has promised to hold a referendum on EU membership before the end of 2017 and has said he will campaign to stay if he can obtain reforms that would loosen Britain's ties with the rest of the EU. Cameron, who has not ruled out supporting a "Brexit", is expected to publish a list of British demands this month. — AFP

AS MORGUE FILLS, AN AID GROUP PLEDGES MONEY FOR REFUGEES

ATHENS: An international aid organization yesterday pledged more aid for thousands of refugees streaming through Greece and said allowing them legal passage across the Aegean would help save lives and stop traffickers profiting from their misery. At least 435 migrants drowned in the Aegean Sea in the first 10 months of this year, out of more than 580,000 estimated to have crossed from Turkey to European Union member Greece, many of them fleeing Syria's civil war.

The advent of more wintry conditions has not stemmed the flow, and the number of border crossings in the last 11 days of October was up almost 40 percent on the previous 11 days, the International Committee for Migration said. On the island of Lesbos, which receives the most arrivals, one witness told Reuters about 40 vessels laden with refugees had arrived on Tuesday alone. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) promised to provide 12.7 million Swiss francs (\$12.8 million) for the refugees in Greece over the next seven months, after giving 3 million in September. In Athens, IFRC Secretary General Elhadj As Sy called for a loosening of travel restrictions to allow the refugees to move legally, echoing a position long held by Greece.

"If you do it legally, you take away the ille-

gal business from the traffickers and then the smugglers. And then people would feel safer and it would be better organized," he said.

Rescue organizations report that smugglers take up to 1,400 euros per passenger for a short crossing. Tourists taking a round trip from Turkey to Lesbos pay around 25 euros.

Bishop Iakovos of Mytilene (Lesbos) said about 20 people were still unburied on the island due to a lack of space. "A special freezer car has been brought and people are placed in there until they can be buried. Most of them are unidentified, and that includes children," he told Mega TV.

The coroner of the island said local authorities were finding it difficult to cope. "We are giving 150 percent of ourselves... we are getting small children, babies, pregnant women. It is impossible not to break down," Thodoros Noulas told the newspaper Ethnos.

The bodies of Greek Orthodox Christians are often exhumed three years after death, to be placed in an ossuary. But most of the refugees are Muslim, and the bishop said the practice was not acceptable for them. He said authorities were looking for a permanent burial site. Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras' office said yesterday he had accepted an invitation to talks with his Turkish counterpart Ahmet Davutoglu on the migrant crisis and other issues. — Reuters



In this photo taken on January 15, 2014 at the Parioli theatre Monsignor Lucio Angel Vallejo Balda (right) stands next to social media expert Francesca Chaouqui. — AFP

'SPYING' ON THE POPE: VATICAN LEAKS REVEAL DIRTY DEALINGS

VATICAN CITY: The pope's private conversations allegedly wiretapped by a racy social climber and a Spanish prelate-the latest scandal to hit the Vatican has unearthed claims of theft, debauchery and betrayal within the Catholic Church.

Leaked documents set to be published in two books today reportedly reveal how charity money was allegedly spent on refurbishing the houses of powerful cardinals, while claiming the murky Vatican bank continues to shelter suspected criminals. PR expert Francesca Chaouqui and Monsignor Lucio Angel Vallejo Balda, arrested at the weekend for allegedly stealing and leaking classified documents, risk up to eight years in prison if the case gets to court.

While Vallejo Balda languishes in jail, Chaouqui, 33, was released after assuring investigators of her cooperation in a case which has thrown light on centuries-old institution unwilling to give up its privileges. "I am totally innocent and I'll prove it," La Stampa daily quoted the dark-haired woman dubbed a "sex bomb" by Italian media as saying, adding that Vallejo Balda "did everything, I tried to stop him". The recording and publication of the pope's private conversations "is the most controversial aspect of all the dust blown up by the second Vatileaks," the Repubblica daily said, comparing the scandal to a similar one three years ago.

Then, it was Pope Benedict XVI's butler who leaked documents revealing fierce infighting in the highest echelons of the Church and allegations of serious fraud. He was sentenced to 18 months in prison, before being pardoned by the pope but banished from the Vatican forever.

'Costs out of control'

In wiretaps transcribed in "Merchants in the Temple" by journalist Gianluigi Nuzzi, Francis can be heard asking, "if we don't know how to look after money, which we can see, how can we look after the souls of the faithful, which we

cannot?" The pope also tells people described as "collaborators" by Nuzzi that "the costs are out of control. There are ploys..."

Italian journalist Emiliano Fittipaldi, who is releasing "Avarice: Documents Revealing Wealth, Scandals and Secrets of Francis' Church", is expected to reveal how Church foundations for sick children act as bank accounts for cardinals. A Vatican statement Monday slammed the upcoming works as "fruit of a serious betrayal of the pope's trust" and said it was considering legal action. Vatican watcher John Allen, of Crux Now website, said the Holy See's furious reaction suggested "both (books) promise to reveal scores of previously secret Vatican documents, few of which are likely to make the Vatican look especially good".

Religious experts said the leaks may have been motivated by frustrated ambitions, with Vallejo Balda, 54, publicly passed over for promotion and Chaouqui frustrated in attempts to climb the Vatican's social ladders. In a Facebook post yesterday Chaouqui denied leaking "even one piece of paper" and said "there is nothing I have ever loved more or defended more than the Church and the pope".

Racy photos, party girl

The former Ernst & Young lobbyist was selected to be part of a special commission set up by Pope Francis to advise him on economic reform within the Church-an appointment which raised eyebrows in 2013 after it emerged she had been highly critical of the Vatican on Twitter in 2012. Tweets-which she claimed were written by a hacker-included one which said Pope Benedict had leukaemia, one which said high-ranking Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone was corrupt and one which accused an ex-Italian minister of being gay.

The Vatican's embarrassment only increased when racy photos of her went viral on the Internet. There were immediately questions as to whether Chaouqui, who has Moroccan origins, might be behind a rumor last month, denied by the Vatican, that Francis has a benign brain tumor. — AFP

TEARFUL RELATIVES IDENTIFY VICTIMS OF PLANE CRASH

ST PETERSBURG: The first 10 bodies of victims of Saturday's plane crash over Egypt were identified by their families yesterday, a string of tearful relatives leaving the city crematorium.

Alexei Smirnov of the Russian emergency situations ministry said that a total of 140 bodies and more than 100 body parts were delivered to St. Petersburg

on two government planes on Monday and yesterday and that a third plane is expected to bring more remains later. Metrojet's Airbus A321-200 en route from Egypt's Sharm el-Sheikh to St. Petersburg crashed over the Sinai Peninsula on Saturday, killing all 224 on board. The overwhelming majority of the passengers were Russian holidaymakers flying home.

Egypt's civil aviation minister said the joint investigation committee will start examining the data from the black boxes retrieved from the crash site.

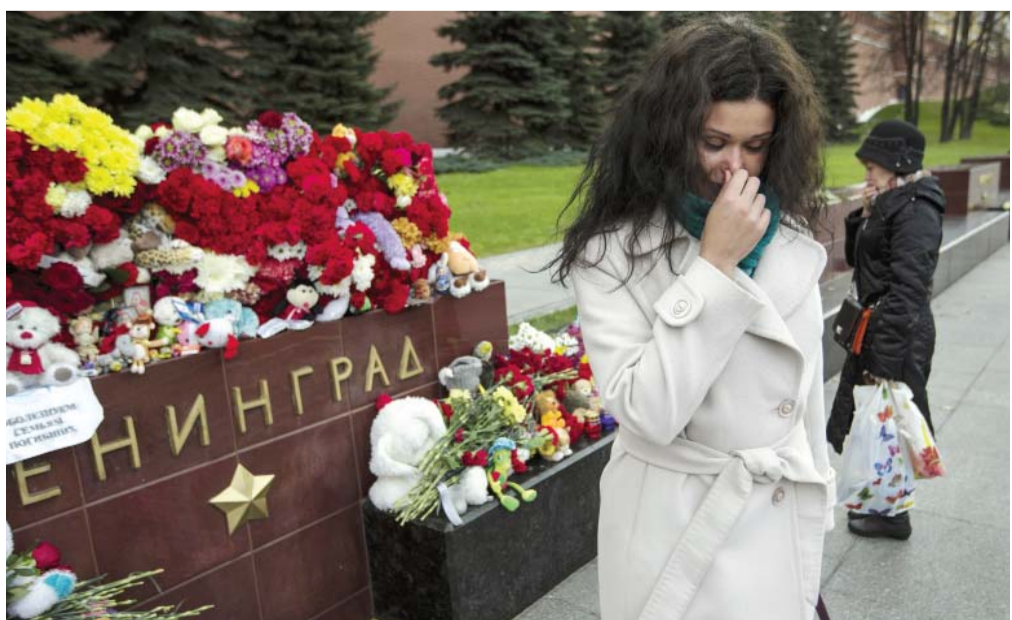
Hossam Kamal said the committee - which includes Egyptian and Russian experts as well as representatives from Ireland, where the Metrojet Airbus A321-200 was registered - will conclude its last field inspection at the crash site by the end of the day Tuesday and start working on the black boxes.

Kamal said it "will take some time" to produce the final report and that the committee "has all the tools and experts to deal with the investigation".

Mourners continued to come to St Petersburg's Pulkovo airport yesterday to lay flowers and leave paper planes and soft toys at the arrivals hall. On the outskirts of town, tearful families of the victims were leaving the premises of the crematorium where the identification procedures are taking place.

The Tass news agency yesterday quoted Alexander Rzhanev, an official at the St. Petersburg city hall, as saying that the first two bodies could be released to their families yesterday. He did not identify the victims but said they were from the St Petersburg suburbs and a neighboring region.

Alexander Agafonov, head of the Russian rescue mission in Egypt, said in a televised conference with other officials Tuesday afternoon that searchers have not found a single additional body on Tuesday having combed a 28 square-kilometer (10.8 square-mile) area. Emergency Situations Minister Vladimir Puchkov said the site "should be studied centimeter by centimeter." "If you need to sift through the sand where the remains or pieces of the fuselage could be, do it," he said. — AFP



MOSCOW: A woman cries after laying flowers at the memorial stone with the word Leningrad (St Petersburg) at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier outside Moscow's Kremlin Wall in Moscow yesterday. — AP

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INDONESIA DEPORTS INDIAN FUGITIVE 'CHOTTA RAJAN'

BALI, INDONESIA: An alleged Indian crime boss arrested upon arrival on the Indonesian island of Bali last month was to be deported yesterday, police said.

Rajendra Sadashiv Nikalje, known in India as "Chotta Rajan," has been on Interpol's most wanted list for two decades. He was arrested Oct 25 when he arrived at Bali's airport from Sydney.

Police Maj. Pande Sugiarta said preparations were underway to deport Nikalje to India later in the day. He said Nikalje "will be tightly guarded by local police as well as by India's Central Bureau of Investigation."

Nikalje, who was carrying a passport with the alias Mohan Kumar, was arrested based on a notice from Interpol and following a tip from

Australian authorities in Canberra, police said.

Nikalje, 56, told Indonesian police that he had been hiding in Australia for seven years and flew to Bali for a vacation. Indian Interpol officials accompanied by diplomats from India's Consulate in Denpasar investigated Nikalje and arranged his deportation.

Indian media have reported that Nikalje was accused of involvement in several mafia killings and other crimes in his homeland. Bali police spokesman Col. Heri Wiyanto said Nikalje had refused to answer all questions about his alleged crimes.

"There are no administrative problems now. We have prepared everything (for his deportation)," Bali police spokesman Hery Wiyanto said, adding he would be flown back to

India late yesterday.

Rajan, 55, had been living incognito in Australia, but fearing his enemies would find him, was able to fly to Bali where he was arrested without resistance, according to news reports.

India's national security adviser devised a plan to secure the arrest of Rajan as part of a strategy to hunt down India's most-wanted man, Dawood Ibrahim, Indian police and ministry sources told Reuters. The two are believed to have worked together.

Ibrahim is accused of masterminding a dozen bombings and grenade attacks in Mumbai in March 1993, killing 257 people and wounding more than 700 in the deadliest such attack in the nation's history. — Agencies



DENPASER BALI: Indian fugitive Rajendra Sadashiv Nikalje, known in India as "Chotta Rajan," left, is escorted by plain-clothed police officers for questioning in Bali yesterday. — AP



KUALA LUMPUR: Japan's Defence Minister Gen Nakatani (right) talks to US Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter (left) before a bilateral meeting during the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Defense Ministers' meeting in Subang, on the outskirts of Kuala Lumpur yesterday. — AFP

US, JAPAN WANT STATEMENT ON SOUTH CHINA SEA DISPUTE

ASEAN DEFENSE MINISTERS MEET TODAY

KUALA LUMPUR: The United States and Japan are pushing to get concerns about the South China Sea included in a statement to be issued after regional defense talks in Malaysia despite Chinese objections to any mention of the disputed waterway, officials said.

A senior US defense official said Beijing had made clear as early as February that it didn't want the South China Sea discussed at the meeting between Southeast Asian defense ministers and their counterparts from across the Asia-Pacific in Kuala Lumpur today. "We've been very clear along with many other like-minded countries that South China Sea language should be included but there are members who feel differently," said the US defense official, adding China was the main obstacle.

A draft of the concluding statement being prepared by host Malaysia makes no mention of the South China Sea, said a separate source familiar with the discussions, focusing instead on terrorism and regional security cooperation. Today's gathering brings together the 10 defense ministers from the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) along with ministers from countries such as the United States, Japan, China, India and Australia.

The meeting, first held in 2006, is a platform to promote regional peace and stability. It is taking place a week after a US warship challenged territorial limits

around one of Beijing's man-made islands in the Spratly archipelago with a so-called freedom-of-navigation patrol.

That prompted China's naval chief to warn his US counterpart in a video teleconference that a minor incident could spark war in the South China Sea if the United States did not stop its "provocative acts."

The source familiar with the talks in Kuala Lumpur said Japan had requested Malaysia "improve" the draft and make note of the South China Sea. China claims most of the South China Sea, through which more than \$5 trillion in global trade passes every year. Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei, the Philippines and Taiwan have rival claims.

STRUGGLING FOR UNITY

ASEAN meetings routinely become a venue for countries such as the Philippines and Vietnam to argue for a stronger stance against China's territorial ambitions. Countries like Cambodia are pro-China while Malaysia has sought to steer a more neutral path, even though it's a claimant and only last month its armed forces chief called China's island-building an "unwarranted provocation". In his opening remarks to a separate meeting of ASEAN defense ministers yesterday, Malaysian Defense Minister Hishammuddin Hussein made no mention of the South China Sea.

At a news conference after the meeting,

Hishammuddin alluded to the waterway, saying he hoped countries outside ASEAN would not increase tension. "If the sides cannot find an amicable solution on the way forward, the patrolling and presence of vessels from China or the US raises concerns for us ASEAN countries," he said. China says its seven man-made islands in the Spratlys will have mostly civilian purposes as well as undefined defense uses.

The US Navy plans to conduct patrols within 12 nautical miles of the islands about twice a quarter to remind China and other countries about US rights under international law, a separate US defense official said on Monday. "That's the right amount to make it regular but not a constant poke in the eye," the official said.

Speaking in Beijing, Fan Changlong, vice chairman of China's Central Military Commission told the commander of US forces in the Pacific, Admiral Harry Harris, that US action in the South China Seas could easily cause "miscalculations" that could threaten regional peace and stability, China's Defence Ministry said. But Harris, speaking earlier at a Beijing university, said US freedom of navigation operations should not be viewed as a threat. "We've been conducting freedom of navigation operations all over the world for decades, so no one should be surprised by them," Harris said, on a trip that is part of regular exchanges that are taking place between the two navies despite tension over the South China Sea. — Reuters

JOURNALIST GUNNED DOWN IN PAKISTAN

PESHAWAR: A Pakistani journalist was shot dead by unknown attackers in the troubled northwest yesterday, police said, a region where reporters are frequently targeted by Islamist militants.

Zaman Mehsud, 40, was killed while riding his motorcycle to the remote Tank district in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. "Zaman Mehsud was riding his motorcycle when gunmen waiting along the road opened fire," Rasool Shah, a senior police official in Tank, told AFP.

He was critically wounded and died of his injuries in hospital, Shah added. He had been working for three Urdu-language newspapers covering the South Waziristan tribal district and surrounding areas.

Zafrul Islam, another senior government official, confirmed the incident and said Mehsud was hit by five bullets including one in the head. Police would not comment on the motive for the killing, but journalists in the region work under constant threat from Islamist rebels, mainly the Taleban.

The powerful military also stands accused of using its intelligence agencies to regularly harass and sometimes kill journalists, including Saleem Shahzad whose tortured corpse was discovered near the capital in 2011. A UN report issued Monday said at least 71 Pakistani journalists and other media workers have lost their lives since 2001 while pursuing their duties.

The report criticized a widespread culture of impunity and ranked Pakistan as the world's fifth worst country in terms of the number of unresolved cases of violence against journalists. The killing was the fourth attack on members of the media in the past

three months. A TV news technician and journalist were killed in separate incidents in the port city of Karachi in September, while a journalist was shot and injured in the north-western city of Peshawar.

Woman succumbs

A young Pakistani woman died yesterday after a rejected suitor set her ablaze for refusing his marriage proposal, a doctor said. Sonia Bibi, 20, was admitted to hospital last month, where she told police that her former lover Latif Ahmed had doused her with petrol and set her alight after she turned down his proposal.

Medical staff had originally said she would recover, but a doctor in Multan's Nishtar hospital told AFP that Bibi's injuries had become infected and that she died yesterday morning.

About 45 to 50 percent of her body had been burned in the attack, doctor Naheed Chaudhry, the head of the hospital's burns department told AFP. The incident took place in a remote village of Multan district in central Punjab province. Police have arrested the 24-year-old suspect.

Bibi had told police that she had fallen out of love with Ahmed, and preliminary investigations suggested he had set her on fire "after she refused to marry him". Hundreds of women are murdered in Pakistan each year in cases of domestic violence or on the grounds of defending family "honor". The Aurat Foundation, a campaign group that works to improve the lives of women in Pakistan's conservative and patriarchal society, says more than 3,000 women have been killed in such attacks since 2008. — AFP



Pakistani relatives transport the body of journalist Zaman Mehsud (center) after an attack by gunmen in Tank district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province yesterday. — AFP

BRITISH JOURNALISTS HANDED SHORT JAIL TERMS IN INDONESIA

BATAM, INDONESIA: Two British journalists given short jail terms in Indonesia yesterday for working without correct visas said they were relieved to be going home but disappointed they were treated as criminals for doing their jobs.

Neil Bonner, 32, and Rebecca Prosser, 31, were sentenced yesterday to two-and-a-half months in prison, less than the five months sought by prosecutors who accused them of misusing their tourist visas to make a documentary about piracy near the western island of Batam. Unless prosecutors appeal against the sentence, their lawyer said the pair, who have been detained since May, could walk free after time spent in custody awaiting trial is taken into account.

Prosser said it was a "big relief" to be going home but condemned their sentence as a "criminalization of journalists". "I think this makes it a more dangerous landscape for other journalists in Indonesia," she told reporters in Batam after the sentence was passed.

Bonner thanked their supporters but expressed sadness because "this is journalism on trial, and we've been found guilty". "I don't think journalism is a crime," he said.

Presiding judge Wahyu Prasetyo Wibowo said the defendants had violat-

ed their visas but admitted their wrongdoing and apologized. The pair arrived in Indonesia to shoot a documentary about piracy for production house Wall to Wall with funding from National Geographic, according to their indictment.

It added they had hired several Indonesians to act out a scene of a tanker being boarded by a group of pirates off Batam. The island is in the Malacca Strait, a major shipping lane.

Their lawyer Aristo Pangaribuan expressed regret that the prosecution was considering filing an appeal, saying his clients were not bad people who had served their time and would pay the 25 million rupiah fine (\$1,850) imposed on each.

"I told the judge I hope the prosecutors are on the same page, because if they file an appeal, whether we like it or not we have to deal with it," he said. Foreign journalists wanting to report in Indonesia must get a special visa. Those detained in the past for illegal reporting have been deported immediately or given short prison terms.

Two French journalists were given jail terms of two and a half months last year after being caught in Indonesia's Papua province trying to make a documentary about the separatist movement while on tourist visas. — AFP

MYANMAR PRESIDENT WARNS OF ARAB SPRING-STYLE VIOLENCE

YANGON: A video posted on the Facebook page of Myanmar's president, raising the spectre of bloodshed and chaos akin to the Arab Spring aftermath if it loses power in Sunday's polls, has drawn an angry response on social media. The tightly edited four-minute feature was posted on the page of President Thein Sein, days before the country heads to the polls in landmark elections which are expected to see the opposition make major gains.



YANGON: Ye Aung (left) and Khin Myo Hla (2nd left), candidates for lower house and regional parliament for the army-backed ruling Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), campaign house-to-house in Yangon yesterday. — AFP

The video juxtaposes scenes of recent violence in the Middle East with shots of seeming tranquility and development in Myanmar during its transition towards democracy, backed by a heavy metal soundtrack.

It ends with the words: "Only when peace prevails will democratization be implemented." "It was about the transformation of Myanmar into a democratic country," Zaw Htay, director of the president's office, told AFP. Thein Sein, a former general, and the ruling army-

backed USDP party have positioned themselves as the guarantors of Myanmar's stable progress as it shakes off decades of junta rule. Unlike countries that suffered "blood streams, explosions, violent protests", Myanmar has remained stable, Zaw Htay said, since the army handed power to a quasi-civilian reformist government in 2011. "Compared to those countries, we all know that our country developed step by step," he added.

"We can't become like America or Singapore right away, we have to wait." Religious violence has left hundreds dead in Myanmar since 2012, while several insurgencies continue to burn in the borderlands. Many local social media users accused the president's office of hypocrisy.

For decades Myanmar's military ruled the country with an iron fist, crushing dissent and fixing or simply ignoring elections. Thein Sein rose to the highest echelons of the junta before trading in his uniform for civilian politics. Human rights groups accuse the military of regular abuses in their fight against ethnic minority rebels. Others, including opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi, have voiced fears the government is backsliding on reforms.

"Taking students to prison while they were protesting in Letpadan for our people's education system, was that a peaceful way of transforming to democracy?" wrote The Ko Ko under the Facebook video on the president's page a reference to the recent arrest and trial of student protesters. "The beautiful Kachin is now left with piles of waste soil... peaceful way huh?" wrote user Pharsi Myae, a reference to military-controlled mining operations in the northern state of Kachin, which has been blighted by decades of war. — AFP



KUWAIT: Photo shows the Al-Ghanim House - a distinctive sample of Kuwait architecture. The house was built in 1919 and is owned by Jassem Al-Ghanim. It was transformed in 1960, into the main formative arts gallery called 'Al-Marsam'. — KUNA

AFGHAN WOMAN STONED TO DEATH FOR 'ADULTERY'

KABUL: A young Afghan woman was stoned to death after being accused of adultery, officials said yesterday, a medieval punishment apparently recorded in a video that harks back to the dark days of Taleban rule. The 30-second clip run in Afghan media shows a woman in a hole in the ground as turbaned men gather around and hurl stones at her with chilling nonchalance.

The woman, named by officials as Rokhsahana and aged between 19 and 21, is heard repeating the shahada, or Muslim profession of faith, her voice growing increasingly high-pitched as stones strike her with sickening thuds. The killing took place about a week ago in a Taleban-controlled area just outside Firozkoh, the capital of central Ghor province, officials said, confirming the video which went viral on social media. "Yes, the footage shown in the media is related to Rokhsahana,

who was stoned to death," a spokesman for Ghor's Governor Seema Joyenda said.

Rokhsahana was stoned by a gathering of "Taleban, local religious leaders and armed warlords", Joyenda said. Joyenda, one of only two female governors in Afghanistan, said Rokhsahana's family had married her off against her will and that she was caught while eloping with another man her age-seen as tantamount to adultery. The man was let off with a lashing, Joyenda's spokesman said. The brutal punishment meted out to Rokhsahana highlighted the endemic violence against women in Afghan society, despite reforms since the hardline Taleban regime fell in 2001.

In March a woman named Farkhunda was savagely beaten and set ablaze in central Kabul after being falsely accused of burning a Koran. The mob killing triggered

protests around the country and drew global attention to the treatment of Afghan women. Joyenda condemned the stoning in Ghor, calling on Kabul to launch a military operation to rid the area of insurgents and other armed groups. "This is the first incident in this area (this year) but will not be the last," she said. "Women in general have problems all over the country, but in Ghor even more conservative attitudes prevail."

In September a video from Ghor appeared to show a woman-covered head to toe in a veil and huddled on the ground-receiving lashes from a turbaned elder in front of a crowd of male spectators. The flogging came after a local court found her guilty of having sex outside marriage with a man, who was similarly punished. Shariah law decrees stoning as the punishment for men and women convicted of having sex outside marriage,

but the penalty is very rarely applied in Muslim countries. Public lashings and executions were common under the Taleban's 1996-2001 rule, when a strict interpretation of Sharia law was enforced, but such incidents have been less common in recent years.

The Taleban have so far not commented on the stoning in Ghor. Long condemned as misogynistic zealots, the militants have recently sought to project a softened stance on female rights. But the insurgents' recent three-day occupation of the northern provincial capital of Kunduz offers an ominous blueprint of what could happen should they ever return to power. Harrowing testimonies have emerged of Taleban death squads methodically targeting a host of female rights workers and journalists just hours after the city fell on September 28. — AFP

MPS CLASH OVER IRAN AMID HEATED DEBATE

Continued from Page 1

MP Dashti said that he will submit a draft law calling to end all forms of racial discrimination in Kuwait.

MP Saleh Ashour criticized the government failure to prevent illegal fund raising campaigns which he claimed - the proceeds had been sent to terrorist groups. He also criticized what he described as attempts by the government to curb freedoms under the pretext of safeguarding security. MP also focused on the economic issue and the Amir's call for diversifying the sources of income. MP Saadoun Hammad called for building more refineries and called on the Oil

Ministry to play a role in diversifying the economy.

He also said Kuwaiti reserves invested abroad posted a return of just 9 percent and added that it should be invested in a better way to raise the return to as high as 20 percent. Ashour criticized the government because it has not succeeded in cutting spending and warned that as a result of the government policy, taxes are expected to be imposed to make people pay for the deficit. The National Assembly also decided to extend for three more months the investigation of the committee probing alleged violations at Kuwait's Investment Office in London. The Assembly will continue the debate today.

AMIR TO MAKE A 'LANDMARK' TRIP TO MOSCOW...

Continued from Page 1

by the Kuwaiti ruler and his top aides. Gelyan was the first Russian warship to arrive in Kuwait on November 18, 1900. Varyag arrived in December, 1901, the protected cruiser Admiral Kornilov arrived in the following year, and the cruiser Askold in 1903.

First visit

The late Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah was the first Kuwaiti senior official to visit Moscow in November, 1964, as Minister of Finance, Industry and Oil; his talks with the Soviet officials led to the signing of the first agreement on economic and commercial cooperation. The two sides inked agreements on economic and technical cooperation in February, 1965 - an agreement to upgrade the Kuwaiti fishing fleet in the following year; a protocol on cultural and scientific exchanges in 1978; a protocol on media cooperation in 1979, another agreement on economic and technical cooperation in 1982, and a protocol on academic certificate of equivalent competency in 1989.

Dozens of Kuwaiti students received their higher education at Soviet and Russian colleges, which contributed to the cementing of the bilateral scientific and cultural ties later on. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the late Minister of Defense of Kuwait Sheikh Ali Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah visited Moscow to sign a security agreement which paved the way for closer cooperation in the defense and technological domains.

Russian ex-prime minister Viktor Stepanovich Chernomyrdin paid a visit to Kuwait in 1994 to sign agreements on protection and promotion of investments, prevention of double taxation, cultural and media cooperation, and consultation between the two ministries of foreign affairs. The bilateral ties in the economic, commercial, scientific and technical fields got a quantum leap when the two sides agreed to form a joint commission, which met alternately in Moscow and Kuwait, and a joint business council. The friendship, based on mutual respect, the rules of the international law, and non-interference in the domestic affairs of each other, kept growing over the last decades.

Iraqi Invasion

Russia did not hesitate in supporting Kuwait in its

struggle against the Iraqi invasion in 1990. The then Russian president Mikhail Gorbachev sent a personal envoy to Iraq to meet the country's president Saddam Hussein and urge him to pull his troops from Kuwait. As a permanent member of the UN Security Council, the Russian Federation voted for all UNSC resolutions relating to Kuwait liberation and the handling of the Kuwaiti missing people and national archive. Moscow backed the UNSC Resolution 678, passed on November 29, 1990, to authorize taking all measures necessary for ending the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. In 1992, one year after the liberation of Kuwait, the late Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah visited Moscow to thank, on behalf of the Kuwaiti people and government, the Russian leaders for their supportive stance.

Kuwait offered a soft loan to the tune of \$2 billion for Russia to overcome the economic hardships in early 1990s. The sides reached agreement on repayment of the loan in 2006. Kuwait supported the Russian bid to join the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) as an observer state and establish a strategic dialogue with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). In May, 2009, the Russian Kremlin hosted the Treasury of the World exhibition, organized by Kuwait's Dar Al-Athar Al-Islamiyyah for three months; the exhibition moved to St Petersburg city in August. In 2010, the two countries signed a memorandum of understanding on cooperation on the peaceful applications of the nuclear energy.

Regional issues

During his visit to Russia, His Highness the Amir is scheduled to meet Russian President Vladimir Putin to discuss a host of bilateral and regional issues, with emphasis on the political and economic cooperation. The visit, which gains additional significance as it coincides with exceptional circumstances in the Middle East, is expected to give momentum to the economic ties and commercial ties which lag behind the close political ones. The bilateral trade volume stood at \$325 million in 2013, so the two sides pin hopes on the joint business council, launched in 2008, and the Russian direct investment fund, jointly launched with Kuwait Investment Authority with a capital of \$500 million, to tap into the potentials of joint investment by the private sector. — KUNA

RARE CYCLONE BATTERS WAR-RAVAGED YEMEN

CAIRO: A cyclone with hurricane-force winds made landfall on Yemen's Arabian Sea coast yesterday, flooding the country's fifth-largest city Mukalla and sending thousands of people fleeing for shelter. Officials and meteorologists say the storm is the most intense in decades in the arid country, whose storm response is hampered by poverty and a raging civil war. In the provincial capital Mukalla, whose 300,000 people are largely ruled by Al-Qaeda fighters since the army withdrew in April, water submerged cars on city streets and caused dozens of families to flee to a hospital for fear of rock slides.

Residents said the seafront promenade and many homes had been destroyed by the cyclone, called Chapala, and officials in the dry hinterland province of Shabwa said about 6,000 people had moved to higher ground. "The wind knocked out power completely in the city and people were terrified. Some residents had to leave their homes and escape to higher areas where flooding was less; it was a difficult night but it passed off peacefully," said Sabri Saleem, who lives in Mukalla.

There were no initial reports of injuries. An Al-Qaeda

militant on Twitter prayed for deliverance from the storm and said that a US pilotless drone was flying especially low over the city, where the militant group's deputy leader was killed in an air strike in June. "May God cause it to crash," said the man, going by the name of Laith Al-Mukalla. "God spare us your wrath, and place the rains in heart of the valleys and mountains." The cyclone first hit the remote Yemeni island of Socotra, killing three people and displacing thousands. An island of natural beauty, Socotra is home to hundreds of plant species found nowhere else on Earth and lies 380 km off Yemen in the Arabian Sea.

Its 50,000 residents speak their own language. Meteorological agencies predicted Chapala would hit land around Balhaf, site of Yemen's liquefied natural gas terminal, and weakening as it advanced towards the capital Sanaa in the country's north. The facility has been mostly shuttered since the start of a war in March between a Saudi-led Arab military coalition and the Iran-allied Houthi movement which controls Sanaa. It was not immediately clear if the terminal, once a lifeline for Yemen's weak economy, suffered damage. — Reuters



MUKALLA: Tropical Cyclone Chapala batters Mukalla, Yemen. — AP

Kuwait Times
THE LEADING INDEPENDENT
DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF
ESTABLISHED 1961

Founder and Publisher
YOUSUF S. AL-ALYAN

Editor-in-Chief
ABD AL-RAHMAN AL-ALYAN

EDITORIAL : 24833199-24833358-24833432
ADVERTISING : 24835616/7
FAX : 24835620/1
CIRCULATION : 24833199 Extn. 163
ACCOUNTS : 24835619
COMMERCIAL : 24835618

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Focus

INVESTORS FEEL THE IMPACT OF HUNGARY'S BRAIN DRAIN

By Gergely Szakacs

German technical services provider TUV Rheinland left no stone unturned in its search for an engineer to fill a specialized auditing position in Hungary. It took two and a half years to find the right person. A growing number of employers are facing such travails since about half a million of Hungary's 10 million people left for better paid jobs in western Europe, with ramifications for economic growth, competitiveness and investor appeal.

Engineers are in particularly short supply. Companies resort to poaching workers from rivals, at greater cost, or invest time and money to bring their own workers up to speed. For Timea Kalina, Human Resources Manager at TUV Rheinland's Hungarian unit, losing experienced colleagues is a big problem. "If we want to recruit a replacement who can fill the role flawlessly from day one, that is difficult right now," she said. "I would say the chances of finding someone like that are zero."

On average, it takes TUV Rheinland two or three months to recruit an engineer, longer for more specialized positions or if management skills are also required. Engineering is just the start of the problem. A recent survey of 750 employers by staffing company Manpower Group found that nearly one in two have trouble finding enough skilled workers to fill vacancies from blue-collar jobs to drivers, IT experts and accountants. Doctors, who have created the most visible gap due to abundant media coverage in Hungary, rank seventh on the list.

Vodafone and International Business Machines Corp are among a string of global companies to have chosen Hungary in centralizing services for employees and customers. Some of those companies are now finding it hard to recruit. "In local shared service centers there is a shortage of several thousand workers," said Laszlo Dalanyi, Country Manager for Hungary and Slovenia at Manpower Group. "In the information technology sector there are 20,000 empty jobs and the gap in the car sector has also reached tens of thousands by now." He said Hungary, which has walled itself off from the hundreds of thousands of migrants pouring into Europe from the Middle East and Asia, has yet to find a way to hold onto its top talent or keep new graduates from leaving in droves.

Structural problems

Hungary's jobless rate has fallen substantially in recent years, sinking to 6.4 percent by September from double-digit figures when Prime Minister Viktor Orban took power in 2010 with a sweeping mandate for reform after eight years of Socialist rule that saw the country pulled back from the brink with an international bailout. But the unemployment figure has been partly pushed down by 226,600 mostly unskilled people employed in public works programs, a fraction of whom find employment in the private sector, as well as 114,200 people registered as working abroad.

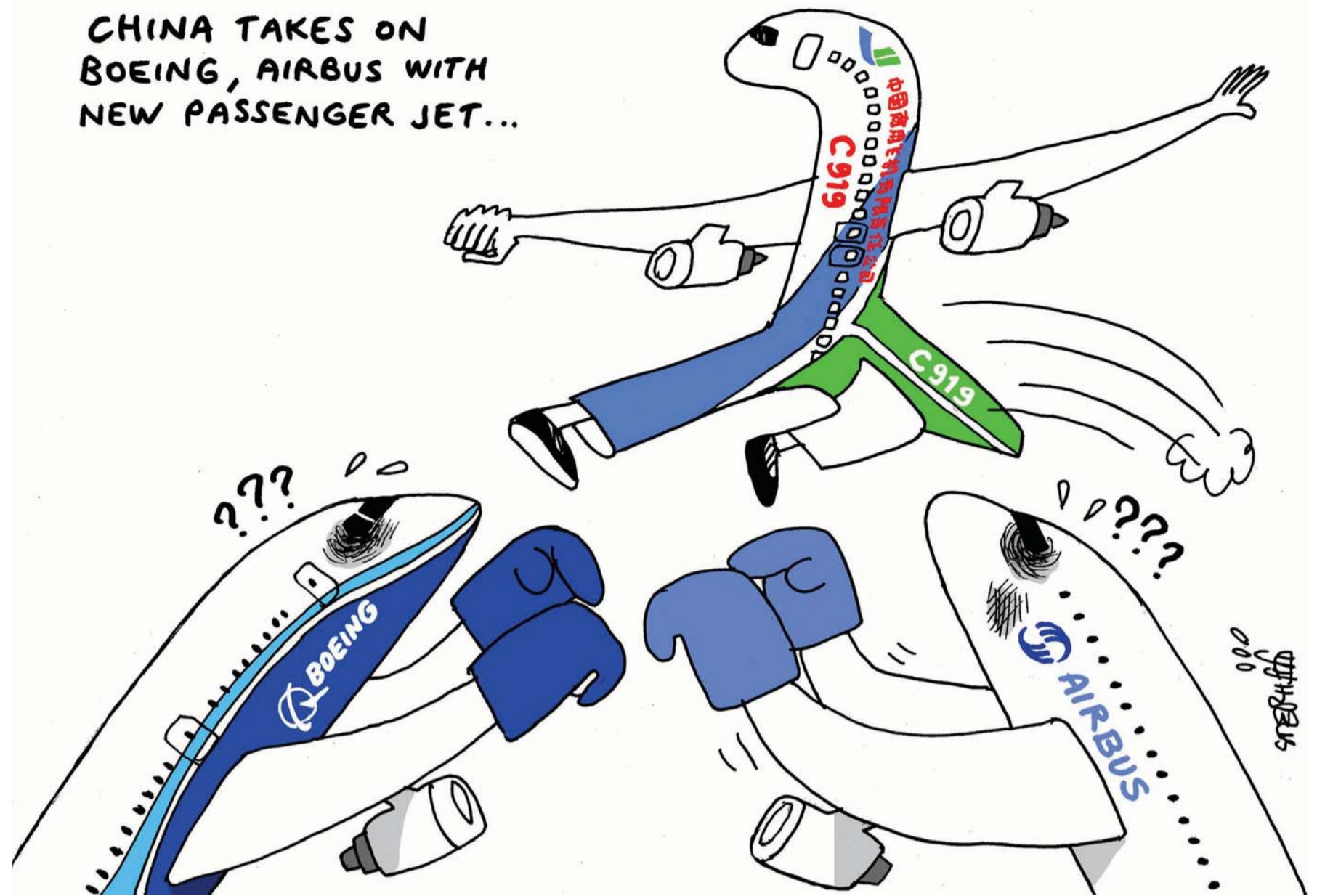
Analyst Mariann Trippon at CIB Bank, the Hungarian unit of Intesa SanPaolo, said most of the improvement in jobless figures came from these two factors and the unemployment rate adjusted for the impact of public works programs remained above 11 percent. "A shortage of workers can have serious consequences in the long run," she said. "One of the key challenges of Hungarian economic policy is to boost potential growth and that would also require tackling the structural problems of the labor market." The problems include a sizeable grey economy, a lack of appropriate skills and low internal mobility.

For the first time in a decade, Deloitte Consulting has launched a billboard campaign aimed at university students and career starters in Budapest. Jobs advertised on its local website include IT engineers, accountants and finance experts. Lajos Antal, head of Cyber Risk Services in Hungary and Central Europe, said only a major overhaul of the education system from primary school to master's degree would solve the problems long term. "We need to devote significantly more resources into finding the right people, casting a wider net, look around across the border and even hire from abroad," he said.

Skills gap

One of the most frequent complaints is a lack of hands-on training at universities, but a 2012 skills survey by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) showed Hungarian schoolchildren losing ground to their peers in mathematics and science, despite some improvement in reading. In all three categories, however, Hungarian pupils scored below the OECD average. German premium car maker Audi, one of Hungary's top revenue-earners and exporters, sponsors an entire department at a university in Győr, where it is based, to train engineers. —Reuters

CHINA TAKES ON BOEING, AIRBUS WITH NEW PASSENGER JET...



EXPOSED: BEIJING'S COVERT GLOBAL RADIO NETWORK

By Koh Gui Qing and John Shiffman

In August, foreign ministers from 10 nations blasted China for building artificial islands in the disputed South China Sea. As media around the world covered the diplomatic clash, a radio station that serves the most powerful city in America had a distinctive take on the news. Located outside Washington, DC, WCRW radio made no mention of China's provocative island project. Instead, an analyst explained that tensions in the region were due to unnamed "external forces" trying "to insert themselves into this part of the world using false claims." Behind WCRW's coverage is a fact that's never broadcast: The Chinese government controls much of what airs on the station, which can be heard on Capitol Hill and at the White House. WCRW is just one of a growing number of stations across the world through which Beijing is broadcasting China-friendly news and programming. A Reuters investigation spanning four continents has identified at least 33 radio stations in 14 countries that are part of a global radio web structured in a way that obscures its majority shareholder: state-run China Radio International, or CRI.

Many of these stations primarily broadcast content created or supplied by CRI or by media companies it controls in the United States, Australia and Europe. Three Chinese expatriate businessmen, who are CRI's local partners, run the companies and in some cases own a stake in the stations. The network reaches from Finland to Nepal to Australia, and from Philadelphia to San Francisco. At WCRW, Beijing holds a direct financial interest in the Washington station's broadcasts. Corporate records in the United States and China show a Beijing-based subsidiary of the Chinese state-owned radio broadcaster owns 60 percent of an American company that leases almost all of the station's airtime.

China has a number of state-run media properties, such as the Xinhua news agency, that are well-known around the world. But American officials charged with monitoring foreign media ownership and propaganda said they were unaware of the Chinese-controlled radio operation inside the United States until contacted by Reuters. A half-dozen former senior US officials said federal authorities should investigate whether the arrangement violates laws governing foreign media and agents in the United States.

Serious inquiry

A US law enforced by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) prohibits foreign governments or their representatives from holding a radio license for a US broadcast station. Under the Communications Act, foreign individuals, governments and corporations are permitted to hold up to 20 percent ownership directly in a station and up to 25 percent in the US parent corporation of a station. CRI itself doesn't hold ownership stakes in US stations, but it does have a majority share via a subsidiary in the company that leases WCRW in Washington and a Philadelphia station with a similarly high-powered signal.

Said former FCC Chairman Reed Hundt: "If there were allegations made about de facto Chinese government ownership of radio stations, then I'm sure the FCC would investigate." US law also requires anyone inside the United States seeking to influence American policy or public opinion on behalf of a foreign government or group to register with the Department of Justice. Public records show that CRI's US Chinese-American business partner and his companies haven't registered as foreign agents under the law, called the Foreign Agents Registration Act, or FARA.

"I would make a serious inquiry under FARA into a company rebroadcasting Chinese government propaganda inside the United States without revealing that it is acting on behalf of, or it's owned or controlled by China," said DE "Ed" Wilson Jr, a former senior White House and Treasury Department official. CRI headquarters in Beijing and the Chinese embassy in Washington declined to make officials available for interviews or to comment on the findings of this article. Justice Department national security spokesman Marc Raimondi and FCC spokesman Neil Grace declined to comment. Other officials at the FCC said the agency receives so many license applications that it only launches a probe if it receives a complaint.

People familiar with the matter said no such complaint has been lodged with the FCC about the CRI-backed network in the United States.

Building 'soft power'

Chinese President Xi Jinping, who has chafed at a world order he sees as dominated by the United States and its allies, is aware that China struggles to project its views in the international arena. "We should increase China's soft power, give a good Chinese narrative and better communicate China's message to the world," Xi said in a policy address in November last year, according to Xinhua. CRI head Wang Gengnian has described Beijing's messaging effort as the "borrowed boat" strategy - using existing media outlets in foreign nations to carry Chinese propaganda. The 33 radio stations backed by CRI broadcast in English, Chinese or local languages, offering a mix of news, music and cultural programs. Newscasts are peppered with stories highlighting China's development, such as its space program, and its contribution to humanitarian causes, including earthquake relief in Nepal.

"We are not the evil empire that some Western

news reader had to frighten away wolves with a flashlight. Today, CRI says it broadcasts worldwide in more than 60 languages and Chinese dialects. CRI content is carefully scripted, with the treatment of sensitive topics such as the banned Falun Gong spiritual group adhering strictly to the government line.

Three surrogates

Around the world, corporate records show, CRI's surrogates use the same business structure. The three Chinese businessmen in partnership with Beijing have each created a domestic media company that is 60 percent owned by a Beijing-based group called Guoguang Century Media Consultancy. Guoguang, in turn, is wholly owned by a subsidiary of CRI, according to Chinese company filings. The three companies span the globe: In Europe, GBTimes of Tampere, Finland, has an ownership stake in or provides content to at least nine stations, according to interviews and an examination of company filings. In Asia-Pacific,

news reader had to frighten away wolves with a flashlight. Today, CRI says it broadcasts worldwide in more than 60 languages and Chinese dialects. CRI content is carefully scripted, with the treatment of sensitive topics such as the banned Falun Gong spiritual group adhering strictly to the government line.

Those restrictions might make China's soft-power push an uphill battle with audiences in places like Houston, Rome or Auckland. But CRI does have something to offer station owners. Since 2010, CRI's broadcast partner in the United States has struck deals that bailed out struggling community radio stations, either by purchasing them outright or paying tens of thousands of dollars a month to lease virtually all their airtime. The latter is known as "time-brokering" and is the method G&E used to take to the air in Washington.

The 195-foot towers broadcasting Beijing's agenda throughout the Washington region are located in suburban Loudoun County, Virginia, near Dulles International Airport. They pump out a 50,000-watt signal, the maximum for an AM station in the United States. The towers went live in 2011. In the previous five decades, before the Chinese got involved, the station was known as WAGE, and it used smaller equipment and broadcast mostly local news and talk.

At just 5,000 watts, the signal didn't carry far. This didn't matter much until the 1990s, when Loudoun County boomed into a bedroom community for Washington. Commuters would lose the signal halfway to the capital. In 2005, an American company called Potomac Radio LLC purchased the station and added some nationally syndicated programming. Potomac Radio president Alan Pendleton said his company had a history of leasing time to ethnic programmers, including an hour a day to CRI on another station. Revenue at WAGE continued to fall, however, and in 2009, it went off the air. "It was a painful, painful experience," said Pendleton. "We were losing millions of dollars a year down the drain."

Loudoun County 'last hope'

Saying they hoped to resurrect the station, other Potomac Radio executives asked Loudoun County in 2009 for permission to erect three broadcast towers on land owned by a county utility, records show. The new towers would boost the station's signal tenfold to 50,000 watts, reaching into Washington. In their application, Potomac Radio executives argued that the new towers offered the "last hope to retain Loudoun County's only" radio station. The paperwork made no mention of plans to lease airtime to Su and CRI.

Potomac Radio also invoked the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, a day when the station provided "critical information to county businesses and parents" as mobile phone service became overloaded. The new towers would contribute to public safety, proponents said. The county Board of Supervisors approved the towers. In the days before the station came back on air in April 2011, Potomac Radio sought FCC permission to change the name to WCRW. Asked about the initials, Pendleton confirmed that they stand for China Radio Washington. The change was his idea, not CRI's, he said. Loudoun County officials were surprised when the amped-up station returned as WCRW and began broadcasting G&E and CRI content about China. "It was all very deceptive," said Kelly Burk, a county supervisor at the time. "They presented it as all about being about local radio, and never let on what they were really up to." Potomac Radio's Pendleton said there was no deception. His company was approached by CRI several months after the county approved the towers, he said.

Pendleton said he didn't know that G&E was 60 percent owned by a subsidiary of the Chinese government until Reuters informed him. But the arrangement complies with FCC law, he said, because G&E leases the airwaves instead of owning the station. In any event, he said, CRI is open about its goals: to present a window into Chinese culture and offer Chinese points of view on international affairs. "If you listen to other state-sponsored broadcasters," especially Russia's, "they're really insidious," Pendleton said. "CRI's not like that at all." Pendleton said he has no input in WCRW content: He simply rebroadcasts whatever programs arrive from CRI's man in America, G&E founder James Su. —Reuters



SHANGHAI: In this file photo, guided missile destroyer USS Lassen arrives at the Shanghai International Passenger Quay in Shanghai, China, for a scheduled port visit. The US Navy's challenge late October 2015 to China's sovereignty claims in the South China Sea was not designed as a military threat, Adm Harry B Harris Jr said yesterday, in a mostly upbeat speech about prospects for preventing US-China disputes from escalating to conflict. —AP

media portray us to be," said a person close to the Communist Party leadership in Beijing who is familiar with the CRI network. "Western media reports about China are too negative. We just want to improve our international image. It's self-protection." In some ways, the CRI-backed radio stations fulfill a similar advocacy role to that of the US-run Voice of America. But there is a fundamental difference: VOA openly publishes the fact that it receives US government funding. CRI is using front companies that cloak its role.

A few of the programs broadcast in the United States cite reports from CRI, but most don't. One program, The Beijing Hour, says it is "brought to you by China Radio International." Some shows are slick, others lack polish. While many segments are indistinguishable from mainstream American radio shows, some include announcers speaking English with noticeable Chinese accents. The production values vary because the broadcasts are appealing to three distinct audiences: first-generation Chinese immigrants with limited English skills; second-generation Chinese curious about their ancestral homeland; and non-Chinese listeners whom Beijing hopes to influence.

One thing the programs have in common: They generally ignore criticism of China and steer clear of anything that casts Beijing in a negative light. A top-of-the-hour morning newscast on Oct 15, broadcast in Washington and other US cities, was identified only as "City News." It reported that US officials were concerned about cyber attacks, including one in which the personal information of about 20 million American government workers was allegedly stolen. The broadcast left out a key element: It has been widely reported that US officials believe China was behind that hack.

Last year, as thousands of protesters demand-

Global CAMG Media Group of Melbourne, Australia, has an ownership stake in or supplies programming to at least eight stations, according to corporate records. And in North America, G&E Studio Inc, near Los Angeles, California, broadcasts content nearly full time on at least 15 US stations. A station in Vancouver also broadcasts G&E content. In addition to distributing CRI programming, G&E produces and distributes original Beijing-friendly shows from its California studios.

In a Sept 16 interview at his offices near Los Angeles, G&E president and CEO James Su confirmed that CRI subsidiary Guoguang Century Media holds a majority stake in his company and that he has a contract with the Chinese broadcaster. He said that a non-disclosure agreement bars him from divulging details. Su said he complies with US laws. G&E doesn't own stations, but rather leases the airtime on them. "It's like a management company that manages a condominium," he said.

Su added that he is a businessman, not an agent for China. "Our US audience and our US public has the choice," Su said. "They can choose to listen or not listen. I think this is an American value." GBTimes CEO Zhao Yinong, who spearheads the European arm of the expatriate radio operation, confirmed that he receives several million euros a year from CRI. In an interview in Beijing, Zhao said he was "not interested in creating a false China" and he had "nothing to hide." Tommy Jiang, the head of CAMG, the Australian-based company that owns and operates stations in the Asia-Pacific region, declined to comment.

Born in a cave

CRI has grown remarkably since its founding in 1941. According to its English-language website, its first broadcast was aired from a cave, and the

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NEW YORK CITY FC SACK COACH KREIS

NEW YORK: New York City FC has sacked coach Jason Kreis citing the star-studded club's "disappointing" inaugural Major League Soccer campaign. "Prior to the start of the season, it was agreed with the coaching team that securing of a playoff place was an appropriate target for this year," the team said in a statement. "A win rate of less than one in three games and a points tally which was the second lowest in the league is clearly not in line with the targets that were agreed." City, backed by English Premier League club Manchester City, had hoped to make a splash in their debut season with a lineup including marquee stars Frank Lampard, David Villa and Andrea Pirlo. But suspect defense and the late arrival of Lampard and Pirlo to the campaign were hindrances in a season in which they finished eighth in the 10-team Eastern Conference and out of the MLS Cup playoffs. Kreis had been brought in after a successful spell coaching Real Salt Lake. He signed on after the 2013 MLS season, sitting out 2014 in order to coach City in their debut campaign. — AFP

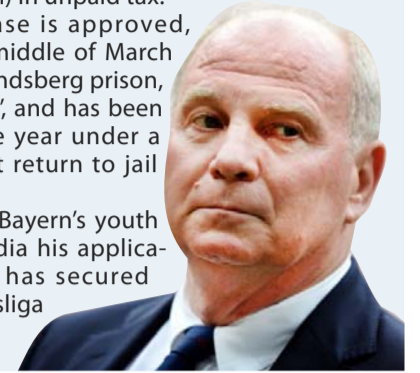


SINGAPORE TRACK INTRUDER JAILED FOR SIX WEEKS

SINGAPORE: A Singapore district court sentenced a 27-year-old man to six weeks in jail yesterday for breaching security fences and entering the circuit during this year's Formula One grand prix in September. British national Yogvitam Pravin Dhokia was arrested and charged with committing a rash act as to endanger the personal safety of the drivers after television pictures showed the intruder strolling along the track as cars sped past. "The accused's act was not only rash but was both selfish and foolhardy," District Judge Chay Yuen Fatt said in a brief statement on the decision, adding that Dhokia had admitted he had wanted to film the race from the track. "Any dangerous intrusion onto the race track can and could have resulted in disastrous and fatal consequences." Dhokia's lawyer Shashi Nathan told the court that his client's actions were "a childish endeavour" and he did not intend to disrupt the race or spoil the spectacle, according to the Singapore-based Channel NewsAsia news channel. Singapore Grand Prix organisers are considering tighter security for next year's race, with higher fences and more marshals, after this year's incident. The race was won by Ferrari's Sebastian Vettel, who was one of several drivers to speed past Dhokia and alerted his engineers of the intruder over his team radio. — Reuters

JAILED EX-BAYERN BOSS SEEKS EARLY RELEASE

BERLIN: Former Bayern Munich president Uli Hoeness has applied for early release from prison having served 18 months of his sentence for tax fraud, his lawyer confirmed yesterday. "Yes, that's right," Hoeness' lawyer Michael Nesselhau told German agency DPA following an initial report in the Bild newspaper. Hoeness, 63, was sentenced to three-and-a-half years in prison in March 2014 for cheating German tax authorities of approximately 28.5 million euros (\$31.3 million) in unpaid tax. If his application for early release is approved, Hoeness could be out of jail by the middle of March 2016. He has served his sentence in Landsberg prison, where Adolf Hitler wrote 'Mein Kampf', and has been on day release since the start of the year under a parole system which means he must return to jail every evening. He has been working with one of Bayern's youth teams and according to German media his application will be helped by the fact he has secured employment with the reigning Bundesliga champions. — AFP



MELBOURNE: Prince of Penzance jockey Michelle Payne, right, celebrates with strapper Stevie Payne, left after winning the Melbourne Cup at the Flemington Racecourse in Melbourne, Australia, yesterday. — AP

PAYNE BECOMES FIRST FEMALE JOCKEY TO WIN MELBOURNE CUP



PRETORIA: In this Friday, Feb 22, 2013 file photo photographers take photos of Olympic athlete Oscar Pistorius as he appears at a bail hearing for the shooting death of his girlfriend Reeva Steenkamp, in Pretoria, South Africa. The state began argument in the Supreme Court of Appeal in Bloemfontein, yesterday that Pistorius' conviction of culpable homicide should be replaced with the initial and more serious charge of murder. — AP

PISTORIUS LAWYERS BATTLE TO AVOID MURDER CHARGES

BLOEMFONTEIN: Oscar Pistorius' lawyers yesterday fought to keep him from returning to jail as state prosecutors argued for a murder conviction in a combative appeal hearing held just two weeks after he was released. The Paralympic sprinter was found guilty last year of culpable homicide—a charge equivalent to manslaughter—after shooting dead his girlfriend Reeva Steenkamp on Valentine's Day in 2013. During sharp exchanges between his lawyer and the five judges at the Supreme Court of Appeal in Bloemfontein, the killing was again re-lived in front of a packed courtroom that included Steenkamp's mother June. At the crux of the appeal was how the trial judge, Thokozile Masipa, interpreted the principle of dolus eventualis—awareness of the likely outcome of an action—under which she acquitted Pistorius of murder. "(Judge Thokozile Masipa's) analysis of dolus eventualis seems to me to be wrong," Judge Eric Leach said. "When he fired the bullets, did he know there was somebody behind the door?" "We're talking about intent." Pistorius' lawyer Barry Roux battled back, arguing that the original trial verdict could not be challenged on its factual findings. "(The judge) was saying: 'I cannot find it under dolus eventualis... because my factual finding is that when he fired the shots thinking it was an intruder he genuinely believed the deceased was in the bedroom.' 'He genuinely believed he was in danger and that's why he fired.'"

State prosecutor Gerrie Nel argued that Pistorius should be convicted of murder as he intentionally meant to kill whoever was behind the toilet door into which he fired four bullets. "Firing through the door at torso level into a small cubicle... the foresight must be that someone would die," Nel said. The court concluded the appeal hearing before lunch, saying it reserved judgement on the case without giving a date when its decision would be announced.

House arrest

Pistorius, 28, was released on October 19 — just one year into his five-year jail term to spend the remainder of his sentence under house arrest at his uncle's mansion in Pretoria. If he was found guilty of murder, he would face a minimum of 15 years in prison. Pistorius, who has not been seen in public since his release, did not attend the hearing. "I'm here to support Gerrie Nel and the team," Reeva's mother June Steenkamp, sitting in court, told AFP.

"We are saying he must stay in jail," said Khosi Mojapi, a 33-year-old member of the African National Congress Women's League, outside the court building. "We say stop abusing women."

A lone Pistorius supporter held a sign reading "Hands off Oscar Pistorius, Give Oscar Pistorius a break." "We need to ensure everybody gets a second chance at life," said Tokelo Africa, wearing a white fedora and navy suit. — AFP

MELBOURNE: Michelle Payne made history as the first female jockey to win Australia's 154-year-old Melbourne Cup when she rode 100-1 outsider Prince of Penzance to a shock win yesterday. In a tight finish, Prince of Penzance powered home to hold off Ireland's Max Dynamite (12-1) by half-a-length with Criterion (18-1) close behind at the head of a strong international field. The well-supported Japanese race favourite Fame Game (4-1) was always well back and finished 13th as Payne and her Down's Syndrome brother and strapper, Stevie, started their celebrations.

"Unbelievable, it's like a dream come true. This horse is awesome," Payne said moments after winning the world's richest two-mile (3,200m) handicap race, which has a Aus\$6.2 million (\$4.4 million) purse. Payne and the locally-trained Prince of Penzance upstaged an 11-strong international contingent prepared by some of the greatest trainers in world racing.

Prince of Penzance became only the fourth 100-1 shot to win the Melbourne Cup, dubbed "the race that stops a nation", and the first in 75 years. It was a fairytale victory for Payne, 30, who has fought back from life-threatening race injuries and also battled prejudice in what she called "such a chauvinistic sport".

"It's a very male-dominated sport and people think we (women) are not strong enough and all of the rest of it, but you know what, it's not all about strength," she said at the winner's presentation.

"There is so much more involved, getting the horse into a rhythm, getting the horse to try for you, it's being patient and I'm so glad to win the Melbourne Cup and hopefully, it will help female jockeys from now on to get more of a go. 'I believe that we don't get enough of a go and hopefully this will help.'

'Get stuffed'

Talking to Australia's Channel Seven, she praised trainer Darren Weir and owner John Richards for their support and added: "I want to say to everyone else, get stuffed, because women can do anything and we can beat the world." Prince of Penzance, a six-year-old gelding, came into Australia's biggest race with little fanfare despite winning one of the lead-up races, the Moonee Valley Gold Cup, over a week ago.

But Payne said she knew her unheralded mount was going to challenge as they headed towards the home turn. "From the 1,000 (metres) everything just opened up," she said. "I got on to the back of Trip To Paris, he took me into the race. 'I was actually clipping his heels, I was going that good but I didn't want to check him and then he just got into the straight and burst clear and it was unreal.'

Payne, the youngest of 10 children, was just six months old when her mother Mary was killed in a car crash. She comes from a family steeped in racing pedigree, with only two other siblings not becoming jockeys. At 18 Payne fractured her skull and suffered bruising on the brain when she fell head-first in a Melbourne race. She suffered further injuries, breaking a wrist and smashing an ankle in

other race falls.

Trip To Paris came in fourth but Newmarket trainer Ed Dunlop's other runner, three-time race runner-up Red Cadeaux, failed to finish. There were initial reports that the popular 10-year-old gelding was taken from the course for immediate surgery on a fetlock.

There was more heartbreak for Dubai ruler

Sheikh Mohammed's Godolphin stable, which again missed out at the 18th attempt at winning the race when Sky Hunter (30-1) beat only two other runners home.

Michael Stoute, who has been a champion trainer 10 times in England and has won races all over the globe, fared no better with his runner Snow Sky coming last. — AFP



MELBOURNE: Models pose ahead of the annual Fashion on the Field competition at Flemington Racecourse on Melbourne Cup day in Melbourne yesterday. — AFP

BURGER HAILS 'GUTSY' WORLD CUP SPRINGBOKS

JOHANNESBURG: Veteran forward Schalk Burger hailed the "gutsy" Springboks yesterday after they returned to South Africa from the 2015 Rugby World Cup in England. "A lesser group would have fallen apart," he said of the team that came third behind New Zealand and Australia after being stunned 34-32 by Japan in their opening pool game.

The downing of the twice world champions by the second-tier rugby nation was the greatest upset in the 29-year global showpiece. "We showed tremendous guts to claw our way back and finish as bronze medallists," said the 32-year-old flanker at Johannesburg airport. South Africa lost by two points to eventual champions New Zealand in an epic semi-final, then beat Argentina comfortably in the third place play-off. Burger, a veteran of four World Cup tournaments, is among senior players expected to retire from Test rugby. Coach Heyneke Meyer reiterated that the team had a great future and that he hoped to have his contract renewed in December for another four years.

"We have some great youngsters coming through," said the 47-year-old handler, whose future will be decided at a December 4 South African

Rugby Union (Saru) meeting. Centres Jesse Kriel and Damian de Allende, fly-half Handre Pollard, prop Frans Malherbe and lock Lood de Jager were emerging Springboks who impressed at the World Cup.

Public and media opinion is divided over Meyer with those favouring him arguing that he should carry on for the sake of continuity. The coach has received the public backing of Saru president Oregan Hoskins. "Heyneke is the most professional coach I have worked with," he said. "We cannot rebuild the team every four years and lose so much intellectual property. 'In retrospect, maybe we should have stuck with coaches in the past. I do not want to keep repeating the cycle.'

Jake White did not have his contract renewed despite winning the 2007 World Cup and the first black Springboks coach, Peter de Villiers, suffered a similar fate after a quarter-final exit four years later.

Opponents of Meyer point to one win in eight matches against arch-rivals New Zealand since he succeeded De Villiers. His obsessively physical and uncreative tactics at the World Cup have also come under fire, as has his failure to racially transform the one-time exclusively white Springboks. — AFP



1,200 SHOOTERS VIE FOR MEDALS AT 13TH ASIAN SHOOTING CHAMPIONSHIP

COMPETITION QUALIFIES FOR BRAZIL 2016 OLYMPICS

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Today's competition in the 13th Asian Shooting Championship will see the distribution of several gold medals in the men's 10 meters rifle, 25m rapid pistol for women and 50m prone rifle for women. There will also be official training for men's and women's skeet, 10 meter pistol for men and 50 meter prone for men.

The 25m rapid pistol competition qualifies for Brazil 2016 Olympics. Meanwhile, in his opening speech of the championship, President of the Arab and Kuwait Shooting

Federations expressed hope that the 13th Asian Championship will see fruitful and beneficial results for all participants and meet its goals. Al-Otaibi said during the opening ceremony which was held at Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Olympic Shooting Complex that the organizing committee began preparation for this major event a long time ago as 1,200 shooters representing 33 countries and equipped with the best equipment available.

He said we were surprised last Friday with the decision by ISSF (International Shooting Sports Federation) to consider this championship not qualifying for the Brazil 2016

Olympics, though we did not receive any complaints all these four years. He rejected any influence on the championship proceedings or its legal status, adding that "we will defend the rights of all winners to get their quota places."

Outstanding

Al-Otaibi expressed his pleasure towards the friendly spirit of all participants and their wish to continue. Al-Otaibi expressed his appreciation and gratitude to HH the Amir, HH the Crown Prince and HH the Premier for their care and support of the sport of shooting.

He also lauded the role of information minister, state minister for youth affairs, president of Asian Shooting Federation Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah and Director General of the sports authority Sheikh Ahmad Mansour Al-Sabah and his deputies for their support of the championship.

Meanwhile, ASC Secretary General Li Fing said the championship is important as it has qualifying quotas for Brazil 2016 Olympics. Fing thanked Kuwait's political leadership and government and Kuwaiti people for hosting this major Asian gathering.

Oman's head of delegation Hamad Al-Jahwari said the opening ceremony was out-



standing and reflected the success of Kuwait in hosting regional and international events. He said the ISSF decision not to consider the quota places in this tournament is not right, and was made in a very inopportune time, just two days before the start of the championship.

He said Asia's national federations may object against the ISSF decision immediately after the championship due to expenses incurred by Asian countries to prepare their teams for the event.



ASIAN PLAYERS 'WON'T MISS OUT' IN TOUR MERGER: KERR

SHANGHAI: Asian Tour CEO Mike Kerr yesterday said he has allayed players' fears that they could lose out in a merger with the European Tour, adding that the move was aimed at nurturing "elite golfers" to drive the sport in the region.

Kerr said the proposed creation of a mega-tour straddling Europe and Asia would go ahead and had been broadly welcomed by players, despite fears from some Asian professionals that it could limit their playing opportunities.

He added that it would create a "pathway" to the world's most prestigious events for players from Asia, and in the process create more elite players from the world's most populous continent.

"What I can say very confidently is that no Asian professional is going to lose any opportunity," Kerr told AFP on the sidelines of the HSBC Golf Business Forum in Shanghai.

"We are going through a process of education with the players," Kerr added. "The European players have embraced this almost 100 percent. For the Asian players I think it's a much bigger change for them. There have been a lot of questions and a lot of concern, as you would imagine. "Change in any industry, in life, is not something that is easily embraced. We have addressed their fears in the way we have structured the partnership."

Elite golfers

Kerr said he could not disclose details of the merger and they were still being negotiated.

"Yes it's all confidential," Kerr said. "But we are going to partner together. We are merging the businesses. We are merging the businesses."

"Asian players will continue to be able to ply their trade in Asia if they wish."

"But for those who want to progress, those that want to create a real career out of professional golf, what we have done is create a very clear pathway to get into some of the more established events in the world and then through to the majors, the WGCs and the cream of the elite tournaments."

"From an Asian Tour perspective we want to create elite golfers in Asia to drive golf and unlock the potential of the game in Asia."

Kerr said the tours are there to benefit their members—the players—and the merger will ensure long-term stability at the top level after a long period when golf's governance has been fractured in Asia, with rival tour OneAsia competing for sponsorship and some events disappearing from the calendar. "It will create scale. It will create a new product. And it will create stability," he said.

"I don't think that we would have embarked on this had we not believed that actually it would satisfy our core purpose, to deliver more earnings and more opportunities for all of our members." — AFP

BLACKHAWKS END KINGS' 7-GAME WINNING STREAK WITH 4-2 VICTORY

CHICAGO: Patrick Kane and Jonathan Toews each had a goal and an assist to lead the Chicago Blackhawks to a 4-2 victory over Los Angeles in the NHL on Monday, ending the Kings' seven-game winning streak. Kane scored to tie it at 2, then set up Teuvo Teravainen's tiebreaking goal in the third as Chicago scored three goals in the final period. After taking Toews' pass, Artem Anisimov added a short-handed breakaway goal with 1:33 left to complete the scoring. Toews got his fifth goal in five games to help Chicago win its sixth straight at home.

Chicago's Corey Crawford made 33 saves and Los Angeles' Jonathan Quick stopped 22 shots. In other games, Jeffrey Lupul had two goals and an assist and James Reimer stopped 43 shots as the Toronto Maple Leafs beat the Dallas Stars 4-1 to get their first home win of the season. Brad Boyes and Morgan Rielly also scored for the Maple Leafs, who had lost their first four at home (0-3-1).

Jake Virtanen scored his first NHL goal and Ryan Miller made 27 saves to lead the Vancouver Canucks past the Philadelphia Flyers 4-1. The Canucks decided to keep

the 19-year-old Virtanen and fellow rookie forward Jared McCann with the club on Sunday, triggering the first year of their entry-level contracts.

MAPLE LEAFS 4, STARS 1

Jeffrey Lupul had two goals and an assist, James Reimer stopped 43 shots, and Toronto got its first home win of the season. Brad Boyes and Morgan Rielly also scored for the Maple Leafs, who had lost their first four at home (0-3-1). Jamie Benn got his 10th goal of the season and Antti Niemi finished with 22 saves as the Stars saw their three-game winning streak broken. Boyes thought he had his second of the night late in the first, but it was overturned when Dallas challenged that the Maple Leafs were offside.

CANUCKS 4, FLYERS 1

Jake Virtanen scored his first NHL goal and Ryan Miller made 27 saves to lead Vancouver.

Bo Horvat had a goal and an assist, and Jannik Hansen and Matt Bartkowski also scored for the Canucks. Claude Giroux scored for Philadelphia, while Steve

Mason stopped 30 shots as the Flyers dropped their fourth in a row. The Canucks announced Sunday that Virtanen and fellow 19-year-old rookie forward

Jared McCann would be sticking with the club beyond the nine-game mark, triggering the first year of their entry-level contracts. — Agencies

NHL Standings

Western Conference					Eastern Conference								
Central Division					Atlantic Division								
W	L	OTL	GF	GA	PTS	W	L	OTL	GF	GA	PTS		
Dallas	9	3	0	41	34	18	Montreal	11	2	0	50	24	22
St. Louis	8	2	1	30	23	17	Tampa Bay	6	5	2	33	34	14
Minnesota	7	2	2	35	32	16	Boston	6	3	1	39	31	13
Nashville	7	2	2	32	25	16	Florida	5	4	2	32	23	12
Winnipeg	7	4	1	36	33	15	Ottawa	5	4	2	35	36	12
Chicago	7	5	0	28	26	14	Detroit	5	5	1	28	30	11
Colorado	3	7	1	27	33	7	Buffalo	5	7	0	28	35	10
							Toronto	2	7	2	24	36	6
Pacific Division					Metropolitan Division								
Vancouver	6	2	4	36	26	16	Washington	8	2	0	34	23	16
Los Angeles	7	4	0	26	25	14	NY Rangers	7	2	2	31	21	16
San Jose	6	5	0	31	28	12	NY Islanders	6	3	3	36	30	15
Arizona	5	5	1	30	32	11	Pittsburgh	7	4	0	24	20	14
Edmonton	4	8	0	32	39	8	New Jersey	6	4	1	28	29	13
Calgary	3	8	1	27	50	7	Philadelphia	4	5	2	22	33	10
Anaheim	2	7	2	14	29	6	Carolina	5	7	0	26	34	10
							Columbus	2	10	0	25	46	4

Note: Overtime losses (OTL) are worth one point in the standings and are not included in the loss column (L)



CHICAGO: Patrick Kane #88 of the Chicago Blackhawks is held by Brayden McNabb #3 of the Los Angeles Kings at the United Center on Monday in Chicago, Illinois. — AFP

THIEM, TOMIC ADVANCE AT PARIS MASTERS

PARIS: Young prospects Dominic Thiem and Bernard Tomic advanced to the second round of the Paris Masters on Monday while local players struggled at the refurbished Bercy arena. The 22-year-old Thiem, the youngest player in the Top 25, progressed with a 6-2, 5-7, 6-2 win over Frenchman Adrien Panarin before Tomic ousted Fabio Fognini 6-3, 6-2.

Opening play on center court, Thiem saved five of the six break points he faced to set up a second-round match with 11th-seeded Kevin Anderson at the indoor hard-court tournament. The 19th-ranked Thiem has won his first three titles this season, all on clay.

The revamped arena in south-east Paris, which features newly designed court lighting, a renovated players' lounge and updated facilities for sponsors, did not bring luck to French players, with Mannarino expressing doubts about the new settings at the Palais Omnisports.

"I used to love that stadium, how it was before, and right now I'm not convinced by the new Bercy," Mannarino said. "I believe it will take some time before we get used to it. It's true for the players and also for the crowd."

Among the 11 French players in the main draw, three have already gone home as Benoit Paire rallied past two-time runner-up Gael Monfils 2-6, 7-6 (7), 6-4 in an all-French encounter and wildcard entry Nicolas Mahut also bowed out in the first round, losing 7-5, 6-3 to qualifier Dusan Lajovic.

Paire was overwhelmed by Monfils' powerful groundstrokes early on and made too many unforced errors. He quickly found himself trailing 4-0 in the second set before staging an unexpected comeback.

Aggressive display

"I think I was too kind with him at that moment and I allowed him back in the match," said the 20th-ranked Monfils. "Then he took his chances, played well." Punching the air after every winner, Paire won five consecutive games and created a first set point in the 12th game but hit a passing shot wide. He missed four more set points in the tiebreaker before finally forcing a decider with a charge to the net.

Paire's aggressive display was rewarded with a break in the ninth game of the third set and he sealed his win with his eighth ace of the match.



PARIS: Australia's Bernard Tomic serves the ball to Switzerland's Stan Wawrinka during their second round tennis match at the ATP World Tour Masters 1000 indoor tennis tournament in Paris yesterday. — AFP

After making unusual mistakes at the net, Mahut blamed fatigue and the slow speed of the court for his early exit. "I enjoyed playing there. It's just that I was

n't good today," Mahut said. "I mean, the only factor is the fact that the court is very slow. From one year to the other, it changes. Sometimes it's faster, some-

times slower. Maybe it was because it was slow that I wanted to force the shots."

The 23-year-old Tomic, who won his third title this summer, is enjoying his best season on the ATP tour and has surged up to No. 18 in the rankings. Monday's win over Fognini was his 40th this year and earned him a second-round match with French Open champion Stan Wawrinka.

Thomaz Bellucci also made it to the second round, where he will be up against top-ranked Novak Djokovic, the defending champion in Paris. Bellucci defeated lucky loser Teymuraz Gabashvili 6-4, 6-4.

The Paris Masters is the final regular-season tournament before the eight best players meet in London at the ATP World Tour Finals from Nov. 15-22. David Ferrer and Kei Nishikori have booked the final two spots available at the elite event last week, joining Djokovic, Andy Murray, Roger Federer, Wawrinka, Rafael Nadal and Tomas Berdych.

Ferrer will start his Parisian campaign against Alexandr Dolgopolov, who defeated Jiri Vesely 6-3, 7-6 (6), while Federer will take on Andreas Seppi, who beat Pablo Cuevas 7-5, 6-3. — AP

SAUDIS PULL OUT OF PALESTINE MATCH

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia has decided not to play the disputed 2018 World Cup qualifier against Palestine in Ramallah, the Saudi federation said yesterday. "The Saudi federation has sent an official letter in which it announced withdrawing from the match against Palestine scheduled for tomorrow," spokesman Adnan al-Moaid said.

The new match date had been set by FIFA on October 21. The teams played each other in Jeddah in June in the first of their two scheduled Asia zone World Cup qualifiers with the Saudis winning 3-2. That match was originally supposed to be played in Palestine, but Saudi Arabia had refused to travel to the Israeli-occupied West Bank, citing undefined "exceptional circumstances".

The return leg was then set for October 13, again in the West Bank, but Saudi Arabia on September 23 demanded that it be played on neutral ground.

That demand was accepted by the World Cup organising committee, but the Palestinian Federation refused to accept the decision, saying it set a "dangerous precedent".

The matter was then postponed to allow further talks to take place between all the involved parties. "The Palestinian Football Association has given full security guarantees for the rescheduled match and FIFA has agreed to appoint a security officer who will work hand in hand with the Palestine authorities to supervise the security plan and make sure that the match is played in very good conditions," an earlier FIFA statement said.

Many Arab national teams refuse to play in the West Bank, saying it "normalises" Israel's occupation of Palestinian territory. Israel controls all access to the Palestinian territories, and Saudi Arabia has no diplomatic relations with the Jewish state. — AFP

CRUNCH TIME FOR ROMA: NAINGGOLAN

MILAN: Roma midfielder Radja Nainggolan has warned anything less than a win against Bayer Leverkusen could prove fatal to the Serie A side's chances of ending a five-year wait to reach the Champions League last 16.

After a mediocre start to their campaign, Rudi Garcia's men sit bottom of Group E with just two points from three games. With BATE Borisov and Leverkusen just one and two points ahead of them respectively, Roma's hopes of reaching the competition's knockout stages for the first time since the 2010-11 season are not over yet. But defeat to Leverkusen would mean Roma would have to win their final two group matches-including away to leaders Barcelona-to have any chance of progressing.

With the city derby this Sunday it is a crucial week for the Giallorossi, who sit third in Serie A just a point behind leaders Fiorentina and second-placed Inter Milan. But Belgian international Nainggolan said all thoughts of beating Lazio have been put to one side as they set about reviving their last 16 hopes at the Stadio Olimpico today.

"We have to think about the Champions League game first, today's match is crucial," Nainggolan said after Roma's 1-0 defeat away to Inter on Saturday. "We have to win if we are to have any chance of qualifying (for the last 16). Then we'll turn our attention to the derby." Roma began their campaign in positive fashion, holding defending champions Barcelona to a 1-1 draw in the Italian capital, but struggles on their travels have complicated matters for Garcia's men.

Stunned 3-2 away to BATE, Roma dropped more points in a spectacular 4-4 draw away to Leverkusen last month. Having gone 2-0 down at the BayArena, Roma hit four successive goals, including a brace from midfielder

Daniele De Rossi, only to concede twice in the final six minutes. Ahead of today's fixture, Roma's steady goals haul-as well as Edin Dzeko's lean spell-is also under scrutiny. Roma's defeat to Inter was the first time they had failed to score in 25 fixtures in all competitions, but Dzeko has scored only once in 11 outings for the Giallorossi.

Garcia has defended his misfiring Bosnian striker, claiming "he needs more playing time to find his feet in the area".

The Frenchman added he was "encouraged" by Roma's defensive performance at the San Siro last weekend, which came in timely fashion. Leverkusen suffered a 2-1 defeat at Wolfsburg on Saturday when Nicklas Bendtner hit a clearly offside opening goal for the hosts. But ex-Manchester United and Real Madrid striker Javier Hernandez has hit great form of late, scoring six goals in his last four games, including a brace in the 4-4 draw a fortnight ago.

Leverkusen's sporting director Rudi Voller, who scored 45 goals in 142 Serie A appearances for Roma in 1987-1992, said he "can't wait" to return to the 'Eternal City'. He believes Roma "can win the scudetto" this season but is more focused on Leverkusen's chances of claiming at least a draw on Wednesday. "If we don't lose at the Olimpico it will give us a boost in terms of qualifying for the last 16, but it will be a difficult game," he said in an interview with www.gazzetta.it.

Leverkusen are missing ex-Germany defender Roberto Hilbert (knee injury) and have doubts over Lars Bender (ankle). Roma welcome De Rossi back to the fray after he sat out the Inter game but will still be missing iconic captain Francesco Totti, who has not played since suffering a thigh injury against Carpi in September. — AFP



LOS ANGELES: Phoenix Suns guard Eric Bledsoe, right, shoots as Los Angeles Clippers center DeAndre Jordan defends during the second half of an NBA basketball game, Monday, in Los Angeles. The Clippers won 102-96. — AP

'KING' JAMES YOUNGEST TO REACH 25,000 POINTS

PHILADELPHIA: LeBron James became the youngest player to reach 25,000 career points, leading the Cleveland Cavaliers past the winless Philadelphia 76ers 107-100 in the NBA on Monday. James had 22 points, 11 assists and nine rebounds and rallied the Cavs in the second half against a scrappy Philly team that had built a 15-point lead. James and the rest of the Eastern Conference champions had enough to push back the undermanned Sixers. James scored the milestone basket on a dunk with 8:07 left in the fourth quarter. The 30-year-old James became the sixth active player with 25,000 points and the 20th overall. He joined Dallas' Dirk Nowitzki, San Antonio's Tim Duncan, Minnesota's Kevin Garnett, Los Angeles' Kobe Bryant and Paul Pierce of the Clippers.

WARRIORS 119, GRIZZLIES 69

Stephen Curry scored 21 of his 30 points in an emphatic third-quarter stretch and the reigning NBA Most Valuable Player followed up his 53-point performance from three days earlier with another sold game to lead unbeaten Golden State past Memphis. Curry did not play in the fourth quarter with his team up big after shooting 10 for 16 and hitting four 3-pointers to give him 21 through four games - even after Grizzlies coach David Joergel joked before the game, "We're going to put three guys on him tonight." Curry also had a huge third quarter with a career-best 28 points in Saturday's win at New Orleans, and he won Western Conference Player of the Week honors after averaging a league-best 39.3 points. The Grizzlies starters combined to shoot 11 for 46, led by Marc Gasol's 13 points. They were outscored 72-27 over the second and third quarters.

SPURS 94, KNICKS 84

LaMarcus Aldridge scored 19 points, Kawhi Leonard had 18 points and 14 rebounds as San Antonio beat New York to give Tim Duncan a milestone victory. Duncan had 16 points, 10 rebounds and six assists in his NBA-record 954th victory with one team. He passed Hall of Fame point guard John Stockton, who went 953-551 with the Utah Jazz. Duncan, in his 19th season with the Spurs, is 954-381. Tony Parker also finished with 16 points. Carmelo Anthony scored 19 points for the Knicks but struggled to just 4-of-17 shooting while often guarded by Kawhi Leonard, the reigning NBA Defensive Player of the Year. Anthony was coming off a season-best 37 points on Saturday in a victory at Washington.

Aldridge followed his best game with the Spurs, a 24-point performance in a 95-87 victory in Boston on Sunday, by shooting 8 of 15 and grabbing six rebounds.

ROCKETS 110, THUNDER 105

James Harden scored 37 points as Houston beat Oklahoma City 110-105 for its first win of the season. It was the first loss for the Thunder, who won their first three games while the Rockets dropped their first three. An 8-1 run by the Rockets made it 107-100 with about two minutes left. Harden capped that key stretch with a 3, knocking it down with Russell Westbrook right in his face. Westbrook made a 3-pointer with 44 seconds left to cut the lead to 108-105, and Harden missed a 3 on the other end. But Westbrook and Kevin Durant both missed 3-pointers on the next possession and Dwight Howard made a pair of free throws with 5.7 seconds left to secure the victory. Durant led the Thunder with 29 points, and Westbrook added 25 points, eight rebounds and 11 assists.

CLIPPERS 102, SUNS 96

Blake Griffin had 22 points and 10 rebounds and unbeaten Los Angeles hung on down the stretch for a victory over Phoenix. The Clippers are off to a 4-0 start for the fourth time in franchise history and the first time since winning the first five games of the 1985-86 season, their second in Los Angeles after relocating from San Diego. They beat Phoenix for the eighth straight time in their longest streak against Phoenix in the rivalry's 46-year history. Markieff Morris scored 19 points for the Suns, who

were coming off back-to-back wins against Portland following their opening night loss against Dallas. Tyson Chandler had 14 points and 17 rebounds.

TRAIL BLAZERS 106, TIMBERWOLVES 101

Damian Lillard had 34 points and seven assists and Portland won 106-101 after Minnesota honored fallen coach Flip Saunders with an emotional pregame tribute. Lillard made 14 of 25 shots, C.J. McCollum scored 18 points and Al-Farouq Aminu had 17 points and nine rebounds for Portland, which trailed by 17 points in the first quarter after an inspired start by Minnesota. Kevin Martin scored 24 points and Ricky Rubio had 12 points, nine assists and nine rebounds for the Timberwolves two days after they attended Saunders' funeral. They whittled a 10-point fourth-quarter deficit to three with 10 seconds to play. But Martin was stripped while trying to shoot a 3 and the Blazers hung on.

BUCKS 103, NETS 96

Jerryd Bayless scored 26 points, Greg Monroe had 23 points and 13 rebounds and Milwaukee beat winless Brooklyn for its first victory of the season. Giannis Antetokounmpo scored 21 points and Khris Middleton had 17 for the Bucks. Brook Lopez had 18 points and nine rebounds, and Jarrett Jack scored 15 points for the Nets. — AP

NBA Results/Standings

Cleveland 107, Philadelphia 100; Milwaukee 103, Brooklyn 96; San Antonio 94, NY Knicks 84; Houston 110, Oklahoma City 105; Portland 106, Minnesota 101; Golden State 119, Memphis 69.

Eastern Conference				Western Conference				
Atlantic Division				Northwest Division				
W	L	PCT	GB	W	L	PCT	GB	
Toronto	3	0	1.000	-	Oklahoma City	3	1	.750
NY Knicks	2	2	.500	1.5	Minnesota	2	1	.667
Boston	1	2	.333	2	Utah	2	1	.667
Philadelphia	0	3	0	3	Portland	2	2	.500
Brooklyn	0	4	0	3.5	Denver	1	2	.333
Central Division				Pacific Division				
Detroit	3	0	1.000	-	LA Clippers	4	0	1.000
Chicago	3	1	.750	0.5	Golden State	4	0	1.000
Cleveland	3	1	.750	0.5	Phoenix	2	2	.500
Milwaukee	1	3	.250	2.5	Sacramento	1	2	.333
Indiana	0	3	0	3	LA Lakers	0	3	0
Southeast Division				Southwest Division				
Atlanta	3	1	.750	-	San Antonio	3	1	.750
Washington	2	1	.667	0.5	Dallas	2	1	.667
Miami	2	1	.667	0.5	Memphis	2	2	.500
Orlando	0	3	0	2.5	Houston	1	3	.250
Charlotte	0	3	0	2.5	New Orleans	0	3	0



ROME: AS Roma's goalkeeper from Poland, Wojciech Szczesny (L) and Roma's coach from France, Rudi Garcia attends a press conference on the eve of the UEFA Champions League football match AS Roma vs Bayer Leverkusen, yesterday at the Trigoria training ground on the outskirts of Rome. — AFP

ARSENAL'S MERTESACKER WARY OF 'WOUNDED' BAYERN

MUNICH: Arsenal's Per Mertesacker expects his side to face a 'wounded' Bayern Munich today in the Champions League after the Gunners' inflicted the Bavarian giants only defeat of the season. Arsenal breathed some life back into their Champions League with a 2-0 win over Pep Guardiola's Bayern at the Emirates Stadium a fortnight ago in Group F. It was the German league leaders only defeat of the season and Arsenal's Germany centre-back expects Bayern to want to make a statement at the Allianz Arena.

"They will be wounded," said Mertesacker. "We were the first team to really challenge them and beat them. They will want to prove that they are better than us. But in their own stadium it will be a different game, they are outstanding in their league." Arsenal are unbeaten in their last two visits

to Munich, but are third in the group with three points while Bayern are top with six. The Gunners need at least a point from Munich having drawn 1-1 at the Allianz Arena in the 2013/14 season having beaten Bayern 2-0 at home the previous season. Bayern's captain Philipp Lahm rejects the notion his side is wounded, but there was a whiff of determination around their Munich training centre. "We're focused, but we have no reason to be wounded," said Bayern's captain with the Germans top of Group F.

"We are top of the Bundesliga and our Champions League group, you can't get much better than that. We weren't wounded after the away defeat. We're playing at home, it's a top game and we want a win to consolidate our place at the top of the table."

'We'll show Arsenal'

Chile midfielder Arturo Vidal has backed the Bavarians to set the record straight: 'We'll show Arsenal the real Bayern on Wednesday', while Bayern striker Robert Lewandowski is eager to hit the back of the net after 17 goals in all competitions.

"I've gone two games without a goal now, obviously I want to score again. I will give everything for that," said Lewandowski. "The most important thing is that we control the game and score the first goal."

"We must not lose control of our game and need a good mix between defence and attack. We can't just run around blindly against an opponent like that. We have to be patient." This is Bayern's 16th meeting with English opponents in the last five seasons and their overall record against English teams

is 12 wins, six draws and three defeats.

Arsenal warmed-up for the trip to Munich with a 3-0 win at Swansea on Saturday which left them second in the Premier League table, but level on points with leaders Manchester City. Bayern dropped their first Bundesliga points of the season on Friday when they were repeatedly frustrated by a defensive display from their hosts in a goalless draw at Eintracht Frankfurt.

Bayern are peerless in Germany and hold a five-point lead at the top of the Bundesliga table, but coach Pep Guardiola is annoyed by talk that the league title is in the bag or that his side is a shoo-in for the knock-out stage. "We've not won the cup, we're not champions, and we've not won the Champions League," Guardiola warned before the Frankfurt draw. — AFP



BARCELONA: Barcelona's players practice during a training session at the Sports Center FC Barcelona Joan Gamper in Sant Joan Despi, near Barcelona yesterday, on the eve of the UEFA Champions League Group E football match between FC Barcelona and Bate Borisov. — AFP

BARCA SEEK EARLY ROUTE INTO LAST 16

MADRID: Defending champions Barcelona could seal their passage into the last 16 of the Champions League with two games to spare in Group E when they host BATE Borisov yesterday. A third consecutive Champions League victory for the Catalans, despite the prolonged absence of the injured Lionel Messi, allied to Roma not beating Bayer Leverkusen at home, will mathematically seal the five-time champions' place in the knockout stages.

Luis Suarez and Neymar have carried the

goalscoring burden in Messi's absence, scoring all of Barca's last 14 league goals. Both were on target in a comfortable 2-0 win over Getafe on Saturday that created more headlines for the Halloween costumes that the Barca players wore as they burst into a Getafe post-match press conference than the action on the field.

And Suarez said he and Neymar's contrasting styles help compliment each other. "Everyone knows their own game. I don't try to dribble past three or four players, but Neymar has those

characteristics. "Every player tries to adapt to what the coach asks of them." However, the former Liverpool striker laughed off suggestions Barca's recent form means they aren't missing Messi. "Everyone remembers Messi because he is the best player in the world. We all miss him."

Barca boss Luis Enrique heaped praise upon Sergio Busquets rather than Suarez and Neymar after the win at Getafe, hailing him as the "best midfielder in the world."

However, Enrique also suggested he wants

to give Busquets a rest after a heavy workload at the start of the season and with a tough test in Villarreal to come at the weekend, the Spanish international may be left out on Wednesday.

Javier Mascherano is free to play despite being halfway through a two-game ban in La Liga. Andres Iniesta is also likely to return to the starting line-up for the first time in over a month after making his return from a hamstring injury as a second-half substitute at the weekend.

Sergi Roberto also made his comeback against Getafe from a brief spell on the sidelines after picking up a groin injury in Barca's 2-0 win over BATE in Belarus two weeks ago.

And the 23-year-old made a spectacular impression with assists for both goals, including a perfectly weighted backheel into Suarez's path for the opener. "After an injury it is important to get back up to the speed of the competition. I felt good physically and without any pain," he said. — AFP

40-GOAL RECORD HOLDS FIRM AS MUELLER TURNS 70

BERLIN: On his 70th birthday, Gerd Mueller's record of 40 goals in a single Bundesliga season is 'still unbeatable'—according to one of the strikers who could break it. Mueller, dubbed 'the Bomber of the Nation' is being treated for Alzheimer's at a Bavarian nursing home as the Bayern Munich and Germany legend turned 70 yesterday.

During his career, Mueller finished as the Bundesliga's top-scorer on seven occasions. No one has ever come close to beating his record haul of 40 German league goals scored in the 1971/72 season—until now. Current Bayern striker Robert Lewandowski has so far scored 13 goals in 11 league games this campaign. At the same stage of the season in 1971, Mueller had only scored six goals, while Lewandowski needed just nine minutes to score five goals against Wolfsburg in September.

The Poland hot-shot hopes to add to his tally of 17 goals in all competitions for Bayern this season at home to Arsenal on Wednesday in the Champions League. But the 27-year-old insists Mueller's record over a 34-match league season is still a long way off.

"It's still too far away," said Lewandowski on Monday. "You'd need to score two or three goals in every game, only then can you think about doing it." "When you look at the league's scoring records, his name is almost alongside everyone."

"That shows what a great player he was." Bayern won the title in the 71/72 season by 22 points with Mueller scoring five and four goals in two separate league matches. He also scored a hat-trick on no less than four further occasions. Lewandowski has already equalled one of Mueller's records this season by scoring ten goals after seven league games, set in the 1973/74 season. "40 is a big number, but with Robert in this kind of form, anything is possible," Lewandowski's team-mate David Alaba said earlier this season.

'A great of world football'

But the Poland international is not the only current Bundesliga star who could challenge Mueller's record this season.

His Bayern team-mate Thomas Mueller has scored ten goals in 11 league games, but says it will take a phenomenal effort to break Mueller's record. "He (Lewandowski) has set the bar high for himself and it would be good for us all if he



Gerd Mueller

could maintain it," said Mueller.

"But realistically there will be games when he'll only score one or none." Alongside Lewandowski, Gabon striker Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang is the league's joint top scorer with 13 goals for Borussia Dortmund. He says his target is simply keeping up with Lewandowski in the battle for the Bundesliga's 'Golden Cannon' awarded to the league's top-scorer. "Lewandowski is one of the best strikers in the world at the moment," said Aubameyang after scoring a hat-trick against Augsburg ten days ago "I'm trying to do better than him, but I can only try. It's been a good start (to this season), but it's going to be difficult to over-take Gerd Mueller," he added.

One Mueller record which is good for another season is his incredible haul of 15 goals after just ten games in the 1968/69 season. He went onto claim 30 goals in 30 league games. Mueller's overall records are dazzling with 533 goals in a total of 585 games for Bayern.

"Gerd Mueller is one of the greats of world football," said Bayern chairman Karl-Heinz Rummenigge.

"Without his goals, FC Bayern and German football would not be where it is today." — AFP

ASTANA HOLD ATLETICO IN DULL STALEMATE

ASTANA: Kazakh champions Astana claimed just their second ever Champions League point in an uninspiring 0-0 draw against Atletico Madrid yesterday. The hosts had been thrashed 4-0 in the Spanish capital two weeks ago, but held out bravely for a surprise point despite rarely threatening to seal their first ever Champions League win. The draw sees Atletico move top of Group C on seven points from four games, but Benfica are only a point back and the Portuguese champions can move to the top of the group should they avoid defeat against Galatasaray later in the day.

"The game didn't surprise me, I said it would be difficult and so it was," Atletico coach Diego Simeone told beIN Sports. "I'm not annoyed with my team. We were good at the back, but we lacked a bit going forward. Now we have to beat Galatasaray in order to stand a good chance of going through." Atletico were faced with freezing conditions on a plastic pitch after making the near 6,000 kilometre trip from Madrid and it was the hosts who had the first effort on goal when Jan Oblak saved from Dmitri Shomko. The

2013/14 finalists took control of the game as the half developed and only some brave defending denied Tiago and Guilherme Siqueira as they had goal-bound efforts blocked.

Fernando Torres' long wait for his 100th Atletico goal continued as he wasted the best chance of the game when Evgeny Postnikov's dallying allowed the former Liverpool and Chelsea striker to turn Juanfran's cross towards goal but wide of the far post. Koke also saw a free-kick clip the top of the crossbar as Atletico ended the half on top. However, the visitors failed to carry on that momentum in the second period and it

was only when Yannick Ferreira Carrasco was introduced from the bench in the final 20 minutes that they started to create chances to snatch all three points. Antoine Griezmann was kept quiet throughout, but Atletico's top scorer found a yard of space to flash a shot across goal before a Carrasco cross came back off the crossbar with Astana keeper Nenad Eric flapping. Jose Maria Gimenez's header forced the 'keeper into a comfortable save moments later, but Eric produced his best stop of the game deep into stoppage time when he got down to save Carrasco's effort with the last kick of the match. — AFP

Live Matches on TV (Local Timings)

UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE	
KAA Gent v Valencia	22:45
beIN SPORTS 5 HD	
Bayern v Arsenal	22:45
beIN SPORTS 1 HD	
Olympiacos v Zagreb	22:45
beIN SPORTS 7 HD	
Chelsea v Dynamo	22:45
beIN SPORTS 2 HD	
Barcelona v Bate Borisov	22:45
beIN SPORTS 3 HD	
Lyonnais v Petersburg	22:45
beIN SPORTS 6 HD	
Maccabi v Porto	22:45
beIN SPORTS 8 HD	
Roma v Leverkusen	22:45
beIN SPORTS 4 HD	



ASTANA: Atletico Madrid's Uruguayan defender Jose Maria Gimenez (L) vies for the ball with Astana's midfielder from the Central Africa Republic Foxi Kethevoama during the UEFA Champions League group C football match between FC Astana and Club Atletico de Madrid at the Astana Arena stadium in Astana yesterday. — AFP

Sports

Pakistan's Shoaib Malik retires from Tests

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1,200 shooters vie for medals at 13th Asian Shooting Championship

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MADRID: A photo taken on February 1, 2006 shows Franz Beckenbauer, then President of the Organising Committee of the 2006 FIFA Football World Cup and Wolfgang Niersbach, then vice President of the Organising Committee at an act of presentation of the event in Madrid. Police raided offices of the German Football Federation (DFB) and homes of top officials yesterday over tax evasion allegations, as a scandal surrounding graft claims over the awarding of the 2006 World Cup widened. — AFP

GERMAN HQ RAIDED OVER 2006 WORLD CUP PAYMENT

FRANKFURT: Police and tax investigators raided the headquarters of Germany's football association (DFB) yesterday and searched the homes of officials to investigate suspected tax evasion linked to the awarding of the 2006 World Cup, prosecutors said.

The raids focused on 6.7 million euros (\$7.4 million) the DFB transferred to world soccer's governing body FIFA in 2005 - adding another layer to US and Swiss investigations into allegations of corruption in the awarding of the 2018 and 2022 World Cups to Russia and Qatar.

The Frankfurt state prosecutor last month launched a monitoring process - a step before a formal investigation - into the payment. A spokeswoman said on Tuesday any other suspicion of wrongdoing, such as bribery or corruption, would not be followed up due to the statute of limitations.

Now the investigation will just focus on tax implications, which must be examined within 10 years. Prosecutors said Wolfgang Niersbach, the president of the DFB, his predecessor Theo Zwanziger and the association's former general secretary, Horst Schmidt, who

all held senior positions on the 2006 organising committee, are suspected of tax evasion over the payment for failing to register the payment properly in tax returns.

Lawyers for Niersbach and Schmidt declined to comment. Zwanziger welcomed the raids and said he wanted the truth to come out.

"The Frankfurt state prosecutor has launched an investigation on suspicion of tax evasion in an especially serious way in relation with the awarding of the 2006 World Cup and the money transfer of 6.7 million euros from the World Cup organising committee to FIFA," the prosecutor said in a statement. The DFB and the prosecutor said the association itself was not being investigated.

DOCUMENTS SEIZED

The investigation stems from a Der Spiegel magazine report in October that suggested a slush fund had been used to buy votes for the German bid in 2000.

It alleged that deceased Adidas CEO Robert Louis-Dreyfus loaned the money to the German bid commit-

tee to buy votes at the FIFA election. Germany won by a single vote from South Africa.

It said the DFB returned the same sum to Louis-Dreyfus via FIFA in 2005. Adidas, a major sponsor of the DFB, declined to comment on the raids.

Niersbach and Franz Beckenbauer, head of the 2006 organising committee, have vehemently denied those accusations, along with the DFB itself. Niersbach told reporters last month there were no slush funds and there was no vote purchase.

Zwanziger, who led the DFB from 2006-2012, said yesterday he was only interested in the truth. "(I want) the truth to finally come out and not by an investigation carried out by the DFB. I am happy it came this way," Zwanziger told reporters.

"I have no worries. I am totally relaxed. What else might come out of it we will see. But it is better this way than through some kind of investigation committees by people who are involved."

The payment is being investigated in-house by both the DFB and FIFA. The DFB said in a statement on Tuesday it was cooperating with the prosecutor's tax

investigation. "The DFB offered the investigators its full cooperation in the clarification of the accusations," it said.

"The prosecutor's office said the raids were part of an investigation into suspicion of a tax offence. The DFB itself is not among those accused."

The prosecutor said the 2005 payment was registered in returns as an operational expense, meaning the trio avoided a number of different taxes that should have been paid on it. Prosecutor's office spokeswoman Nadja Niesen said charges could be filed pending the findings of the raids, which involved more than 50 officers and netted written and electronic documents.

She said tax evasion on a serious level carried a prison sentence of anywhere between six months and 10 years. Niersbach was invited to a hearing of the parliamentary committee on sport on Wednesday that he has declined to attend.

Reacting to the raids, committee member Oezcan Mutlu said: "This is not surprising because at the end of the day the DFB did not make efforts for transparency and clarification." — Reuters

PANTHERS REMAIN UNBEATEN WITH OVERTIME WIN OVER COLTS

CHARLOTTE: Carolina kicker Graham Gano booted the game-winning 52-yard field goal in overtime on Monday in a 29-26 victory over the Indianapolis Colts that kept the Panthers unbeaten in this NFL season.

Gano atoned for a missed extra-point attempt earlier in the contest—a point that proved crucial as the Colts forced overtime with a fierce fourth-quarter rally.

The teams traded field goals to open the extra session before Panthers linebacker Luke Kuechly intercepted a pass from Colts quarterback Andrew Luck — collecting a ball deflected by safety Roman Harper.

That gave the Panthers the ball at the Colts' 39 yard line, setting the stage for Gano's game-winner. The Panthers joined the New England Patriots, Denver Broncos and Cincinnati Bengals at 7-0 — the first time four NFL teams have opened a season with seven straight wins.

"We did what we've done all year, we made plays when we needed to and we were able to scrounge out a win," Kuechly said. The Colts had erased a 17-point deficit in the last 7:04 of regulation.

Two touchdown passes by Luck in the fourth quarter—an 18-yard pass to Andre Johnson and an eight-yarder to Coby Fleener—made it 23-20 with 2:02 remaining in regulation. Luck then threw three straight incomplete passes before a stuttering Colts drive moved the

ball to the Panthers' six yard line with seven seconds to play, and Adam Vinatieri's 24-yard field goal forced overtime.

Vinatieri's 50-yard field goal on the opening possession of overtime put the Colts ahead for the first time, but the Panthers extended the game with Gano's 42-yard field goal.

Then came Luck's third interception of the contest as his pass intended for Fleener was deflected by veteran Harper, shooting straight up and tumbling down into the arms of Kuechly.

"I tried to hit Coby, I waited too long to hit him though, should have moved on," said a dejected Luck, whose Colts lost their third in a row to fall to 3-5 — still level with Houston atop the AFC South. "A guy made a nice play, tipped it up, they got the ball and the game."

Luck completed 23 of 47 passes for 232 yards and two touchdowns, but through the first three quarters played largely in driving rain—he had only 40 passing yards and was intercepted twice.

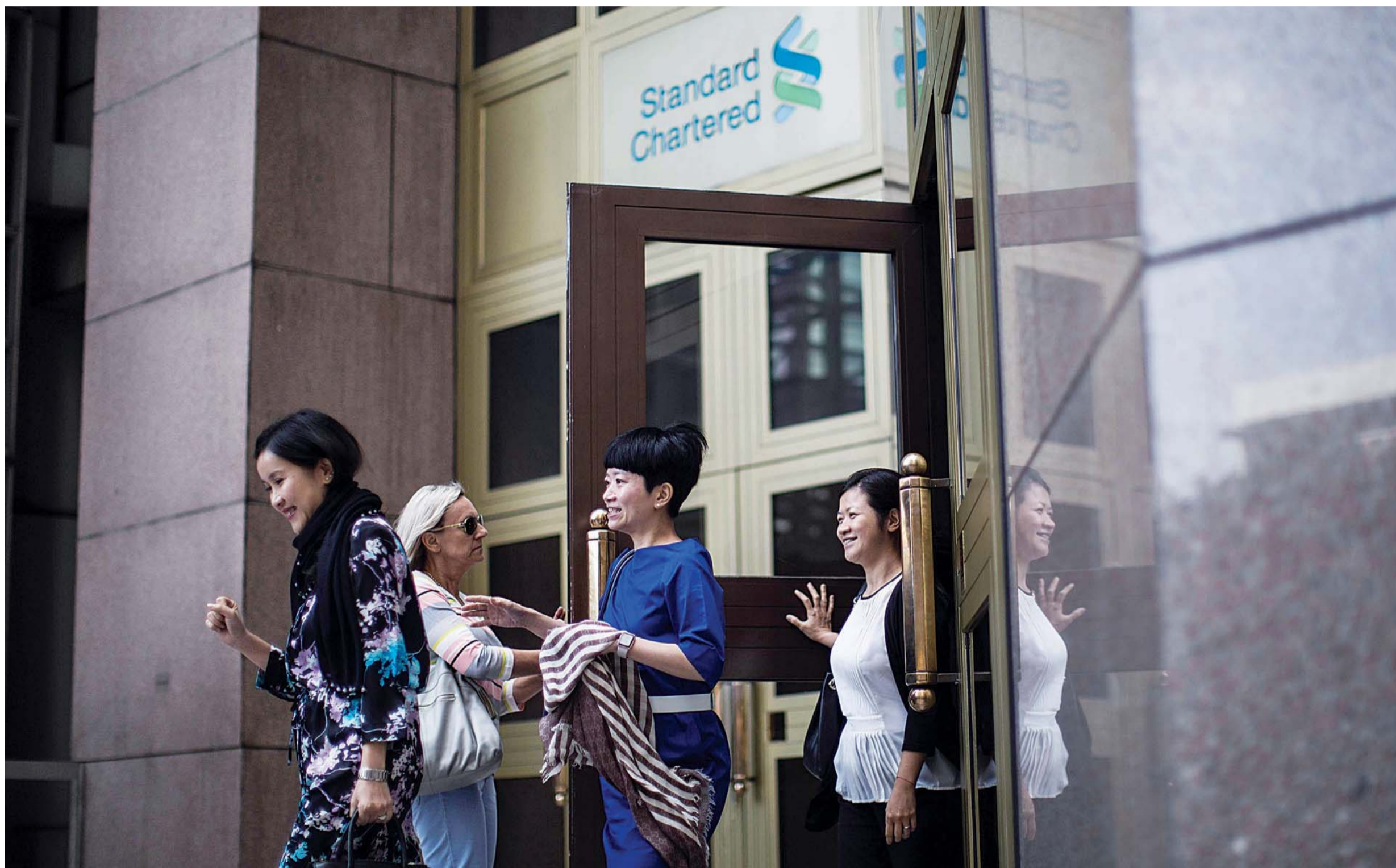
"I'm disappointed in myself," Luck said. Newton connected on 16 of 35 passing attempts for 248 yards, two touchdowns and one interception. "It wasn't pretty, we know that," Newton said. "We know we have to be better, but at the end of the day we're one of the lucky few to be able to say we're 7-0." — AP



CHARLOTTE: Carolina Panthers' Roman Harper (41) knocks the ball from Indianapolis Colts' Dwayne Allen (83) in the first half of an NFL football game in Charlotte, NC, Monday. The pass was incomplete. — AP



ETIHAD AIRWAYS TO START AIRBUS A380 SERVICES TO MUMBAI



HONG KONG: People leave the Standard Chartered bank building in the Central district of Hong Kong yesterday. Asia-focused British bank Standard Chartered said it would axe 15,000 jobs and raise \$5.1 billion in capital after posting a "disappointing" third-quarter loss as it struggles to return to growth. —AFP

GULF'S PRIVATE SECTOR GROWTH SLOWS

CONSUMER SENTIMENT A WILD CARD AMID FALLING OIL PRICE

DUBAI: The private sector in the two biggest Gulf Arab economies grew at the slowest pace in years in October, corporate surveys showed yesterday, indicating low oil prices are starting to slow business activity across the region. The seasonally adjusted Emirates NBD Saudi Arabia Purchasing Managers' Index for last month dropped to 55.7, its lowest level since the survey began in August 2009, when the world's top oil exporter was grappling with the global financial crisis.

The equivalent index for the United Arab Emirates, which measures growth in private manufacturing and services excluding oil, fell to a 30-month low of 54.0.

Until the last few months, heavy government spending in the region's six wealthy oil states insulated them from low oil prices. Government revenues shrank, but they dug into huge financial reserves to keep pouring money into their economies.

But the latest data suggest economies are no longer escaping damage from cheap oil. Faced with the possibility of many years of budget deficits if oil

prices do not recover, governments have started to tighten fiscal policy, delaying or suspending expenditure on projects they consider non-essential.

At the same time, monetary conditions are tightening even though central banks in the region want to keep them loose. Less new oil money is flowing into commercial banks, while some governments including Riyadh are issuing bonds to banks to fund their budget deficits.

The result is rising market interest rates the three-month Saudi interbank rate has climbed 20 basis points in the last three months. The trend may accelerate if the United States begins raising interest rates in coming months. Another source of monetary tightening is the currency peg Gulf countries maintain with the US dollar. The dollar's strength is weighing on non-oil exports and tourism in countries where those sectors are important, such as the UAE.

"Talk of austerity in Arabia sounds ridiculous but it is increasingly certain that next year will see a slow-

down in economic activity due to the double whammy of tightening fiscal and monetary policies," Tarek Fadlallah, chief executive of Nomura Asset Management Middle East, wrote in a report.

"With budget deficits swelling and foreign currency reserves shrinking, governments have indicated that they will trim spending and the private sector has started to lower its capital investment accordingly."

GDP

The purchasing managers' indexes for both Saudi Arabia and the UAE remain well above the 50-point mark which separates growth from contraction, so at this stage, few people expect recessions in the Gulf. A Reuters poll of 24 economists, conducted in mid-October, predicted Saudi gross domestic product growth would ease to a median 2.5 percent next year from 3.0 percent this year. Growth in the UAE is seen edging down to 3.3 percent from 3.5 percent.

There are several threats to this optimism. GDP

growth has been inflated this year by rising oil output in the Gulf; output may abruptly stop increasing next year as the market becomes saturated and sanctions on major producer Iran are lifted.

Many economists are assuming oil prices will begin a gradual recovery next year. If they do not, governments may be pressured into bigger spending cuts than expected. With giant financial reserves compared with the size of its population and a diversified economy, the UAE could still cope fairly comfortably. Saudi Arabia, with more people and bigger fiscal commitments, would be in a more difficult position.

The kingdom's central bank, which serves as its sovereign wealth fund, has burned through \$90 billion of foreign assets since August 2014 as it raises money to pay the government's bills. It still has \$647 billion, but would have to halt the decline well before reaching zero to avoid a market panic.

So far this year, the Saudi economy has been supported by strong consumer spending. Third-quarter

turnover at Jarir Marketing, one of the largest Saudi retailers by market value, rose 7.7 percent from a year earlier. "We have lived this three or four times before since 1980 - we are not concerned by negative sentiment," Jarir Chairman Muhammad Al-Agil said last week at a Reuters summit on Middle East investment, referring to the drop in oil prices.

"What could happen? Seventy to 80 percent of Saudis work for the government, and the government is not going to change its payroll." But consumer behavior could start to change if the government makes spending cuts that hurt disposable income - for example, raising heavily subsidized domestic gasoline prices, or slowing the rise of public-sector wages. It has said it is considering both steps. One statistic which economists see as a rough indicator of Saudi consumer spending intentions is the volume of cash withdrawals from automated teller machines. It fell from a year earlier in September for the first time this year. —Reuters

MIDEAST PRIMARY BOND MARKET BURSTS INTO LIFE

LONDON: The execution of a growing pipeline of deals from the Middle East is under jeopardy because of a toxic combination of reduced local liquidity and limited international, bankers have warned. Jordan is to become the latest issuer from the region seeking to raise funds yesterday following a \$1.6bn triple-tranche transaction for Lebanon last week.

While the greater pool of demand for sovereign issuers, which will soon likely be joined by the likes of Bahrain and possibly Oman, means these deals are unlikely to struggle, the story could be different for bank issuers. "It's not going to be a slam dunk for any of them," said a London syndicate banker. "Local liquidity is very strained and I've had international accounts tell me that they are full on the Middle East, even though the issuers are all different."

The banker said: "International investors have their Middle East pot, and once that's gone, it's gone." National Bank of Oman (NBO) is marketing an Additional Tier 1 while Gulf Investment Corporation and Commercial Bank of Dubai wants to sell new senior paper.

Although sovereign and senior and subordinated bank trades should go to different investor bases, syndicate bankers still

warn that there could be winners and losers in the latest batch of potential transactions. Sukuk have proved a success in recent weeks with three deals priced in the Gulf. Conventional deals, which unlike sukuk do not have as dedicated an investor base, face a tougher ride ahead.

A source close to CBD, which is due to meet fixed income investors from November 5, said that the bank's deal might not come next week, despite the issuer having a decent following among the investor community.

"They would make sure that a good number of key investors are lined up," the source said. "A concession of 25bp over perceived fair value would maybe be okay, but not 50bp to 75bp over."

CBD has a \$500m May 2018 outstanding, according to Thomson Reuters. That note is trading at a Z-spread of 184bp. Citigroup, ING, JP Morgan, National Bank of Abu Dhabi, Natixis and Standard Chartered are running that trade. The CBD treasury official responsible for the deal was unavailable to comment.

INTERNATIONAL WORRIES

Worries about the international bid have been brought to the fore by the col-

lapsing regional demand for Middle East bonds. A failed bond from Abu Dhabi Commercial Bank has become the poster-child of liquidity worries in the region. The deal was nulled in September after announcing initial price thoughts, with sources close to the trade blaming minimal local interest.

"There has been a general cut in liquidity in the region," said another syndicate banker.

The liquidity drain out of Middle East banks, which make up the bulk of new issuance buyers in the Gulf, is becoming worrying. National Bank of Abu Dhabi said at the end of October that government deposits dropped by \$13bn-equivalent in the last 12 months. Governments across the Gulf are withdrawing funds from their banking system to shore up economies against the pressures of oil at less than \$50 a barrel. Another syndicate banker added that Gulf banks are increasingly turning to the regional repo market to finance themselves, a sure sign that banks need cash, but bond issuance is considered risky. "The Middle East has been under-supplied, but it's tricky," said a bond banker. "[The primary market] is not going to be able to go full steam." —Reuters

SAUDI SHARES DROP; KUWAIT INDEX RISES

MIDEAST STOCK MARKETS

DUBAI: Saudi Arabia's stock market fell sharply yesterday after data pointed to an economic slowdown due to low oil prices. Other major Middle Eastern markets fared better, with second-tier stocks favored by speculators lifting Dubai. The seasonally adjusted Emirates NBD Saudi Arabia Purchasing Managers' Index, an indicator of growth in the non-oil private sector, fell last month to 55.7 - its lowest since the survey began in August 2009 - from 56.5 in September.

Meanwhile the cost of insuring Saudi Arabia's sovereign debt against default edged up to its highest level since June 2009, following a Standard & Poor's downgrade of the kingdom's debt rating on Friday. The Saudi stock index sank 1.6 percent yesterday to 6,955 points, near technical support at its August low of 6,921 points. Turnover rose as the market dropped, a negative technical sign.

Petrochemical blue chip Saudi Basic Industries slid 2.7 percent and industrial

zone developer Emaar Economic City dropped by the same amount.

Kingdom Holding fell 2.3 percent after saying it expected no financial impact from its sale of a 29.9 percent stake in media firm Saudi Research and Marketing Group (SRMG). SRMG climbed 9.9 percent after a 7.2 percent gain on Monday. Saudi Printing and Packaging Co also surged, adding 9.9 percent after a 9.8 percent leap on Monday. It has been rising in heavy trade since shortly after it reported quarterly earnings on Oct 20. The Kuwait index edged up 0.2 percent to 5,794 points yesterday. The KSE closed trading yesterday with the benchmark rising by 9.45 point to 5,794 but the weighted index dropped by 0.99. Value of traded shares stood at KD 13.7 million, volume of exchanged stocks some 198 million, done in 4,500 deals.

DUBAI, EGYPT

Elsewhere in the Gulf, Dubai's index rose 0.8 percent, though activity focused on low-

priced speculative shares; HITS Telecom was the most active stock, climbing 2.4 percent.

Du, the United Arab Emirates' second biggest telecoms operator, closed 1.0 percent higher despite missing estimates with a 12.3 percent fall in third-quarter net profit to 489.8 million dirhams (\$133.4 million). Two analysts polled by Reuters had on average forecast 521.3 million dirhams. Abu Dhabi gained 0.5 percent as Aldar Properties surged 4.6 percent. Qatar's index fell 0.3 percent as Industries Qatar slipped 0.4 percent. In a fresh sign of tightening banking liquidity in Qatar, the central bank halved the size of a planned Treasury bill sale yesterday and yields rose sharply from last month's auction. Egypt's index rose in early trade but closed 0.02 percent lower after a disappointing Purchasing Managers' Index; the Egyptian PMI fell to an eight-month low of 47.2 in October from 50.2 in September, dropping below the 50-point mark that separates growth from contraction. —Reuters

MOROCCO SEES \$10BN FROM AUTO INDUSTRY EXPORTS BY 2020

RABAT: Morocco expects auto industry exports to reach an annual 100 billion dirhams (\$10.2 billion) by 2020 as a result of PSA Peugeot Citroen starting production at its new 557 million euro (\$630 million) factory. It will lift the overall industrial component of gross domestic product (GDP) to 20 percent, Morocco's industry minister Moulay Hafid Elalamy told Reuters in an interview, adding that the plant will mean others may come to produce too.

Unlike many countries in the region, Morocco managed to avoid a big drop in foreign direct investments in the wake of the global financial crisis and the Arab Spring uprisings of 2011, partly by marketing itself as an export base for Europe, the Middle East and Africa.

It has attracted a number of big auto and aerospace investors in recent years, including Delphi, Bombardier and Eaton Corp. Peugeot unveiled its plan last June to build the 200,000-vehicle capacity plant, following up rival Renault which has two factories making fully assembled cars in the kingdom.

Industry as a whole in Morocco accounts for only 16 percent of the country's gross domestic product (GDP), but this will jump to 20 percent once Peugeot starts production. "It will go even farther. We will exceed the 100 billion dirhams only in auto exports by 2020," Elalamy said, speaking as part of the Reuters Middle East Investment Summit. "And it is not excluded that Morocco will attract other car and truck makers in the near future and could double these figures," he said.

Elalamy said his department has been in talks with other foreign auto industry companies and an announcement would follow. Last week, a Moroccan delegation met with Italian carmakers in Turin.

Morocco's auto industry has already surpassed traditional Moroccan exports such as agriculture and phosphates. At the end of September, total exports rose 6.2 percent from a year earlier to 160.07 billion dirhams, including 35 billion dirhams of auto exports against 34 billion for phosphate sales and 31 billion of agricultural products. "With Peugeot, we will be at 600,000 vehicles produced annually. That is a critical size and our target is to reach 1 million vehicles annually in the coming years," the minister said.

ENGINES AND ENGINEERING

The Peugeot plant is located near the coastal city of Kenitra and will begin assembling small and subcompact models for Africa and the Middle East in 2019. An initial annual production capacity of 90,000 vehicles is expected to rise to 200,000 as sales pick up.

It is a belated step for the Paris-based company to expand into lower-cost vehicles and emerging markets, reducing its exposure to Western Europe's relatively stagnant demand and high production costs. The plant, meanwhile, will source 60 percent of components locally, rising to 80 percent as the supply chain develops. It will have a 4,500-strong workforce once at the 200,000-vehicle capacity.

"We agreed also with Peugeot to make engines and not only assemble them in the Moroccan factory," Elalamy said. The minister added that Peugeot agreed on 1 billion euros of annual purchases of parts from local makers and the opening of an engineering centre with consulting firm Altran in Casablanca. "That centre has already around 750 Moroccan engineers and qualified technicians, but the figure is expected to rise to 1,500 jobs."

The Moroccan government sees the country's GDP growing by 3 percent in 2016, slower than an estimated 5 percent in 2015 as agricultural output fell from an exceptional 2015. However, non-agricultural activity will increase by 3.1 percent in 2016, after 2.5 percent growth in 2015. — Reuters



BEIJING: A sales woman pass by advertisements for an e-commerce website in Beijing. President Xi Jinping said yesterday that China needs at least 6.5 percent economic growth in coming years and the Communist Party announced plans to let its tightly controlled yuan trade freely by 2020. — AP

XI SAYS CHINA'S ECONOMY MUST GROW 6.5% ANNUALLY

BEIJING TO LET CURRENCY TRADE FREELY BY 2020

BEIJING: President Xi Jinping said yesterday that China needs at least 6.5 percent economic growth in coming years to become "moderately prosperous." The ruling Communist Party also announced plans to let the country's tightly controlled currency trade freely by 2020.

The announcements follow a high-level planning meeting last week at which ruling party leaders promised to make the world's second-largest economy more productive and to raise living standards.

Xi said growth of "no less than 6.5 percent" is required to achieve the party's goal of doubling the economy's size by 2020 from its 2010 level, the official Xinhua News Agency said. It gave no indication where he spoke. Chinese growth has slowed steadily over the past five years as the ruling party tried to steer the economy to a more sustainable expansion based on domestic consumption instead of trade and investment. An abrupt decline over the past year prompted Beijing to try to shore up growth by cutting interest rates six times since last November.

Xi's comment was the latest indication the party might reduce its official growth target, which has stood at 7 percent since 2011. Last year's economic growth was 7.4 percent and this year it is expected at just below 7 percent.

Private sector analysts have warned sticking to a high target could conflict with official efforts to shift China to more sustainable growth based on domestic consumption instead of trade and investment. Some

say a more realistic level would be 5.5 to 6 percent, which still would rank China among the fastest-growing major countries.

Xi said "maintaining a medium-high level of growth" was required for "comprehensively building a moderately prosperous society," according to Xinhua. China's GDP per head is about \$8,000 compared with \$55,000 for the US and \$36,000 in Japan.

Last week, the ruling party eased its birth limits to allow all couples to have two children in a response to the need for more young workers in a rapidly aging society.

Yesterday, the party also said its leaders agreed last week to make the yuan a "freely tradable and freely usable currency" by the end of their next five-year development plan in 2020.

The United States and other governments have pressed Beijing to end controls they complained kept the yuan undervalued, giving Chinese exporters an unfair price advantage. Some American legislators had demanded punitive tariffs on Chinese goods in retaliation.

Beijing has been gradually expanding use of the yuan abroad for trade but restricts the daily movement of its exchange rate and the flow of money into and out of China. Chinese leaders have said they eventually would allow the yuan to be freely traded. But they said that would require extensive reforms to China's state-run financial system to make banks and other entities capable of coping with more abrupt

changes in interest rates and financial flows that might result from that.

Yesterday's one-sentence party statement gave no indication what changes in currency regulation were to come or when. The announcement comes at a time when analysts say market forces are putting downward pressure on the yuan. That could mean a loosening of controls would cause the currency to weaken, making the decision more politically acceptable domestically by reducing the price of Chinese exports and helping exporters who are struggling with weak global demand.

At the same time, the party plans to switch to a "negative list" in regulating foreign exchange, the statement said. That would allow companies to do whatever is not explicitly prohibited, instead of only what regulators say is allowed.

The party said it also would promote the yuan's addition to the basket of currencies used by the International Monetary Fund to determine the value of its in-house currency, known as Special Drawing Rights. Gaining a place alongside the dollar, euro, yen and British pound would be a political trophy reflecting China's growing financial importance.

Beijing rattled global markets Aug. 11 with a surprise change in its exchange rate mechanism to make the yuan more market-oriented. That resulted in the yuan falling by 2 percent, which prompted suggestions it was devaluing the currency to help struggling Chinese exporters. — AP

RWE MAY SPLIT UP IF POWER PRICES FALL: CEO

DUBAI: RWE could split up its business like peer E.ON if wholesale power prices continue to fall as cost cuts alone may not be enough to get Germany's largest power producer back on track, its chief executive said. Germany's worst-performing large-cap company this year, RWE is struggling with nearly 26 billion euros (\$28.5 bln) of net debt and has slashed costs and jobs in an attempt to end years of falling profits.

German wholesale power prices have nearly halved since early 2012 and currently trade at 29.35 euros per MWh, squeezing margins at the group's power plants to the point where it becomes more economical to simply shut them down. Larger rival E.ON last year decided it would spin off its ailing gas- and coal-fired power plants into a separate unit as a result, a move that RWE Chief Executive Peter Terium does not rule out if prices slide further.

"The case X has not yet occurred but at power prices of 28 euros (\$31) per megawatt hour (MWh) things are slowly getting exciting," he told reporters in Dubai during a press trip. "It's becoming harder to just cut more costs," he said. The pressure on Germany's

utilities has accelerated amid concerns over their ability to come up with the funding to pay for shutting down the country's nuclear plants, which will be completed by 2022.

Berlin has tasked a commission with presenting ideas on how to safeguard the up to 80 billion euros in funds by the end of January, with a public trust being one option under discussion.

"We have never been that close to a solution," Terium said.

He also said that RWE would expand its business outside Europe to offset falling earnings at its conventional power generation unit, adding the Middle East, North Africa and Turkey would become profit drivers in the future. While ruling out large acquisitions to enter these markets, RWE said it would look at assets that may be put up for sale by Enerjisa, a Turkish joint venture of E.ON and Sabanci Holding. It is also looking into solar and wind power projects in Egypt. Terium confirmed that the group had for now scrapped plans to look for an outside investor in the Gulf region, but did not rule out that this plan could be revived in the future. — Reuters

GERMAN NEW CAR SALES UP IN OCTOBER: DATA

FRANKFURT: New car registrations in Germany, a key measure of demand in one of the most important sectors of Europe's top economy, edged higher in October, data showed yesterday, appearing to shrug off fears the Volkswagen pollution-cheating scandal could weigh on sales in the sector. A total of 278,400 new cars were registered last month, an increase of one percent compared with the figure for the same month last year, according to data compiled by the automakers' federation VDA.

That was the highest sales figure for October in 10 years, VDA said. Taking the

ten months to October, new car registrations advanced by five percent to 2.686 million vehicles, the statement continued. The number of new registrations of diesel-powered cars increased by six percent in the period from January to October, VDA added, calculating that diesel cars accounted for 48 percent, or nearly half, of the entire new car market in Germany.

German auto giant Volkswagen is currently engulfed in a global scandal after admitting it had fitted 11 million diesel vehicles worldwide with sophisticated software that can skew emission test results. — AFP



LEIPZIG: Workers assembling a Porsche Cayenne model on the production line of the German luxury carmaker Porsche plant, a Volkswagen brand, in Leipzig, eastern Germany. — AFP

EYES TURN TO TURKEY CB AS INFLATION SURGES

ISTANBUL: Core inflation in Turkey hit a 2015 peak in October, putting pressure on the central bank to tighten policy two days after President Tayyip Erdogan - who has equated high interest rates with treason - strengthened his hold on power. Annual core consumer prices rose 8.9 percent last month, data showed yesterday, driven

in part by sharp falls in the lira. The central bank has so far this year steered clear of trying to support the currency by hiking rates, raising persistent market concerns about the institution's independence. Erdogan's steadfast opposition to higher rates, together with renewed violence in the mainly Kurdish southeast and his

crackdown on opposition media, are seen as major factors in this year's 20 percent decline in the lira against the dollar.

Investors are now waiting to see whether Sunday's unexpected outright parliamentary election win by the AK Party that Erdogan founded changes the fraught relationship

between him and the bank. Raising rates would put a floor under the lira, and economists say the bank's monetary policy committee (MPC) cannot hold off doing so forever. "It remains to be seen how much influence the new government will try to exert on monetary policy. But we continue to think that the MPC will raise interest rates over the next 3-6 months," William Jackson of Capital Economics said in a note to clients.

Yesterday's core inflation numbers - which exclude volatile food prices - were likely driven by the lira's declines as well as deeper problems such as rapid wage growth and limited spare capacity, Jackson said. The lira and Turkish stocks rallied sharply on Monday, reflecting initial relief at the election result. Both succumbed to slight profit-taking yesterday.

The year-on-year jump in core prices was the biggest since November 2014, when they advanced by 9 percent, the data from the Turkish Statistical Institute showed. Headline inflation, which includes food prices, slowed to 7.58 percent. On a monthly basis, the headline numbers quickened to 1.55 percent, exceeding an estimate of 1.35 percent in a Reuters poll. — Reuters



SILIGURI: A motorcyclist drives past a row of parked Indian trucks transporting goods and a Nepalese oil tanker near the India-Nepal border at Panitanki, some 40 km from Siliguri yesterday. — AFP

EU FAILING TO TACKLE TAX DODGING ONE YEAR AFTER 'LUXLEAKS': REPORT

BRUSSELS: EU countries are still failing to tackle tax avoidance practices despite vowing to shut down loopholes after the LuxLeaks scandal one year ago, a report by several campaign groups said yesterday.

The 28 member states of the European Union have passed a number of measures in the 12 months since LuxLeaks revealed that top companies, including Pepsi and Ikea, had reduced their tax rates to as little as one percent in sweetheart deals with Luxembourg.

The revelations, unearthed by a group of investigative journalists, were a huge embarrassment to European Commission head Jean-Claude Juncker, who served almost two decades as Luxembourg prime minister at the time of the deals. But the report by 19 organisations including Oxfam, coordinated by the European Network on Debt and Development, said most member states still provide "ample opportunities" for multinationals to "dodge taxes and hide money."

"Although tweaks have been made and some loopholes have been closed, the complex and dysfunctional EU system of corporate tax rulings, treaties, letterbox companies and special corporate

tax regimes still remains in place," the report said.

Luxembourg and Germany remain the "worst culprits" in terms of offering options to conceal company ownership, the report said, although Denmark and Slovenia are introducing public registers of company ownership. More EU governments are, for example, pushing for confidentiality to conceal where global companies do business and how much tax they pay, it said.

"The citizens of Europe have now waited a year for the EU to get its act together," Eurodad coordinator Tove Ryding said in a statement. Instead, although a few loopholes have been closed, new ones have also appeared.

After the scandal emerged, Juncker tasked the Commission to push through steps to crack down on tax deals. Brussels has launched a series of probes into the deals and last month it ordered Starbucks and Fiat to each repay up to 30 million euros (\$34 million) in back taxes for deals they had with the Netherlands and Luxembourg respectively. EU ministers also agreed last week that national authorities would automatically exchange information on tax deals with multinationals. — AFP



2016-Cadillac-ATS-V-Coupe



2016-Cadillac-ATS-V-Coupe



2016-Cadillac-ATS-V-Sedan



A NEW KIND OF CADILLAC: SEGMENT LEADING IN AGILITY AND POTENCY

CADILLAC ALGHANIM PREPARES TO WELCOME THE ALL-NEW TRACK READY ATS-V AND ATS-V COUPE

KUWAIT: As part of its commitment to always offer the most desired Cadillac vehicles to luxury fans, Yusuf Ahmad Alghanim & Sons Automotive, the exclusive distributor of Cadillac vehicles in Kuwait, is currently preparing for the arrival of the 2016 ATS-V and ATS-V Coupe - the brand's inaugural luxury compact performance car - which are set to launch on the 4th Quarter of 2015. Customers are encouraged to book their all-new Cadillac ATS-V at the earliest opportunity either by visiting the Cadillac showroom at Safat Alghanim in Al-Rai or by calling 24969000.

Available in sedan and coupe forms, the twin-turbocharged ATS-V offers a dual-purpose luxury performance experience: a car with true track capability straight from the factory with sophisticated road manners.

Powered by the segment's highest-output six-cylinder engine - the Cadillac Twin Turbo rated at 464 horsepower and 445 lb-ft of torque (603 Nm) - the ATS-V achieves the 0-100kph sprint in 3.9 seconds onwards to a top speed of 304kph. Cadillac's Twin Turbo V6 engine mates to a paddle-shifted eight-speed automatic transmission that features launch control and Performance Algorithm Shift.

"The V-Series is the ultimate expression of Cadillac's reigned product substance and true passion for excellence that is at the core of our brand. The ATS-V is set to introduce a new kind of Cadillac performance character to our customers in the region due to its lightweight agility and power," said Felix Weller, Cadillac's Marketing Director and Head of Sales in the Middle East.

The Cadillac Twin Turbo engine combines a comprehensively redesigned chassis, suspension and drivetrain systems developed to make the ATS-V one of the most agile, responsive and confident luxury performance cars on the market.

Vehicle highlights:

- Offered as a coupe and sedan
- First-ever V-Series with a Cadillac Twin Turbo engine - SAE-certified at 464 hp (346 kW) and 445 lb-ft of torque (601 Nm)
- Offered with the all-new Hydra-Matic 8L90 paddle-shift eight-speed automatic transmission
- Brembo high-performance brake system
- Gen 3 Magnetic Ride Control with 40-percent faster damping response
- Integrated chassis controls include class-exclusive Performance Traction Management
- Driver-selectable driving modes for touring, sport and track
- Available downforce-generating track aerodynamics package
- An interior with high-performance seats and ergonomics focused on the driver's interfaces with key features for performance driving
- Cadillac CUE connectivity, including Apple CarPlay capability

2016 Cadillac ATS-V expands product line

The first-ever ATS-V - offered as a coupe and sedan - introduces class-leading twin-turbocharged power and a comprehensive suite of design and performance systems, expanding the ATS product line and advancing the V-Series legacy with its first turbocharged entry.

Since its inception in 2004, Cadillac's V-Series has driven remarkable power and performance capability into the brand's growing luxury car range. Building on the strengths of the award-winning ATS product line, the V-Series adds impressive track capability to what was already the lightest and most agile-driving car in the luxury compact class. The result is a dual-purpose luxury performer - a car with true track capability right from the factory that is also a sophisticated luxury car on the road.

"Cadillac's V-Series is the best example of Cadillac's emerging product substance - and the purest expression of the passion at the core of the brand," said Johan de Nysschen, Cadillac President.

The ATS-V is powered by the first-ever twin-turbocharged engine in a V-Series. Rated at an SAE-certified 464 horsepower (346 kW) and 445 lb-ft of torque (601 Nm), the engine is the segment's highest-output six-cylinder and enables 0-100 KM performance in 3.9 seconds and a top speed of 189 mph. It is backed by a paddle-shift eight-speed

automatic transmission featuring launch control and Performance Algorithm Shift.

The Cadillac Twin Turbo engine supports comprehensively redesigned chassis, suspension and drivetrain systems developed to make the ATS-V one of the most agile, responsive and confident luxury performance cars on the market. Key performance technologies include:

- Brembo high-performance brake system developed to provide durability, consistency and the capability for track-day performance straight from the factory
- Third-generation Magnetic Ride Control, which delivers 40-percent faster damping response
- Integrated chassis controls that provide balanced performance for touring and the track, including class-exclusive Performance Traction Management
- Structural stiffness increased by 25 percent for higher cornering loads
- Driver-selectable driving modes for touring, sport and track
- Tri-compound tires offering excellent grip with extended tire wear
- Available downforce-generating track aerodynamics package
- Functional exterior design for powertrain and drivetrain cooling, as well as aerodynamic performance
- An interior with high-performance seats and

- A high-performance lubrication system designed to maintain optimal oil pressure and ventilation during high-lateral driving maneuvers typically encountered on a track.

The twin, low-inertia turbochargers' feather-weight titanium-aluminide turbines are used with vacuum-actuated wastegate control for precise, responsive torque production. In fact, the titanium-aluminide turbines reduce rotating inertial load by 51 percent, compared to conventional Inconel turbine wheels. That means less exhaust energy - which spins the turbines - is wasted in stored inertial loads.

In practical terms, that means the relatively small size of the turbochargers and their lightweight turbines foster more immediate "spooling," which virtually eliminates lag, for an immediate feeling of power delivery. They produce up to 18 pounds of boost (125 kPa).

Unique vacuum-actuated wastegates - one per turbocharger - are used with the Twin Turbo for better management of the engine's boost pressure and subsequent torque response for smoother, more consistent performance. They are independently controlled on each engine bank to balance the compressors' output to achieve more precise boost pressure response.

The Cadillac Twin Turbo's patented, manifold-integrated water-to-air charge cooling system also contributes to more immediate torque response,

The underlying ATS structure is highly mass optimized and designed to meet higher performance requirements, with enhancements to the V-Series developed to respond to cornering and torque loads that go significantly beyond the levels experienced by the non-V models.

The new elements include:

- Unique shock tower-to-plenum brace
- Strengthened rocker bulkhead
- Stronger rear cradle-to-rocker braces
- A unique aluminum shear panel at the front of the chassis
- V-braces for the engine compartment.

The result is 25-percent greater structural stiffness than non-V models, which contributes to more precise handling and more direct steering responsiveness.

"The ATS-V feels like it was machined from billet steel," said Tony Roma, chief engineer. "Along with supporting the higher performance capability of the car, the enhanced structure conveys confidence to the driver through a greater feeling of solidity and sharper, more precise responsiveness."

With the stronger body structure - and more than a decade of V-Series production models and the CTS-V racing program experience under their belts - engineers tuned the ATS-V to deliver greater body motion control for a more agile feel, while maintaining excellent ride quality.

- Cadillac's five-link rear suspension features reduced roll center migration, stronger lateral control and effective anti-squat geometry, complementing the front suspension with greater body motion control. Contributing components include stiffer bushings, new cradle mounts, higher-rate springs and a stiffer stabilizer bar

- A standard electronic limited-slip differential supports optimal traction and enables maximum corner exit acceleration
- Larger prop shafts and greater half-shaft asymmetry (stiffer driver's side shaft) mitigate power hop during acceleration
- A Brembo high-performance brake system provides durability, consistency and the capability for track-day performance. The system includes 14.5-inch-diameter (370 mm) front rotors with staggered six-piston calipers and 13.3-inch-diameter (339 mm) rear rotors with four-piston calipers.

The ATS-V also features third-generation Magnetic Ride Control and Performance Traction Management. Five driver-selectable settings include the segment's only competition-level settings for stability and traction control.

Magnetic Ride Control "reads" the road a thousand times per second, sending data to magnetorheological fluid-filled dampers that can independently control the damping characteristics of all four dampers. Third-generation improvements enable 40-percent faster damping response. In fact, at 60 mph, the third-generation magnetic ride control system calculates the optimal damping force for every inch of the road.

Functional design

Almost every exterior panel on the ATS-V is unique, from the fascias and fenders, to the hood, rear spoiler and rocker moldings - and every one was designed to support the car's capability.

"All of the design elements have a purpose," said Andrew Smith, executive director, Cadillac Global Design. "They contribute to lift reduction, enhanced cooling, reduced mass or all of the above."

The unique elements include:

- * A lightweight carbon fiber hood features an air-extracting vent that not only pulls hot air out of the engine compartment, but helps reduce lift at speed by channeling air pulled through the radiator out and over the top of car rather than allowing trapped air to exit under the car
- * Unique front and rear fascias provide optimal aero performance, with larger grille openings in the front fascia to feed more air to the new twin-turbocharged engine. Even the mesh pattern of the signature grille openings is enlarged to allow more air into the radiator and multiple heat exchangers

- A front splitter enhances handling by forcing air to push down on the front of the car rather than flow under it, where it can cause lift
- Wider fenders to accommodate 18 x 9-inch front wheels and 18 x 9.5-inch rear wheels that are wrapped with Michelin Pilot Super Sport tires
- The aluminum wheels, unique to the V-Series, are constructed of a low-mass forging that helps reduce unsprung weight for greater agility and a more direct feel to steering inputs
- The rocker moldings and rear spoiler are aerodynamic.

Apple CarPlay takes the iPhone features most owners want to access while driving and puts them on the vehicle's display to allow drivers to make calls, send and receive messages and listen to music right from the touchscreen or by voice via Siri. Apple CarPlay-supported apps include Phone, Messages, Maps, Music and compatible third-party apps.

Hasn't the time finally come to own the car of your dreams? Go ahead and make Cadillac's sublime luxury and thrilling experience a part of your life by booking Cadillac ATS-V today. We are looking forward to your visit at our Cadillac showroom in Safat Alghanim in Al Rai. Alternatively, you can direct your inquires and booking requests at 24969000 or visit our website www.cadillac.alghanimauto.com.



ergonomics focused on the driver's interfaces with key features for performance driving.

"As the smallest and lightest V-Series ever, the ATS-V forges a great connection with the driver, with exceptional nimbleness and responsiveness," said David Leone, Cadillac executive chief engineer. "It's adaptable to the driver's preferences, with every selectable mode developed to deliver the best performance for all types of driving scenarios, including the track."

A Performance Data Recorder onboard the ATS-V allows drivers to record high-definition video, with data overlays, of their driving experiences on and off the track, enabling sharing on social media.

First twin-turbocharged V-Series

With a more powerful iteration of Cadillac's Twin Turbo 3.6L V-6, the ATS-V represents the first twin-turbo powertrain in the history of the V-Series lineup. Exclusive features for the ATS-V version of the Twin Turbo are designed to make power faster and sustain it longer. Highlights include:

- Turbochargers with low-inertia titanium-aluminide turbines and vacuum-actuated wastegates for more responsive torque production
- Compressors matched for peak efficiency at peak power levels, for optimal track performance
- Patent-pending low-volume charge-cooling system that optimizes packaging efficiency and maximizes boost pressure
- Lightweight titanium connecting rods that reduce inertia of the rotating assembly, complementing the quick-spooling turbochargers

because the compressors blow through very short pipes up to the intercooler. With no circuitous heat-exchanger tubing, there is essentially no lag with the response of the turbochargers. In fact, airflow routing volume is reduced by 60 percent when compared with a conventional design that features a remotely mounted heat exchanger.

Paddle-shift eight-speed automatic transmission

The new Hydra-Matic 8L90 eight-speed paddle-shift automatic transmission is available in the ATS-V. Designed and built by GM, it delivers world-class shift times that rival the best dual-clutch designs.

For performance driving, the transmission offers full manual control via steering wheel paddles. A new transmission-control system and unique algorithms deliver shift performance that rivals the dual-clutch/semi-automatic transmissions found in many supercars - but with the smoothness and refinement that comes with a conventional automatic fitted with a torque converter.

The transmission controller analyzes and executes commands 160 times per second. Wide-open throttle upshifts are executed up to eight-hundredths of a second quicker than those of the dual-clutch transmission offered in the Porsche 911. Additional performance-enhancing features include Performance Algorithm Shift and launch control via the Performance Traction Management system.

Stronger foundation and track-honed driving experience.

"The result is class-leading capability on the highway or track, balanced with luxury and refinement," said Roma. "In fact, the car is ready for the track right off the showroom floor, with no special modifications required."

A key component of the car's dual-purpose performance are Michelin Pilot Super Sport tires developed specifically for the ATS-V. They feature a tri-compound tread that delivers excellent grip in performance driving situations, but delivers excellent ride quality characteristics and extended tread wear.

Also, the V-Series models share the same 109.3-inch (2,775 mm) wheelbase as other ATS coupe and sedan models, but feature wider front and rear footprints that enhance grip, reduce body motion in turns and contribute to more direct-feeling steering.

Additional contributors to the ATS-V's dual-mode driving experience include:

- A revised multi-link double-pivot MacPherson-strut front suspension delivers a quicker response and increased lateral control, incorporating new ride and handling links, where traditional elastomeric bushings are replaced with zero-compliance cross-axis ball joints, higher-rate springs and a stiffer stabilizer bar - for 50-percent greater roll stiffness
- The ZF Steering Systems Servotronic II variable-ratio electric power steering gear, with increased system stiffness offering an improved feeling of precision and greater driver feedback

ETIHAD AIRWAYS TO START AIRBUS A380 SERVICES TO MUMBAI IN MAY 2016

KUWAIT: Etihad Airways, the national airline of the United Arab Emirates, will operate its award-winning Airbus A380 between Abu Dhabi and Mumbai from 1 May 2016, with India's commercial capital joining the carrier's other A380 destinations of London, New York, Sydney and from June 2016, Melbourne.

The Abu Dhabi-based airline's 496-seat A380 features the only three-room suite in commercial aviation - The Residence by Etihad - as well as nine First Apartments, 70 Business Studios, and 415 Economy Smart Seats.

The aircraft will operate daily on flight EY204 from Abu Dhabi to Mumbai, and EY203 from Mumbai to Abu Dhabi, both of which carry the 9W code of Jet Airways, Etihad Airways' strategic partner. The flights connect seamlessly with Etihad Airways' A380-operated services to New York, allowing guests to experience the double-decker aircraft throughout their journey.

Guests onboard Etihad Airways' A380 service will also have access to popular

connecting destinations over Abu Dhabi such as Chicago, San Francisco or Toronto in North America, and Bahrain, Doha or Jeddah in the Gulf region.

James Hogan, Etihad Airways' President and Chief Executive Officer, said: "The Etihad Airways A380 has set a new benchmark for luxury and innovation and we are delighted to announce that this world-class service will soon be available to guests flying to and from Mumbai.

"Furthermore, the A380 out of Mumbai will connect seamlessly at our Abu Dhabi hub to the A380 service to New York, offering our New York-bound guests the comfort, convenience and superior inflight service of A380 flights all the way."

Devendra Fadnis, Chief Minister of Maharashtra, yesterday welcomed the news, saying: "This announcement by Etihad Airways is yet another sign of international confidence in the powerhouse economy of Maharashtra. I look forward to the growth in tourism and



business that this service can bring to our state."

Etihad Airways' thrice-daily service to Mumbai, in addition to Jet Airways' double daily service, offers guests access to more than 2,000 weekly connections in

57 markets across the Gulf region, the Middle East, Africa, Europe and North America.

With a total capacity of 496 seats, the A380 has 50 per cent more seats than the Boeing B777-300ER it replaces, offer-

ing more options for tourism growth into India, USA and Abu Dhabi.

Etihad Airways is carrying an increasing number of air travellers from the Middle East, Africa, Europe and The Americas to cities across India, helping drive economic growth throughout the country, and not just the metropolitan areas. In 2014, nearly one million guests who travelled on Etihad Airways' India flights began their journey from outside the country, representing almost 70 per cent of total passengers who flew to and from India with the Abu Dhabi-based airline.

All guests flying to New York are processed through US Preclearance in Abu Dhabi which allows them to pass through all US immigration and customs checks and arrive in the US as domestic passengers.

Through the partnership with Jet Airways, guests flying into India are able to connect to numerous tourism and commercial destinations across the country.



BERLIN: British finance minister George Osborne (right) speaks as he visits a production line at a plant of German industry giant Siemens yesterday in Berlin. — AFP

UK EXPORT GROWTH HITS SIX-YEAR LOW: SURVEY

LONDON: British exporters experienced the weakest growth in orders since the depths of the financial crisis in the three months to September, a survey showed yesterday, adding to signs that overseas demand has faltered. The British Chambers of Commerce said firms taking part in its quarterly trade survey reported the most limited growth in overseas sales and orders since the second quarter of 2009, when Britain was coming to the end of its worst recession in decades.

"These figures make it clear that the UK's export drive is at risk of going into reverse gear, precisely at the time when it needs to be moving forward," John Longworth, director general of the British Chambers of Commerce, said. Addressing a trade conference in London, Longworth said too few British companies had made the jump to export.

"The scale of challenge facing Britain today is huge," he said. "The UK is slow to spot and exploit new markets. We're even losing market share in a number of key growth markets around the world."

The survey of 1,257 firms took place between Aug. 24 and Sept. 14, and follows a similar survey from the Confederation of British Industry, in which manufacturers reported the biggest fall in orders in three years. However, a more recent

survey by financial data company Markit reported a rebound in factory activity and export orders in October, suggesting the weakness in demand might prove temporary.

Phil Couchman, an executive at freight company DHL which sponsored the BCC survey, linked the weakness in exports to uncertainty in the euro-zone and economic instability in China and elsewhere.

British economic growth slowed slightly more than expected in the three months to September, dropping to a quarterly rate of 0.5 percent. A breakdown of the figures has not been released yet, but domestic demand is likely to have been the main driver. A separate survey of consumer confidence, published by market research company Nielsen yesterday, showed morale in the third quarter was the highest since the survey began in 2005. "Overall, the UK economy is in better shape than most other European countries, as unemployment rates are down and wage inflation is rising faster than general inflation," Nielsen managing director Steve Smith said. A separate survey from Markit released yesterday showed growth in Britain's construction sector slowed in October after hitting its fastest pace in six months in September but the increase in new work was the quickest in a year. — Reuters



BERLIN: (L to R) CEO of German industry giant Thyssen-Krupp Heinrich Hiesinger, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and President of the Federation of German Industries BDI Ulrich Grillo attend a conference hosted by the BDI in Berlin yesterday. — AFP

UK SHOPPING MALL OWNER INTU PLANS EXPANSION IN SPAIN

LONDON: Intu Properties Plc, owner of popular UK shopping malls such as the Trafford Centre in Manchester, plans to invest about 500 million pounds (\$770 million) in Spain over the next five to seven years, its chief executive said. The FTSE-100 company, which already operates two malls in Spain, owns the site for a third development and options on a further three in a country where retail spending is on the rise, Chief Executive David Fischel told Reuters.

"We want to develop centres that are a step change from what's already there," he said in an interview. Intu, founded in 1980 as Liberty International, owns or part-owns 18 of Britain's biggest regional shopping centres, which combined have roughly 400 million visitors every year.

In Spain, the company intends to follow its UK model, whereby it owns and operates large centres housing big retail brands as well as restaurants, cinemas and other entertainment features.

These so-called 'destination centres' are performing better than smaller malls, where the rise of online retailers such as Amazon.com Inc has

contributed to a decline in visitor numbers.

Intu acquired its first mall in Spain a little over two years ago. The Parque Principado centre in the Asturias region houses brands such as Hennes & Mauritz's H&M, Inditex-owned Zara and Associated British Foods' Primark.

Intu bought its second Spanish shopping centre, near Zaragoza, last December, and has a development site in Malaga. From now on the company will develop new sites rather than acquire existing malls, Fischel said. "The market has got a lot more competitive for acquisitions and there aren't actually that many quality centres that we would want to buy," he said, adding that Intu would, for now, avoid the competitive markets of Madrid and Barcelona. Fischel said a recovery in Spain's retail business was at an earlier stage than in Britain. In September, retail sales rose 4.3 percent year-on-year in Spain and 6.5 percent in the UK, according to official data from each country. The Canadian Pension Plan Investment Board has co-invested with Intu at both of its Spanish malls. Fischel said the company would look to bring in a partner at its other projects. — Reuters

OOREDOO OFFERS CUSTOMERS A RANGE OF WEARABLE DEVICES

AVAILABLE IN STORES FOR CASH PURCHASE OR THROUGH SHAMEL PLANS

KUWAIT: Ooredoo Kuwait, a member of the international Ooredoo Group, is offering its customers a variety of the latest and most advanced Fitness Trackers & Smart Watches, available for customers to purchase in cash or installments over their monthly plans.

Jawbone UP Move, UP2 & UP3 along with other Smart watches are available for customers' through Shamel's monthly plans, with 18/24 months commitment. The Jawbone models are Health and Fitness wrist-band trackers, that counts steps, sleep patterns, heart rate measurements and calories burnt.

Commenting on the products offer, Mijbil Alayoub, Director of Corporate Communications at Ooredoo Kuwait said: "Our customers always look for the latest technology therefore we aim at having the most advanced devices, including wearables. These are available for customers to purchase in cash

and in installments through our Shamel plans, making wearable technology affordable to all customers."

The Wearable portfolio will be available in the following branches only: The Avenues, Marina Mall, 360 Mall, The Gate Mall, Hawally Dezon branch, Al-Jahra Co-op and Al-Babtain branch.

Apart from the superb packages, Shamel customers do get other benefits such as carrying over any unused data units to next month, which gives them more value for their money. Additionally, they get immediate membership in Nojoom which is Kuwait's biggest loyalty reward program that offers promotions from top-of-the-line brands in entertainment, travel, health, fashion, beauty and shopping. Plus more services that are perfectly tailored to suit our customers' lifestyle, like concierge call center and unlimited airport lounge access to high value subscribers.

US INDUSTRIAL ECONOMY STRUGGLES, RAIL FREIGHT FALLS 7% IN Q2 2015

LONDON: Freight carried by major US railroads fell by 7 percent in the second quarter of 2015 compared with the same period in 2014, confirming that large parts of the industrial economy are in recession. The major Class 1 railroads carried 431 billion ton-miles of freight in the three months ending June, down from 463 billion ton-miles in 2014, according to the US Surface Transportation Board.

Changes in freight volumes reflect broader difficulties in the industrial economy. Rail operators have been struck by a perfect storm which has hit both their traditional and new business lines. Coal shipments to power plants, the biggest commodity on the network, accounting for about one-third of total tonnage, have been hit by a combination of environmental regulations and low gas prices.

Coal shipments were down by 27 million tons, around 15 percent, in the second quarter compared with same 2014 period. Petroleum shipments, one of the fastest growing sources of new business during the oil boom, fell more than 650,000 tons, 5 percent, as production began to peak and new pipelines diverted crude from the rails. And shipments of sand and gravel, a key ingredient in fracking, plunged by more than 2 million tons, nearly 14 percent, as the number of new wells drilled and fracked tumbled. Shipments of a range of other items from chemicals to fertilisers and other industrial supplies were also lower as the industrial economy ran into stiff headwinds from a stronger dollar and sluggish capital spending.

INDUSTRIAL SLOWDOWN

The slowdown in industrial-related freight has continued into the second half of the year according to data from a range of other sources.

Total traffic on US railroads in the 42 weeks ending on Oct. 24 was down 1.3 percent compared with 2014, according to weekly carload statistics published by the Association of American Railroads (AAR). Shipments of intermodal shipping containers, which mostly handle manufactured products, were up 2.2 percent but shipments using box cars, tank cars, hoppers and gondolas, which handle farm and industrial products, were down 4.5 percent.

Shipments were down in five of the 10 freight categories including coal (10 percent), forest products (3 percent), metallic ores and minerals

(10 percent), nonmetallic minerals (2 percent) and petroleum (7 percent). The downturn has deepened and spread to more sectors as the year has progressed, according to AAR data. The number of cars carrying coal is down 10 percent so far this year but almost 13 percent in the most recent week. The number of cars carrying petroleum and petroleum products is down 7 percent year-to-date but almost 22 percent in the most recent week.

VOLUMES FALL ON ALL RAILROADS

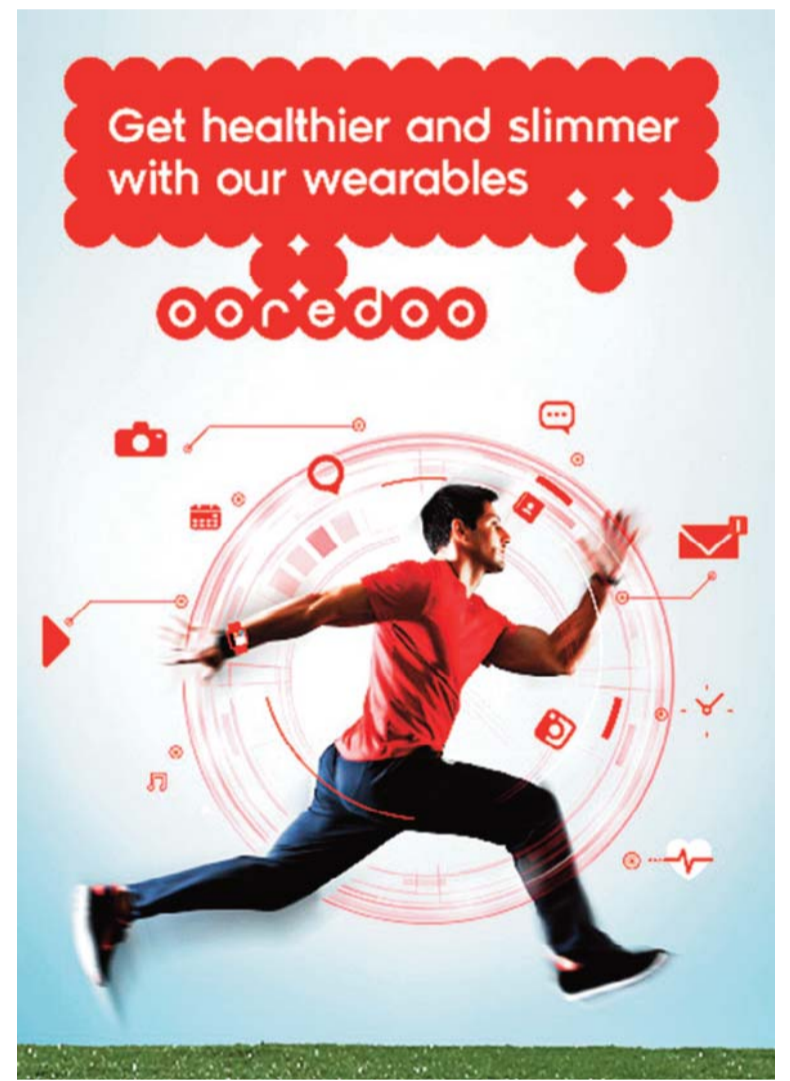
In its third quarter earnings presentation on Oct. 22, Union Pacific, the largest publicly owned railroad, acknowledged freight had shrink in five of six categories during the quarter compared with 2014. Union Pacific carried lower volumes of farm products (3 percent), chemicals (3 percent), containers (4 percent), industrial products (12 percent) and coal (15 percent). The only sector to increase was automotive (5 percent).

Other publicly owned railroads all reported falling volumes during the third quarter compared with 2014. Norfolk Southern blamed a "decline in metals and construction traffic due to softer steel production" and reported a 16 percent in coal volumes. Kansas City Southern reported that its volumes were down 2 percent including a 24 percent decline in frac sand. CSX reported volumes fell 3 percent including a 15 percent drop in metals traffic and an 18 percent drop in coal.

INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTION FLAT

According to the US Federal Reserve, total industrial output was 0.4 percent higher in September 2015 than September 2014. But while production of consumer goods was up 2.6 percent and business equipment 1.8 percent, industrial supplies were up just 0.2 percent and production of raw materials was actually down 0.2 percent.

The struggling industrial economy explains some of the weakness in demand for distillate fuel oil compared with gasoline this year in the United States. Two-thirds of diesel is consumed by vehicles, mostly heavy trucks, on the highways, with another 5 percent on farms, 6 percent on railroads and around 4 percent in construction. But the expansion of the consumer-facing economy, coupled with employment gains and cheap fuel prices, has pushed gasoline demand to its highest since 2007. — Reuters



SHELL SAYS IT CAN MAKE BG DEAL WORK DESPITE WEAK OIL PRICE

LONDON: Royal Dutch Shell sought to ease investor concerns over its planned \$70 billion takeover of BG Group, announcing plans for further benefits and cost cuts aimed at making the deal work with oil prices in the mid-\$60s a barrel. The Anglo-Dutch group, which hopes to complete the deal early next year, said it now expected synergies to increase by \$1 billion to \$3.5 billion for the combination which will make Shell a leader in liquefied natural gas (LNG) and offshore oil production in Brazil.

Shell, which last week reported a huge third-quarter loss due to \$8 billion of write-offs in Alaska and Canada, said it would reduce its costs by \$11 billion in 2015 as it tackles a prolonged period of lower oil prices, currently trading below \$50 per barrel.

"Shell is becoming a company that is more focused on its core strengths, a company that is more resilient and competitive at all points in the oil price cycle and that has a more predictable project development pipeline. We'll grow to simplify," Chief Executive Officer Ben van Beurden said in a statement ahead of a company strategy day in London.

Investors have been concerned that the benefits from the deal would be at risk as a recovery in oil prices is now expected to take much longer than foreseen in April, when the merger with BG was announced. Back then, Shell indicated it expected oil prices to recover to \$90 a barrel by 2020.

BG shares currently trade at a discount of more than 10 percent to the valuation of the cash and shares deal, reflecting investor concerns over its viability and remaining regulatory hurdles. Shell awaits the approval of Australian and Chinese regulators before the deal can be put before shareholders.

Shell shares traded nearly 1 percent higher at 0905 GMT, higher than the European oil and gas sector that was up 0.5 percent. BG shares were up 1.3 percent.

OIL LOWER, FOR LONGER
"No real new surprises today. We

expect more in terms of pre-tax synergies once the two groups combine," said Brendan Warn, Managing Director of International oil & gas equity research at BMO Capital Markets.

"Shell's commitment to operate at a lower oil environment and maintain share buyback may reduce some investors' concerns."

BMO rates Shell as "underperform". Brent crude traded at around \$59 per barrel when the deal was announced and has since traded in a range between about \$42 and \$69 amid a growing consensus among analysts that prices are set to stay "lower for longer".

"Since April, the prevailing market view on oil prices has fallen by \$10-\$15 per barrel on average over the period to 2018," Shell said in the statement. "Despite this, Shell's assessment of the expected accretion for both cash flow from operations per share and earnings per share... and plans for share buybacks remain unchanged." Shell previously announced a sharp reduction to its 2015 capital spending program to \$30 billion as well as 7,500 job cuts. The combined group's capital spending is expected to reach \$35 billion next year.

The company reiterated its plans to sell \$50 billion worth of assets between 2014 and 2018 in order to cover the cost of the acquisition and as Shell focuses its portfolio. Shell said it would maintain its dividend payout in 2015 and 2016 at \$1.88 per share, turn off scrip dividends in 2017 and undertake a share buyback of at least \$25 billion in the period 2017-2020.

The \$3.5 billion synergies were expected to comprise of \$2 billion savings in operating costs, mainly in the corporate and IT and another \$1.5 billion in exploration spending in 2018. The implementation of the cost savings will however result in a one-off charge of \$1.23 billion.

"The BG deal will make will Shell a far better company beyond 2017, but until then a lot of divestments and levers need to be pulled to cover dividend," Warn said. — Reuters

GOOGLE FOUNDER HOPES ALPHABET SPELLS INNOVATION

SAN FRANCISCO: Google founder Larry Page is hoping his newly created company, Alphabet, becomes synonymous with innovation. In a Monday night appearance, Page described Alphabet as a way to give engineers and scientists the independence they need to develop breakthrough products that have little or nothing to do with Google's Internet search and advertising business.

Along the way, Page hopes Alphabet will take the drudgery and bureaucracy out of work. "Companies have pretty bad reputa-

tions," Page told a dinner audience gathered in San Francisco for a forum presented by Fortune magazine. "It's not like a lot of people wake up in the morning and say, 'I want to go work for a company.' They do it because they have to."

Monday's 20-minute appearance marked Page's first public remarks since he announced in August that Alphabet would become Google's holding company, as well as the parent of riskier ventures involved in self-driving cars, Internet-beaming balloons, Internet-connected appliances and medical

research. Page now oversees the hodgepodge of companies as Alphabet's CEO. He turned over the Google CEO job to his top lieutenant, Sundar Pichai. Alphabet supplanted Google as a public traded stock in early October.

The idea for Alphabet's name came from Google's other founder, Sergey Brin, according to Page. Several other names were considered, Page said, but he declined to disclose them in case they are used for other subsidiaries. The new holding company will begin reporting Google's financial results

separately from its other subsidiaries, known as "other bets," in January with the release of its fourth-quarter results.

Alphabet's rudimentary name was chosen, Page said, because it isn't supposed to overshadow Google or any of the other brands in its portfolio. "I didn't want it to be too catchy," Page said. "It's really for employees, more than the customers."

If there is a role model for Alphabet, Page said it would probably be Berkshire Hathaway, the holding company that billionaire Warren Buffet has built through acquisi-

tions and investments in a wide variety of industries. Alphabet could become like a Berkshire Hathaway, with a "technology, science and engineering bent," Page said. Acquisitions will be part of Alphabet's plan to expand, although Page indicated the company will probably focus on startups with interesting ideas and relatively few employees. There are few other companies besides Berkshire Hathaway that Page wants to mimic. "I wish I could look at someone else and say, 'I wish we were doing that,'" he said. —AP

FACEBOOK WANTS TO TAP ROBOT BRAINS TO DO YOUR BIDDING

SAN FRANCISCO: Facebook is studying the ancient Chinese game of Go for insights as it works on building an artificial brain - one that it hopes to turn into a virtual personal assistant that can also sort through a mountain of photos, videos and comments posted by its next billion or so users.

The social networking company is touting the work of its artificial intelligence team at an industry conference this week. Among its accomplishments: the development of software that can analyze a photo and answer questions about what it shows, or study a picture of toy blocks and predict whether they will fall over.

Sure, you could pay a human expert to examine a photo and answer those questions, but mustering an army of such organic brains wouldn't be cheap. "The beauty of AI systems is that we can get enough scale to deploy this to everyone on the planet," Mike Schroepfer, Facebook's chief technology officer, said in a briefing for reporters.

Facebook isn't the only tech company working on these problems. Google, Apple, Microsoft and IBM are all studying artificial intelligence, as are several smaller tech firms that are vying to develop more useful digital services for consumers and businesses. Many are competing to hire the most talented scientists from universities, according to Mike Tung, CEO of Diffbot, a Silicon Valley startup that uses artificial intelligence to scour the Web and extract data that clients can use in their business.

Facebook recently began limited testing of an online personal assistant, called "M," that uses a combination of human workers and software to answer questions and carry out tasks like ordering food or flowers for a friend. Schroepfer said Facebook is using artificial intelligence software to assist and study those interactions, so it can learn the best responses and eventually per-

form tasks that now require human assistance.

'Predictive learning'

The social network, which boasts 1.5 billion global users, has also sponsored efforts to build drones and laser networks to help reach billions more people who currently don't have Internet access. Schroepfer said Facebook can use artificial intelligence to understand the vast amounts of information those users will upload and anticipate which messages they will want to see.

"We need systems that can help us understand the world and help us filter it better," he added. Schroepfer plans to describe some of Facebook's work in a speech at this week's international Web Summit conference in Dublin.

One project combines a new technique for identifying visual images with the ability to field questions posed in natural language. In a demonstration video, the program answered spoken questions about a photo of a baby, describing what the baby was doing and what kind of room he was in.

Another effort uses "predictive learning" to study images and make informed predictions of what will happen, such as whether a stack of blocks is stable enough to stand or fall over. Facebook has also developed a program to play the board game Go, which is considered a tougher challenge than chess for computers. Players in Go have thousands of options for arranging stones on the board, and the best human players appear to recognize visual patterns without trying to calculate each potential outcome. Schroepfer said Facebook's team is using visual recognition algorithms rather than just "brute force" computing to examine every possible move.

It may be years before some of this work finds its way into Facebook's services, Schroepfer added - but it's definitely on its way. — AP



TOKYO: Nissan Motor Co. General Manager Tetsuya Iijima explains a self-driving prototype vehicle after its test drive in Tokyo, yesterday. Nissan's "intelligent driving" feature is smart enough to navigate intersections without lane markers. It also brakes safely to a stop without crashing into the vehicle in front, and it knows the difference between a red light and a tail-lamp. — AP

NISSAN TEST CAR DRIVES ITSELF SAFELY, RECOGNIZES PEDESTRIANS

'INTELLIGENT DRIVING' FEATURE IS SMART TO NAVIGATE INTERSECTIONS

TOKYO: Being a passenger in a self-driving car is similar to being driven around by a very cautious person, maybe your grandmother. Requiring neither hands on the steering wheel nor a foot on the gas pedal or brakes, the Nissan Motor Co. car making its way on Japanese public roads is instead packed with radars, lasers, cameras and computer chips.

Nissan's "intelligent driving" feature is smart enough to navigate intersections without lane markers. It also brakes safely to a stop without crashing into the vehicle in front, and it knows the difference between a red light and a tail-lamp.

Reporters were given a half-hour test ride in the prototype vehicle Tuesday on a scenic but pre-programmed course on Tokyo roads, which included stopping at traffic lights, making turns, changing lanes and crossing a bridge across the bay.

The car was painstakingly careful, like someone extra cautious on the road. It always stayed within the speed limit. And it slowed down, appearing to be "thinking" at slightly complicated situations, such as cars coming from another lane. The system is designed to recognize people and if a pedestrian jumped out onto the road, the car should come to a stop.

Nissan, which also makes the Infiniti luxury model and the March subcompact, is preparing the autonomous driving option for vehicles going on sale in 2020. It plans to have abbreviated versions of the technology starting from next year, such as keeping a safe distance from the car in front on congested roads.

System needs fine-tuning

The car experienced by The Associated Press is still unable to deal with unexpected situations, such as moving to the side of the road if an ambulance



approaches. At one point, the human driver, who was in the seat for the whole test ride, had to intervene because the car didn't properly recognize an unclearly drawn lane. Otherwise, it did fine. Nissan General Manager Tetsuya Iijima, who was the human driver for the test ride, acknowledged the system needs fine-tuning. But he was confident it was the way of the future, delivering better safety, because more than 90 percent of traffic accidents are caused by driver error.

When compared with a human, Nissan's prototype is only 3 or 4 years old, maybe 6 at most, and the goal is to help it mature to a 20-year-old, he said. "It's like a kid," said Iijima, emulating a child walking

slowly, a step at a time. "We need to make it understand the world - the severe world."

The system was shown in Nissan's Leaf electric vehicle, meaning it was not only intelligent but also zero-emission. Its trunk space was filled with electronics and wiring, evidence of the computer technology needed to integrate the information from the car's many sensors, radars and 360-degree cameras.

When it goes on sale, the electronics system will be much smaller and tidier. Jeremy Carlson, senior analyst at IHS Automotive, who is an expert on autonomous driving, praised Nissan for having "a clear roadmap" for the technology it was working on. — AP

BAYT.COM COLLABORATES WITH JORDANIAN BAND TARAB 3AL 7ATAB IN REGIONAL CREATIVE CAMPAIGN

DUBAI: Paying homage to passion, creativity and hard work, Bayt.com has launched a community campaign to celebrate 15 years in the business of building careers, in collaboration with Jordanian a cappella band "Tarab 3al 7atab" and Kuwaiti hip-hop crew "Sons of Yusuf".

The two groups share their rich life and career stories using music as a platform. "Tarab 3al 7atab" pay homage to those who do what they love; while the two Kuwaiti brothers celebrate various careers through hip hop. Both videos invite audiences to add to the conversation and be the writers of their own story through a custom platform provided on bayt.com.

"Bayt.com's history is full of stories. Since we started, millions and millions of stories have fueled our progress," said Rabea Ataya, CEO, Bayt.com. "2015 marks Bayt.com's 15-year story. We've been working very hard since we started in 2000. Evolving from a simple job site, Bayt.com is now the leading multi-dimensional career platform in the Middle East, and we help over 22 million people improve their careers and livelihoods. That's our story. To celebrate, we are really excited about the #WhatsYourStory campaign, which also celebrates the fact that millions of people

on Bayt.com also have their own stories to tell. Our goal is to help them showcase their personal career stories, the journeys of a lifetime. We are also eager to continue to collaborate and create with individuals with particularly inspiring careers, starting with Sons of Yusuf and Tarab 3al 7atab."

Speaking on behalf of Tarab 3al 7atab -Arabs Got Talent' semi-finalists — Executive Producer Jana Zeineddine said: "We really enjoyed this collaboration with Bayt.com, not only because each one of us has worked really hard to be where we are today, but because we believe in the philosophy of the campaign. We are architects, pharmacists, engineers, psychologists, theatre directors, performers and musicians, and we tried to show that in the video. We truly love what we do, and that's why we do it, so when Bayt.com asked us to conceptualize a music video that reflects a passion for your work, and working together, we were immediately excited. We also believe in the message: do not let anyone else write your own story. Believe in your vision and your abilities, collaborate with like-minded people and always follow your instincts. Also, never be afraid to take risks - no matter what the outcome. We learn the most from our mistakes. That's how one grows."

What's Your Story? Here's Ours. The Story of Bayt.com

- 2000: Bayt.com is launched in Dubai, UAE.
- 2001: Bayt.com is recognized as the leading job site in the Middle East.
- 2002: Bayt.com is recognized as the leading job site in the Middle East.
- 2003: Bayt.com is recognized as the leading job site in the Middle East.
- 2004: Bayt.com is recognized as the leading job site in the Middle East.
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- 2014: Bayt.com is recognized as the leading job site in the Middle East.
- 2015: Bayt.com is recognized as the leading job site in the Middle East.

ACTIVISION BLIZZARD VIDEO GAMES BUYS KING DIGITAL FOR \$5.9BN

SAN FRANCISCO: US video game producer Activision Blizzard announced late Monday that it was buying King Digital Entertainment, best known for its "Candy Crush Saga" mobile game, for \$5.9 billion. Activision, whose games include the "Call of Duty" series, said in a statement the purchase "will create one of the largest global entertainment networks with over half a billion combined monthly active users in 196 countries."

California-based Activision has some of the best-known video game titles on the market, including "World of Warcraft," "Diablo," "Guitar Hero," "Skylander" and most recently "Destiny." Activision said it believes the addition of King's business, which it called highly-complementary, will position it "as a global leader in interactive entertainment across mobile, console and PC platforms." It added that the move "positions the company for future growth." Since 2003 King Digital has "built one of the largest player networks on mobile and Facebook, with 474 million monthly active users in the third quarter (of) 2015," King CEO Riccardo Zacconi said in the joint statement.

The "Call of Duty" first-person shooter franchise is one of the best-selling console game series in the world, while "Candy Crush" is among the most popular games on mobile devices. The purchase, approved by the boards of directors of both companies, has King's shareholders receiving \$18.00 in cash per share "comprising a total equity value of \$5.9 billion and an enterprise value of \$5.0 billion," according to the statement.

That represents a 20 percent premium over King's closing price on October 30, it added. Activision said it is using some \$3.6 billion of offshore cash as well as a \$2.3-billion incremental term loan to pay for the purchase. King is based in Dublin, but the joint press statement was datelined London and Santa Monica, California. The transaction, "which is subject to approval by King's shareholders and the Irish High Court" as well

as other antitrust authorities, should be completed by the second quarter of 2016.

"The combined revenues and profits solidify our position as the largest, most profitable standalone company in interactive entertainment," said Activision Blizzard CEO Bobby Kotick. "With a combined global network of more than half a billion monthly active users, our potential to reach audiences around the world... enables us to deliver great games to even bigger audiences than ever before."

Mobile gaming booming

Activision plans to let King operate independently under Zacconi and its creative director Sebastian Knutsson, and will provide King "with experience, support and investment to continue to build" on their legacy, Kotick said.

King has focused on a business model that allows users to play a game for free, but pay extra for additional features. Many of its games run on less sophisticated smartphones, therefore reaching a wider public. — AFP



LOS ANGELES: This June 16, 2015 shows gaming fans waiting in line to play Activision Blizzard's Call of Duty Black Ops III at E3 - the Electronic Entertainment Expo - an annual video game conference and show at the Los Angeles Convention Center on June 16, 2015 in Los Angeles, California. US video game producer Activision Blizzard announced yesterday that it was buying King Digital Entertainment, best known for its "Candy Crush" mobile game, for \$5.9 billion. — AFP

BRITISH FOOTBALL: A RASH OF ROTTEN TEETH

PARIS: Nearly 40 percent of professional football players in Britain have rotted teeth, in some cases serious enough to affect performance on the pitch, according to a new study. Footballers may make huge amounts of money, but little of it seems to go to dental care: On average, their teeth and gums are in worse shape than their British age peers, it said. "We came across several players with tooth decay so deep that it was into the nerve and creating an infection in the jaw," lead author Ian Needleman of the UCL Eastman Dental Institute told AFP. Many put off seeing a dentist despite tooth pain, he said, but whether this was due to a fear, bravado or

a too-busy schedule was not clear.

The study, published in the British Journal of Sports Medicine, is the first to assess just how widespread dental problems are among pro footballers in England, and to what extent they affect athletic prowess. Needleman led dentists and doctors in examining 187 players at eight clubs in England and Wales. Five of the teams were in the Premier League: Hull, Manchester United, Southampton, Swansea City and West Ham.

Two were in the second-tier Championship league, and another in League One. The average age of players was 24, ranging from 18 to 39. At least 90 per-

cent of players in each squad were examined and questioned about their health. Thirty-seven percent had active tooth decay, the researchers found, and more than half had teeth eroded by acid. Eight in 10 players had gum disease, with half the mouth affected in three out of four players. For one in 20, damage to the gums was irreversible. Nearly three quarters of the players said they had seen a dentist in the preceding year, though physical examinations suggested many were less conscientious than claimed. "I think they were aware (of the decay), but for various reasons were putting off treatment," he said by phone. About one in six reported pain in their mouth or teeth

at the time of the interview, and one in four said their teeth were sensitive to hot or cold drinks. Nearly half the footballers said diseased teeth and gums "bothered" them, and a fifth said it undermined their quality of life.

'Debilitating and painful'

Seven percent said the poor state of their dental health adversely affected performance or training. "We also found players with wisdom tooth infections, which can be extremely debilitating and painful," Needleman said. If left untreated, the worst cases "will stop someone from training completely, or take someone out of a game." Arsenal striker Robin van Persie and

Chelsea winger Florent Malouda have been reported as saying that having their wisdom teeth pulled some years ago improved their health and football acumen. Surprising, very few clubs-despite the huge investment they make in players — have staff dentists, the researchers observed. "Teams are beginning to recognize this as a priority," Needleman said. "Successful strategies to promote oral health within professional football are urgently needed." The study noted that nearly two-thirds of the athletes in the study consumed sugary sports drinks three times or more per week, though no link has been proven with oral decay. — AFP



COURCITÉ, France: Farmer Marie-Francoise Brizard milks her Normandy cows at her farm in Courcité. — AFP photos

BLOWING IN THE WIND: HOW TO STOP COW BURPS WARMING EARTH

COURCITÉ..., FRANCE: At her farm nestled in the green hills of northwestern France, Marie-Francoise Brizard is helping to curb a planet-wide menace: Farting and belching cows implicated in global warming. So far this year, Brizard says she has cut methane emissions from her herd of 40 Normandy cows that are equivalent to 32 tons of climate-changing carbon dioxide. That is equal to the carbon pollution spewed out in a 470,000-kilometre (292,000-mile) car journey, according to a computer tracker provided to Brizard by a French initiative that promotes lower methane output from farms. She does it by feeding the cattle more grass but less maize and soy, cutting down on the cattle's output of methane, which comes mostly from belching but also from flatulence.

Ruminant animals emit methane, a gas that is more than 20 times more efficient than carbon dioxide in trapping the sun's heat. Agriculture contributes an estimated 20 percent of global greenhouse gas

emissions, which the world's governments hope to curb in a climate pact to be negotiated in a November 30-January 11 conference in Paris. Methane accounts for 40 percent of farming's heat-trapping emissions. As his wife leads the cattle to milking at the 100-hectare (250-acre) farm in Mayenne, a district of the Pays de Loire region, Luc Brizard sets out to sow seeds: alfalfa and other fodder rich in proteins alternating with cereals. Dried alfalfa allows the couple to feed the cattle in winter without recourse to industrial maize- and soy-based feed which makes up a fifth of the diet of an average herd in France. The cattle also get a small supplement of linseed grown on site.

'Stunning simplicity'

Legumes such as alfalfa and oilseeds such as linseed and some beans enrich the milk with Omega-3 fatty acids, which are claimed to have health benefits for humans but which also suppress the bacteria that

produce methane. The cows thus emit less of the gas. Alfalfa crops, rich in nitrogen, help the couple to improve the quality of the soil while their fields lock away carbon. "The story is almost too good. But it is based on a principle of stunning simplicity: Cows are made to eat grass," said agronomist Pierre Weil, joint founder of the "Bleu-Blanc-Coeur" (Blue-White-Heart) initiative, which promotes food products with higher levels of the valued Omega 3 protein. The scheme has been certified as a bona fide method of lowering greenhouse gas emissions by the French national institute for agricultural research and by the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Under a "business as usual" scenario of greenhouse gas emissions, average global temperatures are predicted to rise by about 4 C (6.4 F) by the end of the century, leading to more droughts, deadly superstorms and higher seas, according to the UN's top science panel. Methane emissions from cattle can be cut by as much as 65 percent depending on the feed, according to the French initiative, which aims for a more modest reduction of 20 percent so as to achieve the best balance between economic constraints, milk quality and animal health.

Meagre financial benefits

Every month, milk produced on the Brizard couple's farm is analyzed to ensure it meets the Bleu Blanc Coeur standards. Savings in greenhouse gas emissions are tracked each month on their computer with an 'Eco-Methane' counter. Not all the 600 French farmers in the Eco-Methane project go as far as the Brizards. "A farmer who only uses maize can just add a bit of linseed. You don't have to change everything," Weil said. Despite saving on feed purchases, however, the financial benefits are meagre for the Brizard family. Dairies in the area are not specialized in collecting Blue Blanc Coeur milk, which is available as a separate product in only a dozen dairies across France. So the dairies just pay the basic price and mix it with standard milk. Despite the tons of greenhouse gas that are saved, the farm does not receive any carbon credits either because there is too little demand from businesses or cooperatives to offset their greenhouse gas emissions. — AFP



COURCITÉ, France: Farmer Marie-Francoise Brizard brings her Normandy cows to a meadow.

STUDY: DEATHS RATES RISING IN MIDDLE-AGED WHITES

NEW YORK: The US death rate has been falling for decades, but researchers have detected one group in which the rates have been steadily ticking up - middle-aged white people. Suicides and deaths from drug overdose and alcohol abuse are being blamed. Deaths rates for other races have continued to fall, as they have for whites 65 and older. But death rates for whites 35 to 44 have been level recently, they're beginning to turn up for whites 55 to 64, and - most strikingly - death rates for whites ages 45 to 54 have risen by half a percent per year since 1998, said the authors, Anne Case and Angus Deaton of Princeton University.

The increase started in the late 1990s and probably is related to the increased availability around that time of certain prescription painkillers, they said. "It certainly can't be helping," said Deaton, who last month was awarded a Nobel Prize in economics for unrelated work on consumer spending.

General decline

Their paper was published online Monday by the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. Federal researchers have reported - repeatedly - on worrisome increases in deaths from suicides and drug overdoses.

And they have noted the bulk of those deaths have been white and middle-aged. So the Case and Deaton findings aren't exactly surprising, said Robert Anderson, who oversees the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention branch that monitors death statistics.

But the Princeton pair brought a new lens to the government's statistics, breaking down death numbers by age and race in a way the government has not highlighted, he added. "White Americans who are middle-aged were really doing worse," Case summarized. "And that's not news we were hearing." There has not been a similar increase in middle-aged people living in other affluent countries, the researchers said.

White death rates still are not nearly as bad as black rates - not even for those 45 to 54. The rate is about 415 deaths for every 100,000 white people in that age group. For blacks, it's 582 per 100,000. US death rates have been on a general decline for more than a century, thanks mainly to public health measures and advances in medical treatment. In recent decades, the improvement has been driven by declines in death rates from heart disease and cancer - the nation's two leading killers. — AP

LOW-HANGING FRUIT: SCIENTISTS UNLOCK PINEAPPLE'S GENETIC SECRETS

WASHINGTON: The pineapple, the tropical fruit enjoyed by people worldwide in slices, chunks, juice, upside-down cakes, jam, tarts, ice cream, yogurt, stir-fry dishes, pino colodas, glazed ham and even Hawaiian pizza, is finally giving up its genetic secrets. Scientists on Monday said they have sequenced the genome of the pineapple, learning about the genetic underpinning of the plant's drought tolerance and special form of photosynthesis, the process plants use to convert light into chemical energy.

The genome provides a foundation for developing cultivated varieties that are improved for disease and insect resistance, quality, productivity and prolonged shelf life, University of Illinois plant biologist Ray Ming said. Pineapples, domesticated about 6,000 years ago in what is now southwest Brazil and eastern Paraguay and currently grown in tropical and subtropical regions worldwide, are big business. They are the second most important tropical fruit crop behind bananas, and are grown in more than 80 countries, with an annual value of more than \$8 billion.

"The industrial production of pineapple in Hawaii a century ago made pineapple a popular fruit worldwide because of its extraordinary flavor and aroma," Ming said. Pineapples are the most economically important crop that uses a

type of photosynthesis called CAM, or crassulacean acid metabolism, that evolved in arid locales for high water-use efficiency. It is one of three types of photosynthesis and differs from the forms in the vast majority of plants.

Most crop plants use a type of photosynthesis known as C3. Plants with CAM photosynthesis use 20 to 80 percent less water than typical crop plants and can grow in arid, marginal lands unsuited for most crops. Mindful of global climate change forecasts, the researchers said understanding the pineapple genome may help to engineer drought tolerance into other crops and even engineer C3 photosynthesis crops like rice and wheat to use CAM photosynthesis. "As such, CAM photosynthesis applications could hold major significance for the entire food industry," added plant molecular biologist Qingyi Yu of the Texas A&M AgriLife Research Center at Dallas.

Some of the pineapple's photosynthesis genes are governed by its circadian clock genes, which enable plants to distinguish between day and night and adapt their metabolism accordingly. Ming said this makes sense because CAM photosynthesis lets plants close pores in their leaves during daytime and open them at night, helping retain moisture. The research appears in the journal Nature Genetics. — Reuters

THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT THE BATTLE OF THE SWEETENERS

LOS ANGELES: Hundreds of millions of dollars are at stake for both sides in a federal court case that's shaping up as the battle of the sweeteners. Yet behind all the legal bluster between sugar and high fructose corn syrup are two products that are similar in their chemical makeup and effect on the human body, experts say. Here are a few things to know about the two saccharine substances as a trial began yesterday.

What's in a name?

Sugar and high fructose corn syrup both contain glucose and fructose, just in slightly different proportions. What's commonly called "sugar" in everyday life is actually sucrose, a compound that's 50 percent glucose and 50 percent fructose. Fructose is the most common sugar in fruit. High fructose corn syrup is made up of the same two sugars. But as the name implies, one type of high fructose corn syrup has slightly more fructose than "sugar" - 55 percent - and the rest is glucose. The other type has 42 percent fructose and 58 percent glucose.

Sweet nothings

Sugar producers argue their product is more natural and that high fructose corn syrup is as addictive as crack cocaine. Corn refiners counter that sugar producers are just trying to make up for market lost starting in the 1970s, when the cheaper high fructose corn syrup came on the market. Corn refiners lost a bid to change the name high fructose corn syrup to "corn sugar" when the Food and Drug Administration ruled in 2012 that sugar was a solid, dried and crystallized food, not syrup. But the government has yet to take a stand on which sweetener, if either, is more nutritionally beneficial.

Roger Clemens, a University of Southern California research professor of pharmacology and pharmaceutical science who has studied sugars, says the human body treats

both the same and there is no appreciable difference between the two when it comes to caloric value or metabolic effect. "They are equivalent forms of sugar," he says. "It's all about perception."

So what's the big deal?

Neutral experts in the debate between sugar and high fructose corn syrup say it all boils down to semantics and marketing. Public opinion that once favored high fructose corn syrup has now tilted toward sugar. Most recently, a third sweetener called agave has risen in popularity because it's believed to be more natural - but the chemical makeup of the sap from the agave plant is "chemically and metabolically almost the same as high fructose corn syrup," Clemens said.

Sugar by any other name

The trial isn't likely to end the debate or wipe away confusion about sweeteners. Sugar listed on packaging goes by many names and all of them mean one thing: A sweet taste. Maltose, dextrose, sucrose, corn syrup, brown rice syrup, maple syrup, high fructose corn syrup, honey or a variety of fruit juice concentrates are all ingredients that indicate sugar is in a food product.

When sugar (of any type) isn't so sweet

Eat too much of any type of sugar, of course, and you'll be in trouble. High consumption of sugar, agave or high fructose corn syrup over time can lead to obesity, heart disease, diabetes and high blood pressure. Some studies have shown that high fructose corn syrup causes fatty liver disease when fed to animals in experiments, but that's when it accounts for 25 to 35 percent of the animal's daily caloric intake - an amount a human would never consume, Clemens says. "It goes back to the old mantra: Balance, moderation and variety are the keys to healthy living," he says. — AP

WEST ANTARCTIC ICE MELT COULD RAISE SEAS BY 3 METERS

MIAMI: Melting ice in West Antarctica is a major concern for global sea levels, and a key area may already be unstable enough to unleash three meters of ocean rise, scientists said Monday. The study follows research out last year, led by NASA glaciologist Eric Rignot, warning that ice in the Antarctic had gone into a state of irreversible retreat, that the melting was considered "unstoppable" and could raise sea level by 1.2 meters (four feet). This time, researchers at Germany's Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research pointed to the long-term impacts of the crucial Amundsen Sea sector of West Antarctica, which they said "has most likely been destabilized."

While previous studies "examined the short-term future evolution of this region, here we take the next step and simulate the long-term evolution of the whole West Antarctic Ice Sheet," the authors said in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. They used computer models to project the effects of 60 more years of melting at the current rate. This "would drive the West Antarctic Ice sheet past a critical threshold beyond which a complete, long-term disintegration would occur." In other words, "the entire marine ice sheet will discharge into the ocean, causing a global sea-level rise of about three meters," the authors wrote.

"If the destabilization has begun, a three-meter increase in sea level over the next several centuries to

millennia may be unavoidable." Even just a few decades of ocean warming can unleash a melting spree that lasts for hundreds to thousands of years. "Once the ice masses get perturbed, which is what is

happening today, they respond in a non-linear way: There is a relatively sudden breakdown of stability after a long period during which little change can be found," said lead author Johannes Feldmann. — AFP



ANTARCTICA : This undated handout photo received on October 30, 2015 by the Pew Charitable Trusts shows penguins in the Antarctic. — AFP



FLORIDA: Senior citizens lift weights during a "sittercise" class at the East Ridge retirement home. — AFP photos

'SUPER-AGERS' STUDY MAY REVEAL SECRETS TO STAYING YOUNG

'WORK-PAID OR UNPAID-MAY IMPROVE COGNITIVE FUNCTIONING'

MIAMI: Mary Helen Abbott, 77, paints her lips bright pink, still smokes the occasional cigarette, keeps up on all the gossip at the retirement home and wears a short skirt to fitness class. She giggles as the aerobics instructor shouts "Swagger! Like you are going to meet someone famous!" then she and a dozen seniors throw shoulders back, lift their knees high and strut around the exercise studio. Abbott is what scientists refer to as a "super-ager," and she is taking part in a \$3.2 million study that aims to uncover the secrets to staying sharp and healthy into old age.

While some hunt for medications to treat or prevent dementia, others, like University of Miami neuropsychologist David Loewenstein, are interested in why some people are spared altogether. "I study Alzheimer's disease, but if we want to unlock the mysteries of the brain we also have to know why some people age successfully," said Loewenstein. The five-year study funded by the National Institutes of Health is open to people age 63 to 100 who have not been diagnosed with dementia, and who are either in good mental shape or have early signs of memory failure, known as mild cognitive decline.

Loewenstein is particularly intrigued with how some people seem to be able to fend off memory loss, whether by genetic, environmental or other means. He cites studies involving autopsies on people 85 and above—a population in which about one in three suffers from dementia. Nearly another third of this age group have post-mortems that reveal significant hallmarks of dementia-known as plaques and tangles in the brain but seemed just fine while alive. "How can people function at these higher levels? Science has not been able to answer that," said Loewenstein. "And that is what we are trying to figure out."

Staying busy

Of the 100 people enrolled in Loewenstein's study so far, more than 40 live at East Ridge, a retirement village that resembles a typical suburban neighborhood in south Florida, with

wild peacocks roaming beneath the palm trees, people driving around the manicured grounds on golf carts, and rows of single-story homes divided into multiple apartment units. Such tranquility does not come cheap. Residents must pay \$111,000 up front, then a monthly rent of \$2,700 or more, depending on the size of their living space.

Soon after arriving seven years ago, Gwen North, a retired kindergarten teacher who appears decades younger than her age of 85, took on the responsibility of running the thrift store. "I work probably six days a week," she said, happily. At age 86, her husband Art is known as the go-to-guy around town-perpetually ready to chat, share information, or fix electronics that have broken. Art and Gwen have already taken memory tests and are giving samples of their spinal fluid so that it can be studied for the earliest biological markers of aging. They have even arranged to donate their brains for further study after they die.

'Exercise in a pill'

So what has kept them young? "Staying busy. And good genes," said Gwen. "Just working. And my wife," added Art. It turns out, there is scientific data to back up their claims: "We have known for a long time that people in



FLORIDA: A woman gardens at the East Ridge retirement village.



FLORIDA: Women chat at a thrift store in the East Ridge retirement village.

the workforce are better than people out of work," said Laura Carstensen, founding director of the Stanford University Center on Longevity, addressing a forum on aging at the National Academy of Medicine last month in Washington.

"Work-paid or unpaid-may improve cognitive functioning." Regular exercise and a Mediterranean diet are also known to help foster healthy aging. "Geriatricians I know say that if we could put exercise in a pill form it would

be the most sought-after drug on the market," she said.

Social connections

Abbott confesses that prior to entering the retirement home, she was not doing so well. After her husband died, she lost weight and felt lonely. "One of the big reasons I like being here is I got tired of eating by myself," said Abbott. She clearly thrives on social contact. Now, she plays golf every Monday and rides the bus to church on weekends. Abbott leads the welcoming committee and knows everyone, from the gay couple who just moved in, to the woman in her 90s who nearly died but is now lifting weights again in exercise class, to the woman with the raven hair who had a tryst with a doctor 20 years her senior, then married him, and has stayed married to him for some 40 years.

She recounts these vignettes without malice, exuding pure delight at knowing the details of others' lives. There's some science behind this, too. "Epidemiological studies show that people with a lifetime of cognitively stimulating activities and social connections are much less at risk for cognitive decline as they age," said Loewenstein. — AFP

MENUS WITH CALORIE INFO MAY NOT CHANGE LONG TERM HABIT

NEW YORK: Knowing how many calories are in a fast food chain's hamburger may not change people's eating habits, suggests a new study. New Yorkers exposed to calorie counts on fast food menus for years haven't changed how much or how often they eat at popular fast food restaurants, researchers report in Health Affairs. "There clearly is a subset of people who see and use this information," said senior author Brian Elbel, of NYU Langone and NYU Wagner Graduate School of Public Service in New York City.

But overall, he and his team couldn't see a difference in behaviors when they looked at the entire population of people visiting fast food restaurants. Since 2008, New York City restaurants with more than 15 locations have been required to post calorie information on their menus. A similar policy is scheduled to be implemented nationwide by December 2016.

For the new study, the researchers interviewed nearly 8,000 people who were dining in fast food restaurants in New York City in 2008 or 2013-2014, or across the river in New Jersey. They also examined patrons' receipts from Burger King, KFC, McDonald's and Wendy's. After the 2008 policy was implemented in New York City, the percentage of people who noticed nutrition information, used the information and used it to decrease the number of calories they ate went up. Those effects declined over the following five years, however.

Furthermore, from the beginning to

the end of the five-year study, the researchers didn't see large differences in the nutritional content of the food people purchased, either in New Jersey or New York, or in how often people ate at fast food restaurants. For example, before the menu labeling policy went into place, New Yorkers consumed about 796 calories at every fast-food restaurant visit, compared to 773 calories for Newark residents. In 2013 and 2014, New Yorkers were consuming 803 calories, compared to 857 calories for Newark residents.

Based on past research, Brenna Ellison of the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Economics at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign told Reuters Health she's not surprised the new study didn't find the policy to be effective. However, Ellison, who wasn't involved with the new study, said research into menu labeling is limited because it can't say what people do during the rest of their day.

"We don't know if they went and exercised later or if they ate a lighter dinner if they had a Big Mac at lunch," she said. Elbel also told Reuters Health that so far, researchers only looked at fast-food restaurants, and there's no way to know how menu labeling at other types of restaurants may affect people's behaviors. "We have a lot of data coming out of fast-food restaurants and little coming out on other places," Elbel said. "I think there is still lots more to do to understand the full impact," he said. — Reuters

RECENT STUDY SHOWS INDICATES WAYS OF RULING OUT HEART ATTACKS FASTER

DUBAI: The Lancet published recently results that show Abbott's ARCHITECT STAT High Sensitive Troponin-I (hsTnI) test may rule out heart attacks to help doctors promptly discharge two thirds of patients with chest pain from A&E (Accident and Emergency). These patients may therefore avoid a prolonged wait for monitoring and additional testing or being admitted to hospital. This study suggests that by using a newly identified level of troponin, a protein which at increased levels can indicate injury to the heart doctors may improve patient care by ruling out heart attacks without repeat testing, thereby reducing unnecessary procedures and hospital admissions. The study was funded by a special project grant from the British Heart Foundation and conducted by researchers at the University of Edinburgh.

"The results show the high sensitive test can help doctors determine with an extremely high level of confidence that a patient may be at low risk of having had a heart attack and therefore can be safely discharged from A&E," said Dr Anoop Shah, one of the study authors from the University of Edinburgh. "By using the identified troponin threshold, there are major benefits to patients and doctors. When a patient is diagnosed as low risk of having had a heart attack, it provides much needed reassurance at a time when the patient is most anxious. By being discharged, patients avoid going into hospital and unnecessarily undergoing serial troponin tests which may often cause further worry."

Potential impact: Dr Waleed Tamimi,

Consultant, King Abdulaziz Medical City, National Guard, Riyadh, President Saudi Society For Clinical Chemistry said, "In a recent study that was lead by Paul J. Licher, PhD Director International Health Economics & Outcomes Research Medical Affairs Abbott in collaboration with King Abdulaziz Medical City National Guard, in Riyadh has suggested that (hsTrop I) can reduce the turn-around-time and length of stay in emergency department (ED)." (Unpublished yet)

"Using the software Emergency Department Event simulation (EDES) with an average of 569 patients per day in which 88 (15.5%) had acute chest pain, we were able to calculate the new TAT. This study suggests that through the use of hsTnI and shorter ED protocol time for chest pain patients, King Abdulaziz Medical City could realize the following potential benefits:

An optimized ED utilization through reducing bed capacity by 13% or an equivalent of 7 beds per day. The average ED stay time would be reduced by 87 minutes for all patients or 70 minutes for non-chest pain patients.

The total economic benefit would benefit by 12 million Å from saving around 12% compared to the current model scenario. This study may also suggest that by using a newly identified troponin testing level, physicians may have the potential to double the number of patients who are discharged directly from A&E following a single troponin test at presentation. In addition, this may provide an opportunity to lower costs incurred by healthcare systems overall.

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Kuwait Times

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AGILITY REAL ESTATE OPENS TWO INDUSTRIAL FACILITIES

FACILITIES CATER TO SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES



Agility Real Estate, a leader in the development and management of industrial real estate in emerging markets, officially inaugurated two new industrial facilities in the Sulaibiya and Jahra areas under the patronage of the Minister of Commerce and Industry Dr Yousef Mohammed Abdullah Al-Ali.

The Sulaibiya facility includes 54 workshop units while the Jahra facility has 147 units. Both facilities are fully equipped with road networks, pavements, communication framework, electricity, sanitation, fire protection, safety equipment and other utilities. The units are designed with a multi-level functionality to accommodate both industrial activities and mezzanine offices.

"The new facilities highlight Kuwait's strong focus on the country's vital industrial sector," said Tarek Sultan, CEO of Agility, during the inaugural ceremony. "Agility is honored to have the opportunity to collaborate with the Kuwaiti government entities to further its vision of transforming the country into a global financial and trade hub by providing the supporting infrastructure." Developed in accordance with the highest standards and competitive pricing, the new facilities will cater to the needs of multiple industrial sectors, including small and medium enterprises, manufacturers, specialized craftsmen and other business owners.

These new facilities by Agility Real Estate in Kuwait are aimed at supporting local industries, encouraging entrepreneurship, providing growth opportunities for small and medium enterprises, and increasing industrial production.



SEAFOOD NIGHT AT LAMAR INTERNATIONAL RESTAURANT ANNOUNCED

Lamar International Restaurant, the new restaurant located at Millennium Hotel and Convention Centre in Salmiya, has unveiled a one-of-a-kind Seafood night which offers the country's finest seafood buffet amid a charming ambience and first class service.

Taking place every Wednesday evening, Seafood Night at Lamar promises to impress even the most discerning seafood lovers with an unprecedented choice of freshly-caught fish, prawns, lobster, and other deep sea delights. After making their selection, guests will have the liberty of watching their dishes prepared to perfection at live cooking stations in the hands of the restaurant's specially-trained chefs.

"We are delighted to introduce Seafood Night at Lamar International Restaurant, a one-of-a-kind weekly outing which was organized with the seafood connoisseur in mind," said Dani Saleh, Area General Manager of Millennium and Copthorne Hotels Kuwait.

Demonstrating exceptional value for friends and families alike, the buffet is available to guests for KD 18 per person and includes a hearty salad and appetizer selection.

Lamar is a haven for all-day dining with tempting breakfast, lunch and dinner buffets. An a la carte menu is also available throughout the day catering to an array of tastes and preferences.

Millennium Hotel and Convention Center Kuwait is located in Salmiya beside the intersection of Fahaheel Expressway and Fourth Ring Road. Operated by UK-based Millennium and Copthorne Hotels plc, a leading global hospitality management and real estate group with 120 hotels worldwide, Millennium Hotel and Convention Center Kuwait joins Al Jahra Copthorne Hotel and Resort as the group's second location in Kuwait.



DASMAN BILINGUAL SCHOOL HOSTS WORLD SPECIALIST IN CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION

With the cooperation of Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences, Dasman Bilingual School held its yearly professional development workshop on the 14th, 15th and 17th of October 2015. The workshop was presented to Dasman Academic staff and took place at Marina Hotel.

Hector J Ramirez the specialist in curriculum implementation, who gave the lectures, completed his undergraduate degree in international relations from the United States International University in San Diego, California and the International University of Europe in London. His post-graduate studies were in Elementary Education and Multicultural studies at San Diego State University. With over 25 years of experience in education, Hector is committed to the evolving classroom by supporting educators with necessary tools and strategies that provide access to all students. These are practices that equip teachers for a new generation of learners who benefit from blended environments.

Adel Al-Sane - CEO of Dasman Bilingual School stated that, "we are used to organizing such workshops on a yearly basis to develop and improve our Academic staff experience, knowledge and skills. In Dasman School, we believe, it is our responsibility to keep our teachers up to date with the latest international methods of new teaching. We are happy to be the first and only school to host Hector Ramirez, who is well known in his domain to lead the workshops on 'Differentiation in the environment of project based learning'."

Sane continued, "for the Arabic Division, we have hosted Dr Abdulrahman Jarar, Bassam Al-Muhammed and Ahmed Al-Dolani."

Samar Dizmen - Academic Director stated, "the Professional Development Day is one of the most important programs that we take in consideration in our school and look forward to developing and implementing successfully and according to the latest up to date learning strategies." Dizmen continued, "we are confident that our academic team has the highest standard of educational skills and qualifications with the modern teaching."



THE SULTAN CENTER HOSTED 'TASTE OF AMERICA' WEEK

The Sultan Center in collaboration with the US Embassy in Kuwait is hosting Discover America 2015 Festival week 'Taste of America' at TSC Sultan Centers from October 28th through November 7th. The festival at TSC is an eventful week to celebrate and showcase the wide variety and range of American origin products only to be found at The Sultan Center stores. The 'Taste of America' was inaugurated under the patronage of US Ambassador to Kuwait, Douglas Silliman, along with TSC's Group Chief Executive Officer, Thomas Hammer, Group International and Non-Food Commercial Director, Makram Malaeb and Commercial Director, Bassam Zantout. Attendees also included TSC man-

agement team and members of the Kuwait community.

Following the inauguration attendees, toured the store and had an opportunity to taste a range of products from fruits and vegetables to cheese and deli meats and a range of snack foods, in addition to other household products and items. Attendees expressed their satisfaction and appreciation for the US food tasting stations and for the extensive selection of products on display. The store ambience evoked a celebratory event true to American style.

Commenting on the occasion, US Ambassador to Kuwait, Douglas Silliman said: "It is a privilege to be here today for the Taste

of America opening ceremony at the Sultan Center. I would like to thank the Sultan Center for devoting an entire week to celebrate American products. I am thrilled to be part of this tradition event for the second year and hope it will remain become a traditional key event for local consumers as well as the business community.

"The growth in US food exports is in large part due to the commitment of many food importers in Kuwait to sourcing high quality US food products. The Sultan Centre exemplifies that commitment. The Sultan Center imports more than 4,000 products made in the United States, bringing the freshest produce, meat and dairy goods via airfreight to

ensure customer satisfaction"

Large variety

According to Makram Malaeb - Group International and Non Food Commercial Director "TSC has been catering predominantly and on a regular basis to the needs of American citizens and all our customers in Kuwait with a large variety of imported and exclusive favorites of the American community, with a range exceeding 4,000 US products"

"Catering to the growing demands of our local customer needs and along with global healthy trends, we bring to our customers more than 800 Organic US products making TSC the largest importer of US products in the

Middle East", Malaeb added.

Malaeb added "From fruits and vegetables to ultra-fresh products like Dairy and Deli, Grocery, Snacks and Beverages, Frozen, Healthy and Beauty Care, Non Food to all types of high quality household products, TSC offers clients the best of US products. This event is to highlight the several lines our customers enjoy and to reward those loyal to US origin products."

TSC 'Taste of America' is held in cooperation with US Embassy in Kuwait includes new and exclusive American products; throughout the promotional campaign customers also have a chance to earn extra TSC Rewards card points on a range of selected products.

WHAT'S ON - SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

All photos submitted for What's On should be minimum 200dpi. Articles must be in plain text and should include name and phone numbers. Articles and photos that fail to meet these requirements will not be published.

Please send them to news@kuwaittimes.net



The Interior Ministry's Relations and Security Media Department organized an advanced photography course for its photographers in order to improve their skills.

CRYCHESS 2015

Friends of CRY Club (FOCC), announces a rescheduled dates for children's chess tournament 2015. "CRYChess 2015" will be held at the Gulf Indian School (GIS), Fahaheel, on Friday, 06th November 2015, from 0930 - 1630 hrs. It is open to all School children. The players will be placed into groups, allocated by their age, to play in the Swiss pairing format. Medals and certificates are awarded to all participating children and first 3 positions in each group win trophies. For more details, registration forms, rules of CRYChess 2015, please visit <http://www.focckwt.org/> or contact FOCC members.

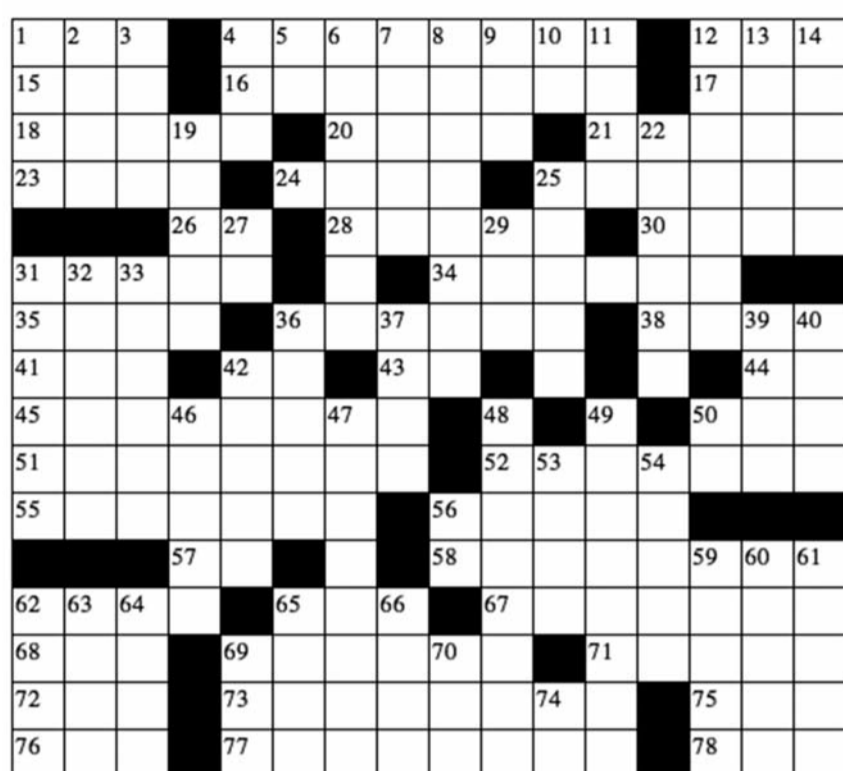


AIS STUDENTS VISIT KUWAIT TIMES

Students from the American International School of Kuwait (AIS) recently visited Kuwait Times building, where they were taken in tours to learn about the process of making news and printing the newspaper. —Photos by Joseph Shagra



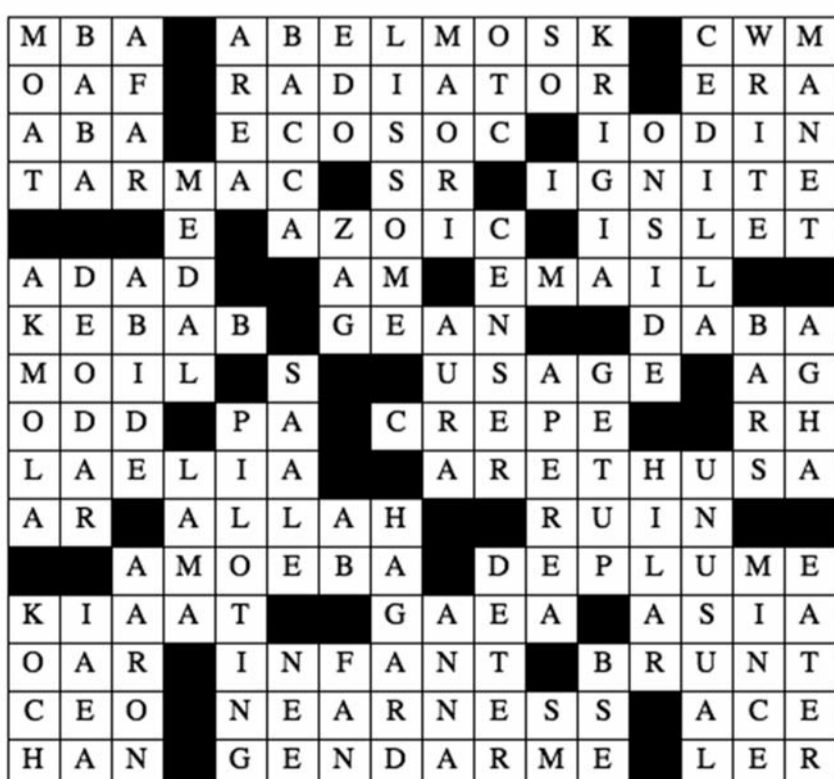
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ACROSS

- 1. A branch of the Tai languages.
4. A cut of pork ribs with much of the meat trimmed off.
12. Someone who is morally reprehensible.
15. How long something has existed.
16. A plane curve formed by the intersection of a right circular cone and a plane parallel to an element of the curve.
17. A flat wing-shaped process or winglike part of an organism.
18. Sluggish tailless Australian arboreal marsupial with gray furry ears and coat.
20. Chief port of Yemen.
21. A dyed fabric.
23. Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
24. The complete duration of something.
26. A soft silvery metallic element of the alkali earth group.
28. An edible seaweed with a mild flavor.
30. An open vessel with a handle and a spout for pouring.
31. Food mixtures either arranged on a plate or tossed and served with a moist dressing.
34. 1 species.
35. A feeling of strong eagerness (usually in favor of a person or cause).
38. A Hindu prince or king in India.
41. A Kwa language spoken by the Yoruba people in southwestern Nigeria.
43. A very poisonous metallic element that has three allotropic forms.
44. A colorless and odorless inert gas.
45. A group of street musicians in Mexico.
51. An elementary particle with negative charge.
52. A tricycle (usually propelled by pedalling).
55. A surgical instrument that is used to dilate or distend an opening or an organ.
57. A white metallic element that burns with a brilliant light.
58. The act of changing something to bring it up to date (usually by adding something).
62. A city in east central Texas.
67. Genus of herbs of Eurasia and the Americas.
68. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
71. A native or inhabitant of Iran.
72. (Irish) The sea personified.
73. Without forethought or plan.
75. (computer science) The smallest discrete component of an image or picture on a CRT screen (usually a colored dot).
76. A doctor's degree in education.
77. A field game played with a ball (especially baseball).
78. Earnest and conscientious activity intended to do or accomplish something.
DOWN
1. The basic unit of money in Bangladesh.
2. Highly excited.
3. Not only so, but.
4. A health resort near a spring or at the seaside.
5. An informal term for a father.
6. A member of a North American Plains people (now living in Oklahoma and Wyoming).
7. Measuring instrument in which the echo of a pulse of microwave radiation is used to detect and locate distant objects.
8. Trees or shrubs of the families Ebenaceae or Sapotaceae or Symplocaceae or Symplocaceae.
9. A Chadic language spoken in northern Nigeria.
10. Being nine more than forty.
11. A small cake leavened with yeast.
12. A member of the Siouan people formerly living in the Carolinas.
13. Having the same or similar characteristics.
14. The capital and chief port and largest city of Senegal.
19. Hungarian choreographer who developed Labanotation (1879-1958).
22. Physically and mentally fatigued.
25. Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
27. A public promotion of some product or service.
29. An adult male person (as opposed to a woman).
32. Any of various water-soluble compounds capable of turning litmus blue and reacting with an acid to form a salt and water.
33. Any of various aromatic trees of the laurel family.
36. The iridescent internal layer of a mollusk shell.
37. Characteristic of false pride.
39. An island in Indonesia south of Borneo.
40. An Arabic speaking person who lives in Arabia or North Africa.
42. Italian chemist noted for work on polymers (1903-1979).
46. Small tropical American tree bearing edible plumlike fruit.
47. Of or relating to or caused by hormones.
48. Repetition of the ends of two or more successive sentences, verses, etc.
49. Consider as ideal.
50. Being ten more than one hundred ninety.
53. Tropical starchy tuberous root.
54. (prefix) Between or among or in the midst of.
56. A dialect of Chinese spoken in the Yangtze delta.
59. Not elegant or graceful in expression.
60. The cardinal number that is the sum of eight and one.
61. In a gay manner.
63. In bed.
64. One of a set of small pieces of stiff paper marked in various ways and used for playing games or for telling fortunes.
65. Tropical Asian starlings.
66. Shout loudly and without restraint.
69. Give a nickname to.
70. A periodic paperback publication.

Yesterday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Searching for hidden information may be a compulsion, as if you don't really have a choice today. Something at work isn't quite right and you won't be comfortable until you get to the bottom of the mystery; even running into a dead end won't stop your investigation now.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

You believe the only way you will get anywhere now is to set an attainable goal and relentlessly pursue it, no matter what anyone else says. However, your current unwillingness to relinquish control might actually be a deterrent to your satisfaction.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

You are confident that you're on the right track and you're not interested in stepping outside of your comfort zone today. You're quite capable of holding your ground, even if a powerful adversary applies undue pressure.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

A casual interaction might trigger unexpressed feelings, possibly bringing a dormant resentment back into awareness now. Your response to someone else may be swift and harsh as logical Mercury receives a reality check from stern Saturn.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

You might surprise someone with a preemptive strike today if you think there is a serious threat to your financial stability. Although you may be anxious to confront a powerful person, be absolutely sure it's necessary before you start something that morphs into a prolonged battle of wills.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Your sharp words could cut like a sword today, even if that's not your intention. Your delivery drips with sarcasm and your heightened passion might diminish your objectivity.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

You may think that you are being extremely rational in your approach now, but cerebral Mercury has left your fair-minded sign for more tumultuous waters. However, someone else's erratic energy might be spilling over into your life.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

You feel the need to express your position in no uncertain terms as communicator Mercury highlights your passionate sign. But you might not be sure about what information to share and which details to keep to yourself.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

You've made up your mind about a career decision now, yet your blind confidence can turn into rigid self-righteousness if you ignore the feedback from others. Unfortunately, your denial could become a problem professionally if your boss isn't pleased with your close-minded attitude.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Finding the origins of your stress is challenging today, but an unspoken truth could resurface over and over again in a series of minor disagreements. However, you might actually be arguing about something that's completely irrelevant while the real issue lurks just on the outskirts of your awareness.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Relationship dynamics have been weighing on your mind lately and they won't stop bothering you until you tackle the problem directly. Unfortunately, you might not even realize where the tension is coming from, making it more difficult to resolve the situation.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Your workmates may not be very supportive today as they take you to task on an issue that you thought was fairly straightforward. This disagreement creates additional anxiety because you aren't sure you can trust your logical analysis, even if others are demanding that you do what makes the most sense.

WORD SEARCH

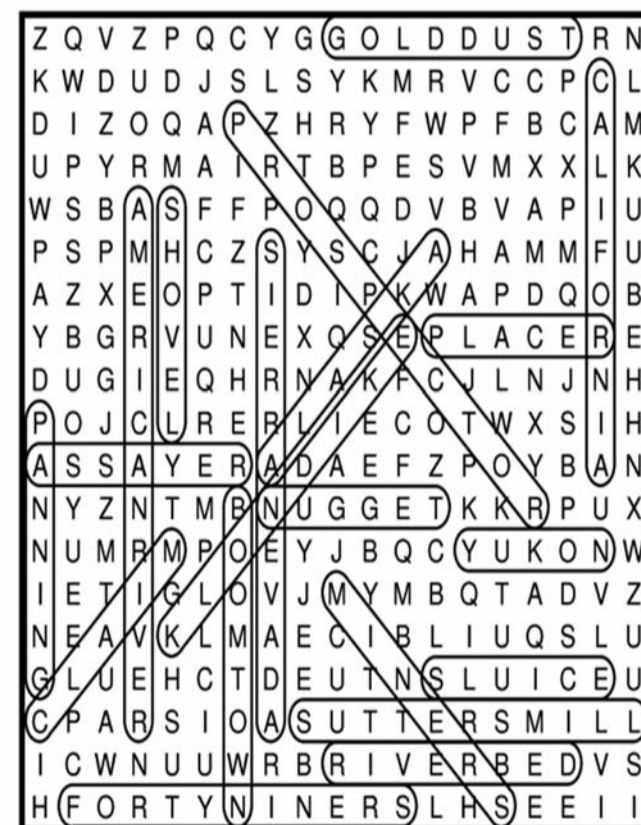
THE CAT'S MEOW WORD SEARCH PUZZLE



- ABYSSINIAN, BALINESE, BENGAL, BOBCAT, BURMESE, CALICO, CHESHIRE, HIMALAYAN, JAVANESE, MAINE COON, MANX, MUNCHKIN, PERSIAN, RAGAMUFFIN, RUSSIAN BLUE, SCOTTISH FOLD, SIAMESE, SPHYNX, TABBY, TOYGER

Yesterday Solution

SOLUTION TO GOLD RUSH PUZZLE



Daily SuDoku



Yesterday's Solution



Free music becomes top-selling album for singer **Sam Hunt**

Sam Hunt may be celebrating the one-year anniversary of his debut album, but most of the songs from "Montevallo" have been living online since 2013. Hunt, who released "Montevallo" last year, first released a free mixtape in 2013. Seven of the 10 songs from "Montevallo" were originally on his 15-track free album. "I put it out on the Internet for free and the success we had after, that was because of the fans," Hunt said in a recent interview. And more fans have continued to support the 30-year-old singer, who is one of the brightest voices in country music.

Hunt has three No. 1 country singles, and he is nominated for three Country Music Association awards, to be presented in Nashville, Tennessee, on Wednesday night. To repay fans, he digitally released an acoustic version of his free mixtape last week. "Between the Pines (Acoustic Mixtape)" is available on iTunes for \$7.99. "Unfortunately we had to take the (free) mixtape down ... (but) this is just sort of a special occasion that we thought would be suited for reissuing that original mixtape," he said. In a recent interview, Hunt talked with The Associated Press about releasing free music, his CMA nominations and his sophomore album.

School of hip-hop

Before he earned a recording contract, Hunt decided to



In this file photo, Sam Hunt arrives at the CMT Music Awards at Bridgestone Arena in Nashville, Tenn. — AP

release a mixtape of free songs to help push his style and sound - a page taken from rappers and hip-hop artists, and a rarity in the country music world. Hunt said he was familiar with rappers dropping mixtapes and got an extra push to release free music from his producer Zach Crowell, who has worked with underground hip-hop artists in Nashville. "(Crowell) was very familiar with that concept and I was familiar with it, I just never associated it with country music," he said.

Hunt put seven songs from the mixtape onto his major label debut, including two songs that eventually topped Billboard's Hot Country songs chart ("Leave the Night On," "House Party"). He also created three new songs - including another No. 1 hit "Take Your Time" - and released the 10-track "Montevallo" last year. The album has sold more than 810,826 units and still sits in the Top 25 on the Billboard 200 albums chart. "One of the biggest artists right now in pop music is The Weeknd and I remember being around when his mixtapes came out and it was the same sort of concept," Hunt said of the breakthrough singer, who had massive hits this year with "Can't Feel My Face," "The Hills" and "Earned It." "I've sort been watching his career since then, I'm a fan of his music and it's interesting to see now how that has grown into what it's become now," he said. "This is the same concept."

Newbie of the year

Hunt is nominated for three CMA Awards, including new artist of the year. He's the only breakthrough act to be up for song and single of the year for "Take Your Time," which he co-wrote. His competition includes hits like Little Big Town's "Girl Crush" and Kenny Chesney's "American Kids." Hunt, who has co-written songs for Chesney, Keith Urban and Reba McEntire, says writing "Take Your Time" helped him find his own voice as

a singer. "I felt like I finally found a direction as an artist and ... I started writing with a purpose or writing as myself," he said. "I held that song and never pitched it."

Sophomore superstar

Hunt has started work on his follow-up to "Montevallo," and he says there's some pressure to match the success of his debut album. He also said there's less pressure because he has been able to succeed in country music with a sound that blends country with elements of R&B, hip-hop and electronica. "Everybody had a different opinion as to where the boundaries actually were as far as what we could do musically and sonically and lyrically, and that can kind of mess with your head," he said. "Now that we've put out a record and we're a little more established and we have some eyes and ears (on us), I feel like a little bit of that pressure is off," he continued, "and we have a little more freedom to go wherever the creative process takes us." — AP

Sam Smith back with 'saddest song' of life

Sam Smith was by some measures last year's biggest breakthrough musician, but on his latest song, he is sadder than ever. Smith returns to his familiar subject matter of fleeting love on "Drowning Shadows," a previously unreleased song that will appear on a deluxe edition of his blockbuster album "In The Lonely Hour" that comes out Friday. "Brace yourself, this is going to be really depressing. So sorry if anyone's in a happy mood," Smith joked as he premiered the song Monday on Apple's Beats One radio.

Described by Smith as "the saddest song I've ever written," the 23-year-old English crooner demonstrates the power of his soaring, soulful voice on "Drowning Shadows" as he narrates his battles with alcohol and casual relationships. Smith sings: "I don't know how I've reached this place / So far from heaven, so far from grace. Go home to nothing or stay out more? Give in to someone or lock down my door? Or drown all my shadows, drown them like before?" he sings to piano and strings. Smith explained to radio listeners that the song was in fact written prior to "In The Lonely Hour" but was left off the album because "something didn't work" in the production.

The singer, who re-recorded the song, said that "Drowning Shadows" was about his former life as he returned home each evening in London from the studio in a taxi. He would face a daily crossroads as he decided whether to hit the gay bars or go home alone. "I was in such a lonely, sad place when I was recording this album," said Smith, who was a bartender until a few years ago. "I used to go out by myself and drink and try and find love. Or I would just go home and chill," he said. But the album proved to be a global hit backed by the strength of the ballad "Stay With Me," itself a tender reflection on the aftermath of a one-night stand. Smith has since gone on to pack stadiums and won three of the four most prestigious awards at the latest Grammys. More recently Smith, who successfully underwent surgery for vocal cord problems, composed the theme song for the latest James Bond film. — AFP



File photo shows Grammy winner Sam Smith, poses in the press room after performing on stage during the 57th annual Grammy Awards in Los Angeles, California. — AFP

Inspired by circus, sisters chart **Japan pop niche**

Their head-to-toe cute factor brings to mind fellow crowd-pleasing Japanese musicians, but for the two sisters who form Charan-Po-Rantan, the inspiration comes not from pop idols but the circus. With songs driven by an accordion, Charan-Po-Rantan has created a sound that marries J-pop with klezmer, the festive music of Ashkenazi Jews, and the theatrical atmospherics of vaudeville. Making their New York debut, the sisters in Charan-Po-Rantan-which loosely translates as sloppy-appeared in poofy dresses of wildly arranged fabric strips and matching purple and red top hats that could have come out of Dr Seuss.

Charan-Po-Rantan represents in some ways an alternative to the alternative scene in Japan-the duo moves musically beyond the sugar-sweet keyboards of mainstream J-Pop but is even further removed from anything consciously hip, with the sisters unperturbed by stylistic comparisons to Disney. "The number of people in underground circles has been growing in recent years (on the Japanese music scene), so it's easier now for people to get into music they didn't know," said Koharu Matsunaga, 26, the duo's accordionist and main songwriter. "We don't see ourselves as out of the mainstream. We've been told before that the music is 'fantasy' or Disney; that may be how people see us, but we're not trying to chart that line," she told AFP.

Koharu-who carried an accordion-shaped handbag to the interview as her sister, 22-year-old singer Momo, brought along her ever-present toy stuffed pig with sewn buttons for eyes-said that Charan-Po-Rantan let its ideas flow freely, with no behind-the-scenes producer dictating their sound or look. Koharu said that the sisters' mother designed their costumes and that the accordion first enticed her during a childhood trip to the circus. She asked "Santa Claus" for an accordion and

eventually was scouring YouTube to discover different styles including klezmer and Roma music. "In the circus, there are lots of different people and nationalities all gathered together, so we wanted to make a band that encompasses a bunch of different genres and styles," she said.

No banal pop lyrics

The duo's New York debut, held Thursday night at the Japan Society, also displayed a playful touch of irony. Momo explained to the crowd that the sisters wanted to play a Japanese game and then performed a vocal-and-accordion rendition of the theme from Super Mario, the classic video game of the Italian plumber created by Nintendo. The songs' themes often stay close to the circus-a recent single is entitled "Anata no Kuni no Merry-Go-Round" ("Your Country's Merry-Go-Round"). Koharu, initially uninterested in lyricism, gradually started to write grimly about her personal life, including, as she says with a laugh, a repeated situation in the past of men hitting her up for money. "I really disliked typical J-Pop because it was too straightforward and simple-I like you, I feel lonely, I'm happy," she said. Charan-Po-Rantan's audience has been similarly eclectic. The duo played Japan's Fuji Rock Festival in July, performing an early set on the same day as Foo Fighters and Motorhead, and in 2013 came to the United States to play South By Southwest.

Charan-Po-Rantan found a fan in Twitter's co-founder Jack Dorsey, who invited the social media-savvy duo to play for the launch of mobile payment service Square in Japan. But while the duo appreciates the growing foreign audience, the sisters play down their ambitions. "We're not trying to 'represent' klezmer or bring this to the forefront," Koharu said. "We're just doing what we like." — AFP



Japanese band of two sisters, Charan-Po-Rantan, perform at the Japan Society in New York in October. — AFP



Justin Timberlake, from left, ASCAP president Paul Williams, former President Jimmy Carter and Trisha Yearwood take a photo after Yearwood received the Voice of Music Award. — AP photos

President Carter, Timberlake honor **Trisha Yearwood**

One of country music's leading ladies, Trisha Yearwood, was honored as the voice of a generation of music fans Monday night by former President Jimmy Carter and pop star and actor Justin Timberlake. Her fellow country stars, including Lady Antebellum and Reba McEntire, surprised the Georgia-born singer with performances of her songs, including "Walkaway Joe," and "She's In Love

With the Boy," during the 53rd annual ASCAP Country Music Awards on Monday in Nashville, Tennessee. "Since her debut in the early '90s, Trisha Yearwood has given young women a voice through song, with powerful lyrics about love, loss and staying true to your own self," Timberlake said. Yearwood was given the Voice of Music Award, while Ashley Gorley was named the songwriter of the year and Sam Hunt was named songwriter-artist of the year by the music licensing agency. Hunt also received the award for song of the year for "Leave the Night On," written by Hunt and Josh Osborne.

The Grammy-winning artist has sold more than 12 million albums and is also a successful cooking show host and cook book author, Timberlake noted, adding, "Girlfriend is busy." Yearwood and her husband, Garth Brooks, joined Carter earlier in the week in Memphis, Tennessee, to help build a home as a part of the charity Habitat for Humanity. Carter, who is undergoing treatment for cancer, received a standing ovation from the crowd of songwriters, singers and music industry executives. He said he was an admirer of Yearwood's work for a long time, but in the past decade has been working with her and Brooks to support the charity, which has helped 5 million people with home construction and repairs.

"Trisha is a very good worker," Carter told the crowd. "She's actually one of the best Habitat for Humanity volunteers that I have ever seen. She's always on top of scaffolding and the roof trusses almost like an acrobat." Yearwood proudly showed off an example of her hard work while on the red carpet prior to the



Justin Timberlake carries Trisha Yearwood's Voice of Music Award.

show. "I have a blister," Yearwood said. "I don't want anybody to go, 'She's a singer, she's not going to work.' I think I work harder than I should because I don't want anybody to think I am slacking." Yearwood said that she's not known as a songwriter, so she was especially proud to get recognized by songwriters in Music City. "The highest compliment I can receive is when I can record a song and the writer is happy with my rendition," Yearwood said. — AP

Adele's 'Hello' breaks one million digital sales in record

British singer Adele smashed records with her comeback single "Hello," selling more than 1.1 million digital songs in the first week and becoming the first song ever to break the 1 million download mark on the Billboard charts. Adele also roundly beat Canadian teen heartthrob Justin Bieber, whose latest single "Sorry" sold 276,800 downloads in its debut week, taking second place, according to data released by Nielsen Music on Monday for the past week.

"Hello" was the first single from Adele's upcoming new album "25," to be released this month, and follows a four-year break from music after her "21" album won six Grammy awards and sold more than 30 million copies worldwide. "Hello" was streamed 47.5 million times globally on Spotify, making it the most-streamed song over a week in the online streaming platform's history.

The music video also broke records at entertainment platform Vevo.com, delivering more than 27 million views in the first 24 hours after its release last week. Nielsen Music said the previous best-selling digital song in a single week was American rapper Flo Rida's "Right Round" in 2009, which sold 636,000 downloads. On the Billboard 200 album chart, Australian pop punk band 5 Seconds of Summer grabbed the No.1 spot selling 192,000 units of their new release "Sounds Good Feels Good."

That pushed country singer Carrie Underwood into second place with her new album "Storyteller" with some 177,000 units sold. Blake Shelton, country music star and a judge on TV show "The Voice," saw his greatest hits collection "Reloaded;

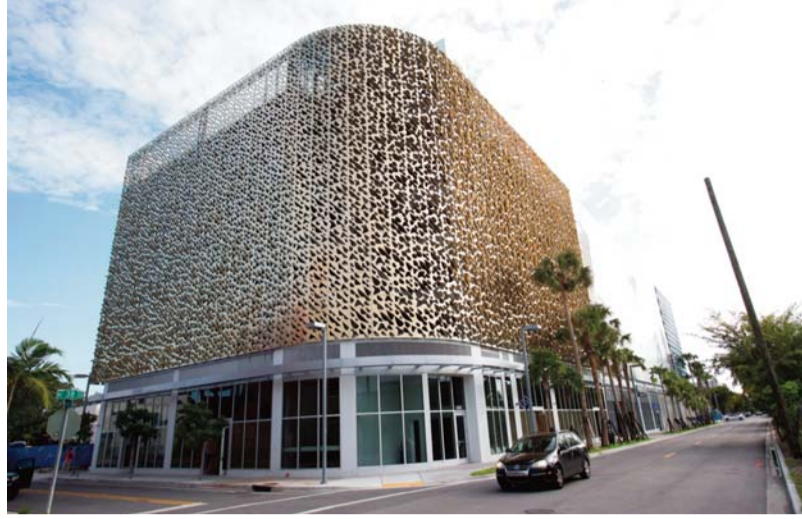
20 #1 Hits" debut in 5th place. The Billboard 200 chart tallies units from album sales, song sales (10 songs equal one album) and streaming activity (1,500 streams equal one album). Canadian rapper The Weeknd held on to the No 3 position with "Beauty Behind the Madness," and last week's chart toppers, Pentatonix, slipped to 8th with their self-titled album of a cappella songs. — Reuters



In this Feb 24, 2013 file photo, singer Adele performs during the Oscars at the Dolby Theatre in Los Angeles. — AP



The exterior of the Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami in the Miami Design District in Miami. — AP photos



The exterior of the City View Garage in the Miami Design District.



The Fly's Eye Dome, designed by the late Neo-Futuristic architect Richard Buckminster Fuller.

NEIGHBORHOODS: ART, FASHION COLLIDE IN MIAMI DESIGN DISTRICT

It was once a pineapple farm. Then a rough, industrial neighborhood overlooking a furniture district. Today, the Miami Design District is emerging as an upscale shopping and art hub. The neighborhood is located just a few miles from downtown and South Beach. Its attractions include contemporary art installations, a parking garage that's an architectural head-turner, and storefront luxury shops from Hermes to Tom Ford, with a concentration of jewelry and timepiece brands.

"We're able to provide them with spaces that allow the brands to present the full range of their creative expression, from the architecture and design of their stores to the scope of their merchandise offering," said Craig Robins, a native Miami developer and CEO of the real estate company Dacra who is also credited with helping with the transformation of South Beach. The Design District also becomes a major hub during Art Basel Miami in early December, when art takes over the city. By the end of 2016, the 18-square-block neighborhood will include more than 200 retailers from Christian Dior and Rag & Bone to Van Cleef & Arpels, art galleries, design showrooms and restaurants, as well as a boutique hotel and luxury residential condos and lofts.

Art installations

The late Buckminster Fuller designed the Fly's Eye Dome in 1965, calling it an "autonomous dwelling machine." His vision of a 24-foot fiberglass circular dome that could serve as a home has been brought to life at 140 NE 39th St. Overlooking the dome is a larger-than-life polyurethane foam-and-resin sculpture of the late architect Le Corbusier by the French artist Xavier Veilhan.

Nearby are two murals created by the collaborative studio 2x4 including "Jungle," an homage to the urban landscape of South Florida, with bright colors, plants and animals painted on the wall; and "Vortex," which creates an optical illusion with its black and white circular strokes. On a second-floor terrace is "Netscape," a 24-seat web of hanging chairs by German designer Konstanin Grcic.

A mixed-use retail building inspired by waterfalls and rain squalls by Japanese architect Sou Fujimoto will be completed by 2016. The two-story building will feature glass fins extending from the rooftop down to the open courtyard. A couple of blocks away is Miami's Institute of Contemporary Art at 4040 NE Second Ave.

Garages as art

Next to busy Interstate 95 is the City View Garage (enter on NE 38th Street between NE First Avenue and North Miami Avenue), its wavy gold- and titanium-coated steel panels shimmering against the Miami sun. On the north and south sides are murals by artist John Baldessari including a cinematic image of swimmers, beach ball and all. Another garage (not yet completed) will be a seven-story mixed-use building with six different facades: a wall of recycled car tops; another of reflective traffic barriers repurposed as dynamic screens interspersed with flower boxes; a theatrical composition of graphic cartoon characters mixed with ornate baroque details; a corner panel of interlocking volumes that evoke puzzle pieces; a series of cut-outs dubbed "the ant farm" which exposes what is going on inside; and a painted mural of a candle being burned at both ends.

Where to eat

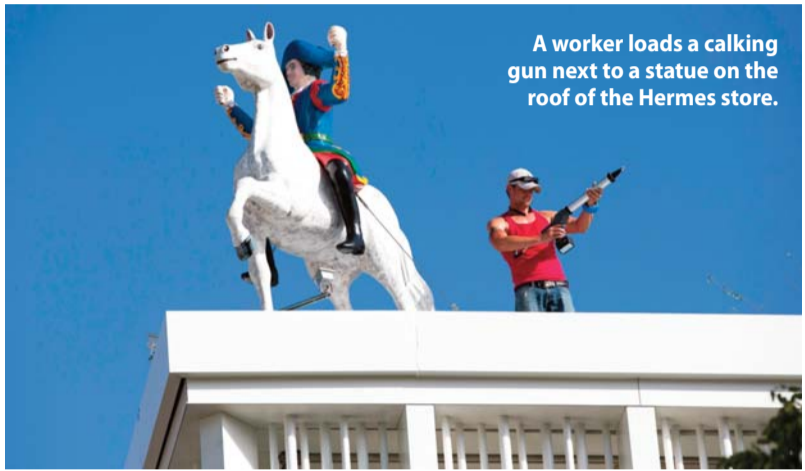
Dining choices include Michael's Genuine Food and Drink by chef Michael Schwartz and Michelle Bernstein's Crumb on Parchment. French chef Joel Robuchon will open three restaurants in the area in 2016.

Location

The Design District is located between two neighborhoods, Wynwood/Buena Vista and Midtown heading toward the downtown Brickell area. NE Second Avenue is the main street running through the area; 40th Street and Second Avenue would be a good starting point for visitors. — AP



A close-up of the City View Garage.



A worker loads a talking gun next to a statue on the roof of the Hermes store.



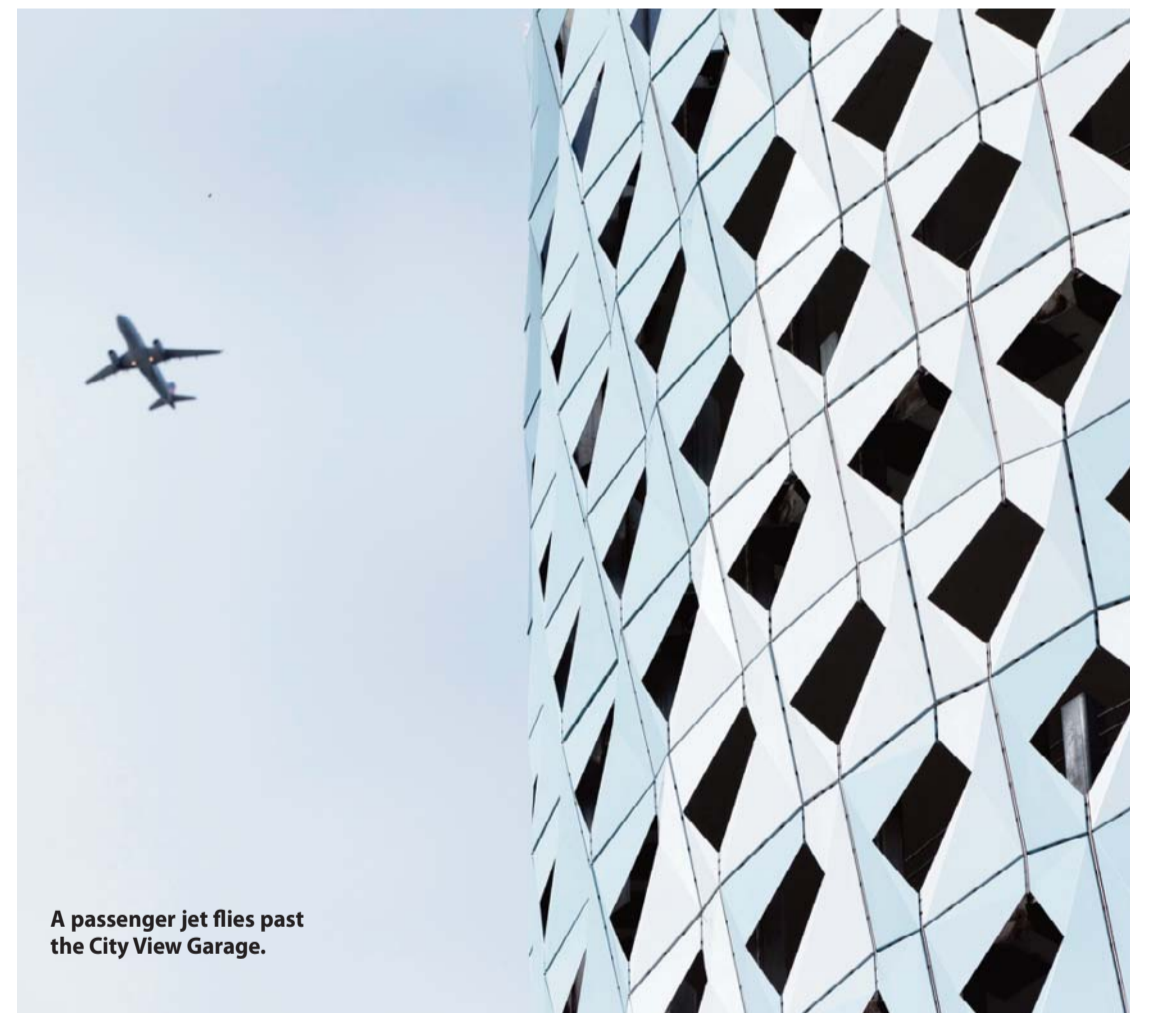
A BVLGARI store is shown next to the Fly's Eye Dome, designed by the late Neo-Futuristic architect Richard Buckminster Fuller.



A pedestrian walks past a Fendi store.



A sculpture of the late architect Le Corbusier by the French artist Xavier Veilhan, appears across from the Fly's Eye Dome, designed by Neo-Futuristic architect Richard Buckminster Fuller.



A passenger jet flies past the City View Garage.

Splash launches 'Splash Cafe Society' as part of the fall /winter '15 fashion show

Imagine a chic club brimming with the affluent and the well-travelled. It's a space that brings a section of people who connect through their mutual love for fashion, travel and music. Splash created that atmosphere for its guests this season to showcase the AW'15 collection that was an amalgamation of classic trends with an updated look. The cafe was a glamorous one which saw the Bespoke Military and Retro Futuristic trends coming together to create the ultimate look for a jet setting individual. Effortless pieces, structured look and the retro chic silhouettes were dominant on the runway that was seen across the fashion weeks in the past days.

Raza Beig, CEO Splash & ICONIC added, "Harnessing the power of simplicity, classic and utilitarian in fashion, this season we have embraced two classic trends namely Military and Retro with a modern spin. The collection defines a well read, travelled person who was part of the very niche cult called Cafe Society. The show is a way of showing our supporters and consumers the creativity that the brand imbibes, not just in our collection but in the way we conceptualize a theme that breaks boundaries and presents fashion like never before."

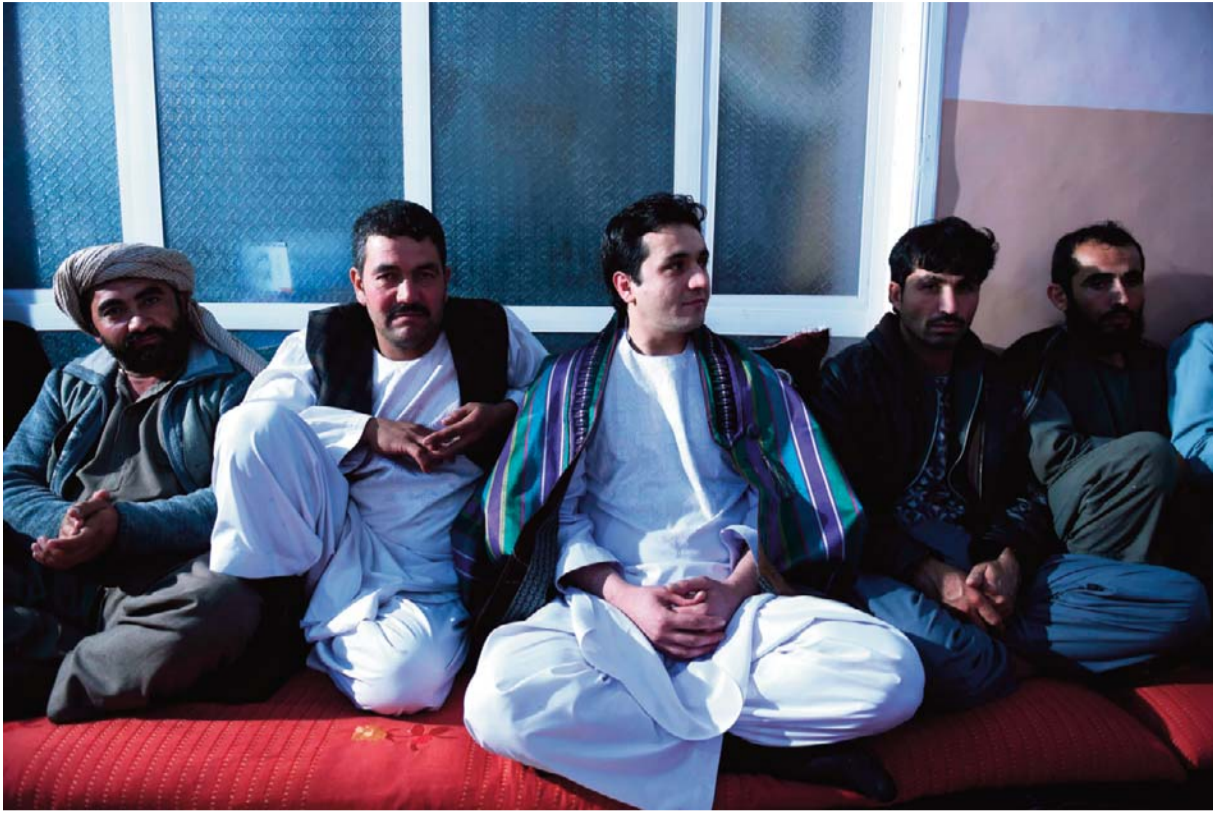
The venue was Madinat Jumeirah where the guests were welcomed into a pre-function area that was designed

as a cafe with heavy French and retro influences. A cafe deemed fit for hi-flyers, the guests relaxed and soaked in the luxurious ambience while they were served premium beverages and canapes. DJ Kennedy made sure to keep the crowd grooving to his eclectic tunes. Stirring just the right amount of excitement, the guests were taken to their seating for the show overlooking an LED lit airport runway which resembled an actual runway. 25 top models sashayed down the runway in a surreal set that came to life with the energy from the audience.

The VIP show was attended by UAE's creme de la creme which saw Raza Beig walk the finale amidst a thunderous round of applause. All fashion followers and Splash customers also got a taste of the season's most awaited runway action at the earlier show in the evening.

To maximize the reach of the shows and celebrate fashion on a larger scale, the 2 shows were live streamed on all the brand's social media platforms along with other leading online platforms across the region, where a million or more fans and consumers watched the show. The entire collection is available at all Splash stores in Centrepoint and at Splash-The Avenues, Phase II.





An Afghan groom (center) looks on during his wedding celebrations at Khoja Paytakht in Maimana, the capital of the northern province of Faryab. — AFP photos



An Afghan man wears ankle bells as he dances during a wedding ceremony inside a house at Khoja Paytakht in Maimana.



An Afghan man ties ankle bells to another's legs as he prepares to dance.



An Afghan groom dances during his wedding celebrations.

Wedding revelers in Afghan village exult over Taliban rout

Ankle bells chimed as male dancers shimmed beneath chandeliers in midnight wedding revelry that drew together an entire frontline Afghan village just days after its residents humiliatingly routed the Taliban. The village of Khoja Paytakht, on the outer fringes of Maimana, was the first line of defense that beat back the Taliban last month as insurgents sought to capture the northern city. When Afghan security forces appeared to have abandoned their posts on the night of October 4, villagers were forced to snatch up butchers' knives and homemade firearms, mobilizing what they call a civilian "uprising force" to stave off the insurgents.

Just days after the overnight battle, a sumptuously colorful wedding unwittingly morphed into a twin celebration of the terror and triumph against the Taliban. After a feast of mutton pilaf, eggplant and platters of freshly peeled pomegranates, hundreds of male guests lounged on soft Persian rugs and silk bolster cushions for the highlight of the gender-segregated wedding. Dressed in traditional shalwar kameez, male relatives and friends of the groom one by one took to the floor in the middle, their legs bound by a traditionally feminine accoutrement—ankle bracelets braided with tiny metal bells. "This celebration is like a slap in the face of the Taliban," 26-year-old groom Noor Ahmed said over the din of drums, tambourines and lutes-while women celebrated in a separate room, hidden from the gaze of men.

"The Taliban are against any kind of lyrical, musical revelry. This is our way of telling them

we will not be defeated and subdued." The men danced with wild abandon, synchronizing every twirl, every hip swivel with the high-pitched chime of the bells as the audience tossed crisp bank notes in the air, erupting in whistles, catcalls and squeals of joy. "Oh zalim, shor beti khoda (Oh cruel one, shake your body!)," the singer hissed into the microphone in Dari, standing behind an ensemble of musicians. "I've got the singer drunk on grape wine," joked the uncle of the groom, himself mildly inebriated. "Now he'll sing all night," he added, provoking a ripple of titters around him.

Fears of Taliban comeback

The Taliban rout offered a rare glimmer of good news as the insurgency spreads inexorably, deeply straining NATO-backed Afghan security forces on multiple fronts as the UN estimates that the group's reach is the widest since 2001. The attack on Maimana was part of the rural insurgency's aggressive new push towards big cities, from Kunduz in the north to Ghazni and Lashkar Gah in the south-forcing ordinary citizens in many areas to take up arms. Khoja Paytakht, a patchwork of grape orchards, dry riverbeds and concrete houses built into beige hillsides, sits in a region seen as an unstable powder keg. The Taliban were pushed back but they still remain frighteningly close, with the insurgent frontline barely a few miles away.

"They are just behind the flanking hills," said Qara, a local militia commander who provided security for the wedding, with his snipers spread across nearby hilltops and fruit orchards. Last

month's attack whipped people into a frenzy of panic as many feared the Taliban's full wrath because of the area's ethnic makeup—mostly Uzbeks and Tajiks, who have long harbored antagonism towards the predominantly Pashtun Taliban.

"The risk of a Taliban comeback is real," said Qara, who goes by one name. Back at the wedding, as the night wore on, the musicians worked through a repertoire of folk melodies. Some of the groom's relatives flushed as they resisted requests to dance, but there was no escaping. Before they knew it friends lunged at their feet, tying them down with ankle bracelets. For cultural purists, the dance is a byword for depravity and evokes strong comparisons with the outlawed cultural practice of bacha bazi—a Dari slang meaning "boy play".

Still prevalent across rural Afghanistan, it is an ancient tradition in which prepubescent boys are sold as entertainers at weddings or for sexual slavery. But this wedding involved grown men and the celebration was raucous, graceless and full of mirth. "We won't let the Taliban win or threaten our way of life," said Ahmed, the groom. "If they attack again, people will revolt once more with knives, shovels and pitchforks—even if we have to lay down our lives for it." But for this one October night there was no terror, only the triumph of the dance. — AFP



An Afghan local band sing as a resident dances.



An Afghan man dances during a wedding ceremony.



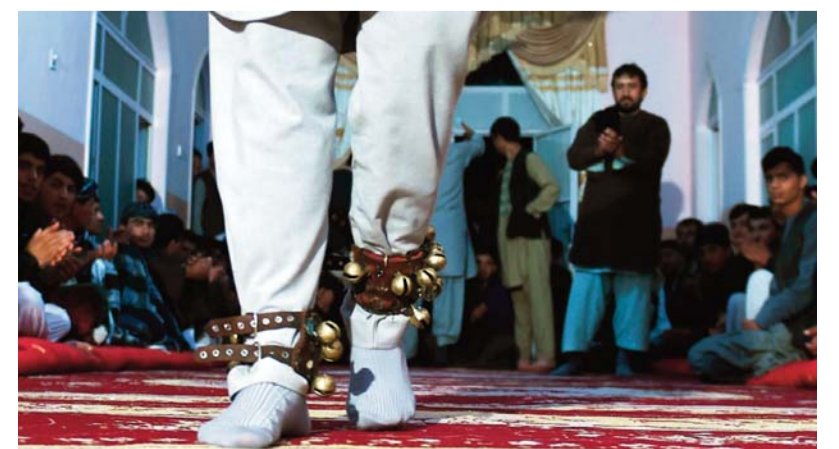
An Afghan local band sing as a resident dances during a wedding celebration.



An Afghan man wears ankle bells as he dances in a wedding ceremony.



An Afghan man wears ankle bells as he waits to dance.



An Afghan man wears ankle bells as he dances in a wedding ceremony.



View of a 'chiva' -rustic local bus- transporting Colombian indigenous people of the Misak ethnic group to take part in an offering ceremony in front of Our Lady of Chiquinquirá church in Silvia, department of Cauca, Colombia during All Saints Day. — AFP photos



Colombian indigenous people of the Misak ethnic group take part in an offering ceremony at Our Lady of Chiquinquirá church in Silvia.

In Colombian mountains, natives see in winter honoring the dead



As children elsewhere celebrate Halloween in fancy costume dress, for the Misak people of southeastern Colombia the coming of November is a solemn occasion to honor the dead. Of the scores of indigenous groups in Colombia, the Misak are considered to have best conserved their ancestral traditions, which at the coming of winter means making offerings to their ancestors. "For us, the year 2015 ended on October 31," said Manuel Julio Tomina, 52, a traditional doctor in this community around the town of Silvia, home to 14,500 of the 20,000 Misaks in Colombia. "The new year started on November 1 and all the spirits of the dead come to visit us. Here people make offerings around the fireplace and all over the house."

The Misaks live at more than 2,500 meters (8,200 feet) altitude in the Andes. They are also known as Guambianos, after the Guambia territory in southeastern Colombia. "Guambiano is what the Spanish called us," said Tomina. "But Misak means 'sons of the water'. The spirits come with the winter, with the rains that refresh and purify." For them, water represents the endless spiral of being. Just as it evaporates and falls again as rain, so the dead depart. But they do not disappear for good. Instead, they return each year on All Saints' Day, until the day comes when they are reincarnated as a new family.

Not heaven, nor hell

On a small altar in one home, family members have left offerings of food for each ancestor they choose to remember. Meat pasties, fried bananas, fermented corn liquor, fruits and potatoes are placed in the candle light. The following day, November 2, the Misaks take the offerings to church, to the sound of drums and pipes, to mark the Catholic feast of All Saints. "Our Guambiano brothers are the ones who organize that. They make offerings of food and products from Mother Earth," said Father Imbachi, the local priest. "The cultural traditions merge with the liturgical."

In a Catholic country, the Misaks have their own vision of the afterlife. "Our dead go to a place called 'cansre'. It is not heaven or hell. We don't know where they go," said Floro Tunubala, the local community governor. "At new year, they come back for food, because a year for us is just a day for them." Tunubala is standing to hold onto his position this All Saint's Day-it is also the traditional date for elections in native communities. If he is not re-elected, he will have to hand his wooden rod of office to a new leader in January.

In a cemetery, Olga Montano spends part of the morning of November 1 cleaning the tomb of her grandparents, Barbara and Jose. "The deceased are with us. They visit us," she says, before leaving in the drizzle to vote at a community assembly in one of the hamlets around Silvia. Women in blue woollen capes flock and men in loincloths flock to vote, on foot or in brightly-painted minibuses.

The Misak use mobile phones and have largely given up their traditional sandals for warmer shoes, but peacefully defend their ancient traditions through bilingual schools and universities teaching their native language. "We take the best of western culture," said Rodrigo Tombe, 35, the town education and health counselor. "And we preserve what is ours." — AFP



A Colombian indigenous man of the Misak ethnic group arrives in a "chiva" -rustic local bus.



Colombian indigenous people of the Misak ethnic group take part in an offering ceremony.

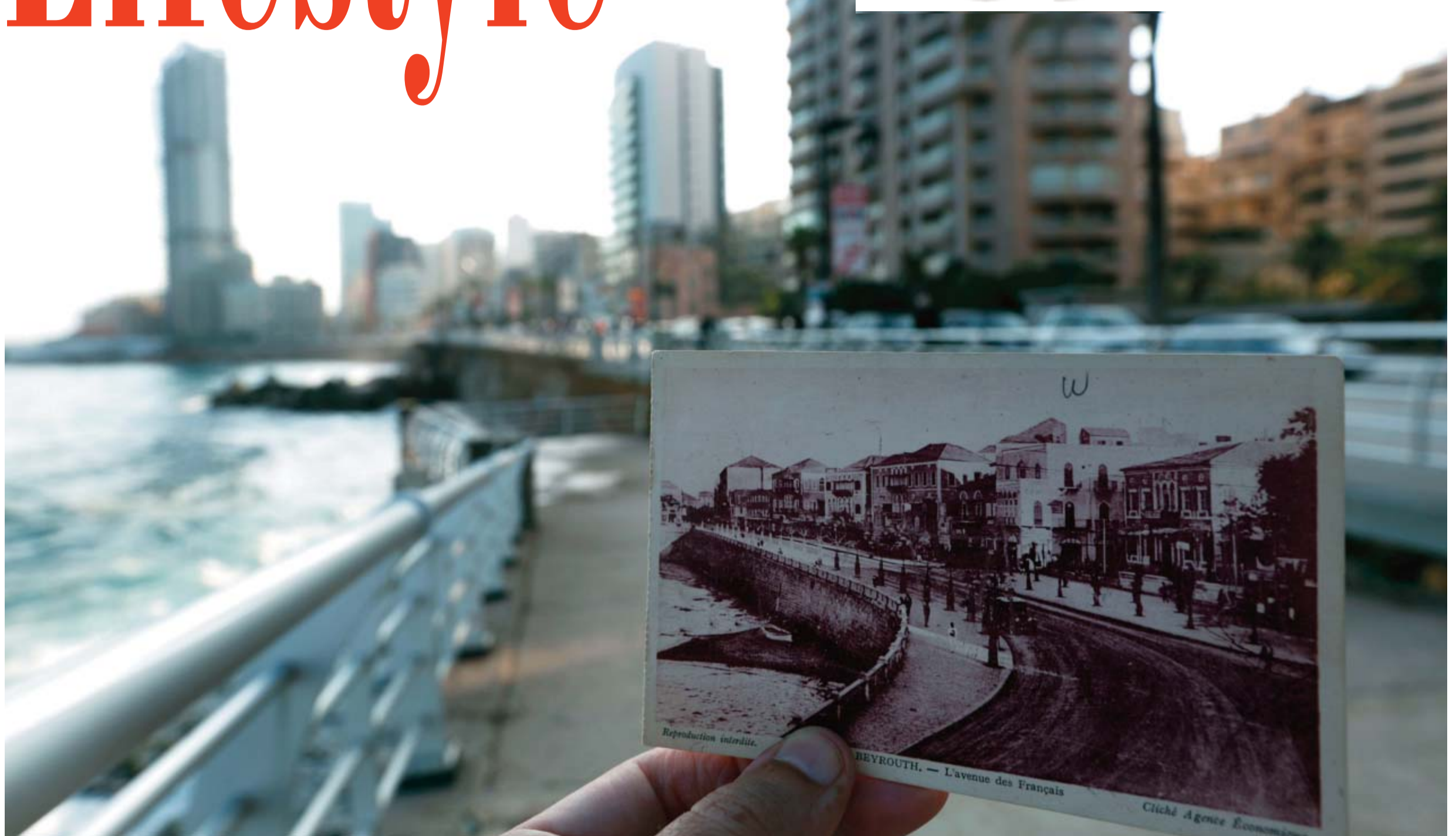


Lifestyle

In Colombian mountains, natives see in winter honoring the dead

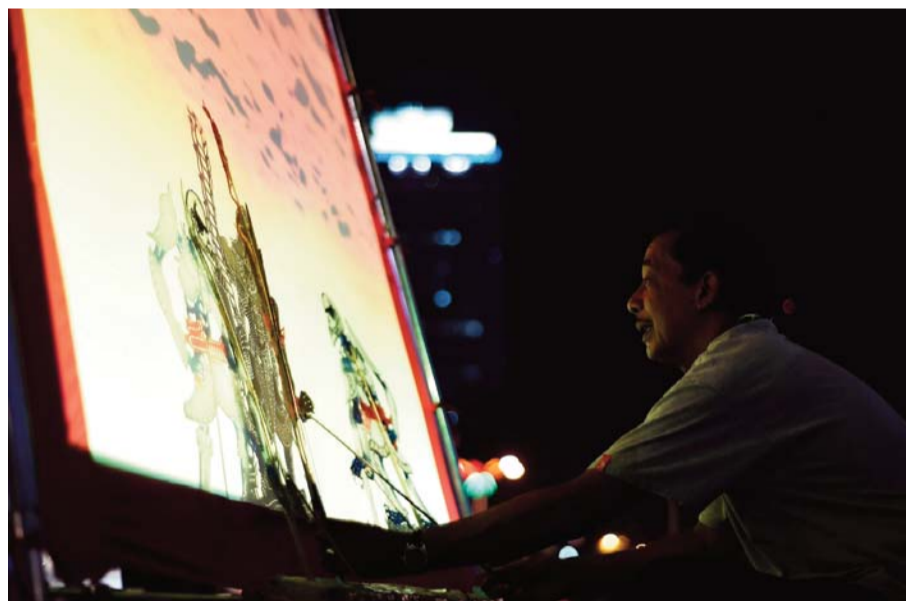
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A picture taken on November 2, 2015 shows a view of Beirut's Avenue des Français as it was taken in a postcard taken by l'Agence Economique and published by La Maison d' Art Colonial in 1925. — AFP

Star Wars quest to pull Malaysian art form out of shadows



Darth Vader's distinctive helmet-headed silhouette swoops in to seize control of a spaceship, but this is not the movies—instead his movements are being brought to life by a Malaysian shadow-puppet master behind a back-lit screen. "Tell me, where are the plans that have been intercepted?" the puppeteer intones in the Malay language, drawing cheers from hundreds of spectators as they recognize Vader's baritone. Traditional Indonesian and Malaysian shadow puppetry was once at the center of Southeast Asian art and culture, but has steadily lost its appeal. But three Malaysians hope to breathe new life into the art by updating it with Star Wars and other pop-culture themes.

Leading the effort is Chuo Yuan Ping, a designer and Star Wars buff who first crafted shadow puppets based on the movie for an art exhibit a few years ago. His research for the project uncovered concerns about the state of the art, which is known as wayang kulit. "At first it was all about Star Wars, but later I learnt how wayang kulit was a dying art form after speaking to many master puppeteers, and I felt sad," said Chuo, 43. "All of us felt a responsibility to do more for this part of Malaysian culture." Chuo, art director friend Teh Take Huat, and 63-year-old master puppeteer Muhammad Dain Othman have performed a section of the original 1977 Star Wars film as a shadow-play about a dozen times the past two years.



Malaysians watch a "Star wars-inspired Wayang Kulit".



63-year-old master puppeteer Muhammad Dain Othman (center) performs the "Star wars-inspired Wayang Kulit".

'Masterpiece' art form

Star Wars was chosen as the theme due to its near-universal appeal, as evidenced by the frenzy surrounding the December release of the latest big-screen installment, "Star Wars: The Force Awakens." "Even my mom knows Darth Vader," Chuo said. Traditionally based on Hindu epics, shadow puppetry was introduced to the region in the 15th century and promoted by Java's Hindu rulers. It seeped throughout Indonesia, Malaysia and elsewhere as Muslim preachers used it as a way to spread Islam, the region's dominant religion today. Puppeteers use sticks to orchestrate the movements of elaborately decorated leather puppets on a back-lit cotton screen, and voice the characters, backed by a traditional gamelan percussion orchestra.

Wayang kulit is on UNESCO's list of "masterpiece" human art forms, but radio, TV, and now digital entertainment increasingly relegate the genre to tourist consumption or the odd cultural show. Rising Islamism also has led to restrictions on the art in conservative areas of Malaysia, due to its Hindu themes. At a recent performance in a Kuala Lumpur square, a miked-up, sarong-wearing Muhammad Dain worked his puppets while sitting cross-legged behind the screen.

Behind him, a young sound engineer used a laptop to make the puppeteer's voice more Vader-like, to replicate R2-D2's digital-beep mutterings, and to splash the screen with colorful lighting effects.

'Using The Force'

"We see the audience happy and their perceptions about wayang kulit are changing, that it has legs," said Chuo, who adds that team has invested more than \$10,000 of their own money. Mohammad Sani Sukir, who brought his family to watch the show, raved afterward. "By combining two things, one old and one new, into one package, this increases the attraction of wayang kulit," he said. But it originally took some persuading to convince Muhammad Dain, who runs a wayang kulit art gallery in his hometown in rural northern Malaysian state of Kelantan. Chuo felt a puppet master was needed to ensure the art form's integrity and aesthetics. "After months of talking, convincing and using a bit of The Force, he agreed to join and do this," Chuo says with a laugh.

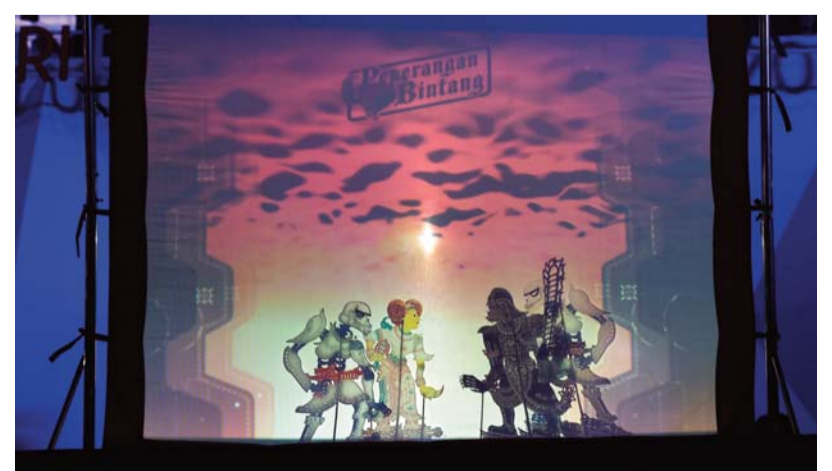
"I had to pass him my Star Wars DVD and let him know who Han Solo was." Most of the puppets were made from tanned buffalo hide by skilled Kelantan craftsmen. Government efforts to promote appreciation of wayang kulit have gained little traction, but private groups are forging ahead, said Eddin Khoo, founder of a cultural non-profit that stages performances of the art. He called the Star Wars project "helpful" for wayang kulit. Chuo has expanded the idea by designing Superman, Batman and other superhero shadow puppets for exhibitions, and may incorporate them in future shows. "It's a little thing that I can do for Malaysian culture," he said. — AFP



The "Star wars-inspired Wayang Kulit", a traditional shadow puppetry show is performed on a screen at the Independence square in Kuala Lumpur.



Designer and the brain behind the "Star wars-inspired Wayang Kulit" Chuo Yuan Ping addresses the audience prior the show.



The characters of "Star wars-inspired Wayang Kulit", are seen on a screen during a show at the Independence square in Kuala Lumpur. — AFP photos