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GCC countries  
seek unified  
security  
legislations



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charge in  
Indian Kashmir



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Papers scandal



## PUBLIC BODIES MOVE TO LAY OFF EXPAT WORKERS

MEASURES SEEK TO BOOST KUWAITIZATION, CUT EXPENSES

By A Saleh



Min 15°  
Max 30°  
High Tide  
10:42 & 23:16  
Low Tide  
04:22 & 16:25

### AMIR ATTENDS 'WE ARE ALL KUWAITIS' OPERETTA



KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah is greeted by children as he attends a national operetta titled "We are all Kuwaitis" at Bayan Palace yesterday. — KUNA (See Page 3)

**KUWAIT:** Various ministries and government bodies have started taking measures towards reducing the number of expat employees in order to provide more job opportunities for Kuwaitis and cut expenses in the state's budget. The measures are also meant to handle demographic imbalances that have so far resulted in limiting national manpower in the local market to less than 25 percent.

In this regard, the education ministry has made a list of 450 expat teachers the ministry no longer needs pending terminating their contracts by the next school year. But Al-Qabas newspaper, quoting educational sources, said Education Minister Bader Al-Essa refused to sign the decision to terminate the teachers and instead postponed the issue until next year, bearing in mind that new schools will open soon. Meanwhile, the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET) has decided not to accept expat students in its various colleges from the next academic year because those colleges' capacity is only enough for Kuwaitis.

Municipality Director Ahmed Al-Manfouhi has also decided to lay off 400 expat employees with the aim of cutting expenses. Notably, the ministry of social affairs and labor has banned recruiting any expat without direct approval from Minister Hind Al-Subaih. The ministry has also decided to lay off a number of expat employees working on a 'pay for work' basis.

The ministry of communication, which has the least numbers of expat employees, is assessing the performance of some of them to be laid off and substituted by Kuwaitis. Kuwait Petroleum Corp has also instructed its subsidiary companies to sack expat secretaries working in the oil sector and make the ones needed to work through contractors. KPC has informed all CEOs to notify expat secretaries and make them choose between working through contractors or termination.

### News

in brief

#### Govt plans KD 2bn sukuk, bond issue

**DUBAI:** Kuwait's government plans to issue KD 2 billion (\$6.6 billion) of Islamic and conventional bonds to help cover a budget deficit created by low oil prices, Al-Arabiya television quoted unnamed official sources as saying yesterday. The finance ministry has asked the central bank to arrange the issuance, Al-Arabiya said. It did not specify the timing beyond saying the issuance would occur this year. The government has begun drawing down its financial reserves to cover part of the deficit, which it projects at KD 12.2 billion in the current fiscal year that began on April 1. But it also wants to start issuing debt to limit the speed of the drawdown and develop the local financial market. The KD 2 billion issuance will be divided equally between conventional and Islamic bonds (sukuk).

#### Finmeccanica to finalize Eurofighter project today

**ROME:** Italian defence company Finmeccanica will finalize a multi-billion contract from Kuwait for 28 Eurofighter jets today, two sources close to the deal told Reuters yesterday. Kuwait signed a memorandum of understanding in September to buy the planes, but efforts to close the deal have hit repeated snags and a third source urged continued caution. The 20-year contract is expected to be worth between €7 billion and €8 billion (\$8-\$9.1 billion), with Finmeccanica's share seen at roughly half of the total. The rest is in the hands of a group of companies in the Eurofighter consortium, including planemaker Airbus and Britain's BAE Systems. Finmeccanica Chief Executive Officer Mauro Moretti said in March that the state-owned conglomerate was in the final stages of discussion with Kuwait over the deal and hoped "to conclude in a short period".

#### UAE court jails 'Hezbollah' trio

**ABU DHABI:** An Emirati court sentenced yesterday three Lebanese, including a Canadian dual national, to six months in prison for forming a local affiliate of Iran-backed Hezbollah, local media said. The supreme federal court convicted the trio of "forming a group for the terrorist Hezbollah (movement) in the country," Ittihad daily reported, adding that they will be deported after serving their sentences. They "were found guilty of setting up an office of the militant group in the UAE and carrying out commercial, economic and political activities without licenses," the daily Gulf News reported. It named the men as Canadian-Lebanese Suhail Naif Gareeb, 62, and Lebanese nationals Asaad Ameen Qansouh, 66, and Ahmed Ebrahim Qansouh, 30. Their trial opened in early February.

## 'PANAMA PAPERS' REVEAL OFFSHORE WEALTH

### WORLD LEADERS, CELEBRITIES, SPORTS STARS EXPOSED

**LONDON/PANAMA CITY:** Governments across the world began investigating possible financial wrongdoing by the rich and powerful yesterday after a leak of four decades of documents from a Panamanian law firm that specialized in setting up offshore companies. The "Panama Papers" revealed financial arrangements of global politicians and public figures including friends of Russian President Vladimir Putin, relatives of the prime ministers of Britain, Iceland and Pakistan, and the president of Ukraine.

While holding money in offshore companies is not illegal, journalists who received the leaked documents said they could provide evidence of funds hidden for tax evasion, money laundering, sanctions busting, drug deals or other crimes. The law firm, Mossack Fonseca, which says it has set up more than 240,000 offshore companies for clients around the globe, denied any wrongdoing and called itself the victim of a campaign against privacy.

Continued on Page 13



**REYKJAVIK:** Iceland's Prime Minister Sigmundur David Gunnlaugsson speaks during a parliamentary session yesterday, insisting he would not resign after leaked documents allegedly link him to an offshore company. — AP (See Pages 7, 10, 11, 14, 20, 23 & 36)

## RENEWABLES USE COULD SAVE \$750BN IN MENA

**KUWAIT:** Middle Eastern and North African nations can make a "net benefit" of \$750 billion if they achieve their set targets on the use of renewable energy, a senior official said yesterday. "Almost every country in the (MENA) region has a target for renewable energy from 5-15 percent," by 2030, Adnan Amin, director general of the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) told reporters. "If we are able to meet these targets, we will have a net benefit of about \$750 billion for the power sector in the MENA region," Amin said on the sidelines of the sixth MENA (Middle East and North Africa) renewable energy conference.

Amin said the world is looking to double the current share of renewable energy of 16-17 percent in the global mix to 36 percent by 2030. He said doubling the renewable energy share will help achieve the reduction by half of carbon emissions which would be a pre-requisite for limiting global warming to two degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) as decided by the Paris climate change summit. Amin told the conference that global

investments in renewable energy rose by 22 percent last year to a record \$330 billion.

The cost of production of renewable energy has dropped significantly in the past few years, he said. In the past five years, the cost of solar photovoltaic power generation dropped by 80 percent, Amin said. "It is already competitive with natural gas. There can be further reduction in cost," he said. But Bassam Fattouh, director of Oxford Energy Institute Studies, said the targets set by MENA countries are "very ambitious". He said several challenges hamper renewable energy production in the region, like state monopoly of the power system, a lack of institutional capacity and conventional energy subsidies.

Nearly half of all new installed power generation capacity in 2014 was in renewables - 37 percent wind, a third solar and a quarter hydro, according to the International Energy Agency. Renewables only account for about 20 percent of global electricity generation, and three-quarters of that is hydro. — AFP (See Page 5)



Adnan Amin

## MPs CONTINUE TO REJECT GOVT'S POWER TARIFFS

By B Izzak

**KUWAIT:** Lawmakers yesterday continued to express their total rejection of a government bill to raise power and water charges, saying the proposed increase would certainly harm low and middle income people. MP Madhi Al-Hajeri insisted that there is no way to allow the government charges to pass and impact the finances of citizens. He criticized the government's proposals, saying that it has no strategy to finance the budget deficit due to the fall in oil prices except through harming low income people. Hajeri called on the government to search for other alternatives to meet the budget shortfall

away from the "pockets of citizens". The government had proposed two sets of increases - for private homes, a majority of which are owned by Kuwaiti citizens, and for apartments, where the majority of expats live. For private houses, it proposed 5 fils for the first 3,000 kilowatts, 8 fils for between 3,000 and 6,000 kW, 10 fils for between 6,000 and 9,000 kW and 15 fils per kilowatt for consumption above 9,000 kW. For apartments, it proposed 5 fils per kilowatt for the first 1,000 kW, 10 fils for between 1,000 and 2,000 kW and 15 fils per kilowatt for higher consumption.

But the National Assembly financial and economic affairs committee on Sunday pro-

posed major changes only for citizens. It proposed keeping the current rate of 2 fils per kilowatt for consumption of up to 6,000 kW and 5 fils above that. It did not propose any changes for apartments. The government is expected to respond to the committee's proposal tomorrow and the issue is expected to be debated on April 12.

MP Awdah Al-Awdah said the charges issue could strain relations between the government and the Assembly, especially if the government insists on its proposals. He said that if the government does not change its plans, the issue will remain without approval in the Assembly for a long time. The lawmaker said that MPs will not vote unless the issue

is in favor of citizens. Previously, a large number of MPs had voiced their rejection of what they called massive fee increases by the government.

In another development, MP Mansour Al-Dhafiri said that the principles of justice and equality in the Kuwaiti constitution call for granting Kuwaiti women married to non-Kuwaitis a housing loan of KD 70,000 like their Kuwaiti male counterparts.

He said that the housing law must be adjusted to treat Kuwaiti women on an equal footing with their male counterparts. The lawmaker said that Kuwaiti women married to foreign husbands should also be given social and children allowances like men.



KUWAIT: Frans Potuyt, Ambassador of the Netherlands to Kuwait launches the new visa application center in Kuwait City yesterday. — KUNA

## NETHERLANDS LAUNCHES NEW VISA APPLICATION CENTER

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: The Embassy of the Netherlands yesterday launched a new visa application center in Kuwait City to facilitate the growing number of visitors from Kuwait. Last year, about 8,000 visitors from Kuwait traveled to the country famous for windmills, tulips and cheese. Speaking at the opening of the VFS Global visa center, Frans Potuyt, Ambassador of the Netherlands to Kuwait, said the number of visa applications rose sharply over the last couple of years and the embassy could no longer accommodate the large number of applicants, and wanted to serve and extend the services for everyone.

"Kuwaitis and other nationals' visa applications are growing rapidly, who would like to travel to the Netherlands. Of course we will miss the direct pleasant contacts with all these travelers, but we are confident that VFS and its professional staff will do everything to secure a swift application process," the envoy mentioned. "I hope that we welcome even more friends from Kuwait to our beautiful country," he added.

Kuwait is the seventh country in the Middle East from where applicants can apply for a visa to the Netherlands. The center is located on the first floor of Al-Banwan Bldg on Ali Al-Salem Street in Kuwait City, and services commenced yesterday. "The decision of who gets the visa still lies in our hands. Once you get a Schengen visa, you are getting a visa to most of the countries in Europe. We trust Kuwaitis and they can visit us any time, so I believe that the visa system for Kuwaitis is outdated. Visas for Emiratis have already been removed, so the idea is to apply the same with Kuwaitis. One of the requirements for doing so is that the passports must be biometric compli-

ant, and I think they are now in the process of doing so," Potuyt said.

### More convenient

The Netherlands joins eight other Schengen countries offering visa services at the same center, making it more convenient for travellers planning multiple business or leisure trips abroad to apply at a single location. VFS Global serves a total of 13 client governments in Kuwait, and has operated visa processing services in the country since 2005. The company has partnered with the government of Netherlands since 2006, and serves it in 24 countries with 54 visa application centers globally.

"Our long-standing partnership with our esteemed client government, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, is reflective of the trust they have bestowed on us through this time-honored and successful relationship. We are privileged to further extend our services in Kuwait to them and remain committed to providing comprehensive end-to-end visa services for applicants," said Srinarayan Sankaran, COO Middle East, VFS Global.

Bilateral relations between the two countries are great, according to Potuyt, with a shared trade volume of \$2.5 billion. With regards to the political tensions in the region, Potuyt noted with the moderate role of GCC countries, he hoped that problems in the Middle East will be settled. "We are facing tougher days ahead especially with the solution we all want for the Syrian crisis. I really hope that parties involved will be ready to compromise or give way to solve the crisis. It's very complicated now with IS, but with the will, we shall overcome this. We now have the biggest immigration problem in Europe, and I heard many Syrians want to return home if political settlements are reached to rebuild the country," he added.



KUWAIT: Samir Khader speaks during the training course.

## KJA, SKY NEWS ARABIA HOLD TRAINING COURSE

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: Kuwait Journalists Association (KJA), in collaboration with Sky News Arabia, organized a training course in 'visual editorial press' on Sunday at the headquarters of Kuwait News Agency (KUNA). KJA Director Adnan Khalifa Al-Rashed said cooperation between KJA and Sky News Arabia is a beginning of a professional and community partnership between the two sides that seeks the development and qualification of a generation of young Kuwaiti journalists from the private and government sectors.

He added that training young journalists is a priority of the Kuwaiti Journalists Association, which is working to provide all the necessary requirements to inform young people about the technical and professional developments in the field of media and journalism in general, especially to develop the Kuwaiti media's message.

"These specialized training programs are part of a series of activities launched by Sky News Arabia in 2013 aimed at colleges, universities and institutes, as well as media practitioners through advanced levels of programs consistent with the nature of their fields and their specialties," said Nart Bouran, Head of Sky News Arabia. Bouran added that one of the

main goals of Sky News Arabia's initiatives is to contribute to the development of the media industry by providing Arab media with the best experiences, stressing the success of training courses to graduate more than 70 media students and more than 50 specialists in the field of journalism and media in the Gulf and the Middle East.

"Sky News will strengthen partnership with the local media in Arab countries and especially in Kuwait for mutual benefit and supporting our colleagues in the media," he said. "The training course explained the methods that have been used in the media and showed the difference between news, analysis, commentary and investigation and how to present the final article in both voice and image. The course also teaches participants about editorial, monitoring, and analytical skills and summarizing the content of television news broadcasts from various sources," Bouran added.

Samir Khader, Executive Editor of Sky News Arabia, explained how to write professional news stories and deal with the camera in order to familiarize the participants with the media message tools of text and image, and practically showed the best methods of delivery to enable them to make quality sound and picture stories.

# CABINET HOLDS WEEKLY MEETING

KUWAIT: The cabinet held its weekly meeting yesterday at Bayan Palace chaired by Acting Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. As the meeting started, the cabinet was informed of a message from Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud inviting His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to attend a summit for the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) leaders with US President Barack Obama in Riyadh on April 21, said Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Sheikh Salman Sabah Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah.

The ministers were also notified of a message from King Mohammed VI of Morocco to His Highness the Amir, on the distinguished bilateral ties and keenness to bolster them in all fields, as well as promoting the GCC-Moroccan relations. Then, the cabinet was apprised of a message His Highness the Amir received from Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, and President of the European Council Donald Tusk, on a conference on Afghanistan slated for next October in Brussels, minister Sheikh Salman added. The ministerial event will be hosted by the European Union (EU) and the Afghan government.

After that, the cabinet was informed about a message from UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon inviting His Highness the Amir to attend the comprehensive high-level Mid-term Review of the implementation of the Istanbul Program of Action (IPOA) for the Least Developed Countries, due in Antalya, Turkey, in May.



KUWAIT: Acting Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah chairs the cabinet's meeting yesterday. — KUNA

The ministers were given notice of a message from President of the Islamic Development Bank (IBD) Dr Ahmad Mohamed Ali, congratulating His Highness the Amir on the success of the fourth conference for Syrian donors held in London in February. Ali reiterated IBD's readiness to cooperate with the international community to muster more financial resources to fulfill the development needs of the Middle East countries.

Meanwhile, Acting Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-

Sabah briefed the cabinet on the outcome of the recent visit to Kuwait by Sudan's chief diplomat Ibrahim Ghandour, Sheikh Salman said. The talks focused on means of broadening bilateral ties in all fields, besides issues of common concern.

In the meantime, the cabinet decided to apply e-messaging in all government bodies as of January 1, 2017, replacing paper-messaging. Concluding the customary meeting, the ministers reviewed political developments on the Arab and international scenes. — KUNA



Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah tours a gallery held on the sidelines of the conference.

## AMIRI DIWAN MINISTER OPENS CONFERENCE ON LATE SHEIKH ABDULLAH AL-SALEM AL-SABAH

KUWAIT: A conference on the era of the late Amir Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah (1950-1965) was held at Kuwait University's Faculty of Arts yesterday under the auspices and in presence of Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. The National Anthem was played at the onset of the conference, followed by recitation of some verses from the Holy Quran.

Addressing the event, the Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs voiced much thanks and appreciation to the organizers of the conference which handles the political and social aspects of the late Amir Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah.

Elaborating on his relationship with the late Amir, the minister said he used to see Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem everyday as he always visited his family at Dasman suburb early morning. He said Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem was a great model for treating children and teens so kindly and moderately. Remembering the sad moment when the late Amir died, Sheikh Nasser said he hurried to have his last look at Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem before his death. Afterwards, Dean of the Faculty of Arts Dr Suad Abdulwahab said the late Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem, who ruled the country between 1950 and 1965 and passed away at 70, is considered the founder of modern Kuwait.

She said this conference should handle everything, not only political or social aspects, about the late Amir who really laid the foundations of the nation. Hailing him as a wise skipper, she said the late Amir efficiently managed to overcome all obstacles and problems the nation faced during his era thanks to his experience and farsightedness.

Meanwhile, Head of the Faculty's History Department Dr Abdulhadi Al-Ajmi said his section was so proud of holding this conference on the era of the late Amir Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, during which the country witnessed the creation of governmental and civil establishments, independence and constitution. He said the late Amir's era was actually the golden age of the State of Kuwait.

Dr Ajmi expressed much appreciation to the Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs for patronizing and attending this event, stressing Kuwait University's significant and influential role in promoting knowledge and culture in Kuwait by hosting such events. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah (center) attends the conference. — Amiri Diwan photos



Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah is seen during the tour.

## CONFERENCE FOR OVERHAULING EDUCATION KICKS OFF IN KUWAIT



KUWAIT: Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education Dr Bader Al-Essa (right) and Walid Al-Hasawi, Chairman of the Kuwait Teachers Society attend the conference. — KUNA

KUWAIT: The scheduled 42nd educational conference, themed "Our Educational Curricula and Development Requirements," got underway yesterday with speakers underscoring His Highness the Crown Prince's attention to this vital sector as well as the need to develop it to cope with modern-day scientific advancement.

Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education Dr Bader Al-Essa, in his statement at the opening session of the convention, organized by Kuwait Teachers Society (KTS), praised the event sponsor, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, for dedicating special concern for education and teachers.

Overhauling the education is a feature of civilization, said Dr Essa, also the Minister of Higher Education, affirming that his department is revising the teaching curriculums and seeking to limit methods based on conventional ways such as memorizing and dictating.

Walid Al-Hasawi, the society chairman, boasted of His Highness the Crown Prince's sponsorship of

this annual gathering, affirming the approach to examine issues in the sector seriously during the convention. He expressed hope that it would cap with recommendations to advance the education and encourage decision makers map out strategies to face challenges in the field.

Abdulrahim Al-Kandari, the conference's general registrar, said meanwhile that the conference logo was chosen with aim of harmonizing schemes with requirements for technological and scientific development. Other key speakers lauded His Highness the Heir Apparent as well as His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah for spearheading the approach for developing education. Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad was also lauded for earning the UN designation, the "Humanitarian Leader."

The State of Kuwait has repeatedly affirmed the approach to develop education and cope with latest innovations in technology and sciences. Digital methods and tools have been already incorporated in the curricula. — KUNA



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and top guests attend a National Operetta entitled 'We are all Kuwaitis' at Bayan Palace yesterday. — Amiri Diwan photos

A child kisses His Highness the Amir's forehead during the event.

# AMIR PATRONIZES 'WE ARE ALL KUWAITIS' NATIONAL OPERETTA



**KUWAIT:** Under the patronage of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, a National Operetta entitled 'We are all Kuwaitis' was held yesterday morning at Bayan Palace.

In attendance during the operetta were His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem, senior sheikhs, Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Deputy Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah and other state officials. The operetta kicked off with the national anthem followed by verses from the holy Quran, to which students from various schools then proceeded to unveil an assortment of portraits depicting nationalistic themes. — KUNA



Scenes from the operetta.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah is greeted by children.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and top guests give a round of applause to the performers.



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KUWAIT: A group photo of participants at the 30th GCC airport security officials' meeting yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

## GCC COUNTRIES SEEK UNIFIED SECURITY LEGISLATIONS: OFFICIAL

### 30TH GCC AIRPORT SECURITY MEETING UNDERWAY

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

**KUWAIT:** The Interior Ministry's Acting Assistant Undersecretary for Border Security Major General Faisal Al-Senain stressed that the vision of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz about enhancing GCC states' joint efforts with the aim of boosting GCC security cooperation and capability to protect their citizens would be the main topic discussed to complete setting the unified security legislations to protect GCC societies from various threats.

Speaking during the opening of the 30th GCC airport security officials' meeting held in Kuwait from April 4 to 6, Senain added that the meeting was dedicated to reviewing all airport security plans and programs in collaboration with the Dubai Center for Civil Aviation in order to use a unified code of civil aviation threats that had been prepared by Kuwait.

Senain also stressed that the meeting would discuss various concerns related to airport and passenger security in GCC states and exchange

ing information about threats to civil aviation as well as international security. Mol's PR and security media manager Brig Adel Al-Hashash said that the goal of the meeting was to coordinate and cooperate with other GCC states on airport security in view of regional security challenges that call for more cooperation and exchanging expertise and views.

#### Airport project

Minister of Public Works Ali Al-Omar said that the ministry had met with the State Audit Bureau and the Cabinet to settle disagreements about the new Kuwait International Airport project. Speaking during a tour hosted by MP Majed Al-Moussa around Sabah Al-Nasser to examine its problems, Omar stressed that the right decision would be reached for Kuwait's greater good. Commenting on the tour, Omar said that he had seen many problems such as not having a main park in the area because of budgetary problems and some road quality issues. He added that MPW was keen on increasing the maintenance sector's budget to help solve sim-

ilar problems in various areas.

Commenting on the area's need for more schools of various stages, Omar said that decisions to build new schools were up to the education ministry, but he promised to report the matter to Minister Badr Al-Essa. He also stressed that some of the work done by the Ministry of Public Works had to be coordinated with other bodies such as the Ministry of Interior when it comes to roads. Omar stressed that Farwaniya governorate suffered from many problems for which he apologized, but stressed that the ministry was working on solving them.

#### Mental assessment

The public prosecution yesterday decided to detain citizen S. D., also known as 'Abu Refaa' for ten days at the central prison pending investigation in state security's accusations of him of slandering His Highness the Amir. The public prosecution also agreed to have the suspect undergo mental assessment tests to determine his mental state, as requested by the defendant's lawyers.

In my view

## DREAMS REMAIN DREAMS

By Talal Al-Ghannam



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**G**ood morning my dear and honorable brothers and sisters, and I wish all a happy and blessed week. In this article, I would like to talk about so many dreams which we all for sure wish they would become a reality one day before Judgment Day. I for sure believe that all of you will agree with me about these issues because we know that if implemented, life would be more easier and comfortable for citizens and expatriates.

The first dream which we all wish to become real is the opening of clinics 24/7 with all services offered. I do not see why the majority of public clinics close at 12 pm and also closed on weekends where patients would have to go to the area hospital for treatment. I am sure that so many doctors, nurses and staff would like to work extra hours if the incentives are luring. In this case, everybody is satisfied; the staff and the patients being able to be treated soon with all the services rendered around the clock. Kuwait has the facilities, human resources and abundant wealth, so what stops them from doing that?

The second dream which we all wish to become a reality is to see justice being imposed on everyone. I am talking now about many runaways who fled from the torture and mistreatment of their employees and get caught by police at checkpoints. So many of those helpless people are being mistreated and given assurances from their sponsors to settle their legal status, and when they are caught, the sponsors claim filing an absconding case or try to escape the situation rather than standing with that helpless worker. Many of the runaways are also promised by their sponsors to find them suitable jobs and when they are in dire need, the sponsors fail to fulfill their obligations and leave those poor workers to be imprisoned and then deported. As a result, this would shut-

ter their dreams for a decent living to feed their loved ones, kids, fathers and mothers who are eagerly awaiting a single dinar to be sent home to them and for their sons and daughters who are expecting graduation soon.

The bad sponsors must be held accountable for their wrongdoings and have some mercy in their hearts towards those helpless people, who came here to serve them and care for their kids and most importantly, for the welfare of this blessed country. They must understand that Allah Almighty sees and hears every single whisper and one day, they will stand before Him on Judgment Day and would be asked about those workers.

The third dream is to see the traffic department imposing strict measures and regulations against the maniac drivers who constantly bother neighborhoods at dawn with their monster-like exhausts and those who turn the intersections into a skidding ring during weddings. Those irresponsible youngsters believe that the roads are personal properties of their fathers and they would threaten anyone who approaches them till they are done with this mad and maniac behavior. The police car in many occasion can be seen watching without being able to do anything because those lunatic 'kids' can be aggressive towards policemen and start pelting their vehicles with stones and glass bottles similar to the case that took place recently in Jaber Al Ali area. In the US, such behaviors are considered a serious crime punishable by law and the policemen there do not know what wasta (connection) is or any mediation by a lawmaker, as they are very committed and dedicated to their work when they subdue any criminal using their real muscles: The law. Let us hope these dream would become reality in the near future insha Allah.

Till the next article insha Allah

## SEVEN ARRESTED ON PROSTITUTION CHARGES

By Hanan Al-Saadoun



KUWAIT: This handout photo shows seven women arrested yesterday on prostitution charges.

**KUWAIT:** Residency detectives arrested a woman for engaging in vice activities. Detectives received information about a Filipina woman who struck suspicious deals through social media, providing her customers with prostitutes. Six more women, Filipinas and Nepalese, were arrested in Hawally. In total, six of the women had article 20 visas issued to domestic helpers, and one had an article 18 visa issued to private sector workers. The women were sent to concerned authorities, and their sponsors were summoned for questioning.

#### No injuries in fire

Fire broke out in the ground floor kitchen of a Mangaf building. Mangaf, Fahahel, Mubarak Al-Kabeer and back-up fire stations responded to an emergency call reporting the fire. The blaze had started in a makeshift room used to store foodstuff. The fire was controlled before it could spread any further. No injuries were reported.

## KUWAIT KEEN ON SETTING UP UNIFIED ARAB CUSTOMS UNION: OFFICIAL

**CAIRO:** The State of Kuwait is keen on establishing a unified Arab customs union, a Kuwaiti official said yesterday. Walid Al-Nasser, director of Kuwait's Northern Customs, made the remark on the sidelines of the 33rd meeting of Arab Commission for the Unified Customs Tariff at the Arab League's headquarters, in the participation of some representatives from Arab customs bodies. The commission discusses, over three days, observations of Arab countries on the Unified Customs Tariff and means of updating its schedule, he added. A proposal submitted by Egypt on setting a mechanism of negotiation concerning unifying customs duties is discussed by the commission, he noted. He stressed the importance of benefiting from the unified Gulf customs union in setting up a unified Arab one. —KUNA

## IRAQI PARLIAMENT APPROVES COOPERATION AGREEMENT WITH KUWAIT

**BAGHDAD:** The Iraqi Council of Representatives approved, on Monday, an agreement law of economic and technical cooperation between Iraq and Kuwait. The agreement law, signed in June, 2013, aims at boosting cooperation in economic and technical fields, a statement by the Council said. Iraq and Kuwait had signed six agreements on

environment, diplomacy, economy, technical and higher education during a visit made by His Highness the Kuwaiti Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah in June, 2013. According to Iraqi constitution, all agreements signed with other countries are not considered valid unless they get the parliament's approval. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Sudanese Foreign Minister Ibrahim Ghandour (left) speaks during the press conference. —KUNA

## SUDANESE FM STRESSES DEEP TIES WITH KUWAIT

**KUWAIT:** Visiting Sudanese Foreign Minister Ibrahim Ghandour said yesterday that his country has deep relations with the State of Kuwait, pointing to mutual cooperation over regional and international issues.

Speaking at a press conference, Ghandour said his visit to Kuwait came at the invitation of First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah for bilateral talks over the current regional and international developments.

He said he had conveyed a letter to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah from Sudanese President Omar Al-Bashir on cooperative relations between both Arab nations, lauding the outcomes of his talks with Kuwaiti officials.

He added that his visit to Kuwait reflected bilateral cooperation in regional and international forums, noting that he had reviewed with officials of the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) existing projects in Sudan.

Ghandour went on to say that he and Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry Chairman Ali Al-Ghanim agreed to fixed and specific ventures to be provided by Sudan for Kuwaiti businessmen and investors.

Kuwait and other Gulf countries have major investments in Sudan, mainly in the field of sugar, hotels and communications, he said, adding that his country exports fodder to the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.

#### National unity

On the local situation, the foreign

minister reiterated that his country's policy is based on maintaining national unity, security and stability and promoting economic, social and cultural development. Warning of surrounding security threats posed by several terrorist groups like Boko Haram, Al-Qaeda and the so-called Islamic State (IS), the Sudanese minister said his country is keen to resolve any problems with neighboring countries through "direct dialogue".

On Yemen, he said his country is part of the coalition that seeks to restore legitimacy in this Arab country, hailing Kuwait's efforts to support Yemen's national unity and to put an end to the ongoing conflict there.

Reaffirming Sudan's policy of non-interference in others' internal affairs, the minister said his country's security organs are part of an African and Arab network aiming to exchange intelligence in the fight against terrorism.

Reassuring about the current situation in Darfur, the Sudanese foreign minister said there is no rebellion in the region anymore, hailing the recent visit by the Sudanese president to Darfur as a clear-cut message of stability. Ghandour highly commended Sudan's relations with China, mainly in the field of oil investment.

On Ethiopia's River Nile dam, the minister said his country is concerned over the dam, noting that Ethiopia has the right to set up development projects over its territories, but they should not negatively affect other Nile partners. The Sudanese foreign minister arrived in Kuwait earlier on Sunday for an official visit to the country. — KUNA



## KRCS OFFERS HUMANITARIAN AID TO 730 DISPLACED FAMILIES NEAR IRBIL

**IRBIL:** The Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) has provided humanitarian and relief aid to up to 730 internally displaced families at a refugee camp near Irbil. Kuwaiti General Consul in Irbil Dr Omar Al-Kandari said the fresh help is part of a relief campaign carried out by the KRCS in all parts of Iraq's Kurdistan region.

He said the Kuwaiti consulate in Irbil coordinated with the KRCS and Irbil Region's government for presence in the refugee camp which is home to displaced families which have fled ongoing military operations in Nino Governorate. Yesterday's aid campaign involves necessary food supplies that are enough for over 4,000 displaced persons for

one month, the Kuwaiti diplomat pointed out.

The KRCS's humanitarian initiative came at the behest of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Kandari added. Kurdistan Region hosts as many as 1.8 million Syrian refugees and displaced persons who have fled ongoing violence in Nino, Saladin, Kirkuk, Diyala and Al-Anbar. —KUNA

Special Report

# FOSTERING RENEWABLE ENERGY DEPLOYMENT IN KUWAIT

By Nada Bedir

This year, Kuwait is hosting the 6th edition of the Middle East and North Africa Renewable Energy Conference (MENAREC) from 4th-6th of April under the patronage of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. The MENAREC conference is an opportunity for high level stakeholders from the region to gather and discuss the challenges they are facing and the potential solutions to achieve a smooth and timely transition towards sustainable energy.

One of the organizers and supporters of the Conference is the Regional Center for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (RCREEE); an inter-governmental organization based in Cairo, Egypt, that aims to enable and increase the adoption of renewable energy and energy efficiency practices in the Arab Region. I had the privilege to work at RCREEE through my participation last year in the Arab Program for Sustainable Energy Youth. The program aims to equip the youth of the region with the technical and operations skills to pursue careers in sustainable energy. Based on my experience at RCREEE, I would like to shed the light on why energy transition in Kuwait is vital.

**Abundant resources**

Kuwait is endowed with abundant natural resources, mainly oil products. And despite being ranked as the sixth

country worldwide with proven oil reserves, domestic energy demand is growing at a rate of 6-8 percent each year which puts pressure on country's resources in the long run. In 2009, Kuwait became a net importer of natural gas to help meet its energy demand. According to Eversheds, an international law firm, Kuwait consumes 552 billion cubic feet per year of natural gas of which about 12 per-



cent is imported. Also the country needs to increase its installed capacity to 24.5 GW by 2020 to meet the increasing peak demand load. In 2014, the peak demand was very close to the current installed capacity of around 12 GW. This rising demand is due to several factors which

include population increase, extreme weather conditions, energy-intensive water desalination plants, and last but not least, government subsidies of energy which encourage inefficient consumption. Kuwait is also blessed with bright sun and wind making it an attractive destination for investment in renewable energy.

Promoting and developing renewable energy projects in Kuwait can

opportunity to free up more oil for exports rather than domestic consumption which will increase the country's revenues. Secondly, renewable energy contributes positively to the economy through job creation, attracting investment, and private sector growth. Thirdly, greater use of clean energy resources will allow Kuwait to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions and participate in the global fight against climate change.

**Ambitious vision**

Kuwait has adopted an ambitious vision to generate 15 percent of its total energy needs by 2030. To achieve this target, the government has allocated 100 KM2 in the west of the country to develop large-scale renewable energy projects with a total capacity of 2 GW, Al-Shagaya Renewable Energy Park. This grand project is managed by Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR) and the Ministry of Electricity and Water (MEW). The park shall include a mix of PV, CSP, and wind technologies. The first phase of the park is currently under construction and expected to be completed by the end of 2017. In a joint venture, Spain's TSK Electronica y Electricidad with Kuwait's Kharafi National shall design, construct and operate a 50 MW solar thermal plant in Shagaya and a 10 MW solar PV plant. In addition, Elecnor Spanish Company entered into a joint venture with Al-Ghanim International to design, con-

struct, and operate a 10 MW wind farm.

In addition, to the energy park, there are several projects that are in the pipeline such as the Abdaliya Integrated Solar Combined Cycle Project which will have a total capacity of 280 MW. The project is expected to be completed by 2017. Also, there is the 10 MW Umm Gudair PV plant that is being developed by Spain's Gestamp Solar after signing a contract with Kuwait Oil Company (KOC). The plant has a capacity of 10 MW and it is estimated to be completed by the end of 2015. When it comes to wind energy, there is the Salmi Mini-wind farm that was completed in 2013 with a capacity of 2.4 MW. The farm serves telecommunication towers located in remote areas and the fire brigade station in Salmi.

With all these projects in the pipeline, the focus now should be on implementing projects in a timely manner and also on developing new projects to be able to reach the target of 15 percent in 2030. In addition, while setting a vision/target reflects the government commitment towards renewable energy, the next step would be to develop a comprehensive renewable energy framework with supporting policies and regulations to attract more investments. Currently, Independent Power Producers (IPP) by-laws and Feed-in-Tariff schemes are being studied by the Ministry of Electricity and Water.

## KUWAIT TO PRODUCE SOLAR POWER ON HOUSE ROOFS

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait is planning to boost production of electricity on house roofs through model pilot projects in 150 homes, to be increased to 1,500 in a later stage after 2018, Director General of the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS) Adnan Shihab-Eldin has said. According to the plans, the cost of a kilowatt of electricity produced through solar energy is 20 fils (65 cent), Shihab-Eldin told reporters as part of the final arrangements for the 6th Middle East and North Africa Renewable Energy Conference (MENAREC-6) that opened yesterday evening.

It is very competitive, compared to the cost of a kilowatt of traditional electricity produced

through fossil fuels, 30 to 40 fils. Kuwait, in cooperation with Germany, established the first solar power plant in the region in 1984, with one megawatt capacity, he said.

Shihab-Eldin pointed to the various renewable energy projects launched by the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR) such as the 70 MW Shagaya complex. He suggested that the government directs part of power subsidy to renewable energy, to raise its share of Kuwait's production of electricity to 15 percent, a target set for 2030.

**Remarkable change**

Meanwhile, Director-General International

Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) Adnan Amin said that the world has witnessed a remarkable change in the alternative power systems over the past three years. He stressed the necessity of paying more attention to alternative energy amid the various crises the world is suffering.

According to Amin, solar power is the cheapest among sources of renewable energy, especially in the Middle East region, in addition to wind power in Egypt and Morocco. Amin said that the world's renewable energy has grown by 17 percent over the past period, and "we believe it will double to 34 percent by 2030." — KUNA



**KUWAIT:** Director General of the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS) Adnan Shihab-Eldin (center) attends a preparatory meeting for the 6th Middle East and North Africa Renewable Energy Conference. —Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

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Crime

Report

## TWO DIED OF EXHAUST FUMES

**KUWAIT:** The medical examiner's report on the death of an expat woman and her compatriot suggested that the cause of death was asphyxiation from exhaust from the car the pair were in. The two were found dead inside a car in an uninhabited area of old Khaitan. The woman and man were inside the running car, she was 35 and he was 29 years old.

### First drowning victim

The first drowning in the summer of 2016 was recorded at Meidan Hawally police station, when a call about an expat drowning in a swimming pool on the sea front. Police and paramedics rushed to the scene, and he was given first aid, but died while on the way to hospital.

### ATV death

A 22-year-old citizen was killed when an all-terrain vehicle (ATV) he was driving flipped over while heading to Kuwait City on Jahra road. The body was recovered by the coroner.

### Expat reports rape

A British woman, born in 1971, lodged a complaint against an unknown person who raped her. A security source said the expat went to Salmiya police station crying in a hysterical condition, and told officers that an unknown person raped her before escaping. She said she does not know the man.

### Security campaigns roundup

General security led by Major General Ibrahim Al-Tarrah continued its activities in Kuwait's six governorates, as a citizen was arrested in the capital, wanted for debts of more than KD 15,000. Four stolen cars were found. In Hawally, two Indians were caught with 20 locally-made liquor bottles, also two others were arrested with 19 bottles, and a third with six bottles. In Ahmadi a citizen wanted to serve a jail sentence was arrested, two cars reported stolen were located, a person with drugs on him was arrested. In Farwaniya, a grocery store that was selling liquor to adolescents was raided and 111 locally made liquor bottles were found on its premises. The raid followed information about the store. In Mubarak Al-Kabeer seven absconders and violators were arrested by back up patrols.

### Officers beaten

A military officer was beaten in Adan by a man he knows, and had personal disputes with him. Policemen are investigating. Separately, two citizens, 22 and 21, were detained in Maidan Hawally at the orders of the investigator on drunkenness and insulting a public employee while on duty. A security source said a Lieutenant noticed a car being driven erratically, so he asked the driver to stop but the driver refused and only stopped later after driving for three kilometers. The driver then got out of the car along with his friend and beat the officer.

### Attempted stabbing

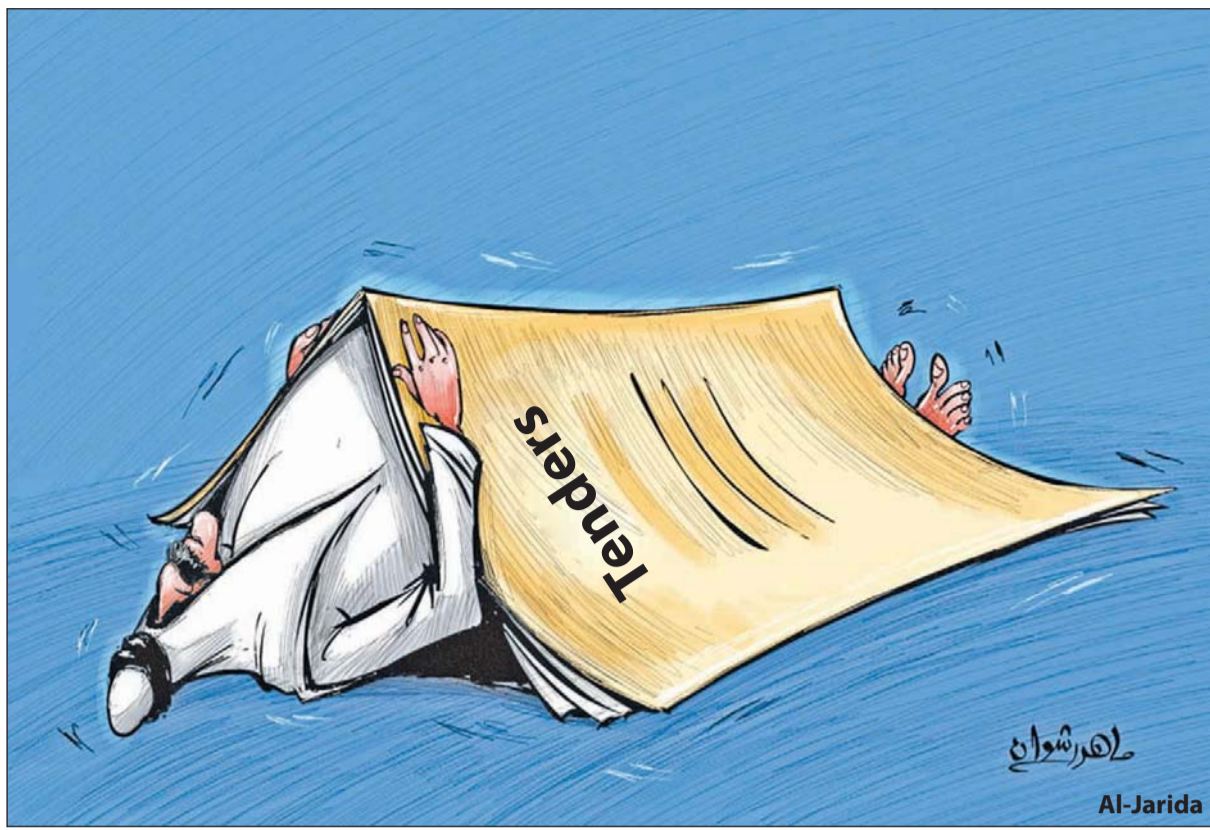
Investigator of Maidan Hawally police station charged a citizen of drunkenness and threatening to kill with a sharp object, and insulting a public employee. A security source said police operations received a call from a woman in a building and when police arrived, they found a man attempting to break into the flat with a knife, with the woman and her son inside. The man attempted to stab the officer while dealing with him and submitted a medical report to that effect. —Al-Rai

## NO MORE GENERAL CONTRACTING COMPANIES

**KUWAIT:** Official sources said Minister of Commerce and Industry Yousuf Al-Ali issued a decision to disband the commercial activities categorization committee and rely on international categorization, which means that general contracting and trading companies, the most widespread in the country, will disappear. The committee is chaired by the ministry undersecretary, assistant secretary for companies and commercial licensing affairs, individual companies and commercial licensing, shareholding companies, commercial supervision, legal studies and IT systems directors. The committee is specialized in studying and describing activities and getting the necessary conditions to practice and follow the licensed activities that are up for renewal, and adding, canceling, amending or rejecting any application for commercial activities be it categorized or not with an explanation. Current license owners must adapt their situation according to the international code within four years, and this applies to general trading and contracting companies. —Al-Rai

## IGNORING TARIFF INCREASE WASTED MILLIONS: REPORT

**KUWAIT:** Successive governments' ignorance of power tariff increase according to the group system caused the loss of billions of dinars, especially since they were within the development plan since 2002, but the lack of implementation or discussing them wasted the opportunity of adjusting the power prices' structure. An informed source said a report prepared by the Supreme Planning Council and the Central Statistics Department more than 14 years ago considered the government responsible for not hurrying crucial decisions to prevent any expected squandering of funds. According to the report, financial calculations showed that possible savings in the first year of implementation in 2003 were nearly KD 65 million, when power subsidies used to be KD 221 million, which means a saving percentage of 38 percent. The source said by the group system, if it was implemented since 2003, government subsidies would have dropped this year to only KD 800 million instead of the KD 2.626 billion paid to subsidize power and water. —Al-Qabas



Al-Anbaa

## WHAT DO WE WANT?

By Dr Nermin Al-Houti

Each one of us, when we were young, had a goal and wish we aimed to fulfill in the future. When grown up, and that child became a man that felt his reality and surroundings, those wishes changed and goals scattered and the majority became not knowing what they want. Yesterday, when we were children, our dreams were rosy and our goals and wishes surrounding us had much optimism and hope, because there were those who protected us from reality that we did not know much about in our childhood. When we grew up and became part of reality, dreams and wishes changed, as the present and future carried the question - what do we want? And the majority does not know the answer! That is the irony - you ask but do not have the answer. Maybe the lack of knowledge and delinquency are the result of the reality that made the human being not know his goal, as the human surrounding started to have much environmental, intellectual, political and other pollutions and

impurities that prevents the individual to not take a breath, so he remains having difficulty breathing all the time. Then it will become difficult for the brain to decide his path because his body and brain and heart breathe much of the negatives that scattered the self and goals, and here the inevitable result will always be in his present and future. Our question: What do we want? When the reality's pollution, oxidation of brains, and tough hearts became what the majority wants in its wishes and goals, things that are polluted from their life, as we once find those who dig for the other to claim his job, and we find those whose goal is to conspire against others so he becomes the best in his surroundings - so from here and there we find out in the air that is full of negatives that the majority became just poisonous material for the society which increases the pollution of reality. All are asking, and do not know the answer: What do we want? —Translated by Kuwait Times

## SAWABER COMPLEX TO BE DEMOLISHED SOON NORTHWEST SULAIBIKHAT TENANTS TO SUE HOUSING AUTHORITY

**KUWAIT:** Director of the Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW) Bader Al-Weqayyan announced that the Cabinet has made a decision authorizing the demolition of the Sawaber Complex soon and annexing the site to the commercial zone in downtown Kuwait City. In a related development, well-informed sources said that following reports about the sufferings of citizens who were given government-provided houses in Northwest Sulaibikhat and complaints about the quality of the material used in constructing the houses, a local law firm offered to represent those tenants in suing the housing authority. Most former tenants in Sawaber were handed over replacement houses in Northwest Sulaibikhat.

The sources added that the law firm asked the concerned citizens to make powers of attorney to sue the housing authority on grounds that it violated the contracts signed with the companies that executed the project by allowing the use of low-quality construction materials. Further, the sources added that a team of the concerned citizens that volunteered to collect the powers of attorney explained that the law firm would file the case free of charge and would only take a percentage of the sums clients would be compensated with if they win the case.

Meanwhile, the deputy resident engineer of the Northwest Sulaibikhat project Jassim Ashkanani said that the housing authority had formed a committee that examined and approved the material used in constructions at the project site. He also



stressed that the authority's engineers would have never passed the project if it did not match specifications. Ashkanani

stressed that by checking many of the complaints citizens filed, they turned out to be insignificant and do not indicate any viola-

tion of standard specifications stated in the contracts signed with the executing companies. —Al-Rai, Al-Anbaa

## FISH PRICES SOAR

**KUWAIT:** There is a shortage in fish in Kuwait; a country where seafood is most popular, or consumers are increasingly avoiding eating seafood because the price is too high, according to an official. Deputy Chairman of the Board of Kuwait Fishermen Union Jalal Al-Shemmari described the fish market as very "hot" in an indication to high prices, and denied that the decision to ban fishing by cages (qar-qoor) is the reason.

Shemmari said the decision was 'random' and made without a study, nor was the opinion of people in the field taken before it was issued. He said agriculture and environment authorities enjoy our support in the field of protecting the environment, but what did they present in solutions to provide food security from fish and guarantee moderate prices for the consumer?

Shemmari said the reduction in the percentage of local fish in the market to 45 percent only is due to several reasons including that the area in which nearly 1,000 boats are



operating is not enough for them, in addition to banning fishing off some islands, military and oil areas, and limiting fishing to an area that is only three miles offshore.

He said PAAAFR implements the laws on licensed fishermen and

ignores more than 26,500 boats, 20 percent of which use illegal equipment for fishing. He demanded that meetings should be held to find solutions and revitalize the market by providing fish at reasonable prices. —Al-Rai

## CITIZENSHIP WITHDRAWAL 'NOT SOVEREIGN ACT'

**KUWAIT:** The cassation prosecution said the interior ministry's decision to revoke the nationality of former MP Abdullah Al-Barghash and his family falls under the administrative judiciary and it is not considered a sovereign act. It rejected the appeals court's decision that cancelled the citizenships' restoration. The prosecution said in its report that it sent to the administrative cassation court which received the contestation of the former MP and his family against revoking their nationality, that the constitution bans immunity of decisions from the judiciary's supervision and guarantees the right of litigation in front of a judge. —Al-Jarida

## CENTRAL BANK ARRANGES TO BORROW KD 2 BILLION FROM LOCAL BANKS

**KUWAIT:** The general debt managing committee formed by the finance ministry gave the Central Bank the green light to arrange for borrowing KD 2 billion for the government, sources said, adding that the banks sought to contribute to this loan are local banks only. This loan will be in dinars and dollars, and its value will be according to market ability and liquidity available at banks, said the sources, adding that the finance ministry does not want to exhaust the banks by applying pressure on the liquidity they have, and this will affect the private sector in turn. The expected picture will be clearer in the coming weeks after the meeting of the Central Bank with local banks and finding their ability to arrange for and collect a loan of this size. They said it is expected the finance ministry will announce that the budget deficit for 2015/2016 fiscal year that ended at the end of March is about KD 6 billion. —Al-Jarida



**Erdogan rejects 'lessons in democracy' from West**

## NORTH KOREANS FLEE TO END UP ADRIFT IN THE SOUTH



**QARYATAIN, Syria:** Syrian soldiers celebrate their victory against the Islamic State group yesterday. — AP

## SYRIA QAEDA SPOKESMAN KILLED

### ARMY ADVANCES AGAINST ISLAMIC STATE POSITIONS

**BEIRUT:** Air strikes have killed several Al-Qaeda-linked Al-Nusra Front members including its spokesman and regime forces have retaken a strategic town from the Islamic State group in the latest setbacks for jihadists in Syria. Abu Firas Al-Suri, whose real name was Radwan Nammous, fought against Soviet forces in Afghanistan where he met Al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden and the founding father of global jihad, Abdullah Azzam, before returning to Syria in 2011.

Suri was meeting with other leading Islamist fighters in an Al-Nusra stronghold in Kafar Jales in northwestern Syria when the raids struck on Sunday. He "was an old time Al-Qaeda member ... He was brought in from Yemen as an ideological counterweight" for rival jihadist group IS, said Pieter Van Ostaeyen, a historian and monitor of jihadist movements. "His death indeed is a blow for Al-Nusra. However, that will not change a lot on the operational level," he added.

Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi, a research fellow at the Middle East Forum, a US think-tank, was of the same opinion. Suri "was a very senior member of Al-Nusra, but organizations like Al-Nusra aren't debilitated because they lose a single senior leader", he said. "Their organizational structures are well prepared for targeted assassinations, which are usual business for them."

According to the Syrian Observatory for

Human Rights, Suri, his son and at least 20 jihadists of Al-Nusra and Jund al-Aqsa and other fighters from Uzbekistan were killed in strikes on positions in Idlib province. Seven were high-ranking jihadists, the Britain-based Observatory said, adding that the Syrian air force had likely carried out the strikes.

#### Warning to Al-Nusra?

A temporary ceasefire between government forces and rebels has largely held since Feb 27, but it does not cover Al-Nusra and IS. The break has, in fact, allowed Russia and the US-led coalition that has been bombing IS in Syria to concentrate on their fight against the jihadists. Al-Nusra has generally kept a low profile since the truce brokered by the United States and Russia came into force. But on Friday, the Al-Qaeda affiliate and allied rebel groups pushed regime loyalists out of Al-Eis, a strategic town in the northern province of Aleppo, killing 12 members of the Lebanese Shiite Hezbollah movement.

"It was Al-Nusra's biggest operation since the ceasefire began," Observatory chief Rami Abdel Rahman said. Suri's killing may even be a warning by the regime to Al-Nusra against staging any more offensives in the future, Abdel Rahman added. Tamimi disagreed. "One should not over-interpret the timing," he said, adding that assassinations of

members of secretive organizations are usually carried out "when a window of opportunity opens". IS has also lost a string of high-ranking members in recent weeks, mainly to strikes by the US-led coalition that launched an aerial campaign against the jihadists in Iraq and Syria in 2014. Last Wednesday, a drone strike near IS's de facto capital Raqqa killed Tunisian commander Abu al-Hajja, according to the Observatory. Fifteen IS commanders accused of revealing his position have since been executed by the jihadists, and the fate of another 20 men accused of collaborating with the US-led coalition remains unknown. "This is the highest number of executions of security officials by IS," said Abdel Rahman, whose Britain-based group has a wide network of contacts on the ground across Syria.

#### Recapture of Al-Qaryatayn

Also on Sunday, the army seized the town of Al-Qaryatayn, one of the last IS strongholds in central Syria, according to state television. IS jihadists withdrew from the town a week after the Russian-backed army and allied militia scored a major victory in the ancient city of Palmyra, which is also located in the vast province of Homs. The recapture of Al-Qaryatayn allows the army to secure its grip over Palmyra, where jihadists destroyed ancient temples during their 10-month rule and executed 280 people. —AFP

## ICELAND PREMIER IN HOT SEAT

**REYKJAVIK:** Iceland's prime minister found himself in the hot seat yesterday after the leaked "Panama Papers" revealed he and his wife used an offshore firm to allegedly hide million-dollar investments, sparking calls for his resignation. Financial records published by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists showed that Sigmundur David Gunnlaugsson, 41, and his wife Anna Sigurlaug Palsdottir bought a company in the British Virgin Islands in 2007. He sold her his 50-percent share for a symbolic sum of one dollar at the end of 2009.

But when he was elected to parliament for the first time in April 2009, as a member of the centre-right Progressive Party, he neglected to mention his stake in his declaration of shareholdings. The issue is particularly sensitive in Iceland, a country marked by the excesses of the 2000s when senior bankers used shell companies in tax havens to conceal their dealings in

risky financial products.

Iceland's big banks collapsed in Oct 2008 after borrowing beyond their means to fund ambitious investments abroad. Before their collapse their liabilities were worth more than ten times Iceland's total GDP. The crash led to an unprecedented financial crisis, a deep recession and a bailout from the International Monetary Fund. Gunnlaugsson insists that despite the financial turbulence he was never tempted to move his money offshore and that his wife paid all her taxes in Iceland.

"She has neither utilized tax havens nor can you say that her company is an offshore company," Gunnlaugsson said on his website, noting that, unlike offshore companies, his wife's company paid its taxes in Iceland. In an interview with Swedish public television SVT recorded last month, excerpts of which were aired in Iceland on Sunday, he became visibly upset

after being repeatedly asked about his wife's company, eventually storming out of the room. "It's like you are accusing me of something," he declared.

Gunnlaugsson, who started out as a journalist and whose father was also a lawmaker, entered parliament in 2009 after the economic meltdown. Elected prime minister in 2013, he was seen as a refreshing change from the political old guard, which was accused of having turned a blind eye to the banks' reckless investments. Gunnlaugsson's wife Palsdottir, also 41, is the daughter of a businessman who made a fortune from having Iceland's only Toyota dealership. On March 15, before the "Panama Papers" leaks, she took to Facebook to acknowledge the existence of Wintris, the company that she and Gunnlaugsson acquired in 2007 to manage her inheritance from her father. —AFP

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## FIRST WOMAN LEADER TAKES CHARGE IN INDIAN KASHMIR

**JAMMU, India:** Mehbooba Mufti was sworn in yesterday as Indian-administered Kashmir's first woman leader, taking over from her father nearly three months after he died in office. India's only Muslim-majority state had been ruled directly from New Delhi since the death in January of Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, who formed an uneasy alliance with the nationally ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) after a 2015 election.

His daughter, who heads the moderate People's Democratic Party (PDP) that he founded in 1999, had initially appeared reluctant to continue the unpopular coalition with the Hindu nationalist BJP. The PDP's main support base is among Muslims in the Kashmir Valley, the epicentre of a separatist insurgency that broke out in 1989,

although the party stops short of calling for independence for the Himalayan region. "Her key task will be to recoup the PDP's credibility among her constituents (Kashmiri Muslims), which is at an all time low, and manage support from Delhi vis-a-vis economic assistance," political historian Siddiq Wahid told AFP. Mehbooba Mufti reached an agreement at a meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi last month, although the terms of their deal have not been disclosed. Her swearing-in takes the number of female chief ministers in India to five, although she is the first woman to serve in the post in the deeply conservative state of



**Mehbooba Mufti**

Jammu and Kashmir. Modi did not attend the swearing-in ceremony in the state's winter capital, Jammu, but tweeted his congratulations. — AFP

## KUWAIT BEAUTIFUL & GREEN STUDENTS ART COMPETITION

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- Competition is open to ages from (6 - 8) (9 - 11) (12 - 14) and (15 - 17) and Special needs.
- The competition is open for all schools in Kuwait (Government and Private)
- The competition will start on **March 10th and will continue till April 14th 2016.**
- 10 winners from each category will receive valuable prizes.
- All participants will receive a certificate of appreciation.
- All schools participating in

- the competition will receive an appreciation plaque.
- Any school or individual interested to participate in this competition is welcome to visit the office of Kuwait Times and collect the drawing sheets.
- Drawing sheets will be given to schools FREE of charge.
- Only drawing sheets provided by the Kuwait Times will be allowed.
- You can use any kind of color pencils, paint brushes or crayons.

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WASHINGTON: A former Republican presidential candidate, answers questions about his opinions on the presidential candidates, during a news conference on Capitol Hill. —AP

## GOP CONGRESS' INCOMPLETE: STALLED BILLS, NO SC NOMINEE

WASHINGTON: Congress increasingly is being defined by what it's not doing this election year. The Senate returns this week with a strong majority of Republicans saying no to any consideration of President Barack Obama's nominee to the Supreme Court. No hearings, no vote and, for some lawmakers, not even a meeting with federal appeals court Judge Merrick Garland.

Republicans, led by Majority Leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, insist that the decision on filling the court vacancy rests with the next president after voters have their say in November's election. A bipartisan bill to aid Flint, Michigan, where the city's 100,000 residents are struggling with lead-contaminated water, is being blocked by Sen. Mike Lee, R-Utah. He says he wants to ensure that the money is paid for without adding to the deficit. The dispute over Flint has snagged a far-reaching measure on energy.

In the House, where lawmakers return from their break April 12, conservative opposition probably will make it impossible to pass a budget, in what would be a major embarrassment for Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Wis. A GOP proposal to aid debt-stricken Puerto Rico has drawn criticism from House Democrats and conservatives, raising doubts about Congress' ability to resolve the issue.

Neither the House nor Senate has done anything with Obama's request for \$1.9 billion in emergency funding to combat the Zika virus. Republican leaders on the House Appropriations Committee have been going back and forth with the White House budget office and agency officials over whether to reallocate money left over from the 2014 fight against Ebola. The latest Gallup Poll shows public approval of Congress at an abysmal 13 percent. Yet, through a half-dozen state primaries, no incumbent lawmaker has lost. A look at the issues in limbo in Congress:

### The fight over Garland

Garland plans to meet with 11 senators in the week ahead, including two Republicans. Democrats are maintaining election-year pressure on the GOP for blocking the usual Senate committee hearings and vote on a high-court nominee. Sens Susan Collins, R-Maine, and John Boozman, R-Ark., are set to sit down with Garland on Tuesday. Collins is one of just two Republicans out of 54 who are open to hearings and a vote on Garland; Boozman is up for re-election this year. Eager to keep the fight in the news, Democrats say there might be 50 more Garland meetings with senators in the coming weeks, and they plan repeated Senate floor speeches on the issue.

Over the Senate's two-week recess, both sides pushed their messages back home, but Democrats were particularly aggressive as senators held news conferences and wrote newspaper columns. Swing-state Republicans facing re-election were top targets, including Sens. Kelly Ayotte of New

Hampshire, Rob Portman of Ohio and Iowa's Chuck Grassley, the chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, responsible for holding hearings on judicial nominees.

Garland has met with just one Republican: Illinois Sen. Mark Kirk. He is embroiled in a difficult re-election fight and has said the Senate should provide "rational, adult, open-minded consideration" of Garland, an Illinois native. At least 15 GOP senators have said they are willing to meet Garland, though most oppose letting the confirmation process progress.

### Spending

It's been years since Congress approved each of the annual appropriations bills - the 12 measures that fund the budgets of agencies and departments. The new normal is an all-encompassing bill at the end of the year. Republicans leaders such as McConnell want to get the process back on track, and the Senate Appropriations Committee is expected to start with this work during the week of April 11.

It'll be a test for the Senate, and pitfalls await, including potential fights over immigration, environmental regulations, gun rights and display of the Confederate flag. In the House, GOP leaders are still trying to win approval of a broader budget plan that's usually a precursor to action on the spending bills. Chances are iffy at best. The way forward on the appropriations bills is unclear.

### Puerto Rico

House Republicans unveiled a plan to help financially-strapped Puerto Rico with its \$70 billion debt, but a draft bill by the chairman of the House Natural Resources Committee, GOP Rep. Rob Bishop of Utah, was rejected by Democrats, GOP conservatives and Puerto Rican officials.

The proposal would create a five-person board designed to audit the territory's government and create fiscal plans and budget measures - steps Republicans say are necessary for Puerto Rico to get its economy back on track. The board would have the authority to enact the plan if the territory's governor and legislature failed to do so.

The draft would not give Puerto Rico the broad bankruptcy authority it has asked for, but would allow the oversight board to facilitate court-supervised debt restructuring in some cases. The House Republican Study Committee, a group of around 170 conservatives, expressed concerns about those debt restructuring provisions, as did the conservative advocacy group Heritage Action for America. Democrats said the oversight board would be too controlling.

Puerto Rico's government has defaulted on \$37 million in interest on bonds issued by Puerto Rico's Infrastructure Financing Authority, as well as nearly \$60 million in Public Finance Corporation bonds. Gov Alejandro Garcia Padilla has warned there is no money for future payments. Bishop said he will continue to work on the bill to gain consensus.—AP

of the President of the United States of America."

President Barack Obama has nominated a number of Latinos to cabinet position during his time in office, two of whom are currently serving: Secretary of Labor Thomas Perez and Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Julian Castro.

Both Clinton and Sanders have already promised comprehensive immigration reform, appealing to Hispanic voters ahead of presidential nominating contests in minority-heavy states. Leading Republican hopefuls Donald Trump and US Senator Ted Cruz of Texas, meanwhile, have promised to tighten up the borders and deport undocumented immigrants.

The responses come as the Democratic contest for the party's presidential nomination is poised to roll into a slate of diverse states - including New York later this month and minority-heavy California in June. The NHLA will use the questionnaires to guide voter engagement ahead of the November election, and to hold the winner to promises made during the campaign, said Hector Sanchez, the chairman of the NHLA. "This is not just a piece of paper that we're going to put out there," Sanchez said. "If they want the Latino vote, they must engage with us." —Reuters

## CLINTON, SANDERS PROMISE TO INCLUDE LATINOS IN CABINET

NEW YORK: Democratic presidential hopefuls Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders vowed to nominate Latinos into key cabinet posts in their administrations if elected, according to their answers to a questionnaire organized by the nation's largest Latino coalition.

The 20-question survey was submitted by the National Hispanic Leadership Agenda to all US presidential candidates on Feb 25, but received responses only from the two Democratic contenders and none from the Republicans, according to the results reviewed by Reuters. Latinos and African-Americans have emerged as key voting blocs in the Democratic race for the White House nomination so far, and are likely to play a large role in the outcomes of big contests looming in New York and California.

"From special assistants to cabinet members, Latinos will play a key role in helping to shape my policy priorities and be effectively represented in our agencies," former US Secretary of State and Democratic front-runner Clinton wrote. US Senator from Vermont Sanders promised to make his administration "reflect the diverse make-up of the country... I can think of no place more vital for such diversity than in the cabinet and the Senior Executive Service

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# TRUMP BACK ON THE 'NEVER A DULL' MOMENT RALLY CIRCUIT

## 'RIGHT NOW I'M CATERING TO THE REPUBLICANS'

RACINE: Donald Trump wants voters to know his message to the disaffected isn't meant for Republicans alone. The party's presidential front-runner told supporters on Saturday that he's out to bring independents and Democrats behind his cause even though "right now I'm catering to the Republicans."

Contenders in both parties bid for an edge ahead of Wisconsin's primaries Tuesday, none more actively than Trump, who's had a rough week and faces a likely struggle against Texas Sen. Ted Cruz in the state. The Republican race is overshadowed by a persistent effort by Trump's rivals in the campaign and the party to force the nomination fight into the July convention - and by his equivocations on whether he will be loyal to the GOP or bolt for an independent candidacy if he feels mistreated.

In Racine, in the first of his three rallies Saturday, Trump said little to suggest his allegiance with the GOP is cast in stone. He offered the critique that the Republican Party had a "falling-asleep reputation" until his campaign caught fire and brought millions of new voters out to primaries and caucuses.

And he sharply challenged Cruz, who appears to have the advantage in the Wisconsin race. "There's such deception and lying," he said of his rival. The outcome in Wisconsin will help determine whether Trump can seize the Republican nomination without a fight at the convention.

### Bitter race

The Democratic race has grown increasingly bitter, too, though it's not matched the GOP contest for raw hostility. Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders were set to attend a Wisconsin Democratic Party dinner,

Their attention will quickly turn to an even more consequential contest, in New York on April 19, where the Democratic front-runner dearly hopes to avoid an upset in the state she served as senator.

Sanders urged rally-goers to come out in droves today. "Here is the political reality," he told a young and pumped-up crowd at the University of Wisconsin's Eau Claire campus. "If there is a large voter turnout - if work-

mary history."

Bundled up in winter jackets and gloves, Sanders supporters waited for hours to hear him. Sophomore Joseph Lehto said he probably will vote for an independent if Sanders doesn't get the nomination. "Hillary Clinton is a conservative disguised by mildly social policies" he said. "She is a more of warmonger than just about anyone."

Trump scheduled two afternoon



WISCONSIN: Republican presidential candidate, Donald Trump, reads The Snake poem during a rally at Nathan Hale High School. —AP

ing people, many of whom have given up on the political process, if young people come, perhaps for the first time - ... we will win on Tuesday."

"But, if there is a low voter turnout, we will probably lose. So, I am here to ask you all, not just to come out to vote, but to bring your friends, your aunts and your uncles - let us have the largest voter turnout in Wisconsin pri-

rallies Saturday and one in the evening, in Racine, Wausau and Eau Claire. In Janesville, Wisconsin earlier in the week, a man pepper-sprayed a 15-year-old girl as Trump opponents and supporters clashed outside his rally. About 1,000 people attended the rally while about as many protested outside. His first rally Saturday went off without disruption.

### Proving ground

Wisconsin has emerged as a proving ground for anti-Trump forces as the front-runner's campaign hit a rough patch. Trump defended his campaign manager after he was charged with battery against a reporter, backtracked from comments that women should be punished for having abortions, encountered a buzz saw of hostile interviews by conservative Wisconsin talk radio hosts and watched Cruz rise in some preference polls in the state.

In an interview Friday, to be broadcast on "Fox News Sunday," Trump left open the question of an independent candidacy when asked about it. "I want to run as a Republican," Trump said. But if he doesn't get the nomination? "I'm going to have to see how I was treated. Very simple."

Cruz has little chance to overtake Trump in the delegate hunt before the convention; Ohio Gov. John Kasich has none. Both hope to deny Trump a delegate majority in what's left of the primary season, forcing the nomination to be settled at a contested convention at which one of them might emerge.

Kasich proposed a novel approach to strengthening Social Security at a town-hall gathering with a few hundred people in Burlington, Wisconsin, on Saturday morning. "Set up a tent city" in Washington, he said, and have mass protests along the lines of the Occupy movement that staged long-lasting demonstrations in the capital, New York and other cities. "Occupy DC to fix Social Security," Kasich said. Heading into the weekend of campaigning, Cruz told a Milwaukee County GOP dinner that Trump as the Republican nominee would be "a train wreck," quipping: "That's actually not fair to train wrecks." —AP

## AUSTRIAN WATCHDOG INVESTIGATES TWO BANKS AFTER PANAMA PAPERS LEAK

**VIENNA:** Austria's financial markets regulator FMA is investigating whether lenders Raiffeisen Bank International and Hypo Landesbank Vorarlberg followed rules against money laundering after they were named in a massive international data leak. The leaked "Panama Papers" cover a period over almost

40 years, from 1977 until last December, and allegedly show that some companies domiciled in tax havens were being used for suspected money laundering, arms and drug deals and tax evasion.

Two Austrian media that were among the more than 100 news organizations that jointly

investigated the documents' contents reported a connection between Raiffeisen and a confectionery company owned by Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko. The bank had made a loan of \$115 million to sweets firm Roshen secured against the holdings of a company based in the British Virgin Islands,

Liquist Holdings Limited, broadcaster ORF and weekly newspaper Falter reported on Sunday. A spokesman for the FMA said yesterday that it was examining whether procedures such as checks on the nature of transactions and those involved in them were adhered to. If necessary, it can report cases to

the criminal authorities, he added.

Raiffeisen said in a statement it had complied with legal provisions on the prevention of money laundering but could not comment on specific cases because of banking secrecy rules. Hypo Landesbank Vorarlberg had no immediate comment. — Reuters



**WASHINGTON, DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA:** Matteo Renzi, Prime Minister of Italy, arrives for a working dinner at the White House on March 31, 2016. — AFP

## ITALY PM MATTEO RENZI TO VISIT IRAN NEXT WEEK

**ROME:** Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi will travel to Iran next week for a two-day trip that will make him the first major international figure to visit since the lifting of sanctions against Tehran. Renzi's office said in a statement yesterday that the centre-left leader would visit the Islamic Republic on April 12-13, without giving further details of his itinerary.

Italy has led the way amongst European countries in re-establishing economic ties to Iran following the lifting of international sanctions imposed over concerns the country was seeking to develop a nuclear weapons capacity. An accord to lift the sanctions was agreed last year and came into force in January.

Renzi's trip follows Iranian President Hassan Rouhani's visit to Italy and France at

the end of January—a trip which resulted in a string of major trade and investment deals being signed between Tehran and the two European countries.

Contracts worth an estimated 17 billion Euros (\$18 billion) were signed in Rome and Rouhani said he hoped that would represent only a start, as he pitched Iran as a safe base for investors looking to get into a regional market of 300 million consumers.

Iran has said it wants European help to modernize and expand its rail, road and air networks as well as seeking investment to boost its manufacturing base, notably in the automobile sector. Italy was Iran's largest European trade partner before the impact of sanctions caused exchanges between the two countries to collapse. — AFP

GREECE SHIPS FIRST MIGRANTS BACK TO TURKEY UNDER EU DEAL  
EXPULSIONS PASS OFF SMOOTHLY

**LESBOS/DIKILI:** Greece shipped over 200 migrants back to Turkey yesterday, the first wave of deportations under a hugely controversial deal aimed at easing Europe's worst postwar migration crisis.

Some 200 migrants—mainly from Pakistan and Bangladesh—sailed on three chartered Turkish ferries from the Greek islands of Lesbos and Chios back across the Aegean Sea, retracing the perilous journey they took on unseaworthy boats in their quest to reach Europe.

EU leaders hope the last-ditch deal with Ankara will discourage migrants from risking the crossing that has claimed 366 lives this year alone and break up the lucrative racket that smuggled about one million migrants into Europe last year.

The surge of migrants has sparked an existential crisis for the 28-nation EU bloc, as members flung up long-shut borders and barbed wire in a bid to push back migrants fleeing war and poverty in Syria, the Middle East, North Africa and the Indian sub-continent. And despite the controversy surrounding the deal, it appears to be reducing the flow. Turkey's Interior Minister Ekan Ala said at the weekend that the numbers crossing had already fallen substantially in the last 10 days to just 300 people a day. But some decided to chance it despite the risk of being sent back, and the Turkish coastguard yesterday blocked a boatload of about 60 mostly Afghan migrants, an AFP correspondent said.

## 'Stop the dirty deal'

The first wave of expulsions passed off smoothly under a visible police presence, as two boats left Lesbos carrying 136 migrants and one from the island of Chios carrying 66, said Yorgos Kyritsis, the Greek government's migration spokesman.

In the boats the grim-faced deportees sat in rows accompanied by security guards from the EU's Frontex border agency, according to images on Turkish state media who were allowed on board the vessels. They arrived at the Turkish



**SCHISTO:** A migrant child looks out behind a wire fence of a refugee camp on Monday. — AFP

Aegean resort of Dikili to a heavy security presence on the harbor side and media kept at a distance by metal barriers, according to AFP reporters at the scene. A police helicopter buzzed overhead as officials guided the migrants to tents pitched along the harbor for registration and health checks.

Turkish state media reported that migrants from Sri Lanka, Lebanon, Iran, Egypt, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Afghanistan were among the first wave. Only two were from Syria and they had requested to return for personal reasons, Kyritsis said.

Some activists have branded the deal inhumane and a few dozen demonstrated gathered on Chios to protest against the deportations, chanting "Freedom," according to an AFP pho-

tographer. "Stop the dirty deal," "stop deportations" and "wake up Europe" were among the banners brandished in Lesbos against the disputed deal. One German protester, Henrike, said: "I feel sorry for them. I have no idea what will happen to them. It's frustrating and it's sad."

Turkish EU Affairs Minister Volkan Bozkir told HaberTurk television that the non-Syrian migrants would be sent to Kırklareli on the Bulgarian border for checks ahead of deportation to their own countries.

"People who have migrated for purely economic reasons are to be sent back according to the rules," he said. "We will apply to the countries of the illegal migrants. They can be our guests for a while and then bit by bit we will send them back." — AFP

## GERMANWINGS VICTIMS' KIN ANGERED BY TRIBUTE TO SUICIDAL CO-PILOT

**BERLIN:** Families of the victims of last year's Germanwings crash deliberately caused by a suicidal co-pilot expressed outrage yesterday after his parents placed a heartfelt newspaper announcement in his memory.

The parents of Andreas Lubitz, who brought down the A320 flight in the French Alps with 149 other people on board in March 2015, ran the announcement in a local paper thanking friends and neighbors for their support over the loss of their son. Entitled simply "Andreas" and featuring a smiling photograph of the co-pilot, the brief text ends with a message to their son in bold letters: "For you: We miss you very much but you are and will remain in our hearts". They speak of a year "filled with horror and fear" but do not explicitly mention the 149 other people killed in the crash.

Juergen Fischenich, whose son was on board the doomed plane, told the Bild daily that he could understand the Lubitz family's lasting grief. "But to say thank you in public and not mention the other 149

people this person murdered—I cannot express how ignorant and disrespectful that is," he said.

The parents of 24-year-old victim Sebastian S. released an angry statement about the announcement via their lawyer and quoted by Bild. "We can only visit our murdered son at his grave. In the Lubitz family's expression of gratitude they describe their son as a cherished person," they wrote. "One couldn't express our rage in words." Investigators found that Lubitz, 27, had a history of depression and suicidal tendencies and the case has raised questions about medical checks faced by pilots as well as doctor-patient confidentiality.

Lubitz was allowed to continue flying despite having been seen by doctors dozens of times in the years preceding the crash. Several victims' relatives have banded together with plans to take the airline's parent company Lufthansa to court in the United States, arguing that the depressive Lubitz should never have been allowed to fly. — AFP

## UKRAINE POPULIST SEEKS PRESIDENT'S OUSTER OVER LEAKED SECRET ACCOUNTS

**KIEV:** A populist Ukrainian party leader said yesterday that he would launch impeachment proceedings against President Petro Poroshenko over his use of offshore accounts revealed by the "Panama Papers" leak. The action by Radical Party leader Oleg Lyashko is unlikely to succeed but is certain to add even further pressure on Poroshenko as he struggles to resolve a months-long political crisis that has paralysed the cash-strapped govern-

ment. A year-long worldwide media investigation into a trove of 11.5 million documents found that the former Soviet state's pro-Western leader had registered a company in the British Virgin Islands that he never disclosed in his income forms.



**KIEV:** Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko arriving to give a press conference on January 14, 2016. — AFP

ment. A year-long worldwide media investigation into a trove of 11.5 million documents found that the former Soviet state's pro-Western leader had registered a company in the British Virgin Islands that he never disclosed in his income forms.

Poroshenko was travelling to Japan yesterday and issued no immediate comment on documents originally leaked to a German newspaper from Panama's Mossack Fonseca law firm.

The president's spokesman did not answer

the telephone when contacted by AFP. None of the three accounts associated with Poroshenko's offshore firm held more than 2,000 euros (\$2,270). But the report said they may have been a haven used by the president to avoid paying taxes on his profitable candy empire.

"Poroshenko was busy setting up an offshore tax haven for his business assets as Ukraine was suffering its worst defeat in Russia's war against Ukraine in the summer of 2014," the report said. "Poroshenko's action might be illegal on two counts: he started a new company while president and he did not report the company on his disclosure statements," it added.

Radical Party leader Lyashko—an outspoken populist who holds 21 of the 450 seats in Ukraine's parliament—said he has "initiated the start of impeachment proceedings" against the president. "We demand the creation of a special temporary investigative committee in parliament that would probe (Poroshenko's) secret offshore companies and accounts," Lyashko wrote on Facebook.

Lyashko's efforts are unlikely to get very far because Ukraine still lacks a law spelling out how such impeachment hearings may proceed. They could also only begin after the case is studied by the country's constitutional and supreme courts. Ukraine's prosecutor general's office said it had studied the leaked information and "found no evidence of a crime".

But the accounts' very existence is likely to reflect poorly on Poroshenko's self-proclaimed efforts to erase Ukraine's long history of government graft. Ukraine's 2014 pro-EU revolution was fed in part by deep-rooted frustration with the Russian-backed leadership's alleged use of state funds for self-enrichment and its brazen disregard for the rule of law.



**VATICAN CITY:** Pope Francis interacts with faithful as he makes a tour of St. Peter's Square at the end of a Mass for the the Holy Year of Mercy. — AP

## HOPES FOR VATICAN PROGRESS WITH SCHISMATIC CATHOLICS

**VATICAN CITY:** Pope Francis met with the head of a breakaway group of traditionalist Catholics amid new hopes for progress toward ending a quarter-century of schism. The Society of St Pius X said the 40-minute meeting Friday was cordial, and took place at Francis' hotel-residence because the pope wanted a "private and informal meeting" with its superior, Bishop Bernard Fellay, rather than a formal audience.

In a statement yesterday, the society said its legal status in the church wasn't discussed but that lower-level talks would continue "without haste." The Vatican in 2014 resumed reconciliation talks with the Swiss-based society after doctrinal discussions launched under Emeritus Pope Benedict XVI collapsed. Last year, Francis made an extraordinary gesture by allowing priests of the society, which has no legal status in the church, to hear confessions during his Holy Year of Mercy.

The late Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre founded the society in 1969, opposed to the Second Vatican Council's modernizing reforms, introduction of Mass in the vernacular and outreach to Jews and other Christians. In 1988, the Vatican excommunicated Lefebvre, and four other bishops after Lefebvre consecrated them without papal consent.

Benedict had made reconciling a priority, liberalizing the use of the old Latin Mass which the society celebrates, removing the excommunications and enduring heated criticism when one of the rehabilitated bishops was shown to have

denied the Holocaust.

But three years of doctrinal talks collapsed in 2012 after Fellay refused to accept a core set of doctrinal demands required by the Holy See over the society's acceptance of Vatican II. Francis' election initially signaled continued impasse, as the Jesuit pope made clear he cared little for the old Latin Mass, considered traditionalists self-absorbed retrogrades, and was more concerned about spreading the merciful message of the Gospel to society's poor outcasts than resolving thorny theological and canonical disputes.

Paradoxically, Francis emphasis on mercy and inclusion, his concern for "peripheral" Catholics

and disdain for rigid rules may have allowed for progress. In recent comments, Fellay has signaled new optimism that the group's legal status might be resolved. He said Francis had sent bishops to visit the society's seminaries and headquarters to "see us as we are," and that what had been theological stumbling blocks in the past were now up for discussion.

"Are we really moving forward? I think so. I think so, but it is certainly slow going," Fellay was quoted as saying in a March 4 interview with the society's DICI.org site. The society says it has 590 priests and 187 seminarians in six seminaries around the world, as well as some 600,000 people who attend Mass regularly. — AP

## RUSSIAN ENERGY MINISTER SAYS MAY MEET SAUDI COUNTERPART BEFORE DOHA EVENT

**NOVOKUZNETSK:** Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak said yesterday that he may meet his Saudi Arabian counterpart before a planned oil producers' meeting in Doha on April 17.

Saudi Arabia, the world's top oil exporter, will agree to freeze crude oil production levels only if Iran and other major producers do so, the kingdom's deputy crown prince said in an interview with Bloomberg last week.

"If there is such an opportunity, surely we will talk to our colleagues," he said about a

possible meeting with his Saudi Arabian colleague. Iran has said it will not join fellow OPEC and non-OPEC members in a plan to be discussed in Doha to freeze oil production to boost prices.

Novak also said he hoped that a common position would prevail at the oil producers' meeting. "I hope that in this case a common position will prevail during the discussions and all sides will come to an agreement,... especially given that Iran has confirmed its participation," he said. — Reuters

## INDIAN WOMEN BARRED FROM TEMPLE DESPITE COURT ORDER VOW TO KEEP FIGHTING

**MUMBAI:** Scores of women who were barred entry to a Hindu temple in western Maharashtra state despite a court order in their favor have vowed to carry on the fight for equal access to places of worship, with the government also backing the court's stand.

A Mumbai court last week said it is the fundamental right of a woman to enter any place of worship that allows men

access, and that the state should protect this right. Yet villagers prevented the women from entering the temple, with police dragging away and detaining the activists briefly.

Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis over the weekend reiterated his support for the court order. "There is no place for discrimination in Hindu culture," he said at a public rally. "We will imple-

ment the honorable high court's decision in true spirit."

The Shani Shingnapur temple in Ahmednagar in western India has barred women for centuries from the inner sanctum that is dedicated to Shani, or Saturn. It is one of a handful of Hindu temples in the country that does not allow women entry.

The fight for equal access for women has sparked similar campaigns in other

places of worship and triggered a wider debate on women's rights, with the hashtag #RightoPray trending on Twitter.

The popular Sabarimala Ayyappa temple in southern Kerala state, which denies entry to women of reproductive age, is the subject of a petition in the Supreme Court. A separate group of women is demanding access to a landmark mosque in Mumbai. Trupti Desai, leader of a group

that has led the protest for entry in the Shani Shingnapur temple, said they would file a contempt petition against the state if it failed to do so.

Authorities at the Trimbakeshwar temple in Maharashtra, which is also the subject of protests by women for denying them access, on the weekend said it would not allow men or women to enter the inner sanctum henceforth. —Reuters



**ISLAMABAD:** Pakistan's Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif looks on as he waits for the arrival of President Mamnoon Hussain at the venue of the Pakistan Day military parade on March 23, 2016. —AFP

## PAKISTAN PM'S FAMILY HIT BACK AFTER PANAMA PAPERS LEAK

**ISLAMABAD:** The family of Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif yesterday defended their ownership of offshore companies after they were named in the Panama Papers, one of the biggest media leaks in history.

Revenue generation is particularly sensitive for Pakistan's government, which is receiving a \$6.6 billion bailout package from the IMF and has a tax-to-GDP ratio of 11 percent, among the lowest in the world. The leak, comprising 11.5 million documents from Panama-based law firm Mossack Fonseca, shows how some of the world's most powerful people have secreted their money offshore.

Among those named are three of Sharif's four children—Maryam, who has been tipped to be his political successor; Hasan and Hussain, with the records showing they owned London real estate through offshore companies administered by the firm.

"Nawaz Sharif does not own any company but having companies in the name of his children also raises questions," Umar Cheema of the Center for Investigative Reporting in Pakistan, told AFP. The center is partnered with the Investigative Consortium of Independent Journalists, which spent months poring over the documents before Sunday's online release.

"There are more than 200 Pakistanis which our report has identified, and they include lawyers, lawmakers and some people from the judiciary," Cheema said. Opposition leader Imran Khan called for action against Sharif.

"Our stance vindicated again as Sharif's wealth stashed abroad exposed," he tweeted, adding the country's accountability watchdog, tax authorities and election commission must take action. But Sharif's son Hussain told the country's largest private broadcaster Geo his family had done "nothing wrong".

"Those apartments are ours and those offshore companies are also ours," he said. "There is nothing wrong with it and I have never concealed them, nor do I need to do that." It is according to British law and laws of other countries that it is a legal way to avoid unnecessary tax via offshore companies.

Hussain said he left Pakistan in 1992 and therefore is not resident, adding Pakistani tax law "says that if you are not staying in Pakistan for more than 138 days, then you are not required to declare your assets". Regarding Khan's call for the National Accountability Bureau to investigate, he said "we voluntarily present ourselves before it or any other judicial and investigative institution in Pakistan". Pakistan's information minister Pervez Rashid also denied Sharif's children had committed any crime.

As prime minister, Sharif has invited investment in Pakistan. But the latest revelations could raise uncomfortable questions about why his family has kept their wealth abroad. A report commissioned by Britain's Department for International Development last year said Pakistan's economy was facing an "existential crisis" stemming from its woe of tax collection rates and inability to finance itself.

Ali Nadir, a financial analyst, said the use of offshore companies was in some cases legitimate. But he added: "I believe political and business leaders will be hard-pressed to take the privacy defense given the worldwide move towards a better track of money, tax evasion, laundering and corruption."

"This may also start more locally focused probes as there are likely to be disclosure issues." The Panama Papers have whipped up a storm of controversy over offshore wealth, ensnaring political leaders, sports figures and underworld members across the globe in the scandal. —AFP

## SUU KYI DROPS TWO MINISTERIAL JOBS, TAKES ON SPOKESWOMAN ROLE VOWS TO RULE 'ABOVE' THE PRESIDENT

**YANGON:** Myanmar's Aung San Suu Kyi has dropped plans to run two major ministries but will act as spokeswoman for the country's new president, a ruling party official said yesterday. Banned from becoming president by a junta-era constitution, Suu Kyi has cemented control over the country's first civilian-led government in decades by taking on a string of senior roles in the new administration.

She has vowed to rule "above" the president, picking school friend and close aide Htin Kyaw for the role. Lawmakers from her National League for Democracy party are also pressing for a special "state counsellor" position for the Nobel laureate, an appointment that would allow her to liaise between the presidency and parliament.

Last week the NLD said she would take on four cabinet posts—foreign, energy, education and the ministerial position in the president's office. But during a parliamentary session yesterday, the NLD put forward two new names for the energy and education portfolios, according to NLD spokesman Win Htein. "Daw Aung San Suu Kyi will be the spokesperson for the president," he added, without elaborating on the rejig. The move will free up the 70-year-old's already busy day-to-day responsibilities while reinforcing control over her proxy president Htin Kyaw.

## Background

Hopes are growing that the newly sworn-in government can accelerate the country's economic and political rejuvenation after nearly half a century of military repression. Suu Kyi's party won a huge mandate at last November's elections. But the constitution effectively bans her from the top post as it rules out anyone with foreign-born children or spouses from becoming president.

Suu Kyi married and had two sons with a British national. The military also retains control of the key home, defence and border affairs ministries, while 25 percent of parliamentary seats are reserved for unelected soldiers.

The military has already balked at the NLD's plans to make Suu Kyi a "state counselor" with army MPs

in parliament last week saying the move bypasses the constitution. The proposal is likely to sail through the NLD-dominated legislature.

## Handover of power

Foreign direct investment (FDI) in Myanmar in the fiscal year ending in March grew to nearly \$9 billion, a government official said on yesterday, after a rush of last-minute approvals before the handover of power to Aung San Suu Kyi's administration.

The figure, a record high, rose

million people.

San Myint said FDI rose sharply after a body approving projects signed off on several large deals before Suu Kyi's government took power in April, following an election win last year by her National League for Democracy. "Projects pending a long time in the process due to lack of necessary information were expedited before the end of the fiscal year," said San Myint.

Myanmar received \$4.1 billion in FDI in 2013/2014 and that number doubled by the end of last fiscal year as foreign firms won oil

"Foreign direct investment is expected to get a lift from the successful political transition following national elections in November 2015, with investment flowing into newly established special economic zones and rapidly expanding transport, telecommunications, and energy sectors," the bank said.

Growth in Myanmar's investment follows reforms launched in 2012 by former president Thein Sein, a former general who enlisted help from technocrats and global financial institutions to



**NAYPYITAW:** Aung San Suu Kyi attends the presidential handover ceremony on March 30, 2016. —AP

by about \$1 billion compared with the previous fiscal year, fuelled by investment in the energy, manufacturing and telecoms sectors, San Myint, an official at the Directorate of Investment and Company Administration, told Reuters.

The investment reflects growing, if still cautious, interest in one of Asia's last remaining untapped markets, which has offered tax breaks and export tariff perks to create urgently jobs for its 51.5

and gas concessions and international hotel chains started moving in. Singapore tops the list of foreign investors, the official said, followed by China, Hong Kong and the Netherlands. He said a detailed breakdown was not available as it was still being calculated.

The Asian Development Bank forecast last week Myanmar's economic growth would recover to 8.4 percent in the fiscal year ending March 2017, partly thanks to a pick up in foreign investment.

overhaul an economy that wilted under sanctions and inept policymaking during five decades of military rule.

The lifting of most Western embargoes has allowed foreign access to sectors from banking, property and tourism to factories, infrastructure, airports and agribusiness. The \$9 billion in FDI is some 27 times the \$329.6 million received in 2009/2010, the year before the military ceded power. —Agencies

## BANGLADESH POLICE FIND WEAPONS AFTER BLAST KILLS 2

**DHAKA:** Police seized grenades, pistols and bullets from a house in a northern Bangladeshi village yesterday, a day after an explosion killed two suspected militants.

Authorities believe the house in the Sherpur area of Bogra district was occupied by members of a banned Islamist militant group, Jumatul Mujahedeen Bangladesh, and that the bomb blast Sunday was an accident, local police chief Mohammed Asaduzzaman said. "We suspect that the house was being used as a den for making bombs," he said.

Witnesses told police the explosion occurred inside the one-story building, but could not identify the two dead men, suggesting they were not local people.

Asaduzzaman said the building's owner, who lives elsewhere, said a man who identified himself as an auto-rickshaw driver rented

the home about five months ago. Police said they could not locate the man after Sunday's blast. A 12-member bomb disposal unit searched the house on Monday and recovered 20 grenades, four pistols and 25 bullets, Asaduzzaman said. The grenades were then defused, he said.

A wave of deadly attacks last year on foreigners, secular writers and members of the minority Shiite and Ahmadiya communities has raised concerns about security in Bangladesh. The Islamic State group claimed responsibility for some of the attacks, but Bangladesh authorities dismissed those claims and instead blamed local militant groups, including Jumatul Mujahedeen Bangladesh. The government insists it has the security situation under control and has arrested several suspects. —AP

## MALDIVES RELEASES JOURNALISTS ARRESTED OVER CRACKDOWN PROTEST

**MALE:** Maldives police have released 16 journalists arrested during a protest against a perceived government crackdown on press freedom on the politically troubled holiday islands, officials said yesterday. The journalists, which the government said were released late Sunday, have been ordered to report to police for questioning over the demonstration held outside President Abdulla Yameen's office in the capital Male. "We were told that we disobeyed police orders and they want to question us further," Zaheena Rasheed, an editor of the private Maldives Independent website, told AFP after she was released.

Police used pepper spray to break up Sunday's protest against the government's move to criminalize defamation, which media fear will be used to stifle freedom of speech. A draft bill proposes heavy fines and jail terms for offenders.

The government said in a statement the demon-

stration was broken up because journalists were gathered in "a high security zone, where protesting is prohibited", adding that the group was detained for 10 hours in total. Political turmoil in the Maldives has dented its image as a peaceful paradise for well-heeled honeymooners. The Indian Ocean nation adopted multiparty democracy in 2008 after decades of autocratic rule, but has faced international criticism over a recent erosion of rights.

Rasheed said the released media met yesterday with US ambassador Atul Keshap, who was visiting from Sri Lanka where he is based. The journalists raised concerns about press freedom in the nation, gripped by turmoil since the toppling of its first democratically elected leader Mohamed Nasheed in February 2012. "Appreciated the opportunity to meet with Maldives journalists arrested during Sunday's protest," Keshap said on Twitter, posting a photo of himself with them. —AFP



**PESHAWAR:** Pakistani residents cross a flooded street following heavy rain on the outskirts yesterday. —AFP

## AT LEAST 55 KILLED IN FLASH FLOODS IN NORTHERN PAKISTAN

**ISLAMABAD:** Flash floods triggered by heavy rain in Pakistan have killed at least 55 people and rescuers were trying yesterday to help thousands of survivors including some cut off by a landslide in a mountain valley, officials said.

The weather system that brought the unusually heavy rain was expected to move northeast, towards northern India, although more isolated storms were expected in northern Pakistan, the

Meteorological Department said.

Yousuf Zia, a disaster management official in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, said nearly 150 homes had been destroyed and tents and blankets were being distributed to the homeless. "There are 30 people stranded by a landslide in the Kohistan Valley where we have sent a helicopter to rescue them," Zia said. Forty-seven people were killed and 37 injured in Khyber

Pakhtunkhwa, Zia said, while eight people were killed in Pakistani-administered Kashmir, officials there said. Landslides caused widespread damage to roads and communication infrastructure in the Pakistani side of Kashmir, they said. One of the worst-affected districts was the Swat Valley, northwest of the capital, Islamabad, where 121 mm (4.76 inches) of rain fell on Sunday, the Meteorological Department said. —Reuters





DUBAI: A general view shows Burj Khalifa (center), the world's tallest tower, as the sun sets over Dubai yesterday. — AFP

## 'PANAMA PAPERS' REVEAL OFFSHORE WEALTH

Continued from Page 1

The Kremlin said the documents contained "nothing concrete and nothing new" while a spokesman for British Prime Minister David Cameron said his late father's reported links to an offshore company were a "private matter". Iceland's Prime Minister Sigmundur Gunnlaugsson could not immediately be reached for comment on the naming of his wife in connection with a secretive company in an offshore haven, which brought opposition calls for him to resign.

Pakistan denied any wrongdoing by the family of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif after his daughter and son were linked to offshore companies. Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko did not comment on his reported offshore links. Australia, Austria, France, Sweden and the Netherlands were among countries which said they had begun investigating the allegations, based on more than 11.5 million documents from Mossack Fonseca.

Banks came under the spotlight for allegedly helping clients hide their funds offshore. The documents, covering a period from 1977 until last December, were leaked to more than 100 news organizations around the world, cooperating with the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ), a Washington, DC-based network. "I think the leak will prove to be probably the biggest blow the offshore world has ever taken

because of the extent of the documents," ICIJ director Gerard Ryle said.

Britain's Guardian newspaper said the documents showed a network of secret offshore deals and loans worth \$2 billion led to associates of Putin, including concert cellist Sergei Roldugin, a childhood friend of the president. Reuters could not confirm those details. Putin's spokesman dismissed the reports, saying they aimed to discredit him ahead of upcoming elections. "This Putinophobia abroad has reached such a point that it is in fact taboo to say something good about Russia, or about any actions by Russia or any Russian achievements. But it's a must to say bad things, a lot of bad things, and when there's nothing to say, it must be concocted, he said.

The British government asked for a copy of the leaked data, which could be embarrassing for Prime Minister Cameron, who has spoken out against tax evasion and tax avoidance. His late father, Ian Cameron, a wealthy stockbroker, is mentioned in the files, alongside some members of his Conservative Party, former Conservative lawmakers and party donors, British media said.

Jennie Granger, head of enforcement and compliance at HM Revenue and Customs, said the government would examine the information "and act on it swiftly and appropriately". Cameron's spokeswoman declined to comment on whether the leader's family had money invested in offshore funds set up

by his father, saying it was a "private matter". The opposition Labour Party's finance spokesman, John McDonnell, tweeted: "Cameron promised and has failed to end tax secrecy and crack down on 'morally unacceptable' offshore schemes, real action is now needed." The Australian Tax Office said it was investigating more than 800 wealthy Mossack Fonseca clients and had linked more than 120 of them to an associate offshore service provider located in Hong Kong, which it did not name.

### Hack

The head of Mossack Fonseca, Ramon Fonseca, has denied any wrongdoing but said his firm had suffered a successful but "limited" hack on its database. He described the hack and leak as "an international campaign against privacy". Fonseca, who was up until March a senior government official in Panama, told Reuters the firm had formed more than 240,000 offshore companies.

The papers also showed the use of offshore companies by Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's family, including his daughter Mariam and son Hussain. Pakistani Information Minister Pervez Rasheed denied any wrongdoing on their part. "Every man has the right to do what he wants with his assets, to throw them in the sea, to sell them, or to establish a trust for them. There is no crime in this in Pakistani law or in international law," Rasheed said.

Media reports also said the leaked data pointed to a link between a member of global soccer body FIFA's ethics committee and a Uruguayan soccer official who was arrested last year as part of a US probe into corruption in the sport. The revelations drew an angry reaction from some quarters. German Economy Minister Sigmar Gabriel questioned the morals of the financial world. "The greed of the super-rich is connected to the lack of conscience in the banking and financial sector. Both damage the trust in the rule of law. We should not tolerate the fact that one section of society works hard and sticks to the rules while another section cheats society," he told Sueddeutsche Zeitung.

The British-based Tax Justice Network said too many offshore lawyers, accountants and bankers saw it as their role to shield their clients from financial regulations designed to prevent money laundering, tax evasion and corruption. "Mossack Fonseca has been one of the giants of the offshore world for decades. They had a reputation for extreme secrecy and discretion on their clients' behalf, which needless to say was attractive to many clients engaged in tax evasion, fraud, hiding conflicts of interest, and other white collar crimes," director John Christensen said in a statement.

Panama was one of the most secretive havens in the world, but the international community had done little to force improvements there or in many other jurisdictions, including a network of British overseas territo-

ries, it said. The Central American country has declined to sign up to global transparency rules. Austria's financial markets regulator FMA is investigating whether lenders Raiffeisen Bank International and Hypo Landesbank Vorarlberg followed rules against money laundering after they were named in the "Panama Papers". Raiffeisen said it had complied but could not comment on specific cases. Hypo Landesbank Vorarlberg had no comment. Norway and Sweden were looking into allegations their banks helped clients set up offshore companies or accounts.

In Ukraine, lawmakers said parliament should investigate allegations President Petro Poroshenko moved his confectionery business, Roshen, to the British Virgin Islands in Aug 2014 as fighting between Ukraine and pro-Russian separatists peaked. "It is the height of cynicism to open offshore companies at a time when hundreds of our soldiers are dying," leader of the populist Radical Party, Oleh Lyashko, said. Any investigation could lead to Poroshenko's impeachment, he added. A senior official from the General Prosecutor's office said there was no evidence the president had committed a crime.

In Brazil, the O Estado de S.Paulo newspaper said politicians from seven parties were named as Mossack Fonseca clients. They included politicians from Brazil's largest party, the PMDB, which broke away from President Dilma Rousseff's coalition last week, but no politicians from her Workers' Party. — Reuters

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Issues

**OFFSHORE EMPIRE OF PUTIN'S FRIEND REVEALS KREMLIN WEALTH**

By Maria Antonova

A virtuoso concert cellist who calls President Vladimir Putin a "brother", Sergei Roldugin has flown under the radar while other close friends of the Russia leader openly amassed vast fortunes. But now the "Panama Papers" leaks have put the godfather to Putin's eldest daughter at the head of an offshore empire worth more than \$2 billion and sparked fresh speculation on the Russian leader's personal wealth.

Documents from Panama-based law firm Mossack Fonseca, analyzed by Russian journalists, offer a glimpse into a web of obscure deals between Russian state companies and offshore firms owned by Roldugin that made "tens of millions of rubles per day" over the decade between 2006 and 2015. The firms, just one of which, Sandalwood Continental, funnelled a total of \$2 billion, were managed by individuals linked with Bank Rossiya, according to Novaya Gazeta, whose reporters are part of an international group of journalists poring through the 11.5 million leaked documents.

The companies clinched cheap loans and appeared to make money out of thin air by signing deals with state firms and pocketing hundreds of thousands of dollars in compensation when the deals were broken off. Among the investments made by the firms linked to Roldugin were into yachts and resorts in Russia. One ski resort was reported as the location of the wedding of Putin's youngest daughter Yekaterina.

**'Like a Brother'**

The secretive web of Roldugin's assets appears to be just the latest evidence of how an elite close to Putin has amassed huge fortunes through favorable deals during his time in power. From his former judo sparring partners to ex-KGB comrades, close associates of the strongman leader have become billionaires by winning state contracts in key energy and infrastructure sectors. Beyond his official salary, the extent of Putin's personal wealth has never been revealed, but allegations are rife that he essentially controls the money his friends have amassed.

The United States and European Union have slapped sanctions over Ukraine against close Putin associates, including Bank Rossiya, which the US Treasury identified in March 2014 as a "personal bank" for the Kremlin elite. Up until now, Roldugin, 64, has appeared nowhere on these lists, although he is a close confidant of the Russian leader. In the book "First Person", a collection of interviews published in March 2000, when most of the world had little idea of who Putin was, Roldugin takes centre stage as the Russian president's intimate friend.

A native of Putin's hometown Leningrad - now Saint Petersburg - he met the future Russian leader in 1977 and is the godfather of his oldest daughter Maria. "We were not apart after that", the musician said in one of the interviews for the book. "He is like a brother to me." While Putin headed into the KGB secret service, Roldugin turned to arts and rose to become a respected conductor and cellist working in Saint Petersburg's Mariinsky theatre who last year judged the prestigious Tchaikovsky Competition.

A source in the cellist's circle told Novaya Gazeta that Putin picked a modest man "he could trust without any doubt" for the job of guarding his fortune, comparing him with Prince Myshkin, the kind and simple "Idiot" protagonist of Fyodor Dostoyevsky's novel.

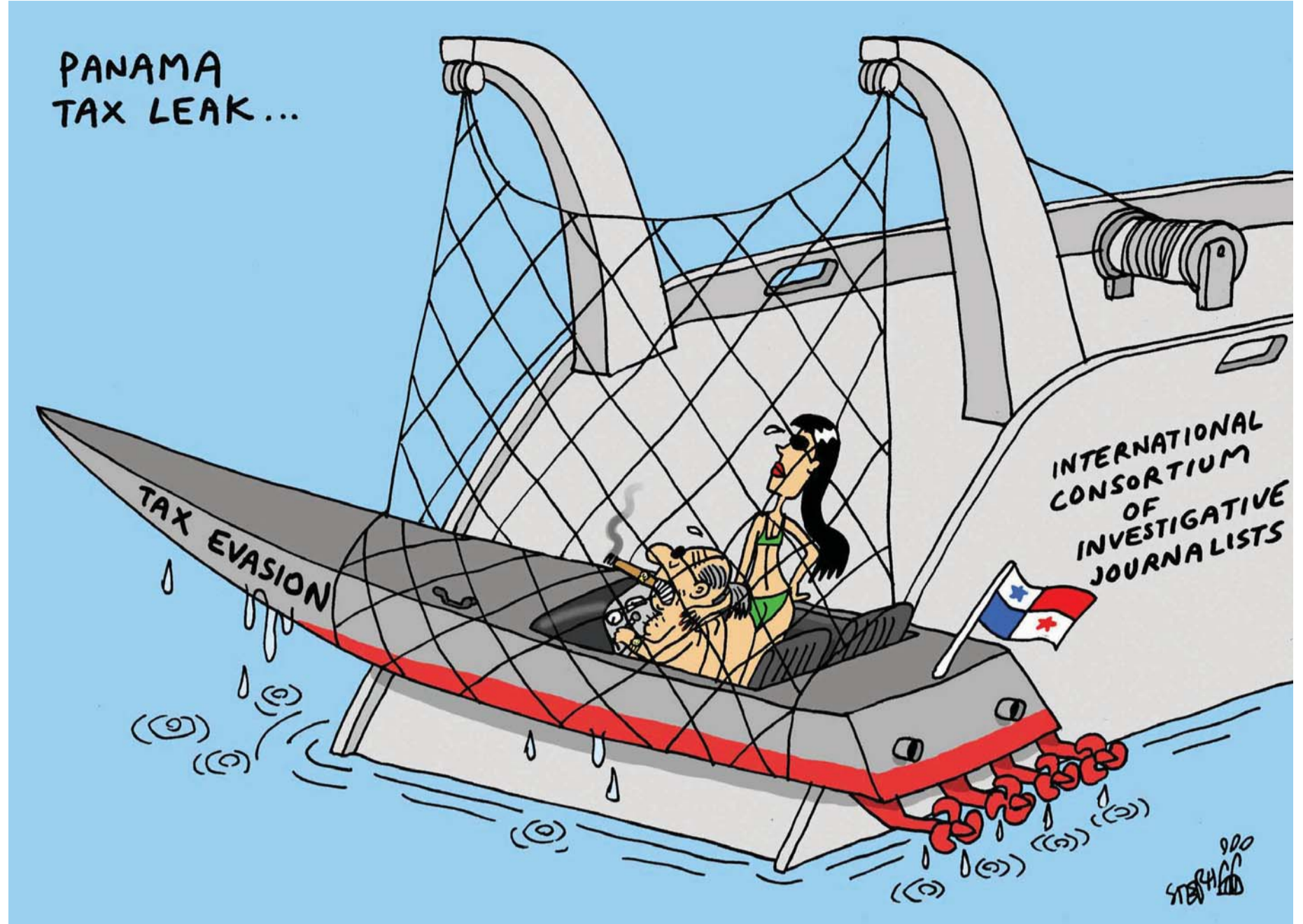
**No Russia Fallout**

"Putin's idea was to store his personal stolen cash in the most unexpected of places, with the most unexpected of individuals," wrote protest leader Alexei Navalny, who has been looking into cronyism and suspicious state-backed deals for years. He added that the leak from the Panama law firm revealed "not even the tip of the iceberg" of the vast capital amassed by Russia's elite, but even this fraction is "perfectly enough for impeachment."

In Russia, however, there is little likelihood that the revelations will rattle Putin's firm grip on power or dent his reputation. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov slammed the leaks as an attack on the Kremlin strongman designed to destabilize Russia. Asked about Putin's connections with Roldugin, Peskov confirmed he is still a friend of the president but insisted that "Putin has a lot of friends."

"From the outside, Russia's leadership already has an image that is hard to tarnish further," said Nikolai Petrov, who lectures at the Higher School of Economics in Moscow. Inside Russia, public opinion is unlikely to be swayed, although some of the elite "may be forced to think about themselves and their prospects." "The main reaction will be that it's a special campaign against Russia," he said. —AFP

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**GERMANY-RUSSIA TIES ENTER NEW CHILL**

By Paul Carrel and Andreas Rinke

At an hour-long meeting in Moscow on March 23, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov irritated his German counterpart by raising the case of a German-Russian girl who said she was raped by migrants in Berlin earlier this year. After the girl's claims were reported by Russian media in January, Lavrov accused Germany of "sweeping problems under the rug". The Berlin public prosecutor's office, though, said a medical examination had found the girl had not been raped.

That was why Germany's Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier was so upset when Lavrov raised the issue again. "I can only hope that such incidents and difficulties, as we had in that case, aren't repeated," he told reporters afterwards. The rape case is indicative of the mutual suspicion that officials from both countries say extends to the highest levels of government. At the root of those tensions lie opposing visions for Europe and the Middle East. Those rival visions have led to clashes at diplomatic negotiating tables, in cyberspace and in the media.

German and other European security officials accuse Russian media of launching what they call an "information war" against Germany. By twisting the truth in reports on Germany's migrant crisis, the officials say, Russia hopes to fuel popular angst, weaken voters' trust in Chancellor Angela Merkel, and feed divisions in the European Union so that it drops sanctions against Moscow. "Russian propaganda is a danger to the cohesion of our society," Ole Schroeder, German deputy interior minister and a member of Merkel's conservatives, told Reuters.

Russian officials deny their country is mounting a campaign against Germany. "These accusations are atrocious," said one Russian official, who said Moscow is the victim of an "indis-

criminate information war" being waged from Germany. In February, Dmitry Peskov, a spokesman for Russian President Vladimir Putin, denied the Kremlin had exploited the rape case to stir up tensions around immigration in Germany. "We cannot agree with such accusations," Peskov said. "On the contrary, we were keen that our position be understood, we were talking about a citizen of the Russian Federation. Any country expresses its concerns (in such cases). It would be wrong to look for any hidden agenda."

But officials in Berlin say Russia's aim is to muddy what is true and what is not and shake Germans' trust in Merkel. "The idea today is to get disinformation, which means you don't believe anything," Hans-Peter Hinrichsen, a Foreign Ministry official, told a recent meeting on Russia's role in Europe at the German Council on Foreign Relations (DGAP).

German and European officials say Russia's aim is twofold: To exaggerate the problems the migrant crisis is causing Germany and to push Germany to relax its backing for European sanctions on Russia over Moscow's interference in Ukraine. While EU governments last month extended asset freezes and travel bans on Russians and Russian companies, there is less consensus on whether to prolong more far-reaching sanctions on Russia's banking, defense and energy sectors from July. Both sides agree on one point: relations between the two countries are at their lowest point since the early days of the Cold War.

**Bikini Trolls?**

Beginning in the late 1960s, the then West Germany pursued a policy of 'Ostpolitik', which encouraged warmer ties with Russia. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the two countries grew even closer thanks to trade and cultural ties. But those ties began unravelling when Vladimir Putin returned as Russian president in

2012, and worsened further after the Ukraine crisis began in late 2013. "All the networks, all the personal ties - they just don't work anymore," said Stefan Meister, at the DGAP.

The accusations of disinformation have spawned a whole new vocabulary. Officials at NATO now talk about the 'weaponization of information' by Russia. Colonel Aivar Jaeski, deputy director at the NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence, says Russia's campaign against Europe uses "angry trolls" who produce online hate speech, and "bikini trolls" to lure followers and then sow discord and doubt about news events.

Jaeski pointed to a NATO StratCom report on trolling, which says the Guardian newspaper's online edition was targeted "in a troll attack that is considered to have been ordered by the Kremlin" over its reporting on the downing of Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 over Ukraine. The Kremlin has repeatedly denied funding or backing online trolls, and has specifically denied any connection with a company based in St Petersburg whose ex-employees have said they were paid to spread disinformation, praise Putin and criticize the West.

**A German Campaign?**

In the rape case, Russian media reported the German-Russian girl - under German law she can only be identified as Lisa F - had been abducted by 'Arab-looking men' and raped repeatedly over a 30-hour period. Janis Sarts, director of the NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence, said Russian media continued to report that even after the Berlin authorities said the girl had not been raped. Europe's East StratCom Task Force has collected dozens of examples of Russian reporting on the migrant crisis that it says are clear cases of deliberate disinformation.

Germany daily Bild reported in March that Germany's foreign and domestic intelligence

agencies were warning of increasing Russian interference in German politics. Moscow rejects the idea of any coordinated campaign. One Russian official said there was a German media campaign to paint Russia in a bad light and "demonise" it. The official said that Russian media had formerly been too positive about Germany and were now more objective. "This ends the discrepancy that saw the German media be very critical of Russia and the Russian media paint a very favourable picture of Germany," he said.

**Black Box**

At the March 23 meeting, the two countries reached an "academic cooperation accord". Both sides also continue to emphasize cultural ties. But repairing political ties may be harder. Germany's Social Democratic Party (SPD) - junior members in Merkel's ruling coalition and the party behind "Ostpolitik" all those decades ago - seems increasingly ready to compromise with Moscow. Sigmar Gabriel, an SPD member and Germany's Economy Minister, said recently that the EU should try to lift sanctions on Russia by this summer.

Merkel, though, has refused to ease the sanctions, insisting that Russia first needs to comply with an agreement to enforce a ceasefire, pull back heavy weapons, exchange prisoners, and hold internationally monitored local elections in eastern Ukraine. German officials say Merkel speaks to Putin more than any other Western leader and recognizes better than most that the Russian leader respects firmness.

But the governments still struggle to understand each other. "The Kremlin is like a Black Box: we have a rough idea of who sits in the Black Box but we have no idea what they are thinking, what they are worried about, what they are thinking for 5-10 years' time," a senior German official said. —Reuters

**HOW EUROPE BUILT FENCES TO KEEP PEOPLE OUT**

By Gabriela Baczynska and Sara Ledwith

In early March, Europe's migration chief Dimitris Avramopoulos squelched through a muddy refugee camp on Greece's border with Macedonia and peered through the barbed-wire topped fence that stands between tens of thousands of migrants in Greece and richer countries that lie to the north. "By building fences, by deploying barbed wire," he said, "it is not a solution." But Avramopoulos has not always preached that message - and his changing views capture the tangle Europe has got itself into as more than a million migrants and refugees have floated in on Greek waters since the start of 2015.

In 2012, when he was Greek minister of defence, Greece built a fence and electronic surveillance system along its border with Turkey. The cement and barbed-wire barrier and nearly 2,000 extra guards were designed to stop a sharp rise in illegal immigrants. The 62-year-old former diplomat was not directly involved in the project. But in 2013 he defended it, telling a news conference the wall had borne fruit. "The entry of illegal immigrants in Greece by this side has almost been eliminated," he said. The official European response to Europe's migrant crisis - championed by German Chancellor Angela Merkel last August - is for member states to pull together and provide shelter for people, especially Syrians, fleeing war or persecution. But in reality, most members have failed to take their quotas of refugees and nearly a dozen have built barricades to try to keep both migrants and refugees out. The bloc is now trying to implement a deal which would see Turkey take back new arrivals.

The European Union was founded in the ashes of World War Two, in part on a principle of freedom of movement among member states. But since the fall of the Berlin Wall, European countries have built or started 1,200 km of anti-immigrant fencing at a cost of at least \$500 million, a Reuters analysis of public data shows. That distance is almost 40 percent of the length of America's border with Mexico.

Many of these walls separate EU nations from states outside the bloc, but some are between EU states, including members of Europe's passport-free zone. Most of the building was started in 2015. "Wherever there have been large numbers of migrants or refugees trying to enter the EU, this trend has been followed up by a fence," said Irem Arf, a researcher on European Migration at

rights group Amnesty International.

For governments, fences seem like a simple solution. Building them is perfectly legal and countries have the right to control who enters their territory. Each new fence in Europe has sharply curbed the numbers of irregular immigrants on the route they blocked. For at least one company, fences work. The firm which operates a tunnel between France and Britain says that since a major security upgrade around its French terminal last October, migrants have ceased to cause trouble. "There have been no disruptions to services since mid-October 2015, so we can say that the combination of the fence and the additional police presence has been highly effective," Eurotunnel spokesman John Keefe said. But in the short term at least, they have not stopped people trying to come. Instead, they have diverted them, often to longer, more dangerous routes. And rights groups say some fences deny asylum-seekers the chance to seek shelter, even though European law states that everyone has the right to a fair and efficient asylum procedure. Forced to find another way, migrants and refugees often turn to people-smugglers.

**Crowd Control**

Greece's border fence was one of the first, and Avramopoulos still defends it. He says Greece built it to divert people towards official crossings where they could apply for asylum. Much of Greece's frontier with Turkey is delineated by a fast-flowing river, the Evros. But there is a 12 km stretch where people used to sneak through on land after making the river crossing in Turkey. "The Evros river is a very dangerous river," Avramopoulos told Reuters in his upper floor office suite in February. "Hundreds of people had lost their lives there."

At least 19 people drowned in the Evros in 2010, according to the United Nations refugee agency. Neither the Greek authorities nor Europe's border agency Frontex could provide more data. In practice, rights groups say Greece's barrier - and others including one built by Spain in Morocco - effectively turn everyone away, denying vulnerable people a chance to make their case for protection. This is partly because some new barriers have passport controls like those at an airport. People need travel documents to exit one country and reach the checkpoint of the EU country where they want to seek asylum. Many refugees don't have any papers, so they are automatically blocked.

With barriers come security guards, cameras and surveillance equipment, which all make it harder for people to make their asylum cases. Rights groups have documented many reports of border officials beating, abusing, or robbing migrants and refugees before dumping them back where they came from. This approach, known as push-back, has become an intrinsic feature of Europe's external borders, according to Amnesty International.

As a solution, some migrants and refugees buy fake papers. Others stow away in vehicles. Or they turn to people-smugglers. Greece's fence had a knock-on effect that continues to ripple through Europe as more countries wall themselves off. More migrants moving through Turkey began to enter Europe across the Bulgarian border, or by sailing to Greece in inflatable dinghies. In the eastern Mediterranean, the International Organization for Migration has recorded more than 1,100 migrant deaths since the start of last year.

**Cultural Purity**

The EU refuses to fund fences, saying they don't work. As European Commissioner Avramopoulos has tried instead to persuade fellow member states to show solidarity by offering homes to 160,000 refugees and migrants, mainly from Greece and Italy. As of March 15, just 937 asylum applicants had been relocated. For Hungary's Prime Minister Viktor Orban, the idea of quotas is "bordering on insanity". Orban opposes a dilution of Europe's "Christian values" by multicultural immigrants and started building fences along Hungary's borders with Croatia and Serbia in late 2015.

Since the ethnic cleansing of the 1990s in the former Yugoslavia, Balkan states have been particularly sensitive to the risks of ethnic and religious conflict. Other countries followed Hungary with fences - even if most said they installed them to control the flow of people, rather than to preserve cultural purity. When Austria started a barrier on its border with Slovenia in Nov 2015, it said it was necessary for crowd management. Then Austria capped the numbers of people it would admit, and how many it would allow through to Germany. By March, all these measures seemed to be having the desired effect: The number of migrants entering Germany from Austria had fallen more than sevenfold. —Reuters

# Mesyar Abu Shaibah is the King of Red Bull Car Park Drift



**T**welve out of the best drifters in town, both amateurs and professionals, participated in the Red Bull Car Park Drift event took place on Friday, April 1<sup>st</sup> with nearly 2000 attendees around the track. Driving a Nissan 240sx, Mesyar Abu Shaibah was able to take a dominant win against his opponents after a two-hour competition. Alive with excitement and adrenaline, the event was organized by Bassel Salem Al Sabah Motorsport Club, in partnership with Nissan, Shop & Ship, Falken Tyres, Total and Acqua Eva.

Splendidly, Abu Shaibah came as near as possible with the clipping point (pendulum) which gave him an extremely high mark of 356 points. The second place went to Fahad Al Jadel who was driving a Nissan Silvia, notching 351 points while Mubarak Al Rumaidhi rounded the podium scoring 295 points on his Nissan 350Z.

When asked about his win in a highly

adrenaline-charged and competitive atmosphere, Mesyar Abu Shaibah said: "I won an extremely tough competition against very skillful opponents like Fahad Al Jadel, Mohammed Khorshid and many others". He added: "It was not an easy challenge and I'm truly happy for having ranked the first among all the other drifters".

Like the previous years, the drifters had the added challenge of touching the pendulum square to score extra points with a panel of judges scoring out of 400 points, 160 points for drifting skills, 40 for

car sound and 40 points for tire smoke in addition to 40 points for the donuts in the box. Judges also kept a watchful eye on car design with 60 points and proximity to the clipping point without hitting it, each accounting for 60 points. The judging panel consisted of elite experts in motorsports such as Pascal Hayek – Automotive Expert, Nawaf Al Safi – Kuwait International Automobile Club Representative, in addition to Nail Gunn and Nigel Colfer – both are Drifters and Event Organizers.

Legendary drifter Abdo Feghali who

holds Guinness World Record for the longest vehicle drift has supervised the setup and the qualifier on Thursday, March 31<sup>st</sup> out of which 12 drifters qualified towards the final the next day. "Drifting as improved in Kuwait quite a lot lately, I highly encourage drifters to maintain professional and safe drifting practice. The drifters performed amazingly well and congratulations to the top three winners", he said.

The audience also enjoyed a Trial Biking Show which Red Bull athlete Brian Capper performed on his motorbike – a special appearance that pushed the levels of adrenaline to extremes.

Mesyar Abu Shaibah qualified to the Final Red Bull Car Park Drift to compete along with winners from other countries in the regional final held in Oman this upcoming December.

For more information about Red Bull Car Park Drift 2016 visit [www.redbull.com](http://www.redbull.com) or follow @redbullkuwait on twitter and Instagram.



## QUALIFYING FIASCO STALEMATE IS 'MADNESS': MERCEDES BOSS

**MANAMA:** Formula One's failure to resolve problems surrounding the future shape and structure of qualifying has been described as "madness" by Mercedes team chief Toto Wolff.

The Austrian, who has called for the sport to ditch the failed fiasco of 'progressive elimination' qualifying, said he was suspicious that political agendas were now at play that were preventing a switch back to the successful former system.

Discussing the outcome of Sunday's

talks at the Bahrain International Circuit which failed to resolve the problems, he said: "All the teams had the same opinion—that we probably need to go back to 2015."

"But there are various agendas and this proved that it is not an easy one, so I cannot tell you what happens next. Last time I told you, I was totally wrong..."

Asked if he could explain how such a simple decision-making process had ended up in such chaos, he said: "A sim-

ple explanation? Madness." Wolff was one of the team bosses who met the president of the sport's ruling body, the International Motoring Federation (FIA), Jean Todt and the veteran commercial ring-master Bernie Ecclestone on Sunday. The teams have expressed a unanimous view that the new qualifying format should be dumped and replaced by its predecessor, a wish shared by virtually all neutrals and paddock observers.

Ecclestone and Todt, however,

vetoed that plan and instead put forward a new complex proposal for aggregate times to be used in qualifying instead of single laps to decide the starting grid. Many paddock observers believe that Ecclestone and Todt want to undermine the power of the teams.

Red Bull team chief Christian Horner, who in Australia had suggested that Formula One should apologise to its fans for the non-entertainment provided by the new system, said he was prepared to look at the new idea.

"The FIA are going to circulate some draft regulations, let's take a look at those and then we will make a decision on the vote," he said. "But after two pretty decent races do we really need to mess around with qualifying?"

The teams are due to meet again with the F1 bosses on Thursday to try and reach a resolution on an impasse that has created a furor on social media with many fans fearful that F1 is becoming ungovernable and a laughing stock. —AFP

## ROSBERG LIVING THE MOMENT, REMAINS FEARFUL OF FERRARI

**MANAMA:** After two successive season-opening wins, Nico Rosberg is "living the moment" but says he remains fearful of Ferrari following their demonstration of potential in Sunday's Bahrain Grand Prix.

The 30-year-old German leads the embryonic drivers' championship by 17 points ahead of his Mercedes team-mate, defending three-time champion Lewis Hamilton.

That, he says, has given him great satisfaction, but in the wake of his 16th career victory at the Bahrain International Circuit, he was keen to point at the advances made by Ferrari despite their early-season setbacks. "I am not thinking about the season," said Rosberg. "I am going step-by-step. I am just enjoying it at the moment. "I have been very privileged to drive this car and go for wins. When I go to China, I know I am going to fight for the win there as well so it is such a great feeling to have..."

"Winning is awesome. Celebrating with the team and getting all those points... It is great to start the season like that, but I am not looking too far ahead, I am living for the moment."

He said he was well aware that Kimi Raikkonen who split the two 'silver arrows' cars and finished second behind him for Ferrari had demonstrated threatening speed on a day when his team-mate Sebastian Vettel had failed to start a race

for the first time following an engine failure. "I was in control," he said. "We were just managing the race, trying to reduce risks strategy-wise, pit-stop wise, and bring the race home. "But at the same time, Kimi showed good pace in the race and we know that Ferrari are super close. So, we need to keep pushing. "They haven't shown what they are able to do yet. That's clear. They have had so many mishaps, which have cost them dearly, so we haven't seen the real Ferrari yet."

"We have to be careful. They are coming on at us and they are strong." Ferrari's potential has been masked this year by difficulties - a strategy call that failed in Australia where Raikkonen retired with turbo troubles, Vettel's reliability problems and Raikkonen's poor start in Bahrain. For Rosberg, Ferrari's problems and Hamilton's two successive opening lap collisions have gifted him two victories and a perfect start to the 21-race season.

Champion Hamilton, who has taken both pole positions so far, departed Bahrain with a smile, however. "I am feeling very chilled," he said. "It is just the start of the season..." Vettel, meanwhile, remains unconcerned by Ferrari's early-season problems. "They are not connected," he said. "Of course, it is frustrating. I saw smoke coming out of my car and we decided to stop - but it is a long season..." —AFP



**KANSAS CITY:** Salvador Perez #13 of the Kansas City Royals kisses his glove after Yoenis Cespedes #52 of the New York Mets struck out to end the game at Kauffman Stadium on Sunday in Kansas City, Missouri. The Royals won 4-3. — AFP

## VOLQUEZ, HOSMER STAR AS ROYALS DOWN METS

**KANSAS CITY:** Edinson Volquez would rather sit on the bench than stand on the mound on opening day, especially when it happens to be the first game following a World Series triumph.

"I like to enjoy the show," Volquez explained with a grin. "Enjoy the time." He had every reason to enjoy Sunday night's festivities anyway. Given no choice but to start the game by Royals manager Ned Yost, the veteran right-hander responded with six scoreless innings. His bullpen held on through three more shaky frames and Kansas City beat the New York Mets 4-3 in the first opening-day rematch of a World Series.

"I did the best I could," said Volquez, who also started the decisive Game 5 at Citi Field last November. The Mets rallied for three runs off Joakim Soria in the eighth, then put runners on the corners with one out against Wade Davis in the ninth. But the All-Star closer struck out David Wright and Yoenis Cespedes, preserving a nail-biting victory and sending 40,030 fans home in another celebratory mood.

"They're scrappy," Wright said. "We knew that they put the ball in play, they find holes, put together terrific at-bats. They get that lead early and you know the bullpen is coming in. That's their M.O. - good starting pitching, terrific bullpen and a pesky offense. That's exactly what they did tonight."

Volquez (1-0) allowed two hits and three walks in outdueling Matt Harvey, who also opposed him in Game 5 of the World Series. Harvey (0-1) allowed four runs - three earned - on eight hits and two walks in 5-2-3 innings.

There wound up being little good about opening night for the NL East champs, still in search of their first championship in three decades. They spent nearly an hour before the first pitch reliving last year's World Series defeat through a steady stream of highlights on the crown-shaped big screen, then had to watch the raising of the championship banner over the Royals Hall of Fame in left field at Kauffman Stadium.

"It was just strange, the pregame ceremony. I think I would have enjoyed it more if we played another team," Yost said. "For them to relive that, it's a little awkward."

### SHODDY FIELDING

Things didn't get a whole lot better for the Mets once the game began.

Cespedes, the Gold Glove outfielder whose shoddy fielding hurt the Mets in the Series, dropped an easy fly ball in the first inning that ultimately led to the Royals' opening run. Kansas City then strung together a couple of singles before Kendrys Morales popped a sacrifice fly to center in the fourth, and Alex Gordon and Omar Infante added two-out RBI singles in the sixth.

Volquez and the Kansas City defense had things well in hand by that point. The right-hander escaped a jam by getting Travis d'Arnaud to ground out in the second inning, then watched first baseman Eric Hosmer make a nice diving stop to escape a sticky spot in the third. All-Star catcher Salvador Perez threw out Michael Conforto trying to steal second base to end the fourth.

The biggest misstep Volquez made may have been fashion-related - he wore his spring training hat with a gold crown over the interlocking "KC" to start the game. He swapped it out for the proper one by the second inning. "Nobody said anything!" he said, grinning again. "Not even in the bullpen."

### TRAINER'S ROOM

**Mets:** Harvey got the start despite having a blood clot in his bladder that led to a minor procedure last week. "When the word 'blood clot' came up, that's severe stuff," manager Terry Collins said. "We started to look at alternative plans and what we might do down the road. Fortunately, it came out he's going to be OK."

Royals: RF Jarrod Dyson was milling around the clubhouse before the game. He's out a few more weeks with an oblique injury that he sustained in the first game of spring training.

### MORE BLING

During the pregame festivities, DH Morales

picked up his Silver Slugger Award, and 1B Hosmer, C Perez and SS Alcides Escobar got their Gold Gloves. The remaining members of last season's team are scheduled to get their championship rings before Tuesday's game.

### UP NEXT

**Mets:** RHP Noah Syndergaard, whose inside pitch to Escobar in Game 3 was a flashpoint of the World Series, takes the mound Tuesday. Syndergaard allowed three runs in six innings in a 9-3 victory that night. Royals: RHP Chris Young started Game 4 of the World Series against New York. He also earned the win in Game 1 when he tossed three scoreless innings in a 5-4, 14-inning victory. — AP



**SHANGHAI:** This file photo taken on March 9, 2012 shows Noh Jin-kyu (C) of South Korea leading the pack during the men's 1500-meters final of ISU World Short Track Speed Skating Championships at the Oriental Sports Center in Shanghai. South Korea's world-record holding short track speed skater Noh Jin-kyu has died at the age of 23 after a battle with bone cancer, his family said yesterday. — AFP

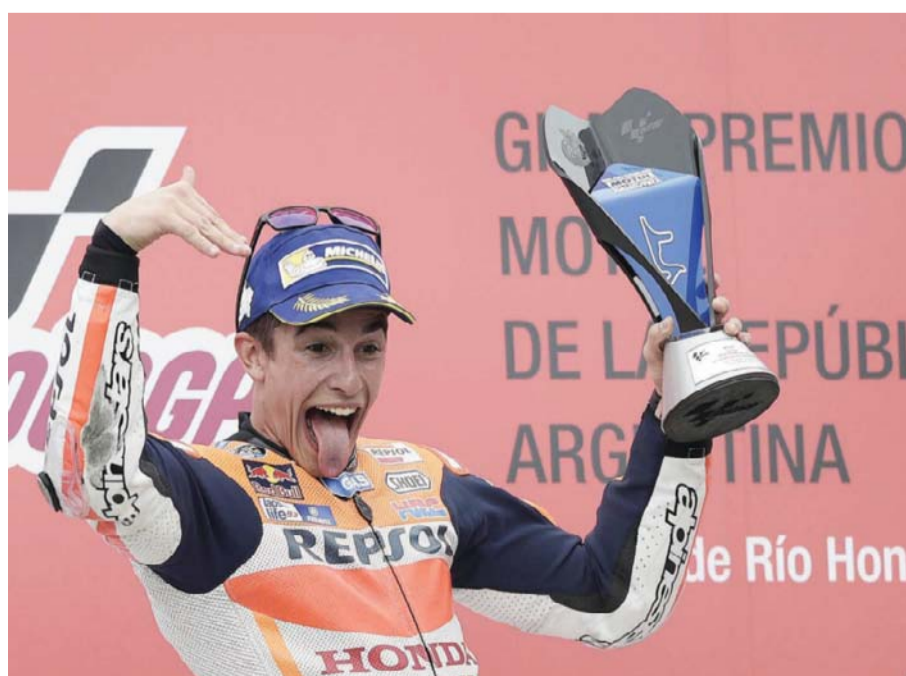
## KOREAN CHAMPION NOH DIES FROM CANCER

**SEOUL:** South Korea's world-record holding short track speed skater Noh Jin-kyu has died after a battle with bone cancer, his family said yesterday. He was 23. Noh's sister, speed skater Noh Seon-yeong, posted on her brother's Facebook page that he had died Sunday evening. Noh Jin-kyu rose to prominence as an 18-year-old when he won the overall title at the International Skating Union World Short Track Speed Skating Championships in 2011 in Sheffield, England.

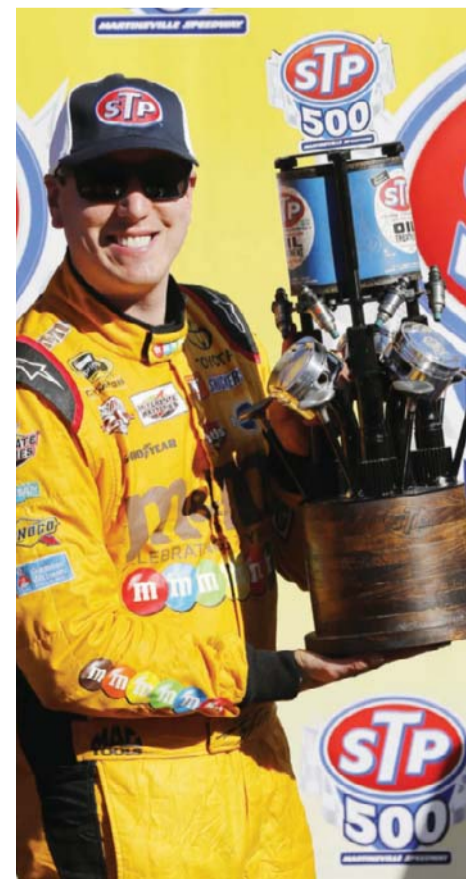
He set new world marks in the 1,500 and 3,000 metres the same year-records that still stood at the time of his death. Noh was first diagnosed with a benign tumour in his left shoulder in

2013 but put off surgery to compete in the 2014 Winter Olympics. He was unable to take part in the Sochi Games after breaking his elbow during practice.

When Noh underwent surgery for his elbow in January 2014, doctors discovered a 13-centimetre long malignant tumour in his left shoulder. Following the news of his death, there were immediate tributes from some of the sport's past and present champions. "Short Track lost one of the greats today," tweeted US speed skater J.R. Celski, a three-time Olympic medalist and current 500m world record holder. "So sad to hear about Noh Jin-kyu. He will be missed," tweeted Dutch Olympic champion Jorien ter Mors. — AFP



**SANTIAGO DEL ESTERO:** Spain's biker Marc Marquez of Honda celebrates on the podium after winning the MotoGP race of the Argentina Grand Prix at the Termas de Rio Hondo circuit, in Santiago del Estero, Argentina, on Sunday. — AFP



**MARTINSVILLE:** Kyle Busch poses with a second trophy as he celebrates winning the Sprint Cup auto race at Martinsville Speedway on Sunday, in Martinsville. —ap

"That was the key to the race, being able to restart on the bottom like that," Busch said after choosing the inside line, putting Kenseth outside. "We all talked as a group earlier this morning about how we were going to do that and what we were going to do and we all said, with 10 to go, it's pretty much off limits. It was (11) to go, so it was pretty much right on the brink there, so, 'Sorry Matt!'"

When the green flag flew, Busch sailed off, Allmendinger beat Kenseth to the inside position and Kenseth got shuffled back to 15th. Allmendinger finished second, followed by Kyle Larson, Austin Dillon and Brad Keselowski. "I was kind of hoping we'd stay green the last 120 laps," Allmendinger said. "I figured that wasn't going to happen, but I was praying we had a shot at that because I felt like if that happened, we had a great chance to win the race."

Several other drivers who pitted before the final restart started in the sixth row, or further back, of side-by-side racing, and while Larson and Keselowski recovered for top-five finishes, others got caught up in traffic and that allowed Dillon to take fourth out of nowhere.

It was the second straight major disappointment at Martinsville for Kenseth. Last spring, he crashed race leader Joey Logano with 46 laps to go, earning himself a two-race suspension. This time, he seemed poised to challenge Busch for the lead with 35 laps to go until a blown tire by Jamie McMurray caused a caution, bunching up the field.

"I was a little worried there toward the end before that last caution came out that Matt was catching me," Busch said. "He was on me pretty good and I wasn't sure that I had enough brake in order to handle the rest of the day, but fortunately we got a yellow there."

Busch led the most laps at Martinsville since Bobby Hamilton was out front for 378 on April 20, 1998.

The race also was a lost day for Denny Hamlin, one of the favorites going in and the defending champion. Hamlin was running fifth after 221 laps after overcoming a pit road penalty until his car lost control heading into Turn 1 and slammed into the wall, sending him to the garage. He never returned, and finished 42nd. —AP



## JAPAN IRON MAN KITAJIMA CLOSURES IN RIO

**TOKYO:** Japanese swim king Kosuke Kitajima turned back the clock at the national championships yesterday, with a devastating display of power to close in on a fifth successive Olympic appearance. The 33-year-old, who captured double gold in the men's 100 and 200 metres breaststroke at the 2004 and 2008 Olympics, flexed his muscles by qualifying fastest for today's 100m final with a time of 59.62 seconds at Tokyo's

Tatsumi Pool. Japan's latest swimming sensation Kosuke Hagino, meanwhile, booked his place at this summer's Rio Olympics with an equally convincing victory in the men's 400 metres medley.

A chiselled-looking Kitajima became the first Japanese swimmer to qualify for four Olympics four years ago and demonstrated he was not done yet with another strong swim in his semi-final heat. "I wanted a slightly quicker time,"

said Kitajima, who nonetheless landed a psychological blow by edging out young pretender Yasuhiro Koseki (1:00.09) and narrowly dipping under the Olympic qualifying time of 59.63. "But it's been a while since I swam 59-something. I feel this is a reward for all the hard work I've put in. I'd still like to set a personal best again in the final."

Hagino, who was ruled out of last year's world championships with a bro-

ken elbow suffered after falling off a bicycle, stormed to victory in 4:08.90 to qualify for Rio alongside rival Daiya Seto.

"I let a lot of people down last year through my own fault," said Hagino, the reigning Asian champion and bronze medalist at the 2012 London Olympics. "I have to work hard to make it up to everyone," added the 21-year-old. "I'm not happy with that time but I've quali-

fied for the Olympics and I'll look to get some revenge by swimming faster in Rio." Daiya, who retained his world title in Kazan last year in Hagino's absence, had already secured his qualification before the final. In the women's 400m medley, Miho Takahashi qualified for her second straight Olympics, along with Sakiko Shimizu. The Japanese nationals double as the country's Olympic qualifiers.—AFP

## SAGAN'S SEASON ALREADY FULFILLED

**UDENNAARDE:** Peter Sagan will be a tough man to beat at Paris-Roubaix next Sunday despite claiming he has fulfilled his season's objectives.

The world champion won his first 'Monument' race by holding off three-time winner Fabian Cancellara at the Tour of Flanders on Sunday. Adding to his world title in Richmond in the United States last September, this was the biggest win of the talented 26-year-old's career and the Tinkoff rider claimed his year is already a success.

"Another big victory: first the world championships and now this. It's something special because it's with the (world champion's) rainbow jersey that I could win Flanders," said Sagan. "This is my biggest objective in the year from the start: Flanders-Roubaix, and now it's very good."

Sagan will almost certainly go into Paris-Roubaix as the favourite having also won the cobbled classic Gent-Wevelgem a week before Flanders and finished second to Poland's Michal Kwiatkowski two days before that at E3 Harelbeke. So far this season on the cobbles, he's been in a league of his own. Cancellara came into Flanders hoping to become the first man to win the race for a fourth time, but had to admit he'd been bested by a better man. He was clearly disappointed to have missed out on his date with destiny, particularly having joked two days beforehand that he would ask for Belgian nationality if he won.

"Second is not first and it's not history. I didn't win," said the 35-year-old Swiss. "Second was still a big thing. I was quite emotional (on Sunday) morning and I still am now. After so many tries, finishing second is not bad. I aimed for history but Peter showed (on Sunday) he managed things well: he's a deserved winner." Cancellara, who waved to the crowd as he crossed the finish line 25 seconds behind Sagan, is riding his final season as a professional. He will still have the chance on Sunday to match the record number of Paris-Roubaix

victories if he manages to snatch a fourth success there.

### DEGENKOLB MISSING

With German reigning champion John Degenkolb still recovering from a training crash in February and missing the entire Spring Classics season, most will likely expect a Sagan-Cancellara battle.

Sagan, though, had no intention of worrying out Paris-Roubaix just yet. "Now I want to have fun after this big week and next week we will think about next week, not now," he said straight after his Flanders win. He spared a thought, though, for two Belgian cyclists-Antoine Demoitie and Daan Myngheer-who died a week before the Flanders race, the biggest in Belgium which is simply known as De Ronde (the Tour). "I want to dedicate this victory for the two guys who died last week, and also to (Tinkoff team-mate) Maciej Bodnar who had a very bad crash (on Saturday) and unfortunately didn't start (Flanders) because he's in hospital," added Sagan.

Paris-Roubaix's line-up will also be without Greg Van Avermaet, the Belgian winner of the Tirreno-Adriatico stage race last month. He crashed innocuously in the first half of Flanders and was taken to hospital with a broken collarbone, showing his frustration as he sat on the Flemish tarmac, sobbing.

Britain's Team Sky will look to bounce back after ultimately disappointing despite having a seemingly strong squad. Luke Rowe finished fifth and Geraint Thomas was 12th as both came home in the chase group behind Sagan, Cancellara and third-placed Sep Vanmarcke. But Kwiatkowski faded badly in the final 20km despite making the initial attack that took Sagan clear of the group of favourites 30km from home. The Pole, world champion in 2014, finished 27th while Ian Stannard paid for an ambitious attack 40km from the finish and came home 32nd. More will be expected from them at the 'Hell of the North'. —AFP

## BLACKWELL OUT OF COMA

**LONDON:** Nick Blackwell has woken from the induced coma he was placed in following a British middleweight title defeat by Chris Eubank Jr, the former champion's promoter said yesterday. Blackwell, 25, collapsed shortly after his tenth-round stoppage loss to Eubank Jr at London's Wembley Arena on March 26. He was then taken to London's St Mary's Hospital. Despite a bleed on the skull, doctors decided against an operation and instead placed Blackwell in an induced coma.

They subsequently reduced his medication, with Blackwell waking last Saturday and talking to relatives and friends on Sunday. "It was the outcome everyone had been hoping and praying for; Nick had won his toughest fight yet," said a statement released by Hennessy Sports. "On behalf of Nick, his family, and very close friends, we'd like to thank everyone for their continued support and well-wishes. It has been overwhelming at times and has certainly not gone unnoticed."

"Nick Blackwell won the hearts of over three million (television) viewers on March 26 with an astonishing display of all-action bravery and determination. "In the past week, however, he has humbled millions more. He's a fighter."

He's a warrior. He's a true champion and gentleman." During the fight Chris Eubank senior, the father of the new champion, could be heard telling his son to stop hitting Blackwell's head. "Even in sparring, I tell Junior to stay away from the head because his punching is fast, powerful and dangerous," Eubank, a former middleweight and super-middleweight world champion, later told the BBC. "So most certainly I was saying this to protect the fighter."

His ringside instructions were especially poignant as, 25 years ago, Eubank senior stopped Michael Watson in a world title fight that left his beaten opponent with irreparable brain damage and partially paralysed. —AFP



**RANCHO MIRAGE:** Lydia Ko of New Zealand holds the trophy after the final round of the 2016 ANA Inspiration at the Mission Hills Country Club on Sunday in Rancho Mirage, California. — AFP

## KO BIRDIES FINAL HOLE TO WIN LPGA MAJOR AT ANA INSPIRATION

**RANCHO MIRAGE:** Lydia Ko took advantage of Ariya Jutanugarn's late collapse to win the ANA Inspiration Sunday for her second straight major victory and second LPGA Tour win a row.

The top-ranked Ko hit an 88-yard wedge shot to a foot on the par-5 18th to set up her winning birdie - and an unlikely victory leap into Poppie's Pond. She closed with a 3-under 69 to finish at 12 under.

"This is an unbelievable moment," Ko said before jumping into the pond. Jutanugarn had a two-stroke lead at 13 under with three holes to play. The 20-year-old Thai player bogeyed all three holes, three-putting the par-4 16th, failing to get up-and-down from a bunker on the par-3 17th and hooking her drive into the water on 18. "I really get nervous, especially being my first time leading," Jutanugarn said. "Next time, it's going to be so much fun to be there." Charley Hull and In Gee Chun finished a stroke behind Ko, and Jutanugarn ended up fourth at 10 under.

Ko won the final major last season, the Evian Championship in September in France, and took the LPGA Tour event last week in Carlsbad. The 18-year-old New Zealander led 12 LPGA Tour victories, five last year when she was the tour's player of the year.

"It has always been my dream to play on the

LPGA Tour," Ko said. "For these amazing things to be happening it is unbelievable, but it also motivates me to work harder." Ko had a bogey-free round, also holing a 22-foot birdie putt on the par-3 fifth and a 40-footer on the par-3 eighth. She made three key par saves on the back nine, the first with a 15-foot putt after crisscrossing the par-5 11th. She ran in an 18-footer on the par-4 13th, and a 10-footer on 17.

### FIVE-HOLE STRETCH

"Obviously, making those putts on 11 and 13 was crucial, too, but just not knowing anything, I wanted to focus on my game and just what I could control," Ko said. "But on 17, I knew what I needed to do. Something like a miracle needed to happen, so I think 17 was probably the most crucial putt."

Until Sunday, best known for blowing a two-stroke lead with a closing triple bogey at age 17 in the 2013 LPGA Thailand, Jutanugarn made four birdies in a five-hole stretch in the middle of the round to move into position for a breakthrough victory that slipped away. She finished with a 71.

"I got a lot of experience from this week," Jutanugarn said. Hull birdied the 18th for a 69 and her best finish in a major. "I know I can play

well under pressure now when I have to get it going," the 20-year-old English player said. "I'm happy I holed that putt on the last, and I'm proud of myself. It feels great. Lydia hit a great shot into the last, and she should be proud of herself."

Chun also closed with a birdie in a 70. The U.S. Women's Open champion was making her first start after sitting out a month because of a back injury. She was hurt when she was struck by a hard case suitcase that rival South Korean player Ha Na Jang's father dropped down an escalator at the Singapore airport.

Lexi Thompson, the third-round leader, eagled the last hole for a 73 to finish fifth at 9 under. The 2014 winner had three front-nine bogeys and failed to make a birdie. "Just overall tough day," Thompson said. "I struggled today, ball-striking, and the bad ball-striking didn't give me many birdie chances, so I struggled a bit with the putter as well." Michelle Wie, tied for seventh entering the round, shot a 77 to drop into a tie for 36th at 5 over. She's winless since the 2014 U.S. Women's Open and hasn't had a top-10 finish in 31 events. Brooke Henderson shot a 67 for the best round of the day. The 18-year-old Canadian tied for 10th at 7 under and to run her top-10 streak to six events. —AP

## UNHERALDED HERMAN TRUMPS STENSON TO WIN PGA TITLE

**LOS ANGELES:** Journeyman Jim Herman held off top 10 players Henrik Stenson and Dustin Johnson to win his first US PGA Tour title at the Houston Open on Sunday and book a Masters berth. Herman, a 38-year-old who was encouraged by Donald Trump to keep pursuing his PGA Tour dream, had five birdies in a four-under 68 — including a spectacular chip-in from thick hillside rough at 16 that gave him a one-stroke lead he wouldn't relinquish.

"Sorry for the tears, but I'm really happy," Herman told a post-round interviewer having parred the last for the win after an agonizing wait on the 18th tee.

His 15-under total of 273 gave him the narrow triumph over Stenson, the world number seven from Sweden who endured another in a long line of near-misses worldwide since he won the European Tour's season-ending World Tour Championship in 2014.

In a back-and-forth battle, Stenson had briefly taken the lead with a birdie at 13 and was tied for the lead after a birdie at 15. He had five birdies in a four-under 68 for 274, but narrowly missed an 18-foot birdie attempt at the last that would have at least put him in a playoff.

Herman's victory was his first in 106 starts on the PGA Tour. He was working as a pro at one of Trump's golf courses when the property tycoon turned US presidential hopeful encouraged him to keep pushing his competitive career. Now he's headed to the first major of the year at Augusta National. "Never thought it was possible," said Herman, who wears a Trump logo on his shirt.

Johnson, ranked ninth in the world, had six birdies to counter a bogey and a double-bogey in a 69 for 275. He was one shot in front of Spain's Rafa Cabrera Bello, whose sparkling seven-under 65 included five birdies and an eagle at the par-four 12th-where his 306-yard tee shot left him a five-foot putt.

For a few moments it looked like Jordan Spieth would mount a challenge as the world number two got off to a hot start in his bid to build momentum heading into his Masters title defence at Augusta National next week. With renewed rhythm on the greens the 22-year-old

Texan birdied five of his first seven holes to charge up the leaderboard, a run that included a 45-footer at the fifth.

But he bogeyed three of his next four, failing to get up and down from the greenside rough at the tough par-three-ninth before poor shots at 11 and 12 — a second shot to the bank of the

water hazard at 11 and a driver into the water at 12 — cost him two more strokes and after two more birdies he closed with a double-bogey at 18, where he was in the water again.

Spieth signed for a two-under 70 that left him tied for 13th on 280 in a group that also included five-time major winner Phil Mickelson. — AFP



**HUMBLE:** Jim Herman of the United States poses with the trophy after his victory at the Shell Houston Open at the Golf Club of Houston on Sunday in Humble, Texas. — AFP



**LILLE:** People are gathered during the funeral of cyclist Antoine Demoitie, yesterday, in Les Avins. 25-year-old Belgian cyclist Antoine Demoitie died on 27 March in a hospital in Lille, France, after he was hit by a motorcycle following a fall during the Gent-Wevelgem cycling race. — AFP

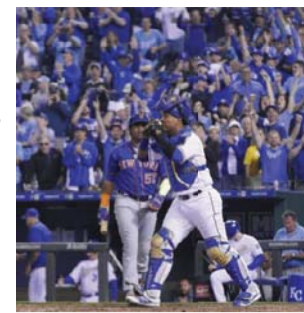




# Sports

Volquez, Hosmer  
star as Royals  
down Mets

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Ko birdies final  
hole to win  
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ATLETICO TOUGHER THAN REAL MADRID, WARNS PIQUE

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OAKLAND: C.J. McCollum #3 of the Portland Trail Blazers goes up for a shot against Stephen Curry #30, Brandon Rush #4, and Leandro Barbosa #19 of the Golden State Warriors at ORACLE Arena on April 3, 2016 in Oakland, California. — AFP

## WARRIORS REBOUND FROM HOME LOSS TO BEAT BLAZERS

OAKLAND: Stephen Curry scored 39 points and the Golden State Warriors bounced back from their first regular-season home loss in more than 14 months by beating the Portland Trail Blazers 136-111 on Sunday night to tie the mark for the second-most wins in a season. Draymond Green added 22 points, 10 rebounds and 10 assists for his 13th triple-double, and Klay Thompson scored 21 for the Warriors, who matched the 1996-97 Chicago Bulls and 1971-72 Los Angeles Lakers with 69 wins. Golden State needs to win four of its final five games to break the record of 72 victories set by Chicago in 1995-96. That chase was dealt a setback Friday when Boston snapped Golden State's record 54-game regular-season home winning streak. Damian Lillard scored 38 points to lead the Trail Blazers, who had their four-game winning streak broken.

### CLIPPERS 114, WIZARDS 109

Chris Paul had 27 points and 12 rebounds and Blake Griffin scored six points in his return from a three-month absence to help the Los Angeles Clippers beat the Washington Wizards. Griffin shot 2 of 7 and contributed five rebounds and two assists while playing 24 minutes after missing 45 games because of quadriceps and hand injuries. The team went 30-15 and clinched a playoff spot during his absence. Marcin Gortat scored 21 points and Markieff Morris added 18 for the Wizards, who never led in losing for the fifth time in seven games.

### CAVALIERS 112, HORNETS 103

LeBron James scored 31 points, J.R. Smith matched a season high with 27 and the Cleveland Cavaliers knocked down 16 3-pointers while playing without an injured Kyrie Irving in a win over the Charlotte Hornets. James added 12 assists and eight rebounds and Kevin Love added 25 points for the Cavs, who held off a comeback in the fourth quarter to open a 31/2-game lead over idle Toronto for the top playoff seed in the Eastern Conference. Smith made six 3-pointers and Love had five. Kemba Walker scored 29 points - 21 in the second half - and Marvin Williams added 22 for the Hornets, who got within 96-92 in the fourth before Smith and Love answered with 3-pointers.

### ROCKETS 118, THUNDER 110

James Harden had 41 points with nine assists to help the Houston Rockets improve their playoff chances with a win over the Oklahoma City Thunder. With 30 seconds left, Harden stole a pass from Kevin Durant and found Patrick Beverley for a transition dunk to give Houston an eight-point lead and the Rockets held on for an important victory. Durant had 33 points and eight rebounds for the Thunder, who led by six early in the fourth until Harden hit back-to-back 3s to tie the game at 93. Oklahoma City lost for just the second time in the past three weeks and had won nine of its previous 10 entering Sunday.

### MAVERICKS 88, TIMBERWOLVES 78

Wesley Matthews hit six 3-pointers and scored 19 points and the Dallas Mavericks topped the Minnesota Timberwolves. J.J. Barea scored 21 points and the Mavericks (39-38) made 14 of 40 3-pointers to overcome 38.6 percent shooting for their fourth straight victory. They forced 18 turnovers and held their opponent under 100 points for the fourth straight game as they push for one of the final playoff spots in the Western Conference. Andrew Wiggins scored 30 points and Karl-Anthony Towns had 11 points, 21 rebounds and nine assists for the Timberwolves. Ricky Rubio had nine points and five assists, but left with four minutes to play after taking a shot to the face.

### PELICANS 106, NETS 87

Tim Frazier had career highs with 19 points and 13 assists, Luke Babbitt added 21 points and the New Orleans Pelicans beat the

Brooklyn Nets. Alexis Ajinca added 16 for the Pelicans as the Nets lost their fifth straight game. Sean Kilpatrick led the Nets with 15 points. Henry Sims and Markel Brown each had 12 for the Nets.

### JAZZ 101, SUNS 86

Gordon Hayward led five Utah players in double figures with 22 points, and the Jazz boosted their playoff chances with a win over the Phoenix Suns. Rodney Hood added 18 points, Derrick Favors had 17, Trey Lyles 13 and Rudy Gobert 12 for the Jazz, who scored 26 points off 22 Suns turnovers and committed only 10 turnovers themselves. Mirza Teletovic led the Suns with 24 points, and Tyson Chandler added a season-high 21 to go with 18 rebounds. Phoenix has lost six straight.

### MAGIC 119, GRIZZLIES 107

Nikola Vucevic scored 25 points off the bench, Victor Oladipo and Evan Fournier added 22 points each and the Orlando Magic topped the struggling Memphis Grizzlies. The Grizzlies, trying to hold onto the fifth seed in the Western Conference, have lost six straight games for their longest skid since November 2009. Orlando, meanwhile, has won three straight games at home and four of its last five. The Magic (33-44) continued their offensive surge that had seen them average more than 118 points in their previous four games heading into Sunday. Memphis was led by Matt Barnes, who had 24 points.

### CELTICS 107, LAKERS 100

Isaiah Thomas scored 26 points and Boston clinched a playoff berth while besting Kobe Bryant for the final time with a victory over the Lakers. Jae Crowder added 22 points for the Celtics, who blew an early 17-point lead and survived a tense fourth quarter in their first game since ending the Golden State Warriors' NBA-record 54-game home winning streak. Bryant scored 34 points in his final showdown with the Lakers' historic rival, putting up the second highest-scoring performance of his farewell season. He hit a jumper with 56 seconds left, and Julius Randle's three-point play moments later trimmed Boston's lead to four points. But Bryant missed two late jumpers, and the Celtics secured their eighth playoff berth in nine years.

### BULLS 102, BUCKS 98

Jimmy Butler scored 25 points on 10-of-11 shooting, Pau Gasol had 16 points and eight rebounds and the Chicago Bulls held off a second-half surge by the Milwaukee Bucks. Butler had six points and an assist in the final 3:45, when the Bucks had narrowed a 19-point deficit to one at 87-86. Justin Holiday hit a tough jumper from the corner with 1:15 left and later grabbed a defensive rebound on a missed finger roll by Milwaukee's Giannis Antetokounmpo with 43.9 seconds to go. Antetokounmpo scored a career-high 34 points, while Jabari Parker added 24 for Milwaukee.

### PACERS 92, KNICKS 87

Paul George returned from an injured ankle to make the tiebreaking jumper with 23.6 seconds left, and the Indiana Pacers beat the New York Knicks to tie for seventh place in the Eastern Conference. The Pacers blew an 18-point lead in the second half against a Knicks team missing its two best scorers, but recovered to join Detroit at 41-36 and stay two games ahead of ninth-place Chicago. George finished with 20 points and nine rebounds, returning to the game midway through the fourth quarter after the Pacers had said he was questionable to play further because of a sore left ankle. Sasha Vujacic scored 21 points for the Knicks, who rested Carmelo Anthony and had fellow starters Kristaps Porzingis and Jose Calderon already out with injuries. Arron Afflalo added 15 points. — AP

## MESSI DENIES TAX EVASION IN PANAMA PAPERS SCANDAL

BARCELONA: The family of Lionel Messi denied yesterday that he was involved in tax evasion after the Barcelona star emerged as one of many personalities accused of shady offshore dealings in the Panama Papers scandal.

"The Messi family wants to make clear that Lionel Messi has not carried out any of the acts attributed to him, and accusations he created a...tax evasion plot, including a network of money-laundering, are false and insulting," it said in a statement.

The scandal erupted on Sunday when media groups made public a year-long worldwide investigation into a trove of 11.5 million documents leaked from a Panama-based law firm that exposed a tangle of offshore financial dealings by the elite.

Among the accused are close associates of Russian President Vladimir Putin, relatives of Chinese leader Xi Jinping, Iceland's Prime Minister Sigmundur David Gunnlaugsson as well as sports celebrities and screen stars.

Messi and his father are named as owners of a Panama company that had not previously been disclosed during a Spanish probe into their tax affairs. "The Panama company to which they refer to is a totally inactive company that never had any funds or any open current accounts," the Messi family said.

They added that the firm was created by the family's former tax advisers and that everything had since been brought into line where Messi's fiscal situation was concerned. Barcelona published a message of support to their star player on their official website.

"The club supports the arguments which the Messi family published in a statement today," said the Barca statement. "Since the very first moment that the 'Panama papers' which accuse Leo Messi were released, FC Barcelona has sent its affection and support to the player and to his whole family.

"The Club makes all of its judicial means, fiscal and administrative, at the family's disposal in order to make his actions and honour clear in this case."

### FRONT COMPANIES

Messi and his father Jorge have been charged with tax fraud in a separate



Lionel Messi

case for allegedly failing to declare 4.16 million euros (\$4.74 million) in taxes related to his image rights between 2007 and 2009 through front companies in Belize and Uruguay.

The pair are accused of ceding the player's image rights to the companies in order to avoid declaring money made from lucrative deals with sponsors in Spain. Their trial in this case is set to begin on May 31 at a court in Barcelona and is expected to run until June 3.

Lawyers acting on behalf of the tax office have asked for both defendants to be slapped with prison sentences of 22-and-a-half months. Both father and son have denied the accusations and instead blamed a former financial advisor.

Jorge Messi made a voluntary corrective payment of four million euros in August 2013 which is expected to mitigate any sentence. Even if convicted it is unlikely that either Messi or his father would enter prison as jail terms of less than two years are usually suspended for first-time offences in Spain. — AFP

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## AL SAYER & SONS WIN 'OUTSTANDING CUSTOMER SERVICE AWARD'

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LOS ANGELES: This file photo taken on January 24, 2016 shows a Virgin America plane near Los Angeles International Airport. — AFP

## ALASKA AIR GROUP TO BUY VIRGIN AMERICA IN \$4BN DEAL DEBATE REIGNITES OVER AIRLINE CONSOLIDATION

**NEW YORK:** Alaska Air Group Inc is buying Virgin America in a deal worth around \$4 billion, making Alaska the biggest carrier on the West Coast and reigniting the debate over airline consolidation. The proposed merger also would give Seattle-based Alaska a foothold in key airports in New York and Washington DC, increasing the airline's appeal to business travelers.

"Our goal is to be the premier airline for people along the West Coast," Alaska CEO Brad Tilden told investors on a call yesterday morning. In Virgin's hometown of San Francisco, for instance, Alaska currently only flies to Seattle. Following the merger, it also would fly from San Francisco to several key markets including New York, Los Angeles, Las Vegas, Chicago, Boston, San Diego, Denver and Washington DC.

The merger pushes Alaska ahead of JetBlue Airways - which had also bid for Virgin - to become the fifth largest carrier in the US based on passengers. The combined airline would control 5.5 percent of domestic passengers, compared to New York-based JetBlue's 4.2 percent. By comparison, the four largest US airlines - American Airlines, Delta Air Lines, Southwest Airlines and United Airlines - controlled a combined 83 percent of domestic seats in the past year, according

to an AP analysis of data from Diio, an airline-schedule tracking service.

### Winning over customers

Alaska said the deal will add Virgin's 200 daily departures to its existing 1,000 daily flights. The airline currently serves 112 destinations in the US, Canada and Mexico. Both airlines have very loyal followings in their respective hometowns. Virgin quickly won over passengers with its new jets, friendly crews, trendy mood lighting, extensive seatback entertainment systems and meals on-demand. All of that could go away if Alaska chooses to fly a uniform fleet, a decision company executives say they are still debating.

Alaska fliers are just as loyal, loving the airline's compassion. Like other carriers, it charges for bag fees but was the first to add a service guarantee: if a bag doesn't make it to the claim area within 20 minutes, fliers get \$25 off a future trip or 2,500 bonus miles. Virgin America's Elevate loyalty program members will become part of Alaska Air's Mileage Plan. The two loyalty programs will remain separate until the acquisition closes.

Virgin America got off the ground with support from minor

ity owner Richard Branson and began flying in 2007. It went public in November 2014 with an initial stock offering priced at \$23 per share. Virgin, which turned profitable - barely - in 2013, earned a record \$340.5 million last year. The airline slowed down its rapid growth and got help from low fuel prices. Virgin is being forced to restart that growth this year as it takes delivery of new jets ordered years ago that can't easily be cancelled. New routes often start at a loss.

### Loyal Boeing customer

Alaska first approached Virgin about a sale in the fall and pending approval by Virgin shareholders in June and by government regulators - hopes to close by the end of this year. Alaska Airlines will pay \$57 in cash per Virgin America share. That's a 47 percent premium to its Friday closing price of \$38.90. Virgin's shares rose 40 percent in morning trading. The companies put the transaction's value at about \$4 billion, including debt and capitalized aircraft operating leases.

The combined business will be based in Seattle with Tilden as its CEO. It will have about 280 aircraft including regional planes. Alaska has been a loyal Boeing customer for years, fly-

ing almost entirely a fleet of 737s, manufactured just a few miles from its headquarters. Virgin only uses Airbus jets.

The deal marks a shift in the size of consolidations within the airline industry. For more than a decade consolidation swept through the major players, reducing the largest nine carriers in 2005 to four airlines by the end of 2013. The Alaska buy-out of Virgin indicates that consolidation has shifted to smaller players.

While Virgin has experienced growth in Dallas and added new service to Hawaii and Denver, the airline was having trouble getting enough takeoff and landing slots at busy New York airports, where access is restricted by government limits. Its smaller size and schedule made it difficult for the company to compete with bigger carriers for lucrative business travelers.

The deal is anticipated to add to adjusted earnings per share in the first full year, excluding integration costs, and boost annual revenues 27 percent to more than \$7 billion. Alaska Air said that it expects about \$300 million to \$350 million in one-time integration costs. Virgin America Inc's stock jumped 40.6 percent yesterday morning, to \$54.70. Alaska Air Group Inc, shares fell 4.5 percent, to \$78.36. — AP



PARIS: In this Sept 17, 2014 file photo, travelers wait at an Air France customer service desk at Paris Charles de Gaulle airport. — AP

## FEMALE AIR FRANCE CREW CAN DROP OUT OF IRAN FLIGHTS OVER HEADSCARF

**PARIS:** Women employees of Air France will be allowed to opt out of working on the resumed flights to Iran so that they can avoid having to wear a headscarf, a company official said yesterday. The airline will appoint a "special unit" to replace those who do not want to fly to Tehran, he said.

"Any woman assigned to the Paris-Tehran flight who for reasons of personal choice would refuse to wear the headscarf upon leaving the plane will be reassigned to another destination, and thus will not be obliged to do this flight," human resources official Gilles Gateau told Europe 1 radio.

Air France is to resume on April 17 its Paris-to-Tehran service, which had been suspended since 2008 because of

international sanctions against Iran over its nuclear ambitions. Unions say company executives sent staff an internal memo regarding flights to Tehran saying that female cabin crew would be required to wear trousers on board with a loose fitting jacket and must cover their hair with a scarf when they leave the plane. The headscarf rule is already in place when flying to certain destinations such as Saudi Arabia. Unions, who held talks with the human resources chief yesterday, argue that an escape clause was already in place for flights to Conakry in Guinea during the Ebola crisis last year and for services to Tokyo following the 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster. — AFP

## MOST OF GULF GAINS DESPITE WEAKER OIL; EGYPT RECOVERS

**DUBAI:** Investors in most Gulf stock markets shrugged off further losses in oil prices yesterday, while foreign buyers helped to lift Egypt's bourse. Riyadh's index recouped most of the previous day's drop and rose 1.4 percent, as local retail investors bought back speculative stocks that they had dumped on Sunday. The insurance sub index jumped 2.3 percent after tumbling 3.5 percent on the previous day.

The petrochemical sector also rebounded, adding 1.5 percent as Saudi Basic Industries, the largest listed petrochemical producer, added 2.0 percent. Almarai, the biggest dairy producer in the Gulf, added 1.0 percent. The company said shareholders had approved a capital increase for the company through an issue of bonus shares. Saudi Airlines Catering added 2.0 percent after the company said it had signed a contract with Saudi Airlines Real Estate Development Co to provide catering and other entertainment services for the Saudia Hotel.

Telecommunications firm Zain Saudi rallied 9.5 percent to 9.20 riyals; Riyadh Capital issued a note yesterday affirming its "hold" rating for the stock with a price target of 9.50 riyals. The mean price target of three analysts polled by Thomson Reuters, including Riyadh Capital, is 9.25 riyals. "We believe that Zain will be able to strongly grow its subscriber base to reach 12.4 million subscribers in the first quarter of 2016," said the note.

### Technical resistance

The Dubai index jumped 2.3 percent to 3,379 points, nearing technical resistance on the March peaks of 3,397-3,421 points as momentum started to build in the latter half of the session, with volume hitting a three-week high. Builders Drake and Scull and Arabtec each rallied over 6.5 percent and attracted 56 percent of total trading volume combined.

Blue-chip companies have been largely dormant for several weeks as local speculative traders continue to steer markets. Emaar Properties rose 2.6 percent in modest volume. Abu Dhabi National Energy Co (TAQA) jumped 13 percent after a 6.1 percent loss on Sunday. Last week the energy company reported a narrower fourth-quarter loss. Dana Gas added 3.9 percent.

But telecommunications firm Etisalat, the largest listed compa-

ny by market value, dipped 0.5 percent. Its shares will go ex-dividend on Tuesday. Doha's benchmark edged down 0.2 percent in a second day of lethargic trade. Oil rig provider Gulf International Services fell 1.0 percent.

Egypt's main index, which initially fell, ended 0.7 percent higher in modest volume as foreign investors were net buyers, bourse data showed. Stocks preferred by international asset managers rose with Commercial International Bank and Global Telecom Holding, adding 1.7 and 1.3 percent respectively. — Reuters

## CLIMATE CHANGE PUTS TRILLIONS OF DOLLARS OF FINANCIAL ASSETS AT RISK

**OSLO:** Trillions of dollars of non-bank financial assets around the world are vulnerable to the effects of global warming, according to a study yesterday that says tougher action to curb greenhouse gas emissions makes sense for investors. Rising temperatures and the dislocation caused by related droughts, floods and heatwaves will slow global economic growth and damage the performance of stocks and bonds, according to the report, led by the London School of Economics. "It makes financial sense to a risk-neutral investor to cut emissions, and even more so to the risk-averse," lead author Professor Simon Dietz, an environmental economist, told Reuters.

A global climate summit in Paris last December set a goal of limiting global warming to "well below" 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 Fahrenheit) above pre-industrial times, while leaving open precisely how this would be achieved. If the rise were limited to 2C by 2100, the study's central scenario put the total of current financial assets that could be damaged at \$1.7 trillion. — Reuters



# CAMBODIA ADOPTS CONTROVERSIAL UNION LAW

**PHNOM PENH:** Cambodia's parliament yesterday approved a controversial draft law regulating trade unions, to the dismay of labor activists who fear it will curb their ability to protect garment workers — the backbone of the economy.

The government of strongman Prime Minister Hun Sen says the law is aimed at regulating the country's 3,400 trade unions. But unionists and international human rights groups say it will dilute the power of labor groups in a sector still rife with abuse.

Around 700,000 factory workers form the bedrock of Cambodia's \$7 billion textile industry, which supplies brands including Gap, Nike and H&M. Critics have expressed particular alarm at provisions forcing unions to report their finances to the government each year as well as granting authorities further powers to close down labor groups.

"The government wants to restrict our

rights by creating this law," Ath Thorn, president of the Coalition of Cambodian Apparel Workers' Democratic Union, told AFP. "The law will limit our work... and employers can request for the dissolution of unions or find ways to block unions from protesting," he added.

The draft law still needs approval by the Senate but its passage is a near-forgone conclusion since the upper house is dominated by ruling party lawmakers. Two labor activists were injured yesterday morning during scuffles with authorities outside parliament.

Hun Sen, who has ruled Cambodia for more than three decades and tolerates little dissent, has frequently clashed with unions. Influential garment factory owners want to restrict the number of unions, blaming them for rocky labor relations that they say threatens to undermine a lucrative sector.

Parliament also approved a rare cabi-



**PHNOM PENH:** A Worker Union member, Suth Chet, 36, center, is beaten by district security personnel during a protest rally at a blocked street near National Assembly. — AP

net reshuffle by Hun Sen, a move he described as a "necessary measure" as he gears up for local polls next year and a general election in 2018. Hun Sen has surrounded himself with a coterie of loyalists who are rarely moved. In total 26 officials were promoted or reappointed to other portfolios while two ministers were removed.

Among those reshuffled were Hor Namhong, Hun Sen's close ally who had been foreign minister for 18 years. He was replaced by telecommunications minister Prak Sokhon, though Hor Namhong will remain a deputy prime minister. Analysts say the reshuffle is an attempt to halt Hun Sen's waning popularity ahead of upcoming polls. "The coming elections are certainly on his mind," analyst Ou Virak told AFP. Opposition politicians accuse Hun Sen's party of rigging the 2013 elections in their favor, a charge they deny. — AFP



**NEW YORK:** The statue of George Washington on the steps of Federal Hall faces the facade of the New York Stock Exchange. — AP

## KASHKARI TAKES ON WALL ST FROM FARM-RICH FED REGION

**NEW YORK:** From his seat atop the Fed's smallest bank, in a region known for fracking, farming and ranching, Neel Kashkari wants to make sure he's heard well beyond the northern plains. Since becoming president of the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis this year, the 42-year-old Kashkari has gone on a media blitz, visiting nine major media outlets in two days and creating a Twitter hashtag to promote his view that the biggest US banks should break up.

On Monday, he will host a symposium at his bank in downtown Minneapolis entitled "Ending Too Big To Fail," giving fierce critics of Wall Street's behemoths a platform to present their views. Becoming the Fed's bad cop is the latest ambitious move in a high-flying career that has taken Kashkari from Goldman Sachs Group Inc, to the Treasury Department at the height of the financial crisis to a run for California governor.

"He's trying to swing way above the weight of the Minneapolis Fed. He didn't come from California just to rub elbows with ranchers in Helena," said Dick Bove, an analyst with Rafferty Capital Markets, referring to the capital of Montana, a state in the Minneapolis Fed's region.

Kashkari's critics argue he is using the "too big to fail" issue as a springboard to higher places of authority. He says he's only working toward prudent financial regulation. Kashkari's crusade kicked off with a Feb. 16 speech, in which he compared the aftermath of large bank failures to that of a nuclear reactor meltdown. He told Reuters a few days later that the symposium is intended to come up with a plan to prevent big banks from receiving big taxpayer bailouts, the way they did in 2008. That's a subject he knows intimately.

At Treasury, he ran the Troubled Asset Relief Program, which infused \$700 billion into banks, automakers and insurers. The bailout played an important role in stabilizing the financial system during the crisis, but remains controversial. Kashkari now says "bolder, transformational options" are needed beyond a post-crisis regulation that requires big banks to outline plans to unwind themselves if they fail - known as their "living wills."

Kashkari launched a social media campaign with the hashtag #EndingTBTF to promote his event and encourage the public to contribute ideas. He has amassed 10,300 followers on Twitter, where his retweets of economic news mix with musings on the superiority of Yuengling beer and photos of his dogs.

### Media magnet

Kashkari is not the first Fed official - even within the Minneapolis Fed - to argue that much more should be done to prevent future bailouts of big banks. Gary Stern, who led the Minneapolis Fed for 24 years, was vocal about the problems created by big banks. Dallas Fed President Richard Fisher has also called for breaking them up.

There are plenty of critics outside the Fed, too. Democratic presidential candidate Bernie Sanders bashes Wall Street at every campaign stop. Even former Citigroup Inc CEO Sandy Weill, who created the so-called "universal" banking model in the 1990s, now says big banks are better off broken up. Kashkari, however, may have more of a knack for bringing mainstream attention to a subject long the purview of policy wonks and left-leaning politicians.

During and after his time at the

Treasury, he was the subject of admiring media profiles - including a photo spread in the Washington Post that showed him splitting logs and building a shed at a cabin in rural California. With his clean-shaven head, thick brows and intense gaze, he made it into People Magazine's 2008 "Sexiest Man Alive" issue alongside Prince Harry and actor James Franco.

As the Republican challenger to California Governor Jerry Brown in 2014, he spent a week on the streets of Fresno pretending to be homeless and posted a YouTube video about it. "Up against a hugely popular incumbent, he had to find ways of getting attention," said Claremont McKenna College politics professor Jack Pitney. He lost to Brown by 20 percentage points.

The son of Indian immigrants, Kashkari earned an MBA from the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania and joined Goldman Sachs. In 2006, he followed former Goldman CEO Hank Paulson to the Treasury Department, where Paulson served as secretary under President George W. Bush. Between that stint and his gubernatorial run, he spent a few years at bond-fund giant Pacific Investment Management Co.

As Minneapolis Fed president, Kashkari oversees a bank with \$35 billion in assets in a region where oil, timber, farming and ranching are among the important industries. Although none of the U.S. banks considered "too big to fail" are based there, Kashkari said his staff highlighted the issue as a top priority. Kashkari's position puts him at odds with peers who have spent years crafting rules to make the financial system safer. In coming weeks, a group of regulators is expected to release the latest information on banks' "living wills."

### 'Criticize the messenger'

Regional Fed presidents are arguably less influential than their Washington-based colleagues. Most vote on monetary policy once every three years, while Fed governors have a permanent vote on the policy-setting committee.

Fed presidents typically have even less sway on regulatory matters. Their bank supervisory powers are largely limited to carrying out policies set by Washington. When Fed presidents have raised alarms on regulatory issues, they have rarely budged national policy.

Ten current and former regulators, bankers and lobbyists who spoke to Reuters said they believe Kashkari's "too big to fail" campaign is motivated by his career ambitions. They asked not to be named because they did not want to damage relationships with Kashkari. In his February interview with Reuters, Kashkari said he had no motive beyond responsible regulation. On Friday, he said critics are trying to distract from the real issues he is addressing at Monday's event.

"The Wall Street critics can't argue with me on the substance of too-big-to-fail, so they criticize the messenger," he told Reuters in an email. "I welcome their criticisms because they are an implicit admission that I am right." Kashkari has plenty of supporters, too. They believe his experience in banking, regulation and politics makes him a credible advocate. "As a moderate, he may be offering some sort of aid and comfort to the notion of breaking up the banks," said Jim Angel, a professor at Georgetown University's McDonough School of Business. — Reuters

# THE OFFSHORE ACCOUNTS USED TO HIDE WEALTH, AVOID TAXES

## 11.5 MILLION RECORDS FOUND HELD OFFSHORE HOLDINGS

**TOKYO:** An investigation published by an international coalition of more than 100 media outlets, based on 11.5 million records of offshore holdings, details how politicians, celebrities and other famous people use banks, law firms and offshore shell companies to hide their assets.

The International Consortium of Investigative Journalists, a nonprofit organization based in Washington, said an anonymous source provided internal documents from the Panama-based law firm Mossack Fonseca, one of the world's biggest creators of shell companies.

Ramon Fonseca, a co-founder of Mossack Fonseca, said the documents were obtained illegally by hacking but confirmed that many of them were real. He denied his firm has engaged in any wrongdoing. This is a look at offshore accounts and how they are used:

### What are offshore accounts?

Offshore bank accounts and other financial dealings in another country can be used to evade regulatory oversight or tax obligations. Companies or individuals often use shell companies, initially incorporated without significant

assets or operations, to disguise ownership or other information about the funds involved.

### Where are most offshore accounts?

Panama, the Cayman Islands and Bermuda are among more than a dozen small, low-tax locations that specialize in handling business services and investments of non-resident companies.

### Legitimate uses for offshore accounts:

Companies or trusts can be set up in offshore locations for legitimate uses such as business finance, mergers and acquisitions and estate or tax planning, according to the global money laundering watchdog, the Financial Action Task Force.

### Illicit uses of offshore accounts:

Shell companies and other entities can be misused by terrorists and others involved in international and financial crimes to conceal sources of funds and ownership. The ICIJ says the files from Mossack Fonseca include information on 214,488 offshore entities linked to 14,153 clients in 200 countries and territories.

### Efforts to crack down on financial havens:

The Financial Action Task Force and other regulatory agencies publish assessments identifying weaknesses in enforcement of anti-money laundering and counter-terrorism financing efforts of specific countries and territories. Financial and legal professionals get training on how to spot potential violations, since in some cases lawyers and bankers are unaware they are handling illicit transactions. The EU has stepped up efforts to crack down on tax avoidance by multinational corporations.

### Past scandals over offshore accounts:

Banking secrecy laws can obscure offshore financial dealings. But the disclosure of other leaked documents by the ICIJ and other organizations in late 2014 drew attention to sweet tax deals offered by the tiny European country of Luxembourg to multinational companies and ultra-wealthy individuals. In the 1980s, the Bank of Credit and Commerce International, an international bank founded by a Pakistani financier, was implicated in wide-scale money laundering and other illegal financial dealings. — AP



**PANAMA CITY:** A marquee of the Arango Orillac Building lists the Mossack Fonseca law firm. — AP

# AUSTRIAN WATCHDOG INVESTIGATES TWO BANKS AFTER PANAMA LEAK

**VIENNA:** Austrian regulators are investigating whether two banks named in an international data leak followed procedures to prevent money laundering, one of the firms having attracted attention for its lending to a confectionery company owned by Ukraine's president.

The leaked "Panama Papers" cover a period over almost 40 years, from 1977 until last December, and allegedly show that some companies domiciled in tax havens were being used for suspected money laundering, arms and drug deals and tax evasion. Two Austrian media groups that were among the more than 100 news organizations that jointly investigated the documents' contents identified Raiffeisen Bank International and Hypo Landesbank Vorarlberg as companies named in the trove.

"We are verifying whether the banks did their work thoroughly beforehand," a spokesman for Austrian financial markets regulator FMA said, citing required checks on matters such as the purpose of transactions and people involved. "We are verifying that in the course of an on-site inspection," he said, adding that the FMA can refer matters to the criminal authorities if it suspects wrongdoing. The Austrian news organizations involved in the investigation, broadcaster ORF and weekly newspaper Falter, reported a connection between Raiffeisen and the Roshen Company owned by Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko.

The bank had made a loan of \$115 million to Roshen secured against the holdings of a company based in the British Virgin Islands, Linquist Holdings Limited, ORF and Falter reported.

Raiffeisen said it had complied with legal provisions on the prevention of money laundering but could not comment on specific cases because of banking secrecy rules. There were also limits to its ability to carry out checks, it said in a statement.

"As we are not a government institution, a thorough screening of customers and transactions is not possible," said Raiffeisen, which

according to ORF and Falter performed similar transactions involving Linquist and other offshore firms. ORF said Hypo Landesbank Vorarlberg-majority-owned by the province of Vorarlberg, which borders Liechtenstein and Switzerland-was connected to offshore firms through trustees in Liechtenstein and much of the money trail led to Russia.

"At no point have we violated money-lau-

ndering stipulations or sanctions, as legal stipulations are taken very seriously and followed very fastidiously in our company," Hypo Vorarlberg said in a statement. The criminal investigations bureau, a branch of the Interior Ministry, and the Austrian prosecutors' office in charge of economic crimes and corruption said they had taken no action so far as there was not enough concrete information. — Reuters

## EU BACKS COMMISSIONER OVER WIFE'S 'PANAMA PAPERS' LINKS

**BRUSSELS:** The European Commission defended yesterday EU climate commissioner Miguel Arias Canete, saying he appeared to have obeyed its rules by disclosing his wife's links with a firm caught up in the "Panama Papers" scandal.

Overnight, a media probe into millions of documents leaked from a Panama-based law firm exposed a tangle of financial dealings by global elites, from aides of Russian President Vladimir Putin to relatives of Chinese President Xi Jinping, sports celebrities and screen stars.

Among others, the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists said Canete's wife, Micaela Domecq Solis-Beaumont, was linked to Rinconada Investments Group, a Panama company registered in 2005. European Commission spokesman Margaritis Schinas, asked about the Panama connection, told reporters that everything seemed to be in order and that Canete had informed the EU's executive arm of his and his wife's business interests when he took up office in 2014. "His declaration appears to be in compliance with the code of conduct for commissioners as it includes all the professional activities and financial interests of the commissioner's wife that would pose a potential conflict of interest," Schinas said.

"As far as the company (Rinconada) referred to

in the news is concerned, according to the information given by the commissioner, this company has been inactive for several years before he took office in November 2014," he added. In his latest declaration of interests, dated July 14, 2015, Caneta lists two companies owned by his wife-Agricola Micaela Domecq and NOVA 19 S.L.

Rinconada is not listed on the document which can be seen on the European Commission's website under the entry for Canete. The Panama law firm at the heart of the document leak, Mossack Fonseca, listed Rinconada as inactive in January 2010, the ICIJ said on its website.

Schinas, asked about the reports about Canete's wife, said the commissioner had informed Commission head Jean-Claude Juncker of the situation at the same time as he had replied to ICIJ journalist questions on the subject. Offshore financial dealings are not illegal in themselves but may be abused to hide assets from tax authorities, launder the proceeds of criminal activities or conceal misappropriated or politically inconvenient wealth. The European Commission has made it a priority to crack down on tax avoidance under Juncker, who was himself snared in charges that he had allowed sweetheart tax deals with major companies during his 19 years as Luxembourg prime minister. — AFP

ASIA TRACK WALL ST GAINS, TOKYO DOWN AGAIN

HONG KONG: Japanese stocks fell for a fifth straight session yesterday as the yen strengthened against the dollar...

there was also a modest pick-up in hourly wages. That was followed by a report showing US manufacturing activity increased in March for the first time in six months.

run away on the Fed, but on the other, it certainly still showed, together with a rebound in (manufacturing data), that the economy is still performing well overall.

were also gains in Manila and Jakarta. Hong Kong, Shanghai and Taipei were closed for a public holiday. In early European trade London added 0.1 percent, while Frankfurt lost 0.1 percent and Paris slipped 0.3 percent.

Salman, suggested to Bloomberg News last week that the kingdom would only freeze output if the move was mirrored by Iran and other major producers.

Prices had been rising in March to levels above \$40 a barrel after Saudi Arabia and Russia agreed to hold talks with other crude majors to address a supply glut.

Oil extends losses Singapore gained 0.4 percent, Seoul added 0.3 percent and Wellington put on 0.5 percent. There

Daily Kuwait Stock Exchange Report Monday 04 April 2016. Includes tables for Index, Trades, Security, Real Estate, Investment Instruments, Technology, and Insurance.



TOKYO: A man looks at an electronic stock board of a securities firm. —AP

National Bank of Kuwait Financial Markets Daily Report. Includes Global Stock Indices, MENA Stock Indices, Global Currencies Exchange Rate, MENA Currencies Exchange Rate, Global Interest Rates, and Global Bond Yields.







## AL SAYER & SONS WIN 'OUTSTANDING CUSTOMER SERVICE AWARD'

**KUWAIT:** In recognition of its outstanding continuous performance over eight years in a row, Toyota Motor Corporation recognized Mohamed Naser Al Sayer and Sons (MNSS) one of the Al Sayer Group Holding Companies as an appreciation of the impressive successes and continuous outstanding achievements, by bestowing 'Outstanding Customer Service Award' for the 8th consecutive year during a special ceremony held at The Convention Centre, Shuwaikh.

The event was attended by Yoshiro Nobe General Manager, Overseas Service Division, Masayuki Fukumori Project General Manager, Field Operations in the presence of Mubarak Naser Al Sayer Chief Executive Officer, Paul Reynolds Chief Operating Officer, Ibrahim Al-Fouzan Business Director Group Service Division along with Management Officials from MNSS.

Crediting Mohamed Naser Al Sayer on this achievement Yoshiro Nobe General Manager, Overseas Service Division said "Everybody has successfully worked under the leadership of Mr. Mubarak Naser Al Sayer towards this outstanding achievement, dedicated to accomplish the desired group goals and the best results to reflect the success of the strategy by providing excellent customer service.

MNSS has firmly rooted KAIZEN culture which is TOYOTA's DNA everywhere and has learned a lot of them. We believe that you will keep providing the best service to customers in Kuwait, exceeding their expectations to stay one of the most recognized distributors in the world. Wish for you growing success."

On this occasion Mubarak Naser Al Sayer, CEO Al Sayer Group said "Today we marked yet another milestone in the history of Al Sayer Group and MNSS. Eight times in a row



we have won the Outstanding Customer Service Award from Toyota Motor Corporation, which also puts us among the top 7 distributors in the World. This is a testimony of our strong and consistent team efforts towards building a true culture of customer care. Congratulations to Group Service and Spare Parts team members for your direct and indirect contributions for this remarkable achievement."

According to Paul Reynolds COO Al Sayer Group "Customer satisfaction influence potentially constitutes to be a vital element for successful after sales operations, hence immense focus in this area goes into winning this Award. Not just to win it, but because by winning we are

also contributing in a major way to achieve best results for Al Sayer Group in the region by working hard to run a sustainable business. He also reminded the importance and strength of Customer Care skills in the present competitive market."

Ibrahim Al Fouzan, Business Director, Group Service Division said "This year MNSS achieved the highest rating among other Toyota Distributors across the globe. So I would like use this opportunity to congratulate all our team members from service & parts Division for their hard work and commitment. I also appreciate our central functions including Technical & Warranty Department,

Customer Relation Department, Technical Training Department & Field Operations for their valuable contribution for this remarkable achievement."

For Al Sayer Group business units, 2016 is the year to push the boundaries of customer service. It is the year to transform customer service and imbibe values of guest hospitality, considering every customer as a guest and making them feel at home while visiting any Al Sayer facility. Board of Directors and Management has encouraged all employees of the Group to work towards building a culture of hospitality within all the divisions and departments.

## THE LONGINES EQUESTRIAN COLLECTION: A TRIBUTE TO THE BRAND'S PASSION FOR THE EQUESTRIAN WORLD

**KUWAIT:** As a token of its long-running passion for equestrian sports and its attachment to its lady customers, Longines is launching a new line with shapes and materials inspired by iconic elements of the equine world. Boasting a decidedly bold design, the various models of this collection remain true to the elegance that characterizes the winged hourglass brand. The Longines Equestrian Collection has been created as an allegory of the equestrian world. Longines' history and the history of equestrian sports have been intertwined for over a century. It was therefore natural for the brand to dedicate a collection to this passion. The various models of The Longines Equestrian Collection are linked by their references to the equine world. Shapes and materials derive their inspiration from symbolic elements of this environment, like a sublime echo of the world of horse lovers. Longines thus celebrates the elegance of riders and their mounts.

Arches on racetracks evoking horseshoes, stirrups acting as supports to follow their horse around the high jump course, fine leather of saddles: All these strong images are found in the bold

lines of these watches dedicated to female equestrian sports lovers. On their wrist, the hands waltz to the rhythm of time and merge with the pace of the horses. With the Longines Equestrian Collection, Longines offers a genuine allegory of the equestrian world in tribute to the deep bonds the brand has forged with it.

The models evoking the arch are available in four sizes - 23 mm, 26 mm and 30 mm and 34 mm - while watches drawing their inspiration from the stirrup come in three sizes, 23.50 mm, 26.50 mm and 30 mm. Their steel cases house a quartz movement and each of these watches also comes in a diamond-set version. The polished black lacquer and mother-of-pearl dials are adorned with diamond indexes, while the silver-colored flinque dial features Roman numerals and the silver-colored sunburst dial Arabic numerals. The stirrup-shaped model with a mother-of-pearl dial is also available in an even more dazzling version, decorated with a double row of diamonds. All the watches in this collection are fitted with overstitched leather straps matching the rider outfit.

## PARIS TELECOM STOCKS DIVE AS ORANGE STALLS BUYING RIVAL

**PARIS:** Stocks in French telecoms companies fell sharply yesterday after market leader Orange said talks to purchase the rival network owned by industrial group Bouygues had failed. The company said that "after in-depth discussions, the Board of Directors of Orange has concluded that an agreement regarding a possible consolidation with Bouygues Telecom has not been reached.

"The decision has therefore been taken to end the discussions with Bouygues that have been ongoing since" January, Orange said in a statement Friday. Shares in Orange fell 5.2 percent in morning Paris stock exchange business yesterday. Bouygues fell 15.8 percent, Iliad, parent company of the Free operator, dropped 13.5 percent and Numericable-SFR 12.2 percent.

"There was much expectation surrounding the talks by the four operators," said HPC trader Xavier de Villepion. "It was in their interest to reach a conclusion." Deutsche Bank's recommendation for Orange shares went from "neutral" from "buy", while Berenberg now calls Bouygues a "sell" from its previous "neutral" call.

Sources said that the valuation of the two companies was one of the main sticking points in the talks and would have resulted in the number of mobile operators in France dropping to three-a number that many analysts believe is all the French market can bear, instead of the current four. Another was the risks that the deal would be blocked by competition authorities over concerns it could lead to higher prices for consumers.

### Big players

Bouygues chairman Martin Bouygues told daily Le Figaro's online edition that three of France's big players had wanted the merger to succeed but the fourth, whom he did not name, had put a spanner in the works. "There were four of us around the negotiating table, but only three of us wanted to make it work,"

he said in remarks published yesterday. "Clearly one of the players had the ambition to get the most while paying the least, with the option of pulling out," he said.

Asked whether he meant Free chairman Xavier Niel, Bouygues said: "Everyone is entitled to their own interpretation." The two companies announced publicly in January they were holding talks, the second time they have considered a tie-up, and the fifth attempt in two years to consolidate the market where operators have been slashing prices to capture customers.

"...Orange will pursue the deployment of its strategic plan, launched in 2015, that is focused on investment in very high-speed broadband networks and providing an unmatched customer experience," said the company, adding its financial targets remain unchanged. The deal would have seen considerable concentration of the market as Orange held 38.8 percent of the market at the end of last year, with Bouygues Telecom in third position with 16.3 percent.

A considerable portion of Bouygues Telecom's network was expected to be immediately sold off by Orange to the other two operators in the market in order to alleviate competition concerns. The French state, which still owns 23 percent in Orange, the successor to the national phone operator, played a key role in the outcome of the talks, according to one source.

"The state wanted Orange shares to be valued at a price much higher than at the market" and imposed conditions that were likely to be difficult for the Bouygues group to accept, said the person familiar with the talks. "It got so complex that it failed," said another source. "We ended up with a monster of a deal that contained too large uncertainties concerning competition and in the end Bouygues found it too risky." Martin Bouygues told the Figaro that he was "not worried" about his company's future. "The company is perfectly viable in a four-player market," he said. — AFP



This undated photo provided by Tesla Motors shows the new Model 3 car.— AP

## TESLA UP 276,000 MODEL 3 ORDERS IN JUST THREE DAYS

**SAN FRANCISCO:** Orders for the much-hyped Tesla Model 3, a cheaper version of its electric car aimed at the mass market, have surged to 276,000 in just three days, company founder Elon Musk said Sunday. Orders are piling up fast and exceeding the expectations of the company for its Model 3 — which will have a base price of \$35,000 — even though it won't be available until late next year.

Amid reports of queues to snap up the vehicle, Musk tweeted: "276k Model 3 orders by end of Sat." And in a subsequent tweet added: "A Model 3 order gives you priority in your geography, so, even though the total count is high, ordering early will make a big difference locally."

With the Model 3, a compact sedan unveiled Thursday, Tesla aims to show it can appeal to the general public and produce cars en masse. The base price is half that of Tesla's luxury Model S and the Model X, which start at \$70,000. Musk said Thursday that orders had passed 115,000 worldwide and hinting that demand was outstripping expectation later tweeted: "Definitely going to need to rethink production planning..." — AFP

## GERMAN CAR SALES STAGNATE IN MARCH

**FRANKFURT:** New car registrations in Germany, a key indicator of demand in Europe's top economy, stagnated in March, but largely as result of statistical effects related to the timing of the Easter holidays, data showed yesterday.

A total of 323,000 new cars were registered last month, unchanged from the figure for the same month in 2015, according to data compiled by the carmakers' federation VDA. Nevertheless, "a 12-month comparison of the March data is not really meaningful because the Easter holidays last year fell in April, while in this year they fell in March," said VDA president Matthias Wissmann.

"In addition, there was one more working day in March last year. That means we should wait for the two-month comparison in April," Wissmann said. Taking the first three months of the 2016 as a whole, new registrations were up four percent at 791,500 over the same period a year earlier, VDA calculated. The timing of the Easter holidays also left its mark on production with seven percent fewer vehicles rolling off the production lines in March, VDA said. Exports were down eight percent at 396,300 vehicles in March, it added. — AFP



## MAKERS TOOK BIG PRICE INCREASES ON WIDELY USED US DRUGS 'COMPANIES HAVE COMPLETE CONTROL OVER PRICING IN THE US'

**NEW YORK:** Major drug companies took hefty price increases in the US, in some cases more than doubling listed charges, for widely used medications over the past five years, a Reuters analysis of proprietary data found. Prices for four of the nation's top 10 drugs increased more than 100 percent since 2011, Reuters found. Six others went up more than 50 percent. Together, the price increases on drugs for arthritis, high cholesterol, asthma and other common problems added billions in costs for consumers, employers and government health programs.

Extraordinary price hikes by two small companies, Turing Pharmaceuticals and Valeant Pharmaceuticals International Inc., drew new attention to drug costs. Turing expected to book \$200 million by raising the price of Daraprim, an antiparasitic used for a rare infection, by 5,000 percent, according to company documents released by Congressional investigators. Routine price increases by bigger players may draw less attention, but they add up. Sales for the top 10 drugs went up 44 percent to \$54 billion in 2014, from 2011, even though prescriptions for the medications dropped 22

percent, according to IMS Health data.

At the top of the list was AbbVie Inc, which raised the price of arthritis drug Humira more than 126 percent, Reuters found. Next were Amgen Inc and Teva Pharmaceutical Industries Ltd, which raised prices for arthritis treatment Enbrel and multiple sclerosis drug Copaxone by 118 percent.

The increases help explain federal data showing overall spending on drugs rose faster than doctor visits and hospitalization over the past five years. Reuters based its analysis on the top 10 drugs, according to 2014 sales figures from IMS, and on proprietary pricing data provided by Truven Health Analytics. Reuters used commonly prescribed approved indications. Reuters shared its method and findings with the eight companies that sell the top 10 drugs; none disputed the findings. In general, drug companies said they set prices to recoup investments in failed drugs, support new research and development efforts, and pay for clinical trials to broaden the use of approved drugs. Also, they said, medications prevent costly hospitalizations.

Some of the companies noted that

Reuters' analysis of list prices failed to capture negotiated discounts and rebates - information they closely guard. In a few cases, companies offered a limited view into proprietary prices. Amgen, for instance, told Reuters that, after most discounts, the average sales price for a dose of Enbrel is at least \$200 less than list.

And, while Reuters found arthritis drug Remicade went up almost 63 percent, Johnson & Johnson spokeswoman Caroline Pavis said average selling price increases were closer to 5.4 percent per year. For GlaxoSmithKline Plc's Advair asthma drug, Reuters found a 67 percent increase. But spokeswoman Jenni Ligday said that, with discounts and rebates, prices actually fell during the period. Even after discounts, pharmacy benefit managers told Reuters they pay annual price increases on top medications of up to 10 percent. By comparison, the US consumer price index rose an average of 2 percent annually over the last five years. Dr Steve Miller, chief medical officer of top US pharmacy benefit manager Express Scripts Holding Corp, said the current level of drug price increases was "not sustainable."

### New focus

Drug prices have been a hot topic on the presidential campaign trail and in Congress since Turing hiked Daraprim and Valeant imposed triple-digit price increases on two heart drugs.

Adding to the political pressure is the practice among employers and insurers of passing increases onto consumers. Patricia Calopietro, 70, said she once paid \$20 for a three-month supply of Nexium. AstraZeneca Plc raised the list price of the acid reflux drug nearly 50 percent over the past five years, and Calopietro's insurer pushed her out-of-pocket share up to \$250. She switched to a cheaper medicine but doesn't like how it works.

"How can I pay something like that? I'm 70 years old, and I'm on a fixed income," said Calopietro, a retired sales manager for the US Army & Air Force Exchange stores from Lorton, Virginia. Leading drugmakers say price hikes by Turing and Valeant are outliers. "Our industry invests on average 20 percent of our revenues into research and development. It's a fundamentally different business model," said Robert Zirkelbach, a spokesman for industry lobby Pharmaceutical Research

and Manufacturers of America, or PhRMA.

Sanofi SA, Teva, Amgen, J&J and AstraZeneca, which all have top 10 drugs, said they offer assistance to low income consumers. AstraZeneca spokeswoman Abigail Bozarth said the company sets prices based on market conditions, "a common practice across the industry." Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center oncologist Peter Bach said patients would be better served if drug prices reflected value, instead of bargaining power. Pharmaceutical "companies have complete control over pricing in the US," he said. By Bach's estimate, increases last year on just one drug, Amgen's Enbrel, added up to \$1 billion to care costs. In a statement, Amgen spokeswoman Kristen Davis questioned Bach's estimate, saying it is impossible to infer revenue growth from list price increases because of other factors, including rebates and discounts.

Davis said Amgen prices reflect research and development costs of \$33 billion over a decade. Rebates and discounts bring the average sales price for a weekly dose of Enbrel to \$704.23, down from its list price of \$932.16, she said. —Reuters



PRAGUE: A cat being held by a customer at the cat cafe Kocic Kavarna. — AFP photos

## CZECH CAT CAFE BOOM PAIRS SOOTHING STROKES WITH JAVA JOLTS



PRAGUE: A cat sitting on a bed at a cat cafe Kocic Kavarna.

**PRAGUE:** NOX sniffs curiously at a cup of creamy Vienna coffee and a plate of chocolate cake, then leaps off the table into the lap of a young woman, an afternoon visitor to Prague's oldest cat cafe. The jet-black cat is one of eight that Kockafe ("kocka" being Czech for "cat") has acquired from a Prague animal shelter to help its customers feel cosy and relaxed. "Cats radiate calm and purring is very pleasant, people simply like it," says Jana Parizkova, a 25-year-old tourist guide who opened the cafe in the Czech capital along with her mother and sister.

"Cats bring people together - guests who don't know each other have something to talk about, which is great," she tells AFP, surrounded by cats leaping on the bar or resting by the window. Already popular in Japan, Taiwan, and other parts of Asia and Europe, cat cafes are booming across the Czech Republic, with a dozen having popped up since the summer of 2014. "My wife and I opened the cafe a year ago. We had seven cats at home and now we have nine here," says 45-year-old Ivan Herak, a former manager, who runs one of the four cat cafes in tourist-magnet Prague. Unlike Parizkova, Herak relies on British marbled cats, which he breeds himself.

"I need cats that like being caressed, that aren't afraid of people, while cats from a shelter are often easily frightened," Herak says, stroking a big tomcat with a bell on his collar and calling him "Darling." At the

Kockafe, Parizkova has taken several stray cats off the street, including a kitten she found outside her cafe on the day it opened, and allows guests to adopt its felines. "A cafe isn't an ideal place for a cat - that's why we have cats from a shelter, their experience is so terrible that they find the cafe OK," she says with a smile.

But she admits it is difficult to find cats suitable for cafe life. The felines must be "completely relaxed and composed in order to handle the bustle here." Among the Kockafe's customers, Karolina Brabcova has taken a kitten home, while her friend Lucie Kubrova, a student, already has a cat but still frequents the cafe to soak up its unique atmosphere. "Cats make it far more pleasant - you don't just gulp down your cup of coffee and leave; instead, you sit, play with the cats and spend more time here," Kubrova says over a plateful of pizza, graciously ignored by Nox and his peers.

Herak says about 80 percent of the people who come to his cafe already have cats of their own at home.

"They are cat lovers, they know the cats will be on the table and curious about their plates, so to speak, but they don't mind." But he adds some clients find the idea of pairing coffee and cats unappealing. "When we opened the cafe, a lady in her sixties came over and asked if we really sold meals made from cat meat. That, you've got to admit, was shocking." — AFP

## HISTORIC DENGUE VACCINE PROGRAM LAUNCHED IN PHILIPPINES

**MANILA:** The world's first public dengue vaccination program was launched in the Philippines yesterday as nurses began injecting the first batch of a million children with a French drug to combat the sometimes deadly disease. Several hundred children aged 9-10 queued in front of government health workers at a public school in eastern Manila for the injections, capping a 20-year, 1.5-billion-euro (\$1.8 bn) effort by French drug manufacturer Sanofi to develop the vaccine. "We are the first country to introduce, adopt and implement the first-ever dengue vaccine through the public health system and under public school settings," said Philippine Health Secretary Janette Garin.

The Philippines had in December approved the vaccine, the first to be licensed globally to combat the mosquito-borne disease for people aged between nine and 45. Zelin Joice Carunay, aged nine, cried briefly as she and her classmates fell in line for the vaccine on teacher's orders. "I'm terrified of needles but they told us we need it to avoid dengue," the girl told reporters. "In the end it felt nothing more than an ant's bite," the relieved child said afterwards.

Dengue or haemorrhagic fever, the world's most common mosquito-borne virus, infects an estimated 390 million people in more than 120 countries each year, killing more than 25,000, according to the World Health Organization. Symptoms are often mild but more than two million people annually develop more serious symptoms-which can involve severe headaches, pain behind the eyes, a rash, pain in the joints, muscles or bones and leaking blood vessels.

Asia is home to some 70 percent of cases worldwide. In the Philippines 200,000 cases were



MANILA: A nurse shows vials of the anti-dengue vaccine at Parang Elementary School in Marikina.

reported in 2013, according to Sanofi. The company said the vaccine should prevent eight out of 10 dengue hospitalizations and up to 93 percent of severe haemorrhagic dengue fever cases. "This initiative sends a strong message to the rest of the world that dengue vaccination is a critical addition to integrated disease prevention efforts," Sanofi said in a statement. Sanofi's two-decade effort to develop the vaccine included 25 clinical studies in

15 countries. This saw 29,000 volunteers receive a vaccine that, aside from the Philippines, has also been registered in Mexico, Brazil and El Salvador, according to Sanofi. Of 17,000 people who were injected with the vaccine in the Philippines in February as part of the clinical study, just 27 developed side effects, proving it was an effective vaccine, Health Undersecretary Vicente Belizario told reporters. — AFP



## YIACO MEDICAL COMPANY INTRODUCES NEW RETAIL PHARMACEUTICAL CONCEPT

**KUWAIT:** In line with YIACO Medical Company's new strategic direction, the healthcare leader recently inaugurated its latest new scale model pharmacy featuring a brand new look and expanded pharmacy care services with an aim to enhance the retail experience of its customers.

The newly opened YIACO pharmacy is located in Arabia Mall in the Eqaila district. "We are thrilled to have this opportunity to introduce our integrated pharmacy services and healthcare expertise to our customers across Kuwait" commented Dr Bader Alzaid Al-Taraji, CEO of YIACO Medical Company.

"The way our customers engage with

YIACO continues to evolve and as part of our strategic plan, we continue to listen and respond to their needs.

Our efforts to innovate our pharmacy care services by going beyond the traditional pharmacy experience offer our customers with expanded wellness options and increased access to healthcare" commented Dr. Mohammed Barham, COO of YIACO Medical Company.

Dr Mahdi Mashharawi, Retail Pharmacies Manager, explained that the new YIACO pharmacy also includes a wellness and education corner that will also allow customers to seek advice and receive more education-

al insight from highly qualified pharmacists. Designed by an award winning international design agency, the new look adopts new design shelving and retail displays which ensures a seamless and easy to navigate flow cycle for customers encouraging visits which promote precaution and wellness in a much warmer and friendly environment. Over the past 60 years, YIACO Medical Co. has grown to be one of the largest healthcare networks in Kuwait, and caters both medical products & services to the private and public sectors. One of YIACO's greatest milestones since 1953 is having one of the largest pharmacy chain in Kuwait.



## TESTOSTERONE MAY LOWER HEART ATTACK RISK IN OLDER MEN

**MIAMI:** Older men with clogged arteries who took testosterone therapy seemed to have a lower risk of heart attacks than men who did not take the hormone, a study suggested Sunday. Testosterone is currently considered risky to the heart, and the US Food and Drug Administration mandated last year that manufacturers of all approved testosterone products add labels to describe these dangers, which include heart attack and stroke.

The methods of the study were observational-one of the weakest kinds of scientific research-but its authors said the results should lead to more rigorous trials on the hormone therapy in the future. The study by Intermountain Medical Center Heart Institute in Salt Lake City included 755 men, aged 58 to 78, with severe coronary artery disease and low testosterone. Those who did not take testosterone as part of their follow up were 80 percent more likely to suffer a heart attack, stroke, or death from a cardiovascular event in the next three

years. After a year, 64 patients who were not taking testosterone supplements suffered major adverse cardiovascular events, compared to 21 taking testosterone.

After three years, 125 patients not on testosterone therapy patients suffered major adverse cardiovascular events, compared to 60 patients receiving the hormone. The findings were presented at the American College of Cardiology conference in Chicago.

"Although this study indicates that hypo-androgenic men with coronary artery disease might actually be protected by testosterone replacement, this is an observational study that doesn't provide enough evidence to justify changing treatment recommendations," said cardiologist Brent Muhlestein, co-director of cardiovascular research at the Intermountain Medical Center Heart Institute. "It does, however, substantiate the need for a randomized clinical trial that can confirm or refute the results of this study." — AFP



NAAMEH, Lebanon : A general view shot taken on March 30, 2016, shows trucks dumping their load at the Naameh landfill, just south of the Lebanese capital, Beirut. — AFP photos



NAAMEH, Lebanon : Lebanese schoolgirls play in their garden in the village of Baawarta as trucks are seen in the background unloading garbage at the Naameh landfill.

## TO FLEE LEBANON'S TRASH CRISIS, FAMILY HEADS TO SYRIA

'THE SMELL IS WORSE BECAUSE IT'S BEEN THERE FOR SEVEN TO EIGHT MONTHS'

**NAAMEH, Lebanon:** Imagine living near a trash dump so putrid that you would rather move to war-torn Syria. That's what Fayyad Ayyash, his wife Riham and their four young daughters plan to do next week, leaving behind their home in Lebanon for neighboring Syria. Their modest two-storey house in the town of Naameh, about 20 kilometers (12 miles) south of the Lebanese capital, directly overlooks the infamous and odorous landfill by the same name. "We're going next week. In Syria, there's a possibility I might die. Here, we'll definitely die," Fayyad tells AFP.

From his grassy backyard, dozens of large trucks carrying tons of waste can be seen and smelled lining up to add their load to the "trash mountain." The July 2015 closure of the notorious landfill lies at the heart of Lebanon's trash crisis, which has seen rivers of trash spread across the Mediterranean country, triggering protests nationwide. Then last month, the gov-

ernment made a controversial decision to reopen it and this was the last straw for residents like Fayyad. Pulling out a bright blue inhaler, he says his family has been suffering from respiratory problems for months because of the dump.

His daughters, whose ages range from just under two to 10 years, all have trouble eating and sleeping. "It's always worse at night than during the day. The whole area is swarming with the same smell and the same sickness," he says. Fayyad says it's become so bad, he's decided to flee across the border to the town of Libeen in southern Syria, a country where a conflict has been raging since 2011.

### Costly medical bills

The Naameh landfill opened in 1997 and was meant to be a temporary dump, but an alternative site was never opened. For 20 years, the waste generated in Beirut and Mount Lebanon-

the country's most populous areas was dumped in Naameh. The verdant valley swelled into a trash mountain of more than 15 million tons. Furious residents forced the closure of the site in July 2015, saying it was leading to high cancer rates, skin diseases and breathing problems. Uncollected rubbish began piling up around Beirut and its suburbs, emitting a horrible stench that sparked protests in downtown Beirut demanding a long-term solution. After months of political wrangling, Lebanon's cabinet announced a four-year plan to end the waste crisis and its first step was reopening Naameh for two months.

"When the dump reopened, my baby immediately started throwing up again," Fayyad says. Fayyad and his Syrian wife, Riham, are both Druze, an offshoot of Islam. Riham estimates that she spends about \$1,000 (around 880 euros) per month on doctor's visits, inhalers, and other medication for her children.

Pointing to her bare finger, she says she had to sell her wedding ring to cover the costs. "I wish my kids would eat food as much as they take medicine," she says. Riham's family hails from Libeen, in Syria's southern Sweida province. That's where she will travel to next week, in the hope that the open plains there will be good for her children.

### Suitcase 'packed and ready'

Sweida, the heartland of Syria's Druze minority, has come under attack by jihadists of the Islamic State group but has seen less fighting than other parts of the country.

"No, it isn't safe, but I'm forced to leave... I have a suitcase packed and ready on top of the closet," Riham says. Farouk Merhebi from the American University of Beirut says the smell has probably made life incredibly uncomfortable for hundreds living within a one-kilometer radius of the dump. Before the crisis began, trash trucks

would dump between 2,800 to 3,000 tons of waste per day in Naameh, says Merhebi, who is AUB's director of environmental health, safety and risk management.

"Now it's about 8,000 to 9,000 tons. The operations almost tripled because they're playing catch-up with the trash that had accumulated," he says. "The waste that has accumulated in streets has fermented, so the smell is offensive... The smell is worse because it's been there for seven to eight months." But the long-term health effects of the dump on the surrounding area remain untested.

Merhebi is part of a team at AUB hoping for funding to complete research in the area "to test the surface water, ground water, and some samples of the soil as well as samples of ambient air." But Fayyad and his family say they cannot wait. "Riham's family said they were thinking of coming to Lebanon," he says. "But we told them, 'do you want to die here from the smell?'" — AFP

## MEGA INDIA-BACKED COAL PROJECT AWARDED AUSTRALIA MINING LEASES

**SYDNEY:** A controversial India-backed giant coal project near Australia's Great Barrier Reef was Sunday awarded mining leases, but developer Adani said it would not commit to a final investment decision until legal challenges against it were resolved. The Queensland state government said the Aus\$21.7 billion (US\$16.7 billion) project to build one of the world's biggest mines was awarded three leases. "This is a major step forward for this project after extensive government and community scrutiny," Queensland Premier Anastasia Palaszczuk said in a statement.

"Stringent conditions will continue to protect the environment, landholders' and traditional owners' interests, and our iconic Great Barrier Reef." The state government added that the mining leases at Carmichael in the Galilee Basin were estimated to contain 11 billion tons of coal. Adani welcomed the announcement, saying the leases gave the Indian conglomerate certainty and the firm had the "clear aim of commencing construction in calendar year 2017" pending the finalization of some second-tier approvals. But the company slammed legal challenges by conservationists, which along with the need for state and federal consent, has seen the approvals process stretched to some six years.

"(The) conclusion of second tier approvals and resolution of politically-motivated legal challenges is the company's principal focus, prior to a final investment

decision being made," an Adani spokesman said in a statement. "Having previously sought to progress to the construction phase in 2015, Adani is keenly aware of the risks of proceeding on major works in advance of the conclusion of these matters." The awarding of the leases came two months after state authorities gave the project environmental approval subject to some 140 conditions.

Conservationists have argued the megamine would threaten the heritage-listed Great Barrier Reef, the world's biggest coral reef ecosystem. Adani faces two legal challenges—one from an indigenous group and another mounted by an environmental organization. The organization, the Australian Conservation Foundation, slammed the decision and said its case in the Federal Court would be heard next month. "By granting a licence for this massive coal mine the Palaszczuk government is bowing to the demands of big polluters, not listening to the needs of the people," the foundation's chief executive Kelly O'Shanassy said in a statement.

Researchers say the reef is currently experiencing the worst bleaching on record in its pristine north, with few corals escaping damage.

The biodiverse site is also threatened by climate change, which conservationists said causes the bleaching, as well as farming run-off, development and the coral-eating crown-of-thorns starfish. — Reuters

## FIXING VITAMIN D, DEPRESSION AIDS THE HEART

**MIAMI:** Taking steps to recover from depression and boost vitamin D levels may improve heart health, according to new research out Saturday. The findings were contained in two studies presented at the American College of Cardiology conference in Chicago. The first focused on depression, a known risk factor for heart attack, stroke and even death. Researchers at the Intermountain Medical Center Heart Institute in Salt Lake City studied a registry of more than 7,500 people, and found when depressed patients get effective treatment, they can lower their risk of heart damage to the same level as a person who never suffered from depression.

"Our study shows that prompt, effective treatment of depression appears to improve the risk of poor heart health," said Heidi May, a cardiovascular epidemiologist with the Intermountain Medical Center Heart Institute. However, those who remained depressed had higher rates of heart problems—at a rate of about six percent, compared to around four percent of people without depression. "The key conclusion of our study is: If depression isn't treated, the risk of cardiovascular complications increases significantly," May said.

A second study, also led by May, focused on two measures of vitamin D, which when too low can predict the likelihood of heart attack, stroke, heart failure or death. Some 4,200 people aged 52 to 76 were studied. Most already had coronary artery disease (70 percent) and one quarter were diabetic. For doctors who treat these patients, the most

important measures of vitamin D are known as total vitamin D and bioavailable vitamin D, since both were "the most accurate in predicting harmful cardiovascular events," said the findings.

"Our study found that low levels of both total vitamin D and bioavailable vitamin D appear to be associated with poor cardiovas-

cular outcomes," said May. "And evaluating usable vitamin D could mean the difference on the amount of vitamin D prescribed, if it's prescribed at all." May added that more research was needed to examine Caucasian and African-American patients, since these groups are known to be affected differently by vitamin D. — AFP



SEVILLE, Andalusia, Spain : Anti bullfighting demonstrators shout slogans and hold placards as they protest during a demonstration in Sevilla against animal abuse and bullfighting. — AFP

# CLINIC PAGE



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248 33 199

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YEAR 2 LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD AND THE WOLF



KNES PERFORMS 'LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD AND THE WOLF'

The Year 2 pupils of Kuwait National English School performed Roald Dahls Red Riding Hood, a 'howlingly hilarious musical' to an entranced audience recently, 22nd March 2016. The musical tells

the tale of Little Red Riding Hood, though with a few unexpected twists. The wolf, a rather foreboding creature was played by Hassan. Little Red Riding Hood herself, played by

Mariam and Amal, was not the shy little girl we have come to expect and had the audience mesmerized as she fought the wolf, then rescued Grandma from his belly! All Year 2 pupils were given the opportunity to

participate in either singing or acting and were superb in their roles. The school Director, Madame Chantal Al Gharabally, highlighted the importance of respecting fundamental human values. She

also warned children against the dangers of bullying. She congratulated the Music Department and the Year 2 teachers for this spectacular production. Parents were elated with the top performance of their children.



AL-MUNAYES GENERAL TRADING HONORS MOMS AT 4TH ANNUAL 'LOVE YOU MOM' FESTIVAL

Al-Munayes General Trading Est announced its participation in the 4th annual "Love You Mom" Festival at The Avenues Mall and Gate Mall during March 18-21 in an effort to engage with the community following the re-launch of Al-Munayes Tea Bags, its new-look brand

of 100% Pure Ceylon tea. The event, which attracted the participation of a wide range of companies, saw Al-Munayes Tea honor mothers with special gifts at its booth, offer free sampling of Al-Munayes Tea to visitors and answer questions about the product.

"Our participation in 'Love You Mom' was an excellent opportunity to extend our thanks and appreciation to mothers everywhere with special gifts which were prepared just for the occasion," explained Mr Salah Al-Munayes, Deputy General Manager of Al-Munayes General

Trading Est. Comprised of 100% pure Ceylon tea, Al-Munayes Tea Bags was recently re-launched into the market featuring a new look and packaging in order to highlight its superior quality, better preserve its freshness and maximize appeal with its

target audience. Moreover, it is a purely 'Natural' product without any additives or preservatives making it a healthy choice for consumers of all ages. Al Munayes General Trading Est was established in 1947, and remains loyal to its founding principles.



## LANDMARK GROUP HOSTS 9TH ANNUAL BLOOD DONATION DRIVE

Landmark Group, one of the largest value retail shopping chains in Kuwait recently conducted its 9th annual Blood Donation drive in association with Kuwait Central Blood Bank (KCBB). The annual campaign is a reflection of the Group's commitment and work in line with its social responsibility program that aims to provide services and assistance to society. 150 plus donors, which are Landmark employees and customers reached out to the commitment of Saving Lives. The Blood Donation drive was held at Centrepoint Avenues. Commenting on the company's annual initiative Mr Saibal Basu, Chief Operating Officer, Landmark Group Kuwait said, "We thank KCBB for their support towards the 9th Blood Donation Campaign,

which serves the local community and helps in raising awareness about society related humanitarian initiatives and activities. We are always keen and committed to organizing the blood donation campaign on an annual basis. This year's blood donation campaign witnessed huge success especially with the increasing number in participation from our staff. We are grateful to them for continuously showing great interest in supporting such noble causes. We take very seriously our role in the private sector towards community welfare."

The blood donation drive is part of a multi-faceted plan developed by Landmark Group to address vital health and safety issues in Kuwait. As one of the highest forms of

humanitarian services, voluntarily blood donation can play a vital role in saving someone's life. There are also potential health benefits for the donor, as it can reduce the risk of heart attacks and cancer.

Staff members from all departments and branches across Kuwait were invited to participate in the blood donation drive. The campaign, which was supervised by a team of specialized doctors, generated a tremendous response from the employees. Landmark Group strongly believes in being an integral part of the Kuwaiti society, the campaign conducted for the seventh consecutive year is a part of the Group's continuous efforts to highlight the principles of corporate social responsibility and support patients in need.



## HTC FORMS REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP WITH MOHAMED HAMAKI

HTC, the global innovator in smart mobile devices and technology appoints popular Arab Singer and Egyptian pop culture icon Mohamed Hamaki, as its social media brand ambassador, and he will work with the consumer electronics brand to establish music and sound quality as the brand's defining competitive differentiator. He will also bring unique experiences to HTC users and enthusiasts across the MENA region, giving HTC and Hamaki fans the opportunity to create brilliant memories.

Mohamed Hamaki said: "HTC is a premium global brand that prides itself on sound quality and design innovation as its competitive differentiation, and this is why I see a strong link between the brand and myself. It is a privilege to partner with the brand that pioneered the art of truly understanding the critical need for a great audio experience on smartphones. I look forward to creating a strong sense of engagement with the fans of HTC across the region, with brilliant, unique experiences not only through music but also through their ground breaking camera technology."

As social media brand ambassador for HTC across the MEA region, Hamaki will partner

with the brand to further amplify HTC's launch campaigns in the region with his online community. He will work with HTC to offer experiences to both his and HTC's social media fans, which include exclusive access to behind-the-scenes at Hamaki's concerts or music video

shoots, and VIP tickets to his live concerts. He will also commit time to participate in live online chats with fans from across the region, presented by HTC.

Neeraj Seth, Head of Marketing, HTC MEA, said: "Hamaki has built on his efforts and suc-

cess to become an instantly-recognizable musician from the Arab world. HTC appreciates the 'challenger' spirit that he has built his success on, and we are happy to collaborate with him in a long term strategic partnership to offer our users and fans the opportunity to

interact more closely with this contemporary icon. Using the universal and language-agnostic platform of music and sound, which is also HTC's strongest pillar and advantage, Hamaki and HTC will create matchless premium opportunities and memories for the Arab world."

With over 122 million views on YouTube, 11 million fans on Facebook, and nearly 2 million followers on Twitter, Mohamed Hamaki is a true icon in a region where youth constitute a large and influential demographic of the population. Hamaki's releases and concerts are eagerly awaited by fans across the region, and his notable accomplishments include Best Singer and Album at the Middle East Music Awards 2013, and Best Middle East Act at the MTV Europe Music Awards 2010.

HTC prides itself on the superior audio experience available through all its smartphones, and has prioritized innovation in this area as most people use their smartphone as their primary music device. HTC's BoomSound(tm) with Dolby(tm) Surround and integrated amplifiers bring out the best in the music playback experience, with a dynamic range of sound.



## MARINA HOTEL KUWAIT TRAINS INTERNS IN COLLABORATION WITH LOYAC

Marina Hotel Kuwait collaborated with Loyac Internship Program 2016 to host students for an extensive training program which lasted eight weeks. During this time, the interns Mariam Abdullateef Faraj and Razan Saleem A Issa understood the fundamentals of working in a hotel and acquired hands-on knowledge of key functions across the various

departments of the hotel with a focus on the Front Office and Housekeeping Departments.

Mr Nabil Hammoud, General Manager of Marina Hotel, highlighted the importance of the internship programs, stating, "We are very pleased to partner with Loyac year after year. We at Marina Hotel believe in the importance of supporting the young generation and in paving

the way for them to begin their career and successful future. Over the past five years we have been supporting LoYAC as we want to give eager and talented minds the opportunity to understand and practice the business essentials of the hospitality sector."

"Students will get firsthand experience of being part of a team and that helps them develop in character, confidence and prepare them in the future. We are lucky to have the opportunity to host such talented and ambitious students and wish them all success in their careers" further concluded Mr Hammoud.

This annual initiative by the Marina Hotel in association with Lothan Youth Achievement Center (Loyac) reflects the hotel's proactive contribution to the development of the youth. The internship program at Marina Hotel encouraged interns to gain practical work experience in areas that strengthened their aptitude.

The interns were allotted tasks and provided with hands on experience of a professional ambience with its daily functionalities. They gained invaluable insight into work-life and environment, while benefiting from a professional service orientation. At the end of their internship period, the interns were assessed and given feedback on their performance by their direct mentor. This collaboration is an annual internship program which offers college, university and high school students the opportunity to acquire first-hand experience in the hospitality industry.



### APPEAL FOR INFORMATION ABOUT KUWAITI RESISTANCE FIGHTERS

To whom it may concern

This is an appeal on behalf of Marshal Byiers, a Scottish gentleman who lived in Kuwait during the 1980s. While here, he lived with his family in Fahaheel city, more specifically, in a building owned by Khalif Al-Fulaij.

Marshal worked for a company called EW Sable, and was trapped in Kuwait during the Iraqi invasion. He was held hostage by the Iraqi forces for a brief period of time. He was eventually put in contact with members of the Kuwaiti Resistance by Larry Banks at the British Embassy. While Mr Byiers never met the resistance fighters in person, they spoke over the phone and they provided him with food, cigarettes, and a small radio at great personal risk to them self. The men who knew him would likely be in their 50s now. His personal friend was a Kuwaiti gentleman names Sami Al

Dabbous, who we're having trouble locating.

After the war, Marshall returned to Scotland. We are a group of filmmakers who are currently working on a documentary that narrates Marshall's story, and, after 26 years, we are flying him back to Kuwait for the first time, for what will probably be quite an emotional closure to his journey.

Marshall would really like to meet the person that helped him during the Iraqi occupation. Marshall is due to arrive to Kuwait on April 4-9. The documentary tells his story and we would like the opportunity to tell the story from the side of the man who helped him. If you or anybody else has any personal history with this story or anybody involved in it, please contact us at the following email Hamadaam@vcu.edu or phone number (965) 6668-0061.

### GULFNET FORMS DISTINGUISHED PARTNERSHIP WITH PALMS HOTEL

Continuing its outstanding progress in the information and communication technology (ICT) field, Gulfnet has concluded an agreement with The Palms Beach Hotel & SPA to provide the hotel with the latest hospitality technology related to ICT package with high speed Internet connectivity. This partnership positions Gulfnet as a leader in the field of technical services related to the hotel industry, especially since The Palms Hotel is considered one of the prominent hotels in Kuwait. Furnished with

the latest technology, the fact which boosts the strength and stance of the company in this sector, Gulfnet provides the Hotel with passive and data network system, IP telephony, IP CCTV, IP hotel TV, guest room management system, and public address sound system, ensuring high quality services for the Hotel's guests and residents. This remarkable and outstanding project, equipped with the latest technology, will enable Gulfnet to achieve sustainable competitive advantage in the Kuwaiti market.

AMC

- 01:10 Restoration
03:05 Road House
05:00 The Beautiful Country
07:00 Lords Of Dogtown
08:40 The Beast Of Hollow Mountain
10:00 Saved!

ANIMAL PLANET HD

- 00:45 Shark Attack File
01:40 From WAGs To Riches
02:35 Tanked
03:25 Echo And The Elephants Of Amboseli

- 14:30 Dialogue
15:00 News Update
15:15 China 24
16:00 News Update
16:15 Global Business

CNBC

- 00:00 Inside China
00:30 Managing Asia
01:00 U.S. Squawk Alley
02:00 Asia Squawk Box

crime & investigation network

- 00:00 The Killer Speaks
01:00 Britain's Darkest Taboos
02:00 Crime Stories
03:00 Gangsters: America's Most Evil

Discovery Channel HD

- 00:20 Fast N' Loud
01:10 Gold Rush
02:00 Diamond River Hunters
02:50 Alaska: Battle On The Bay

BBC FIRST

- 00:45 Prey
01:35 Undercover
02:30 Silent Witness
03:25 Casualty

Bloomberg TELEVISION

- 00:00 Charlie Rose
01:00 First Up With Angie Lau
02:00 First Up With Angie Lau



47 RONIN ON OSN MOVIES HD ACTION

- 08:00 Countdown
09:00 Countdown
09:30 On The Move
10:00 On The Move

- 14:20 Outback Truckers
15:10 Wheeler Dealers
16:00 Fast N' Loud
16:50 Chasing Classic Cars

CCTV NEWS

- 00:00 News Update
00:30 Dialogue
01:00 News Update
01:15 China 24

Discovery SCIENCE

- 00:20 Through The Wormhole With Morgan Freeman
01:08 You Have Been Warned
01:55 Space Pioneer

- 12:38 Mythbusters
13:23 Through The Wormhole With Morgan Freeman
14:10 Eco-Tech
14:57 Da Vinci's Machines

Disney

- 00:00 Violetta
00:45 The Hive
00:50 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch

- 00:00 The Killer Speaks
01:00 Britain's Darkest Taboos
02:00 Crime Stories
03:00 Gangsters: America's Most Evil

Disney JUNIOR

- 00:05 Art Attack
00:30 Henry Hugglemonster
00:45 Calimero
01:00 Zou

- 06:00 Boyster
06:10 Super Matrak
06:55 Star vs The Forces Of Evil
07:00 K.C. Undercover

EHD

- 00:00 Sex With Brody
00:30 Fashion Bloggers
00:55 The Grace Helbig Show
01:25 Courtney And Khloe Take The Hamptons



MY FATHER THE HERO ON OSN MOVIES HD COMEDY

- 14:40 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
15:10 Miles From Tomorrow
15:35 Jake And The Never Land Pirates

- 20:00 Christina Milian Turned Up
21:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
22:00 Fashion Police

- 08:00 Raised By Wolves
08:25 The Doctor Blake Mysteries
09:20 Keep It In The Family

XD

- 06:00 Boyster
06:10 Super Matrak
06:55 Star vs The Forces Of Evil
07:00 K.C. Undercover

food network

- 00:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
00:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
01:00 Amazing Wedding Cakes

HD HISTORY

- 00:20 Aussie Pickers
01:10 Storage Wars: New York
01:35 Storage Wars: New York

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC CHANNEL HD

- 00:10 Dirty Rotten Survival
01:00 Primal Survivor
02:00 Dawn Of Humanity

NAT GEO people HD

- 00:10 Tales From The Bush Larder
00:35 Tales From The Bush Larder
01:00 David Rocco's Dolce India

OSN FIRST HD COMEDY

- 00:00 Parks And Recreation
00:30 Hot In Cleveland
01:00 The Nightly Show With Larry Wilmore

NAT GEO WILD HD

- 00:20 The Pack
01:10 Secret Life Of Predators
02:00 Hooked
02:50 Fatal Attraction

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC CHANNEL HD

- 00:10 Dirty Rotten Survival
01:00 Primal Survivor
02:00 Dawn Of Humanity
02:55 I Wouldn't Go In There

NAT GEO people HD

- 00:10 Tales From The Bush Larder
00:35 Tales From The Bush Larder
01:00 David Rocco's Dolce India

- 01:25 David Rocco's Dolce India
01:50 Tales From The Bush Larder
02:15 Eat Street
02:40 Eat Street

OSN FIRST HD

- 00:00 Bates Motel
01:00 Quantico
02:00 Rosewood
03:00 Allegiance

OSN MOVIES HD ACTION

- 00:00 The Frozen
02:00 Mega Shark vs. Mecha Shark
03:45 Crimson Tide

OSN MOVIES HD COMEDY

- 00:00 Down And Out In Beverly Hills
02:00 Romy And Michelle's High School Reunion

OSN MOVIES HD FESTIVAL

- 01:00 Carrington
03:00 The Man Who Would Be King

OSN MOVIES HD

- 00:00 Charlie Rose
01:00 First Up With Angie Lau
02:00 First Up With Angie Lau

OSN FIRST HD COMEDY

- 00:00 Parks And Recreation
00:30 Hot In Cleveland
01:00 The Nightly Show With Larry Wilmore

OSN SPORTS 1 HD

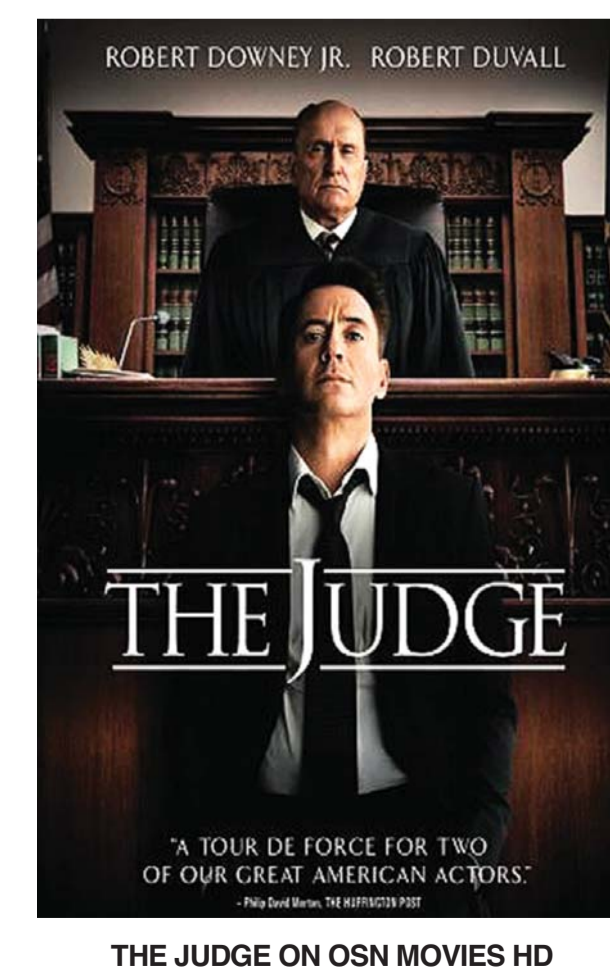
- 00:30 PGA Tour Special
01:30 PGA Tour Highlights
02:30 Gillette World Sport

OSN SPORTS 2 HD

- 02:30 This Week In WWE
03:00 Live WWE Raw
06:30 Top 14 Highlights

OSN SPORTS 3 HD

- 00:00 AFL Premiership Highlights
01:00 Top 14 Highlights
01:30 The World Sailing Show



THE JUDGE ON OSN MOVIES HD











(From left) Hong Kong actor Michael Ning, Chinese actress Jessie Li, Taiwanese actress Elaine Jin and Hong Kong actor Aaron Kwok pose after winning the Best Supporting Actor and New Performer, the Best Actress, the Best Supporting actress and Best Actor awards for their movie 'Port of Call' during the Hong Kong Film Awards in Hong Kong. — AP photos



Hong Kong actor Aaron Kwok poses after winning the Best Actor award for his movie 'Port of Call'.



Hong Kong director Raman Hui, left, holds up his trophy after receiving the Best New Director award for his movie 'Monster Hunt' from Hong Kong actor Andy Lau, right.



Hong Kong producer Andrew Choi, foreground, raises the trophy after winning the Best Film award for his movie 'Ten Years'.



Hong Kong movie producer Andrew Choi, fourth left, and director Ng Ka-leung, third left, pose with members of the cast and crew after winning the Best Film award for their movie 'Ten Years'.

## Chinese media ignore win of film about Hong Kong's future

Mainland Chinese media ignored a film festival award by yesterday in a massive leak of documents, some of which reveal hidden offshore assets. Bollywood legend Jackie Chan, simply known as the "Big B" in India, was appointed director of at least four shipping companies registered in offshore tax havens and set up 23 years ago. The authorized capital of these companies ranged from just \$5,000 to \$50,000 but they traded in ships worth millions of dollars, according to the Indian Express newspaper.

by "Ten Years," with at least one entertainment site omitting it from its list of winners. Online site Tencent, which often broadcasts film ceremonies, put up videos of other winners accepting awards.

Made on a shoestring budget, "Ten Years" became a surprise hit with Hong Kong audiences for its dystopian view of the former British colony in 2025. In one story, "Dialect," a taxi driver struggles with a Mandarin proficiency requirement, reflecting

nervousness among Cantonese-speaking residents about the influx of mainlanders. Another segment has a woman who sets herself on fire in support of independence for Hong Kong - a once-unthinkable cause now advocated by a number of groups. "What this award represents is so much bigger than the film. This award means that there's still hope for Hong Kong," said executive producer Andrew Choi.

"Port of Call" was still a big winner, sweeping the acting categories and earning best screenplay and cinematography awards. Michael Ning was named best supporting actor and best new performer, to take two trophies alongside co-stars best actor Aaron Kwok, best actress Jessie Li and best supporting actress Elaine Jin. Hong Kong director Tsui Hark won best director for his 3D adventure film "The Taking of Tiger Mountain." — AP



File photo shows Hong Kong actor Jackie Chan during a press conference at a cinema hall in Bucharest. — AFP



File photo shows Indian Bollywood actor Amitabh Bachchan speaking during the start of the 21st Kolkata International Film Festival in Kolkata. — AFP

## Film stars in spotlight after Panama Papers leak

Bollywood's Amitabh Bachchan and martial arts movie star Jackie Chan are among celebrities who featured yesterday in a massive leak of documents, some of which reveal hidden offshore assets. Bollywood legend Jackie Chan, simply known as the "Big B" in India, was appointed director of at least four shipping companies registered in offshore tax havens and set up 23 years ago. The authorized capital of these companies ranged from just \$5,000 to \$50,000 but they traded in ships worth millions of dollars, according to the Indian Express newspaper.

The Express is among more than 100 media groups which have investigated a massive leak of 11.5 million documents from Mossack Fonseca, a Panama-based law firm with offices in 35 countries. Bachchan, who has long since resigned from the companies and has not commented on the documents, is not the only member of his famous family named in the leaks. His daughter-in-law, actress Aishwarya Rai Bachchan, was also director and shareholder of an offshore company, along with members of her family, before it was thought to have been wound up in 2008, according to the newspaper.

The media adviser of the former Miss World winner has rejected the documents as "totally untrue and false". As with many of Fonseca's clients, there is no evidence that the Bollywood A-listers used their companies for improper purposes and having an offshore entity is not illegal. But the documents, naming more than 500 Indians including real estate tycoons in Fonseca's list of offshore companies, foundations and trusts, come at a sensitive time in India.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government has vowed to crack down on the "menace" of so-called black money-vast sums stashed abroad to keep them secret from Indian tax authorities. Hong Kong film star Jackie Chan has also been revealed to have at least six companies represented by Fonseca's firm, though he too may have used the companies legitimately for business purposes rather than for tax avoidance. The stash of records was obtained from an anonymous source by German daily Sueddeutsche Zeitung and shared with media worldwide. The documents, from around 214,000 offshore entities, cover almost 40 years. — AFP

## Favreau gives 'Jungle Book' a girl-power makeover

One of the best-loved animated films of all-time, "The Jungle Book" boasted iconic songs and a cast that ensured it would be revered as a milestone in Hollywood history. But for all its virtues, Disney's 1967 version of Rudyard Kipling's tale of an orphan raised by wolves lacked the one thing you'd be sure to find in the jungle—the female of the species. "I thought it was a little gender biased. I have two daughters, and the world is different now," says Jon Favreau, who directs the big budget live-action remake which hits US theaters on April 15. The veteran director set about putting things right by bringing on board Tinseltown A-lister and regular collaborator Scarlett Johansson to give villainous, and very male, snake Kaa the feminine touch.

"I liked the character of this mother figure who is welcoming and also menacing. I thought that there was something interesting psychologically about that," Favreau told AFP. The 49-year-old, who directed the "Iron Man" and "Avengers" movies, also hired Oscar-winning Lupita Nyong'o to upgrade the role of she-wolf Raksha, who has a bit-part in the 1967 film. The 3D remake of the "The Jungle Book" employs photorealistic CGI in perhaps the most visually stunning yet of Disney's growing stable of animation-to-live action remakes, which includes box office smashes "Maleficent," "Cinderella" and "Alice in Wonderland." It stars American newcomer Neel Sethi, 12, as "Mowgli," the man-cub forced to abandon his jungle home for a journey of self-discovery, guided by stern panther Bagheera and free-spirited bear Baloo.

### Athleticism

Favreau plucked the youngster from around 2,000 children who auditioned to play Mowgli. Sethi, whose scenes sprinting through the forest and swinging from vines required the athleticism of a gymnast, was studying for his black belt in Tae Kwon Do at the time. "I'd never thought about acting before. I was in a dance class and the teacher heard about the role and said 'I'd be really good for it,'" Sethi told AFP. "So I auditioned. I went to LA and two weeks later we started filming." The young debutant and his female co-stars are joined by a glittering male cast featuring Ben Kingsley, Christopher Walken, Idris Elba and Bill Murray, who is famously selective about the roles he takes.

"The hardest part of the movie was trying to get Bill Murray on the phone for the first time," said Favreau, who cast the 65-year-old comic actor in the role of Baloo the bear. "I sent letters, I sent artwork. I'd done it on other movies, I'd reached out to him before, and never heard from him. So when I got the call back from him, that's when my whole world lit up."

While "The Jungle Book" was the only animation for which Walt Disney hired well-known voice actors, Favreau describes himself as the kind of director who draws inspiration from an all-star cast. "When I cast Robert Downey Jr, all of a sudden 'Iron Man' became very clear to me," he told AFP. "In this case, when Bill Murray came in as Baloo my blood pressure dropped. I knew that I had a great opportunity here to make a wonderful film."

### Dreaming of Mowgli

Born two months before Disney's death in 1966, Favreau found fame early in his career as the writer and star of 1996 cult comedy "Swingers." His memories of the impresario's last movie are sketchy, but he remembers dreaming of Mowgli driving in his parents' Toyota in downtown Manhattan. "I also remember it being scary to me. I remember the snake hypnotizing the boy felt very scary. I look at it now and it seems silly," he told AFP. Award-winning composer John Debney, whose father Louis was used by Walt Disney in the mid-1930s, provides a score reminiscent of the 1967 film but, unlike the original, the new version is not a musical.

There are snippets of the classic songs from the 1967 film, such as "Bare Necessities" and "I Wanna Be Like You," but fans will have to wait for the closing credits for a full-on sing along. Favreau said he reined in the musical numbers because he felt a more flamboyant approach would have undermined the sense of danger in his film, which is much more adult in tone than the original. "You want to make a movie that's appealing to all audiences, and around the world, and I think the original was more of a children's movie," he told AFP. "Although people remember it fondly, if we had done a live action version of it, I think it would have felt a little redundant." — AFP



One Direction star Zayn Malik is finding renewed success in his own right, with his solo debut album opening at number one in both the United States and Britain. — AFP

## Zayn tops charts in post-One Direction debut

One Direction star Zayn Malik is finding renewed success in his own right, with his solo debut album opening at number one in both the United States and Britain. The 23-year-old, who now simply calls himself Zayn, has gone racier as a solo artist with a sexual image that would have been out of the question for his former boy band. His album 'Mind of Mine,' sold 157,000 copies or the equivalent in downloads or streaming in its first week in the United States, Nielsen Music said late Sunday.

Zayn becomes the first British male solo artist to debut at number one on the benchmark US Billboard chart with his first album. George Michael went to number one in 1988 with 'Faith,' his blockbuster solo debut after disbanding the pop duo Wham!, but he did not do so in his first week. 'Mind of Mine' also debuted at number one in Britain, where Zayn edged out fellow hometown star Adele on the Official Albums Chart released Friday. Zayn released 'Mind of Mine' on March 25, the anniversary of his abrupt and at times acrimonious departure from One Direction amid a global tour.—AFP



A screen grab from the 1967 film 'The Jungle Book' - a version of Rudyard Kipling's famous tale. — AFP

Awards



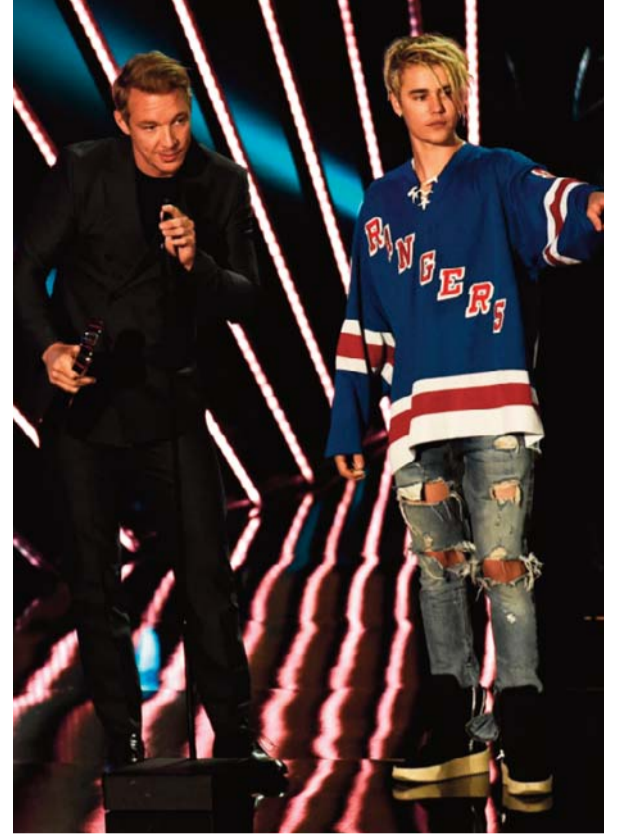
Taylor Swift, left, accepts the award for best tour as Justin Timberlake looks on from right during the iHeartRadio Music Awards at The Forum. — AP photos



Justin Timberlake presents the award for best tour.



Taylor Swift accepts the award for best song.



Diplo, left, and Justin Bieber accept the award for dance song of the year for Where Are U Now.



Justin Bieber performs "Love Yourself" and "Company" on stage.

# Swift thanks 'boyfriend Adam' at iHeartRadio Awards

For the second year in a row, the iHeartRadio Awards became the iHeartTaylorSwift show. Not only did Swift claim three prizes, including album of the year, but her bestie and her boyfriend took home trophies, too. Swift, who swept the awards last year, won the first and last prize Sunday night - female artist and album of the year. In between, she claimed best tour honors for her star-studded "1989 World Tour," thanking boyfriend Calvin Harris (real name: Adam Wiles) from the stage. "For the first time, I had the most amazing person to come home to when the spotlight went out and when the crowds were all gone," Swift said. "So I want to thank my boyfriend Adam for that."

Harris won dance artist of the year. Gomez took the "biggest triple threat" award. Bono and the Edge from U2 accepted the show's Innovator Award, presented by last year's winner, Pharrell Williams. "The thing that might be the most innovative about our band is we are a real band," Edge said. "We are still in our high school band." Song of the year went to Adele for "Hello." She accepted via video from a performance in Birmingham, England. Other winners at the fan-voted show included Fetty Wap (best new artist), Pitbull (Latin artist of the year) and Chris Brown (R&B artist of the year). All three men also performed during the show.

Brown thanked "everybody who supported me through all the worst times in my life and the positive times in my life." "I tend to not have a filter sometimes, and I go off on a lot of people," said Brown, who has been dogged by legal troubles since pleading guilty to felony charges in 2009 for beating then-girlfriend Rihanna. "But the music stays the same." There were as many performances as awards presented during the three-hour show, hosted by Jason Derulo and broadcast live on TNT and TBS from the Forum in Inglewood, California. Justin Bieber was the first to perform, showing off his new dreadlocks during a mash-up of "Love Yourself" and "Company." He returned to the stage twice as a winner, claiming male artist of the year and sharing in the dance song of the year award with Diplo and Skrillex for "Where Are U Now."

Bieber thanked his fans for standing by him through what he described as "tough times." "It's just about our growth and learning," he said. Meghan Trainor performed her new single, "No." Demi Lovato sang the heart wrenching "Stone Cold" while Brad Paisley accompanied her on guitar. Iggy Azalea unveiled her new song, "Team." Zayn Malik made his solo awards-show performance debut, performing "Like I Would" from his new album, "Mind of Mine." Other performers included DNCE, The Weeknd, show host Jason Derulo and Maroon 5, which was named duo or group of the year. — AP

## Winners

**Album of the Year:** 1989 - Taylor Swift

**Song of the Year:** "Hello" - Adele

**Female Artist of the Year:** Taylor Swift

**Male Artist of the Year:** Justin Bieber

**Best New Artist:** Fetty Wap

**Hip Hop Artist of the Year:** Drake

**R&B Artist of the Year:** Chris Brown

**Dance Artist of the Year:** Calvin Harris

**Latin Artist of the Year:** Pitbull

**Triple Threat:** Selena Gomez -

Singer/Actor/Dancer

**Hip Hop Song of the Year:** "Hotline Bling"

- Drake

**R&B Song of the Year:** "Earned It" - The

Weeknd

**Alternative Rock Song of the Year:**

"Stressed Out" - Twenty One Pilots

**Best Collaboration:** "Uptown Funk" - Mark

Ronson featuring Bruno Mars

**Best Tour:** Taylor Swift

**Rock Song of the Year:** "Heavy Is The

Head" - Zac Brown Band featuring Chris

Cornell

**Country Song of the Year:** "Buy Me A

Boat" - Chris Janson

**Dance Song of the Year:** "Where Are U

Now" - Skrillex & Diplo with Justin Bieber

**Best Lyrics:** "Fight Song" - Rachel Platten

**Best Fan Army:** Justin Bieber - Beliebers

**Alternative Rock Artist of the Year:**

Twenty One Pilots

**Best Duo/Group of the Year:** Maroon 5

**Rock Artist of the Year:** Foo Fighters

**Country Artist of the Year:** Luke Bryan

**Latin Song of the Year:** "El Perdon" - Nicky

Jam & Enrique Iglesias

**Regional Mexican Song of the Year:**

"Levantando Polvadera" - Voz de Mando

**Regional Mexican Artist of the Year:**

Banda Los Recoditos

**Best Cover Song:** "Uptown Funk" - Fifth

Harmony, Jasmine V, Jacob Whitesides and

Mahogany Lox covering Mark Ronson featur-

ing Bruno Mars

**Best Song from a Movie:** "Til It Happens

To You" - Lady Gaga (The Hunting Ground)

**Most Meme-able Moment:** Taylor Swift's

"Crazy Girl" with Running Mascara (from

"Blank Space" video) — Reuters



Fetty Wap poses in the press room with the award for best new artist.



Justin Bieber, winner of the awards for male artist of the year and dance song of the year for 'Where are U Now', poses in the press room.



Calvin Harris accepts the award for dance artist of the year.



Selena Gomez accepts the award for triple threat for her career as a singer, actress, and dancer.



Diane Warren poses in the press room with the award for best song.



Nicky Jam winner of the award for latin song of the year for 'El Perdon'.



Bono, left, and The Edge of U2, winners of the innovator award pose in the press room.



Bono, left, and The Edge of U2 accept the innovator award as presenter Pharrell Williams looks on at right.



Meghan Trainor performs 'No' on stage.



Host Jason Derulo appears onstage during the iHeartRadio Music Awards.



Recording artist Jason Aldean accepts the Entertainer of the Year award onstage during the 51st Academy of Country Music Awards at MGM Grand Garden Arena. — AP/AFIP photos



Chris Stapleton accepts the award for album of the year for 'Traveller'.



Chris Stapleton poses in the press room with the awards for album of the year for 'Traveller', new male vocalist of the year, male vocalist of the year and song of the year for 'Nobody to Blame'.



Chris Stapleton, left, and his wife, Morgane Stapleton, perform 'Fire Away'.

# Aldean wins top award, Stapleton cleans house at ACM Awards



Miranda Lambert accepts the award for female vocalist of the year.



Miranda Lambert poses in the press room with the awards for female vocalist of the year and vocal event of the year for 'Smokin and Drinkin'.

Jason Aldean beat Luke Bryan and Miranda Lambert for entertainer of the year at the Academy of Country Music Awards - a first for the singer after earning nominations for the top prize over the years, while Chris Stapleton cleaned house in other categories. Aldean also won over Garth Brooks and Eric Church on Sunday at the MGM Grand Garden Arena in Las Vegas. "I was just starting to think this one wasn't in the cards for me," Aldean said onstage near the end of the three-hour show, which aired on CBS. "This is one of the best nights of my professional career."

Stapleton had an even better night. It was a repeat of the recent Grammy Awards and last year's Country Music Association Awards. Stapleton took home six awards, including album, song, male vocalist and new male vocalist of the year (he won twice for album and song of the year as the artist and songwriter-producer). Stapleton also shined with an impressive performance of the song, "Fire Away." His special guest this time wasn't Justin Timberlake, but his wife, Morgane, who sang next to her all-star hubby. The critically-acclaimed singer-songwriter was humbled and shocked as he won the most awards of the night.

"You got to be kidding me. I thought for sure we were going to be girl-crushed on this one," Stapleton said onstage after winning song of the year for "Nobody to Blame" and beating Little Big Town's mega-hit "Girl Crush." Other top moments from the show included Dolly Parton partnering with Katy Perry for "Coat of Many Colors" and "Jolene." "Y'all finally got me in a pair of boots," Perry said onstage, sporting a bright pink and yellow country-flavored get-up. Parton wore a 2016 sparkly version of the famous coat she said "represents a very special time in my life" and was part of last year's NBC TV-movie about her childhood, "Dolly Parton's Coat of Many Colors." She won the Tex Ritter Award for films that honor country music.

### Musical heroes

Eric Church also had a special moment when he paid tribute to rock icons like David Bowie, The Eagles' Glenn Frey, Lemmy Kilmister of Motorhead and former Stone Temple Pilots frontman Scott Weiland. Bryan introduced Church and said the performer was a big fan of vinyl records and was set to pay tribute to "four of his musical heroes." Church performed the track, "Record Year," and intertwined the late performers' songs into his performance.

Tim McGraw's performance was also a highlight: As he sang "Humble & Kind," a diverse group of people joined him onstage, from children to adults of every race. Some even dressed in clothes representing their backgrounds, and others wore clothes representing their occupation. Other performers include Lambert with ZZ Top's Billy Gibbons and Keith Urban, Sam Hunt, Kenny Chesney, Little Big Town with Trombone Shorty and Kelsea Ballerini, who sang with pop singer Nick Jonas. Carrie Underwood earned loud applause after singing "Church Bells." She was nominated for female vocalist of the year, but lost to Miranda Lambert, who won the honor for record-setting seventh time.

"I love to see here tonight a bunch of new country girls up here shining and singing their great songs that they wrote themselves," said Lambert, who also won vocal event of the year for "Smokin' and Drinkin'" with Little Big Town. "I'm really excited for women in country music, and I'm glad to be here as one of them." Lambert was referring to breakthrough singers like Ballerini, who won new female vocalist of the year,



Recording artist Thomas Rhett performs onstage.



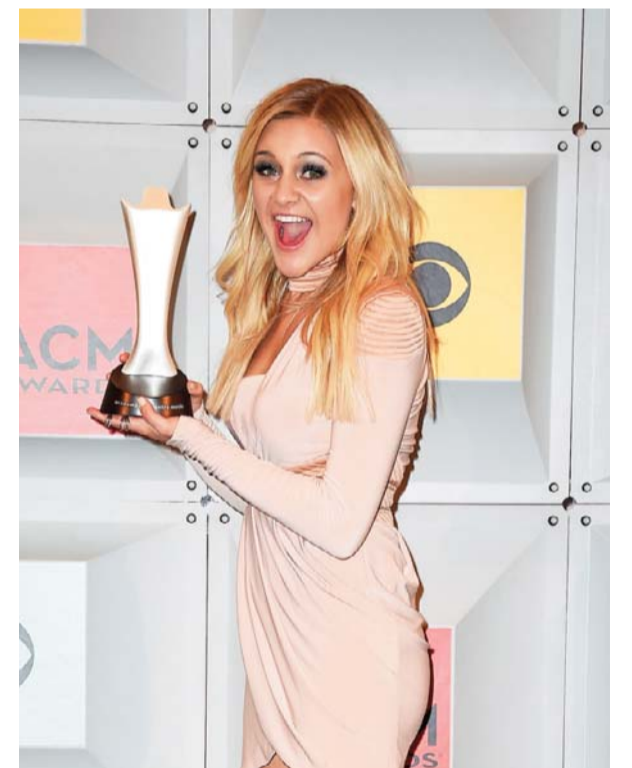
Thomas Rhett accepts the award for single record of the year for 'Die a Happy Man'.

and Cam, who was nominated for six awards and sang her Grammy-nominated hit, "Burning House," at the ACMs. They represent a small number of women who performed Sunday. In typical fashion of the last few years - at country awards shows and country radio - the night was dominated by the men.

### Waiting backstage

Other winners included Little Big Town, Florida Georgia Line, Church, Old Dominion and Thomas Rhett, who took home single record of the year for "Die a Happy Man." Blake Shelton, who didn't host this year's ACMs like usual with Bryan, joined his former co-host to open the show with a performance, taking the spot of new co-host Dierks Bentley. Bentley was waiting backstage to jump into the performance before Shelton took his microphone to perform "Huntin', Fishin' and Lovin' Every Day" with Bryan. "The Voice" coach followed the collaborative performance with his own, of his recent single "Come Here to Forget."

After the performance, the hosts told a string of jokes, including one about country singers in the audience taking credit for the breakthrough career of leading nominee Chris Stapleton, who has written hits for dozens of country stars. Stapleton's six of seven wins ties him with Brooks and Faith Hill for most wins in a night at the ACMs. Presenters on Sunday included Kiefer Sutherland, who is working on a country album; British actor Tom Hiddleston, who portrays Hank Williams in biopic, "I Saw the Light"; Miss America Betty Cantrell; and singers Kacey Musgraves, Darius Rucker, Martina McBride and Jake Owen. — AP



Kelsea Ballerini, poses in the press room with the award for new female vocalist of the year.



Brian Kelley, left, and Tyler Hubbard of Florida Georgia Line, perform 'Confession'.



(From left) Recording artists Keith Urban, Miranda Lambert and Billy Gibbons perform onstage.



Recording artists Nick Jonas (left) and Kelsea Ballerini perform onstage.

Awards



Jimi Westbrook, foreground from left, Kimberly Schlapman, Karen Fairchild and Phillip Sweet of Little Big Town, perform 'Stay All Night', with Trombone Shorty, background center right.



Little Big Town, winner of the award for vocal group of the year, and vocal event of the year for 'Smoking' And Drinkin', pose in the press room.



Brian Kelley, left, and Tyler Hubbard, of Florida Georgia Line, pose in the press room with their awards for vocal duo of the year.



Recording artist Carrie Underwood performs on stage.



Old Dominion performs on stage.



(From left) Singers Whit Sellers, Trevor Rosen, Matthew Ramsey, Brad Tursi, and Geoff Sprung of Old Dominion, winners of New Vocal Duo or Group of the Year.



Keith Urban performs 'Wasted Time' on stage.



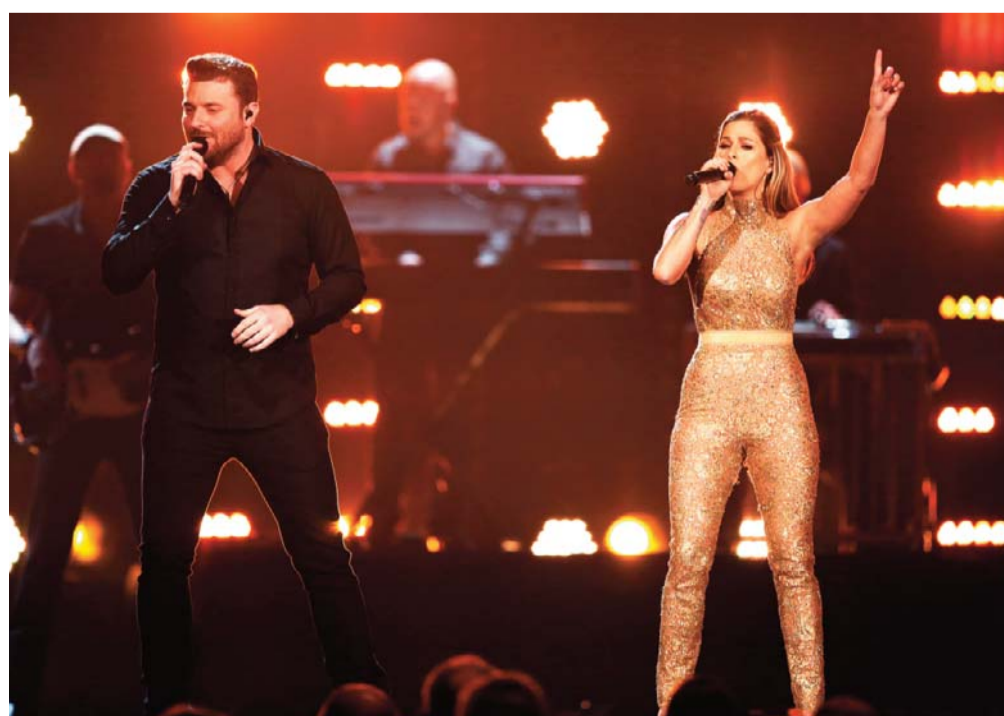
Nicole Kidman, left, and Keith Urban arrive at the 51st annual Academy of Country Music Awards.



Jake Owen, left, and Betty Cantrell present the award for single record of the year.



Eric Church performs 'Record Year' on stage.



Chris Young, left, and Cassadee Pope perform 'Think of You' on stage.



Kiefer Sutherland presents the award for female vocalist of the year.



Dolly Parton accepts the Tex Ritter award.



Nancy O'Dell presents the award for male vocalist of the year.



Tom Hiddleston presents the award for entertainer of the year.

# Winners

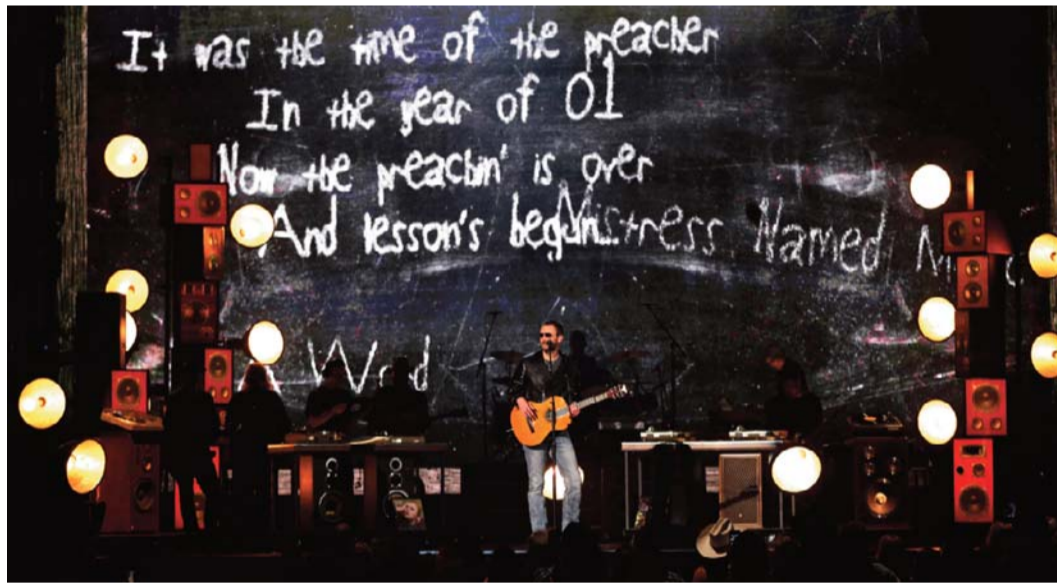
- Entertainer of the Year**  
Jason Aldean
- Album of the Year**  
Chris Stapleton, Traveller
- Song of the Year**  
"Nobody to Blame," Chris Stapleton
- Single Record of the Year**  
"Die a Happy Man," Thomas Rhett
- Male Vocalist of the Year**  
Chris Stapleton
- Female Vocalist of the Year**  
Miranda Lambert
- Vocal Duo of the Year**  
Florida Georgia Line
- Vocal Group of the Year**  
Little Big Town
- New Male Vocalist of the Year**  
Chris Stapleton
- New Female Vocalist of the Year**  
Kelsea Ballerini
- New Vocal Duo or Group of the Year**  
Old Dominion
- Video of the Year**  
"Mr Misunderstood," Eric Church — Reuters



Hosts Luke Bryan, left, and Dierks Bentley appear on stage.



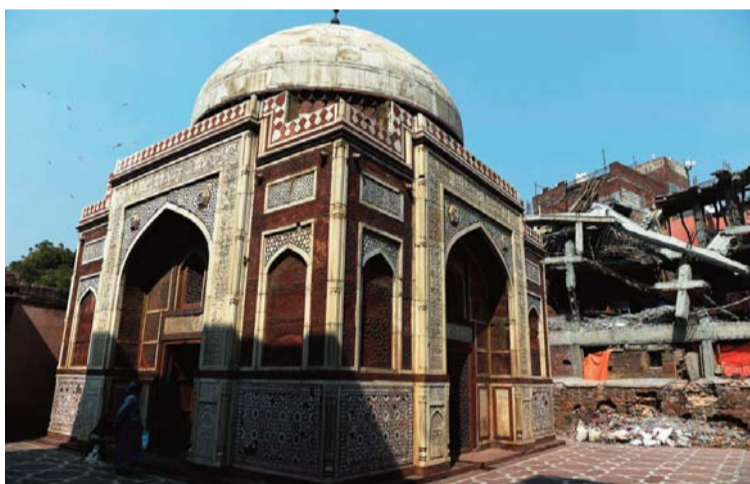
Dolly Parton, left, and Katy Perry perform 'Coat of Many Colors'.



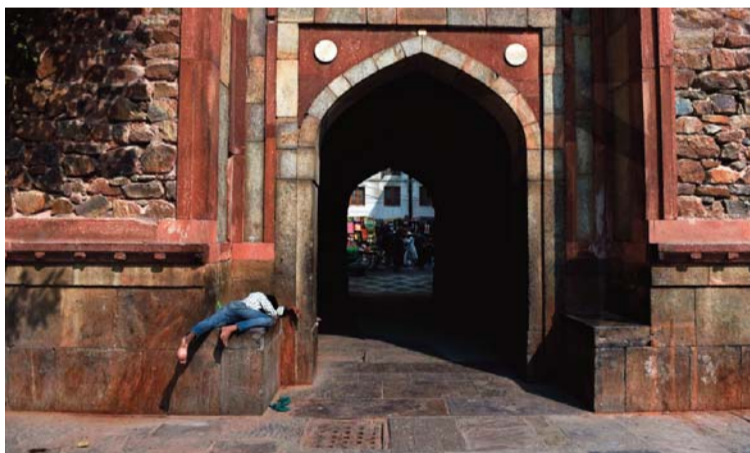
Eric Church performs on stage.



A man takes part in the International Fireworks Fair in Indaparapeo municipality, in Michoacan State, Mexico. — AFP



The remains of an illegally-constructed building that has been demolished are seen near the tomb of Atgah Khan in the Nizamuddin area.



An Indian Muslim sleeps at the entrance to the 16th century tomb of Chausanth Khamha (64 pillars) in the Nizamuddin.



An Indian laborer stands amidst ongoing construction inside the Zamait Khana Mosque at the Dargah of Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya in the Nizamuddin area.



An Indian man sits inside the tomb of Atgah Khan in the Nizamuddin area of New Delhi.

## Squatters barrier to protecting Delhi's ancient monuments

In the crypt of a 16th-century nationally protected tomb in New Delhi, a family is busy preparing a meal in their brightly painted kitchen that boasts a fridge and electricity. New Delhi, where emperors ruled for at least 2,000 years, is rich with ancient tombs, shrines and forts which are packed into almost every suburb of the Indian capital. But the city is also teeming with millions of desperately poor and homeless and with land at a premium, the ancient monuments have become valuable homes, making removal of so-called squatters a tough battle.

"There are far too many monuments and not enough resources. That means they are neglected and open to abuse and occupation," Delhi conservationist A.G.K Menon said. "Nobody occupies the Taj Mahal because it's looked after, but that's not the case for other precious monuments." Deep inside Delhi's packed Nizamuddin neighborhood, past the goats and snack vendors, the family of Sufi musicians has lived in the vaults of the Atgah Khan tomb, built in 1566, for generations. There are cupboards, rugs and aqua-coloured paint on the walls. "We are connected to the shrine. We have a duty to be here," said one woman, whose nephews perform at the nearby Nizamuddin Dargah, adding that they have not been asked to leave.

One floor up, a string of small homes have been built against the perimeter walls of the striking red sandstone and marble tomb, making any substantial conservation work difficult. Three months ago, men armed with sledge hammers and welding equipment started demolishing one of the occupied homes. Official warnings against undertaking extensions that might encroach on the tomb had gone unheeded, according to neighbors, forcing the destruction. But the 18-member family has defiantly continued to live in the ruins, setting up beds in the rubble, and hanging laundry from the now-exposed rafters. "If somebody thinks we are going to leave this place, they are very mistaken," said 75-year-old Shamama Khan who insists her family bought the land on which they built decades ago. Squatters-or encroachers as they are called in India-are just one of the many headaches facing conservationists as they endeavour to preserve the city's monuments.

### 'Heritage a burden'

More than 1,000 listed heritage sites are scattered in Delhi, where Mughal emperors and other rulers rose and fell for hundreds of years, before the British later moved in, with thousands more spread across India. But only 176 of those in Delhi are protected by the top government-funded Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) whose funds are limited. Cash-strapped city and state bodies are responsible for some, while others are not protected at all, and are

crumbling under the strain of the ever-expanding city of more than 16 million people.

Some have disappeared altogether under developers' bulldozers.

"It's a full-time job to protect the ones we have," ASI joint director general R.S Fonia told AFP when asked if more should be added to its list. At a sprawling archaeological park across town, Menon and his team from

uments are being used as seats around a campfire and few tourists are seen.

Ratish Nanda, a noted conservationist, and his team including of craftsmen and architects have restored several monuments inside Nizamuddin, including a 14th-century step-well considered holy by Muslim pilgrims. The Aga Khan Trust for Culture, of which Nanda is chief executive, is also credited with restoring the stunning World



A tomb at Mehrauli Archaeological Park in New Delhi. — AFP photos

INTACH, a non-governmental conservation organization, have worked hard to restore some of the 100-odd monuments dating back to the 11th century. INTACH received government funding to carry out the restoration work, but says the authorities failed to maintain the monuments after they were handed back.

"It is a waste of public money," says Menon, whose organization took legal action to try to force the authorities to act. The High Court last month ordered the Delhi Development Authority to erect a wall around parts of the park, spread over 80 hectares (200 acres), to keep out squatters. But a squabble over who owns the different monuments, and therefore should protect them, is ongoing. Inside the park meanwhile, broken blocks from mon-

Heritage-listed Humayun's Tomb, built in the 1560s for Mughal emperor Humayun, to which tourists flock. But Nanda says it's a constant struggle to convince a myriad of authorities, local communities and other stakeholders of the need to work together to preserve the past and treat their heritage as a valuable resource. "We don't understand the economic potential of our heritage. We could live off our heritage if attitudes changed and we decided to properly restore and protect our past. We are sitting on a gold mine," he said. "Instead we treat our heritage as a burden." — AFP



A tomb at Mehrauli Archaeological Park in New Delhi.



An Indian man stands beside the baoli or step-well in the Nizamuddin area.