

**Kuwait mourns
luminary stage
director Al-Shatti**



**British brands eye
growing Muslim
consumer market**



**Warriors clinch
home-court
advantage**



150 Fils

LEBANESE EXPATS FEARFUL AS GCC NATIONS EXPEL DOZENS

100 EXPELLED FROM BAHRAIN, KUWAIT, UAE IN 2 MONTHS



Min 19°

Max 36°



MANAMA: (From left) Kuwait Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah, Qatar Foreign Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Bin Jassim Al-Thani, Oman Foreign Minister Yusuf bin Alawi, Saudi Arabia Foreign Minister Adel Al-Jubeir, Secretary of State John Kerry, Bahrain Foreign Minister Khalid bin Ahmed Al Khalifa, UAE Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Anwar Gargash and Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Secretary General Abdulatif Bin Rashid Al Zayani, of Bahrain, stand together for a family photo at the start of the GCC Ministerial meetings in Manama, Bahrain. — AP

NO MORE 'FREE MONEY' FOR EGYPT: SAUDI BUSINESSMAN

OIL PRICE, DIPLOMATIC DIFFERENCES, CHANGED THINGS

CAIRO: Saudi Arabia's financial support for strategic ally Egypt will no longer involve "free money" and will increasingly take the form of loans that provide returns to help it grapple with low oil prices, a Saudi businessman familiar with the matter said. "This is a change in strategy. Return on investment is important to Saudi Arabia as it diversifies sources of revenue," the businessman said yesterday during what has been described as a "historic" visit to Cairo by Saudi King Salman.

Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait showered Egypt with billions of dollars after then-military chief Abdel Fattah El-Sisi toppled President Mohamed Morsi of the Muslim Brotherhood in 2013 after mass protests against his rule. But low oil prices and differences over regional issues have called into question whether such strong support is sustainable. Egypt is struggling to revive an economy hit by years of political upheaval since the 2011 uprising that ousted President Hosni Mubarak, as well as an Islamist insurgency based in the Sinai Peninsula.

The more measured Saudi approach could increase pressure on Sisi to deliver on promises of an economic turnaround and job creation in the most populous Arab nation through infrastructure mega-projects. "Saudi Arabia will be making investments and soft loans. No more free money," said the businessman. Gulf monarchies applauded Sisi after he seized power in

2013, removing the Muslim Brotherhood-seen as an existential threat to their wealthy nations-and mounting the fiercest crack-down on dissent in Egypt's modern history.

Sisi went on to become elected president on promises of stability but cracks are beginning to appear in what was once the cult-like adulation he enjoyed among many Egyptians, with television talk show hosts increasingly critical of government officials. The Gulf Arab allies have grown increasingly disillusioned at what they see as Sisi's inability to address entrenched corruption and inefficiency in the economy, and at Cairo's reduced role on the regional stage. Riyadh's new approach does not mean the Gulf States will abandon Egypt financially or politically.

With Iraq, Syria and Yemen immersed in civil war, and Saudi Arabia preoccupied by its region-wide rivalry with Iran, Riyadh is determined to stop the Egyptian state from failing. It will maintain some aid despite its own tighter budgets from falling global oil prices, analysts say. Saudi Arabia is expected to sign a \$20 billion deal to finance Egypt's oil needs for the next five years and a \$1.5 billion deal to develop its Sinai region, two Egyptian government sources told Reuters. Saudi businessmen are investing \$4 billion in projects including the Suez Canal, energy and agriculture, and have already deposited 10 percent of that sum in Egyptian banks, the deputy head of the Saudi-Egyptian Business Council said this week. — Reuters

DUBAI: Ahmed, a Lebanese worker living in the United Arab Emirates, closed down his Facebook page and started to shun some of his compatriots. His intention was to sever all links to people associated with Lebanon's Hezbollah after Gulf Arab states classified the Shiite Muslim organization as a terrorist group. Ahmed, a medical worker in his early 50s who declined to give his full name, is not alone.

Anxiety and apprehension are unsettling many of the up to 400,000 Lebanese workers living in the Gulf after last month's announcement by the Gulf Cooperation Council - Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman and Qatar. The rich states, where Lebanese have worked for generations, some achieving wealth and influence, have threatened to imprison and expel anyone linked to the Iranian-allied group that fights in support of President Bashar Al-Assad in Syria's civil war.

The GCC move on Hezbollah is part of a struggle pitting Sunni Saudi Arabia against Shiite regional heavyweight Iran. The rivals back different factions in Lebanon where Hezbollah wields enormous political influence as well as having a powerful military wing. Hassan Elian, who heads an association campaigning for Lebanese deportees from the Gulf, said about 100 had been ejected from Bahrain, Kuwait and the UAE in the past two months. There are no official figures to corroborate this.

While that total may appear small, the expulsions caused widespread fears amongst Lebanese expatriates, who send back about \$2.5 billion to Lebanon a year, that they are vulnerable. Some have expressed worries that they might not be expelled but their residency permits might not be renewed if they are suspected of being sympathetic to Hezbollah. Questioned about the possibility of further expulsion of Lebanese workers from GCC countries because of their relationship with Hezbollah, a Lebanese foreign ministry official said the Beirut government was following the matter.

Relations between Lebanon and Saudi Arabia have been plunged into crisis since Riyadh halted \$3 billion in aid to the Lebanese army - a response to the Beirut government's failure to condemn attacks on Saudi diplomatic missions in Iran. The row raised concern for Lebanon's political and economic stability by exacerbating tensions between its Sunni and Shiite Muslims and had already prompted concerns about the livelihoods of Lebanese expatriates in the Gulf. It is not just Shiite Lebanese who feel under scrutiny.

"We have no political activity, but we do support Hezbollah because it is a resistance movement against Israel," said Hassan, a civil servant working in Kuwait, one of only a few Lebanese who agreed to comment for this article. "Many Lebanese are worried because of the recent measures," Hassan, who asked that his family name not be used said. Hassan said some have refrained from buying new possessions because of fears for the future, while others planned to send their families home.

Continued on Page 13



KUWAIT: Kuwaiti women seen playing at the sports arena. Women Sport in Kuwait developing at a faster rate. — KUNA

KUWAIT URGES COOPERATION AGAINST TERROR, EXTREMISM

GENEVA: Kuwait has called on the international community to face violent extremism and terrorism through "mechanisms of cooperation with the UN strategy" for combating terrorism and the UN chief plan on banning vio-

lent radicalism. Mentioning five axes for this approach, the envoy to the UN, Ambassador Jamal Al-Ghnaim, said Kuwait focuses, in the first axis of its strategy, on prohibiting any linkage between these two phenomena with

religions, civilizations, cultures, races or nationalities.

He was speaking at a senior-level session of the two-day Geneva conference for combating violent extremism, sponsored by the UN and the Swiss Foreign Ministry. The second axis affirms necessity of mapping out international, national and regional plans to combat the violent radicalism, provided that this axis get integrated into the third one; creating a balance between the preemptive perspective, resisting extremism and the therapeutic approach, confronting terrorism, the senior Kuwaiti diplomat added.

The fourth axis, he said, aims to devote significant attention to the violent extremism which encompasses indiscriminate racism, disdain of religions, hatred of Islam and the foreigners, occupation, with abstention from linking the issue solely to rights breach or lack of freedoms. The ambassador delved into the fifth point; stressing on necessity of education, spread of awareness, tackling annihilating notions by promoting tolerance and human rights' respect. For its part, Kuwait had already enacted a series of anti-terror legislations and joined the 1999 anti-terrorism international convention. Moreover, the Cabinet had established a special panel to implement the relevant UN resolutions.

Kuwait, as an active member in the international anti-IS coalition, had taken part meetings aimed at crushing terrorism. The IS stands for the radical Islamic State, present in Iraq and Syria. Ambassador Al-Ghnaim called for a comprehensive approach to tackle violent extremism, not only on pure security bases, but also with regular pre-emptive precautions. Terrorism has hit not only various foreign countries, but Kuwait as well, he said, alluding to the bombing of a mosque in downtown Kuwait on June 26, 2015. He affirmed the State keenness on cooperating with the international community to fight such perils. — KUNA

KUWAIT MOURNS LUMINARY STAGE DIRECTOR AL-SHATTI

KUWAIT: Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah yesterday mourned the passing away of distinguished Kuwaiti stage director Fuad Al-Shatti. Al-Shatti died after prolonged struggle with illness at the age of 65, the minister said, noting that his long career in directing works in theater and television, stretched back to the early sixties.

Among the theatrical works he directed were plays written by Kuwaiti and Arab playwrights, the

most memorable of which are "A Sultan for Sale," "Sleeping Sheep," "Watch Out," and "A Case Without a File." He directed them for Al-Araby Theater, which he was a member of for a long time, becoming eventually that theater's board chairman, said Sheikh Salman. He noted that Al-Shatti joined Al-Araby Theater as a member in 1963, and in 1969 he earned a diploma in theater arts in Kuwait and a college degree in mass communication from Colombia University in the US, all of which equipping him with the appropriate wherewithal to pursue a successful career in theater and television.

For his distinguished works with his theater troupe, he was awarded a number of accolades, among them the state of Kuwait award for excellence in arts and letters in 1989, the award for best director in 1980 at a pan-Arab theater event, and the best director at the 1989 Carthage theater festival, said the minister. His contributions to Kuwaiti and Gulf theater arts will remain indelibly in the minds of those who remember him for his remarkable talent and creativity, said the minister as he expressed his condolences to the family and friends of the deceased. — KUNA



Kuwaiti stage director
Fuad Al-Shatti

News

In brief

84,000 Kuwaitis visited Dubai in two months

KUWAIT: Up to 84,000 Kuwaitis visited Dubai in January and February, down by 1 percent compared to the same period in 2015, a report by the Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing (DTCM) said. Dubai received 670,000 Gulf visitors during the first two months of the year, a rise of 18 percent, compared to the corresponding period in 2015. Saudis topped the list with 295,000 visitors, followed by Oman, 223,000, then Kuwaitis in the third place. According to the DTCM report, Kuwait ranked ninth among the 20 tourist-exporter countries to Dubai. Gulf visitors counted for 25 percent of the total tourists who visited Dubai in the two months. On the international level, Dubai received 314,000 tourists from India, 200,000 from the UK, and 107,000 from Germany, in the two months.

Kuwait is instrumental in bringing peace, stability

KHARTOUM: Sudan looks with pride at the role Kuwait played in bringing peace and stability to East Sudan, said Musa Ahmed, Assistant to the President of Sudan. At a meeting with Kuwaiti lawmakers on Thursday, he said Kuwait's efforts that eventually led to the signing of an agreement that brought stability and peace to East Sudan in 2006 would remain indelible in the minds of the Sudanese people. Further he thanked the Kuwaiti leadership for sponsoring the donors conference for the benefit of East Sudan in December 2010, which brought about fruitful results much appreciated by people of that eastern region of the country. He said Kuwait's pledge of \$500 million at the donors conference resulted in the carrying out of numerous development projects in East Sudan involving health, education, and access to clean water. He appreciated the assistance his country gets from the Kuwaiti government and from Kuwaiti charitable organizations.



Kuwait Ambassador to the United Mexican States, Sameeh Johar Hayat meets with the Mexican Secretary of Development and Social Affairs Jose Antonio. — KUNA

Kuwait and Mexico examine history of bilateral relations

KUWAIT: Kuwait Ambassador to the United Mexican States, Sameeh Johar Hayat, has held a meeting with the Mexican Secretary of Development and Social Affairs Jose Antonio Meade discussing history of the bilateral relations bonding Kuwait with the nation. Secretary Meade, during the meeting with the ambassador, lauded the various projects and initiatives that have been launched by Kuwait in his country, in coordination with Ambassador Hayat, according to an embassy statement delivered to KUNA yesterday. The Mexican official also praised the Kuwaiti diplomat for his noticeable role in holding donations' activities and exchanging expertise between the two countries in fields such as family development and child care, in addition to care services for people of special needs and the elderly. He indicated that the Kuwaiti support was intended to help cash-strapped families earn their living by being active and productive.

A BLOODY FIGHT IN SALMIYA

KUWAIT: Nine friends partying in Salmiya with three women lost their temper after they got drunk. An argument over who danced best soon triggered a bloody fight that made neighbors to call police. The injured persons were rushed to hospital for treatment and the three semi-naked women were arrested. In another development, two female clerks working at the Mol Service Center engaged in a brutal fight in Al-Salam area. Onlookers refrained from separating them in fear of being accused of 'touching' the women.

Boref'a released

Kuwaiti citizen, Boref'a, who had been detained on arrival from London for slander, was released yesterday by court after checking his medical reports proving that he is mentally disturbed (suffering from Schizophrenia), security sources said, noting that the same reports had been used before by the British courts last March. "Hell in Kuwait is better than paradise elsewhere. I would protect HH the Amir with my life - and I swear I will never slander anyone", Boref'a said after hearing that the court has ordered for his release. Meanwhile, he has been banned from travelling so as to continue his treatment at the psychological hospital.

Traffic policeman hit

A driver who had committed a traffic violation, ran over a traffic policeman along the Gulf road and drove away - escaping the scene, security sources said. The man's vehicle was later found abandoned in Maidan Hawally. The injured officer was rushed to hospital for treatment and a search is on for the suspect. In another development, two citizens sustained several injuries when they were stabbed during a fight with three others in Abu Halaifa, security sources said. The five fought over some old disputes and unsettled scores.

'Wanted man' nabbed

A citizen who had been wanted for several cases was

recently arrested after a police patrol chased him around Fahaheel streets. Patrol policemen suspected the man and urged him to pull over - but he accelerated in an attempt to escape arrest.

Kuwaiti escapes death

A Female citizen narrowly escaped death when her vehicle caught fire in Salmiya. Security sources said that the woman was sitting immobile in shock inside the vehicle as the fire destroys the car before the firemen pulled her out.

Weapon inspection

Weapon inspection teams recently searched Failaka Island for unlicensed weapons, security sources said. Detectives and the coastguards launched a 48-hour inspection campaign. 16 suspects were arrested 16 and 24 unlicensed shotguns were seized.

'Fake fingerprints'

Well-informed sources said that 18 Information Ministry employees have been referred to Public Prosecution with charges of faking their check in-and-out fingerprints and having someone use the fake prints for them.

'Son missing'

A citizen in his fifties recently reported that his son was missing. The father added that his son is so religious and expressed fears that he might have left the country to join the Islamic State.

Husband steals jewelry

A Jordanian wife accused her husband (a Jordanian) of stealing her jewelry. She alleged the man sold it and used the proceeds to marry another woman. In a similar development, an Iranian has accused a Filipina working at her beauty Salon of stealing KD 800. — Al-Rai, Al-Anbaa



KUWAIT: Farwaniya security forces recently launched a wide scale security inspection campaign in Ardhiya Industrial Area, security sources said. Officers issued 10 traffic citations and four people were arrested for not holding their IDs.



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AHMADI MUSIC GROUP COMMEMORATES MOZART

By Athoob Al-Shuaibi

KUWAIT: In a cordial atmosphere, a musical reception was held by the US Embassy last Thursday. The Ahmadi Music Group commemorated the famous musician Mozart by playing a preview of the "Don Giovanni Opera in a chamber, which was translated to English. The attendees included a number of local and diplomatic figures. "The US Embassy is keen on supporting cultural activities that live up to the high artistic taste through the blend of cultural heritage in Europe, America and the Arab world" His Excellency Douglas A

Silliman, US Ambassador said.

Ahmadi Music Group director, Richard Bushman said they want to be performing opera without audio amplifiers and modern techniques. "In Kuwait, we feel happy when people come to us," Bushman expressed. The guests enjoyed the remarkable performance of the opera singers and the piano by Harriet Bushman - who played popular classic songs like 'I'm So Pretty and Summer Time'. There will be another public performance at Abdhussain Abduredha Theatre in Salmiya on the 14th and the 15th of April 2016.



MUNICIPALITY REFERS 'TURKEYS CASE' TO PUBLIC PROSECUTION

KUWAIT: Upon recommendations by the Kuwait Municipality's Legal Department, Director Ahmed Al-Manfouhi has referred the probe results of 'turkey shipment' to the Municipality Minister pending the referral to the Public Prosecution. Al-Manfouhi also recommended taking legal measures against the company for selling part of the shipments in the local markets before getting Municipality's approval. The shipment arrived at Shuwaikh port

from US at the same time importation of poultry from US was suspended because of the spread of bird flu. The official in charge refused to receive the shipments because but his superior officer approved the shipment on the condition that the it would be withheld until they are properly certified. Moreover, investigators found out that the shipment had been originally sent to Lebanon and but ended up in Kuwait. — Al-Qabas



KUWAIT BEAUTIFUL & GREEN STUDENTS ART COMPETITION

HELLO ARTISTS...

Welcome to the Student's Art Competition. I hope you are ready to paint a beautiful painting and win wonderful prizes. The theme for your painting must be related to planting and greening, basically anything pertaining to our environment. We are looking for a great painting. So, please pick up your color pencils, paint brushes, crayons or whatever you prefer and start drawing and painting.

Good luck to you, our young artists.

- Competition is open to ages from (6 - 8) (9 - 11) (12 - 14) and (15 - 17) & 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.

March 10th Till April 14th, 2016

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Participation Form

If you are interested to participate fill the form and send it to Kuwait Times.

From:

We would like to confirm our participation in the above mentioned activity with the total number of participating student's so the corresponding number of drawing sheets can be delivered to our school.

School:

Tel: Fax:

Address:

Total number of interested student's are

6 - 8 years ☐ 9 - 11 years ☐ 12 - 14 years ☐ 15 - 17 years ☐ Special need ☐

Name: Signature:

For more information contact Kuwait Times Tel: 24835616/7 Fax 24835620/1 or send an email to: ads@kuwaittimes.net

ZAIN GROUP HOSTS CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT FORUM

KUWAIT: Zain Group, a leading mobile telecom innovator in eight markets across the Middle East and North Africa, announces the successful conclusion of its Customer Engagement Forum 2016, a three-day event held in Kuwait 4-6 April, which drew senior personnel from across the Group operations. Customer experience management remains one of Zain Group's keys strategic pillars, with the company investing heavily in the area in order to maintain the highest quality of service for its customers.

The Customer Engagement Forum focused on areas of customer experience management and topics of discussion included Customer Centricity and Complaint Management; Channel Economics; Change and Knowledge Management; Social Care as well as a dedicated session and focus on Zain's brand and digital online future strategic direction. Key presentations were made to the Zain management by leading global and regional technology providers specialized in the customer management arena showcasing the latest solutions available, namely Cybermak, Matrixx, Qelp, Response Tek and Sestek.

In addition, innovative end-to-end mobility digital services provider FOO Solutions, the entity that Zain recently acquired a strategic stake in, showcased how mobile apps can be at the center of customer services. The Forum was led by Zain Group CEO, Scott Gegenheimer, and Group Chief Commercial Officer, Duncan Howard who have been strong advocates for the Group's focus on customer experience management, having overseen a number of key initiatives in the area recently.

Commenting on the successful conclusion of the Forum, Scott Gegenheimer said, "In today's competitive telecom landscape, cus-

tomers experience management is as important to the sustainable success of a telco as technical innovation and investment. At Zain, we take this area of our business very seriously and are developing it as one of our key differentiators. As a Group of operations we benefit from differing experiences in our respective markets, and it is important to be able to gather regularly and share knowledge and insights in settings such as the Customer Engagement Forum."



Zain is set to continue to develop its laser-like focus on simplicity and operational efficiency, with customer experience remaining an important factor in driving commercial success. Retaining customers is vital and Zain strives to deliver the best experience in order to achieve this. Elements within Zain Group's customer experience management program include the quality of its network, delivery of value-added services, as well as the improvement of all customer touch points.

In an example of Zain Group's heightened

investment in customer experience management-related activities, last year the Group and its country operations introduced a series of analytical tools and activities aimed at heightening customer satisfaction levels, the results of which are proving positive.

Zain's holding of regular Customer Week exercises forms part of the company's ongoing commitment to delivering the best-in-class customer experience, and was conducted across all Zain Group markets simultane-

ously. Zain personnel, including business chiefs, directors, managers, and general staff interacted closely with customers during the week through different activities arranged in conjunction with the local customer experience teams.

Across its markets, each quarter approximately 150-200 members of Zain Group's management participate in Customer Day (Voice of the Customer) activities whereby the company conducts customer-related activities that take place in each of its mar-

kets, where management teams participate in customer-related activities including serving in retail, answering calls in contact centers, social media chats, corporate customer visits, on-site base station visits with engineers, and so on. At the end of each session, management teams meet to discuss their observations and a list of actions are created to determine what needs to continue to improve.

Zain has also implemented an internal customer survey feedback platform, which continues to be rolled out across markets, providing deep insights on customers' key interactions. When customers interact with the company through a visit to a branch or when calling customer service, they soon thereafter receive a SMS based survey that addresses questions related to satisfaction with the interaction, effort required to handle their request, agent knowledge to deal with their interaction and more.

These real-time insights have enabled Zain country operations to continue to shape their plans to drive the right results ultimately aimed at reducing customer effort and increasing both customer satisfaction and net promoter score. The real-time tool has now launched in five markets, with the remaining markets due to go live this year.

Additionally, members of the Customer Care and Customer Experience community across Zain Group participated in the Global CEM accreditation training as part of bi-annual forums undertaken by the company. The interactive training was aimed at continuing to develop capabilities and skills related to customer experience and required participants to submit an examination assignment in order to be accredited. Many of Zain's community members are now certified in Global CEM as a result.

BURGAN BANK 'GOLD SPONSOR' OF 'LOVE YOU MOM' FESTIVAL

KUWAIT: In celebration of Mother's Day this year, Burgan Bank recently sponsored the 'Love You Mom' festival activities, which took place at the Avenues and The Gate Mall from March 18th to March 21st, 2016. The event allowed Burgan Bank the chance to engage with all children to enjoy the Celebrative days with their moms with many fun-filled activities and stations. Young participants enjoyed the event where they met the BuBa Character and enjoyed many surprises and activities while giveaways were also distributed to the kids during this celebrative event.

Through this event, Burgan Bank aims at giving back to mothers and sharing with them their happiness with their kids, as a symbol of gratitude for their endless care and support. The BuBa Kids account is a suitable

savings account for all children up to 14 years old, where parents are provided with the best solutions to secure their children's future through its various services and benefits. From these benefits, BuBa Kids account holders are entitled to a free branded ATM VISA Electron card which offers them discounts at selected merchants in addition to free monthly transfers to BuBa account. Along with that, the bank continuously presents various promotions, offers and entertaining activities to all its BuBa Kids account holders. To find out more about Burgan Bank's BuBa Account as well as the latest promotions, customers are required to visit their nearest Burgan Bank branch or contact the call center on 1804080. For more information, customers can visit the bank's website on www.burgan.com.



DEAN COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING AND PETROLEUM PRAISES KFH

KFH SPONSORS PROJECTS FOR 200 STUDENTS

KUWAIT: Dean of College of Engineering and Petroleum Dr Abdullatif Al-Khalifi praised Kuwait Finance House KFH's efforts in supporting the educational process and the scientific activities, especially those related to the projects and programs of the College of Engineering and Petroleum, indicating that the cooperation and support of KFH encompassed thousands of students over the last years.

Dr Al-Khalifi expressed, while receiving KFH Public Relations Team on the occasion of the exhibition of the students' projects at the college slated for next May, his appreciation of KFH in recognition of its collaboration and support to the students'

projects. He indicated that KFH is an example for the institutions of private sector to follow suit, indicating that KFH has a long track record of contributions towards the society.

Meanwhile, Public Relations Manager at KFH, Yousef Al-Ruwaieh said during the meeting that KFH had signed several partnerships with the College of Engineering and Petroleum over the last years. KFH is sponsoring 300 projects for 1200 male and female students, among of which over 50 projects for 200 students at the exhibition slated for May at Crown Plaza hotel. He confirmed that KFH spares no efforts in shouldering the social responsibility.

International

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BRONX: Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton campaigns outside of Yankee Stadium on Thursday.—AFP

CLINTON, SANDERS GET TOUGH AS DEMOCRATIC RACE NARROWS

THE GLOVES ARE DEFINITELY OFF NOW

NEW YORK: Hillary Clinton and leftist challenger Bernie Sanders turned up the heat Thursday in the Democratic race for the White House, locking horns over trade and the "Panama Papers" scandal ahead of the New York primary.

Clinton, the frontrunner and former secretary of state, holds a six-point lead over Sanders in the RealClearPolitics national poll average but lost seven of the last eight voting contests to the Vermont senator. The New York primary on April 19 has turned into a battle ground, where Clinton needs a commanding win in her adopted home state, which elected her twice to the Senate in 2000 and 2004.

Sanders, who was born and raised in Brooklyn, must capitalize on his recent momentum by winning in New York and in Pennsylvania on April 26 to keep alive his hopes of snatching the Democratic nomination from party favorite Clinton.

The 74-year-old senator sought to capitalize on the leaked "Panama Papers," which lay bare how terror groups, drug cartels and pariah countries can hide money in banking havens, by conflating it with

Clinton's support for a 2012 Panama free trade agreement. "I don't think you are qualified if you supported the Panama free trade agreement, something I very strongly opposed, which has made it easier for wealthy people and corporations all over the world to avoid paying taxes owed to their countries," he told a rally in Philadelphia on Wednesday.

Sanders contended at the time that the free trade agreement would make it harder for the United States to crack down on off-shore tax havens in Panama. Clinton, who said on a campaign stop Wednesday that she would shut down "outrageous tax havens and loopholes" if elected president, helped push through the trade deal through Congress when she was secretary of state.

The former first lady has repeatedly questioned whether Sanders is a qualified commander-in-chief when the 74-year-old Senator has served his entire career in the small state of Vermont, first as mayor then as representative in Congress.

"It is all about rolling up our sleeves and getting to work. Don't make promises you can't keep," she told reporters Thursday

while campaigning in the Bronx, where she rode the subway joined by a local Democrat politician. "Know what you want to achieve and then bring everybody together to get the results and that is what I'm going to do."

Bare-knuckled

New York, America's largest city and one of its most diverse, has demographics that play well to Clinton's support base among the wealthy and minorities, but observers warn there may be tougher terrain outside the city. Communities in the more economically hard-hit western and northern part of the state voted Clinton into the Senate, but critics say they have not seen the job growth they were expecting.

Sanders has resonated strongly among voters, particularly independents, for his steadfast opposition the trans-Pacific trade deal signed by President Barack Obama that Clinton has only opposed more recently. "If the Clinton campaign wants to engage in a more bare-knuckled kind of approach, we're happy to do that as well," Sanders's campaign director Jeff Weaver told MSNBC on Thursday. "Secretary Clinton is funded by

Wall Street interests and other special interests. You know, she's really made a deal with the devil, and the devil always wants his due. So that time will come," he said.

In Philadelphia on Wednesday, Clinton criticized Sanders, saying "in a number of important areas, he doesn't have a plan at all." This week she also ripped into her opponent for saying in a newspaper interview that he did not agree with efforts by parents of children killed in a shooting at a Connecticut elementary school to sue gun manufacturers. "That he would place gun manufacturers' rights and immunity from liability against the parents of the children killed at Sandy Hook is just unimaginable to me," she told MSNBC on Wednesday.

Clinton and Sanders also sparred for days about holding a debate ahead of the New York primary—now scheduled for April 14 in Brooklyn, the borough where Sanders was born and which Clinton made her national campaign headquarters. Clinton leads Sanders 54-42 percent among likely Democratic voters in New York and 50-44 percent in Pennsylvania, according to Quinnipiac University polls.—AFP



MANAMA : US Secretary of State, John Kerry (L) speaks near Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir during a joint press conference after the ministerial meetings of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) leaders on Thursday. — AFP

KERRY URGES IRAN TO HELP END WARS IN YEMEN, SYRIA

KERRY TO BAHRAIN: RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS "ESSENTIAL"

MANAMA: US Secretary of State John Kerry on Thursday urged Iran to help end the wars raging in Yemen and Syria, criticizing the Islamic republic's "destabilizing actions" in the Middle East.

On the first visit by a US chief diplomat to Bahrain since 2010, Kerry also told authorities in Manama accused of discriminating against the country's Shiite majority that respect for human rights was "essential".

Kerry was also to meet his other Gulf Arab counterparts later Thursday, two weeks before President Barack Obama is scheduled to attend a summit of the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council in Riyadh when Washington's Middle East policy is likely to come under the microscope.

Speaking during a joint news conference with Bahraini Foreign Minister Sheikh Khalid bin Ahmed Al-Khalifa, Kerry condemned "the destabilizing actions of Iran, which the United States takes very seriously".

Kerry said the US Fifth Fleet, which is based in Bahrain, last week interrupted a shipment of weapons destined for Huthi rebels in Yemen. "We call on Iran to constructively join in the efforts to make peace and to help us to resolve Syria and rather than to continue to send weapons to Huthis, join in the effort... to make peace and to work toward a cessation of hostilities," Kerry told reporters.

Tehran and the Gulf states back opposition sides in Syria and Yemen. Last year Iran struck a landmark deal with world powers scaling back its nuclear program, which has led to the lifting of international sanctions on the Islamic republic. The US Treasury last month imposed financial sanctions on Iran's Republican Guards, who conducted ballistic missile tests over March 8-9.

"The United States and the GCC

countries remain united in our opposition to Iran's missile activities but we say very clearly to Iran... that we're prepared to work a new arrangement to find a peaceful solution to these issues," Kerry said.

Sheikh Khalid, whose government accuses Iran of stoking persistent protests among the kingdom's Shiites demanding an end to Sunni minority rule, echoed Kerry's call for Iran to cooperate. Iran's "interventions through proxies in several parts of our region (are) continuing unabated," the Bahraini foreign minister said.

Tehran argues that it is Saudi Arabia and its Gulf allies that are sowing instability in the region with their air strikes in Yemen and support to the opposition in Syria.

'Full' Yemen ceasefire

All the Gulf Arab states, apart from Oman, are taking part in a Saudi-led coalition that has been battling Iran-backed rebels in Yemen since March last year, in a war which the United Nations says has killed around 6,300 people.

Human Rights Watch said Thursday that bombs supplied by the United States were used in coalition air strikes on a market in Yemen that killed at least 97 civilians including children last month. Asked to comment on the report, Kerry said he did not have "solid information" on weapons used in Yemen.

Yemen's warring parties have agreed to observe a UN-brokered ceasefire from midnight Sunday to be followed by peace negotiations in Kuwait on April 18. The Gulf Arab states have also been staunch backers of Syrian rebel groups fighting to overthrow President Bashar al-Assad's regime since 2011.

Iran, with Russia, has been among the

regime's main supporters in the conflict that has killed more than 270,000 people and pushed nearly five million into exile.

Kerry will also discuss the situation in Iraq, Lebanon, and elsewhere in the region during his meeting with Gulf foreign ministers, a US official said. The GCC comprises the Sunni-dominated monarchies of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain and Oman.

More 'inclusive' Bahrain

Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and the UAE have carried out air strikes against the Islamic State jihadist group in Syria as part of a US-led military coalition.

"We're satisfied, I think, with the overall level of support that we're getting from the Gulf states in the coalition," the US official said. On Bahrain, Kerry urged authorities to adopt an "inclusive political system". "Here, as in all nations, we believe that respect for human rights and an inclusive political system are essential," Kerry said.

He said he and Sheikh Khalid "had the chance to discuss the ongoing effort to address and to reduce sectarian divisions here in Bahrain and elsewhere". "I appreciate the seriousness with which he considers this issue," Kerry said. "We all welcome steps by sides to create conditions to provide for greater political involvement for the citizens of this great country," he added.

In 2011, the tiny but strategic island state, which is dominated by a ruling family drawn from the Sunni minority, crushed a Shiite-led uprising calling for a full constitutional monarchy with an elected prime minister. Scores of Shiites were rounded up and sentenced to lengthy jail terms, including opposition chiefs, amid growing criticism from international rights groups. — AFP

LEBANON EX-MINISTER JAILED FOR 13 YEARS ON 'TERROR' CHARGES

BEIRUT: A Lebanese military court sentenced former information minister Michel Samaha Friday to 13 years in prison with hard labor for attempting to commit "terrorist acts", a judicial source told AFP.

Samaha, 68, was convicted of transporting explosives to carry out attacks and assassinations of political and religious figures in Lebanon with the help of Syrian security services.

The ex-minister was arrested in 2012 and sentenced in May 2015 to four and a half years in prison, but that conviction was quashed a month later and a retrial ordered.

"The prosecution asked for the death penalty but he was sentenced to 13 years with hard labour," the judicial source said. But Samaha will actually serve a sentence of less than seven years. Lebanon's "judicial year" is equivalent to just nine months, and Samaha has already served nearly three years following his initial sentencing. He was also stripped of his right to vote or stand as a candidate for public office, the source said.

The sum of \$170,000 that was found on his person when he was arrested has been given to the Lebanese armed forces, the source added. Samaha, a Christian politician and former adviser to Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, was information minister from 1992 to 1995.

He admitted during his previous trial that he had transported explosives from Syria for use in attacks in Lebanon with the help of Damascus's security services chief Ali Mamluk. Samaha has argued that he should be acquitted because he was a victim of entrapment.

In court on Thursday, he repeated his claim that he was "a victim of the security apparatus, who tried to trap me and undermine my reputation and political achievements". Samaha's family and his lawyers were not reachable for comment on Friday.

'Cause for celebration'

The fresh sentencing in the controversial case was hailed by Lebanese political figures opposed to Damascus. Former prime minister Saad Hariri-Lebanon's leading Sunni Muslim politician, whose ex-premier father Rafiq was assassinated in a 2005 truck bombing in Beirut-welcomed the new verdict using Twitter.

"The terrorist Samaha will return today to prison, which is the right place for anyone that plans to kill innocents and drag Lebanon into sectarian strife and civil war," Hariri said.

Health Minister Wael Abu Faour said the sentence was "a slap in the face for the terrorist, criminal regime in Damascus".

And Ashraf Rifi, who recently resigned as Lebanon's justice minister, said the verdict "was cause for celebration". "The agent of Bashar al-Assad and Ali Mamluk will return to prison. It's our duty and yours to press for full justice," Rifi said in a statement.

Syria maintained a nearly 30-year presence in Lebanon during and after the 1975-90 civil war, finally withdrawing its troops in the face of the mass protests that followed Hariri's 2005 murder.

The assassination was widely blamed on Shiite militant group Hezbollah and its supporters in Damascus and Tehran, and five Lebanese individuals with ties to Hezbollah have been charged in an international tribunal. A series of killings of prominent Lebanese opponents of the Damascus regime, including journalists, security figures and politicians, followed the Syrian army's withdrawal.

Since civil war broke out in Syria in 2011, Beirut has sought to maintain an official policy of neutrality. But the rival blocs headed by Hariri and Hezbollah are bitterly divided over the conflict, with the former supporting the rebels and the latter the Damascus regime. — AFP



BEIRUT: Former Lebanese Information Minister Michel Samaha. — AP

PAKISTAN TRIBAL POLICE APPOINT FIRST EVER FEMALE OFFICERS

LANDI KOTAL: Pakistan tribal police have for the first time in the country's history recruited three Christian women to work alongside their Muslim male colleagues.

The three were among a group of 15 female Christian applicants for the job, despite the fact that the posts were open to all religions. Officials said no Muslim women applied due to local traditions in the conservative tribal society. "Their basic job is to carry out body searches of women passing through the Torkham border crossing," Khalid Khan, a senior official in Pakistan's Khyber tribal district told AFP.

Khyber is one of Pakistan's seven tribal districts situated next to Peshawar and bordering Afghanistan, and thousands of Afghans families pass through the Torkham

border crossing between the two countries daily. "But they will also help us in house to house raids," Khan said. Male police carrying out female body searches is a sensitive issue in Pakistan.

Security agencies elsewhere in the country have recruited women police, but Khan said the tribal districts were facing a shortage of female applicants.

"We consider it as a first drop of rain and we are hopeful that more women, both Muslims and Christians will apply," another official in Khyber tribal district told AFP, requesting anonymity.

A tribal police force with more than 4,500 personnel assists other security agencies to maintain law and order in Pakistan's seven tribal districts. The tribal force are

mainly responsible for controlling local crime and drug smuggling while the military and paramilitary are responsible for border control and security.

The new recruits will do three months of basic training before being deployed at Torkham. "I do not want to be at home like other women, I want to serve my country and help my family," twenty-one-year-old Riffat Abid, one of the successful applicants, told AFP in Landi Kotal border town.

Landi Kotal is home to a limited number of Christian families. The men mostly work as sweepers while men and women with basic education also work as nurses at local hospitals.

Another successful applicant Mehak Ghaffar, 20, said her husband was getting

up to 7,000 rupees (\$66) which was insufficient to feed 12 members of the family. "This was the happiest day of my life, our family has been facing extreme poverty for generations and I want to get rid of that," Ghaffar told AFP at her small home.

"At least my kids will not work as sweepers, we, the three women, will be the initial drops of rain for our families," Ghaffar added. The other fortunate candidate Naila Jabbar, 22, said she feels like a man when she leaves her home. "I become a man when I leave my home, I am happy that I will support my family," Jabbar said.

Christians make up an estimated 1.6 percent of Pakistan's 200 million people and have long faced discrimination in the Muslim-majority country. — AFP



HAVANA: Fidel Castro speaks to school children. — AP

FIDEL CASTRO MAKES RARE PUBLIC APPEARANCE IN CUBA

HAVANA: Fidel Castro has made a rare public appearance, speaking to school children about his brother's late wife and revolutionary figure Vilma Espin.

The 89-year-old former president regularly writes reflections in the state media and meets with dignitaries but seldom appears in public. His last appearance at a public event was in July 2015. Wearing a white sports jacket and speaking in a scratchy voice, Castro told a room of students and teachers that Espin would be happy to see the fruits of her sacrifice at schools like theirs. Thursday's appearance came on what would have been her 86th birthday.

"For those of us who are here we consider it a privilege to be in this school today because this type of school is getting close to a kind of dream," he said. Castro was later shown shaking hands with children while seated and wearing a black baseball cap. The revolutionary leader did not make any remarks about last month's visit to Cuba by President Obama in televised portions of the visit aired on Cuban state news media.

Castro wrote a 1,500-word essay in response to Obama's trip in his only statement about the US leader's visit to date, reminding Cubans about a long history of US aggression against the island and stating "we don't need the empire to give us any presents." Castro stepped aside in 2006 after suffering a serious illness and officially retired two years later, but his presence still casts a long shadow on Cuban government and society.

Espin was married to Castro's brother and current president, Raul. She fought alongside the Castro brothers during the revolution against dictator Fulgencio Batista. She later founded the Federation of Cuban Women and was Cuba's de facto first lady for decades. She died in 2007. — AP

SAUDI COALITION USED US BOMB IN YEMEN STRIKE

AMERICA REMAINS INVOLVED IN THE CONFLICT

DUBAI: A Saudi-led coalition battling Shiite rebels and their allies in Yemen used US-supplied bombs in an airstrike last month on a market that killed at least 119 people, a human rights group said Thursday, further highlighting American involvement in the conflict.

The March 15 bombing targeting the northwestern town of Mastaba marked the second-deadliest airstrike conducted by the Saudi-helmed campaign since it began its war in March 2015. Condemned by the United Nations, the strike also wounded at least 47 people and left charred bodies lying next to flour sacks and twisted metal.

Human Rights Watch said its investigators traveled to the town in Yemen's Hajja province, controlled by the Shiite rebels known as Houthis. There, the group said it found fragments of a 900-kilogram MK-84 bomb and a kind of satellite-guidance hardware known as a JDAM, which together are known as a GBU-31 bomb.

The group said the bomb, as well as its guidance equipment, was supplied by the US. Their finding matched an earlier report by British television channel ITV, which said its journalists found remnants of what likely was another MK-84 bomb and a different kind of satellite guiding system supplied by the United States.

"One of the deadliest strikes against civilians in Yemen's yearlong war involved US-supplied weapons, illustrating tragically why countries should stop selling arms to Saudi Arabia," Priyanka Motaparthi, emergencies researcher at Human Rights Watch, said in a statement. "The US and other coalition allies should send a clear message to Saudi Arabia that they want no part in unlawful killings of civilians."

US Central Command, which oversees American military action in the Mideast, declined to comment on specifics about the bombing, saying that the "selection and final vetting of targets in the campaign are made by the members of the Saudi-led coalition, not the United States."

"The US is confident that the information that we relay and noncombat support we provide to Saudi Arabia and other coalition members is sound and provides them the best options for military success consistent with international norms and specifically



MASTABA: Remnants of a bomb, found at the scene of a March 15, 2016 airstrike on Yemen. — AP

mitigating the potential for civilian casualties," US Navy Cmdr. Kyle Raines, a Central Command spokesman, said in a statement to The Associated Press.

The offer

The US is believed to offer the Saudi-led coalition satellite images and other intelligence about Yemen to guide its campaign. US Secretary of State John Kerry, visiting Bahrain on a trip to the Gulf island nation, also declined to comment specifically on the report while speaking to reporters Thursday. "I don't have any solid information, any documentation with respect to what weapon might have been used," Kerry said. Kerry said he remained involved in efforts to secure a cease-fire in the war.

"Whatever weapons are being used, our preference is that all shooting stops," Kerry said. However, he also criticized Yemen's internationally recognized president, Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi, for decisions in the "last few hours" that have set back mediation efforts. The American diplomat did not elaborate.

Hadi on Sunday fired his vice president and the head of his Cabinet, Khaled Bahah, over what he described as shortcomings in

the performance of his government in exile. The Saudi-led coalition that supports Hadi has yet to retake Yemen's capital, Sanaa, which the Houthis seized in September 2014.

Saudi officials previously said they were investigating the strike, though they previously insisted most of the casualties were Houthi combatants. The US has backed the Saudi-led campaign in Yemen, where suspected American drones continue to target alleged members of al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula. In November, the US approved a \$1.29 billion rearming program for Saudi Arabia, including thousands of similar bombs.

The air campaign waged by the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen has been increasingly criticized by human rights activists over civilian deaths. Airstrikes account for 60 percent of the 3,200 civilians killed in the conflict, according to the UN, which has criticized coalition strikes that have hit markets, clinics and hospitals.

The war in Yemen has killed over 6,000 people in total and left more than 80 percent of Yemenis in dire need of food, water and other aid as a result of the conflict in the Arab world's poorest country, the UN has said. — AP

GERMAN JOURNALISTS 'SURPRISED' BY IMPACT OF PANAMA PAPERS

MUNICH: The two German journalists of the Sueddeutsche Zeitung daily behind the Panama Papers revelations say they are surprised by the global shockwaves the leak caused and promised more sensational disclosures.

"I never imagined there would be such a reaction, that it would be on every television channel and that we would receive media requests from all around the world," one of the reporters, Bastian Obermayer, 38, told AFP. Germany's second-biggest daily in sales, the Sueddeutsche received from an anonymous source more than 11 million documents of the Panamanian law firm Mossack Fonseca that cast a harsh spotlight on the shady financial dealings of many of the world's rich and powerful.

The liberal daily shared the massive leak with a consortium of hundreds of international investigative journalists who have mined the mountains of data for more than a year. Since Sunday, the revelations have brought down Iceland's prime minister Sigmundur David Gunnlaugsson, forced the resignation of a senior UEFA official and raised the heat on British Prime Minister David Cameron and Argentine President Mauricio Macri.

"We are still in the middle of the revelations," said the other journalist, who has a confusingly similar surname, Frederik Obermaier, 32, speaking at the newspaper's headquarters in Munich. "In the coming days, there will be more topics that will make big headlines in many countries."

'Destroy the system'

In the mass leak, "we are seeing the most different types crimes, we see how the drug cartels launder money, that arms merchants are implicated, that sanctions are being circumvented, we are seeing tax fraud," said Obermayer. "If politicians really want to stop it, they must act now." "We really need a hammer to destroy the system of offshore companies," he added, arguing that "the policy of small steps is not enough". The data showed that, as national governments take steps against tax cheats, "they adapt, they find new ideas" to divert and hide their money, he said. His colleague, Frederik Obermaier, was more reserved: "I think there is a lot of talk, but what will be done in the end is a different thing." The reporters said they don't know the name of the source at the origin of the scoop, and that they received the data on offshore companies "more than one year ago". "I do not know if it's a man or a woman, or a group. I don't know the identity of this person," said Obermaier, adding however that "we have become a bit more familiar over the year" with the leaker.

At pains to protect their source, the journalists also declined to reveal whether the person had been in contact again or had reacted to the international reverberations.

But they were clear on the source's "moral" motivation, that the person "wants these crimes to be made public". "Our source has obviously seen a lot of this data and thought it had to be published," said Obermaier, while his colleague stressed that the source "wants Mossack Fonseca to cease operations".

'Future of journalism'

It was Bastian Obermayer who received the first contact from the anonymous source, offering the explosive information. On the choice of Sueddeutsche, "we can only speculate on the reasons why we were contacted", he said. Founded in Munich after World War II, the broadsheet is considered one of Germany's major newspapers of record, along with the conservative Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, and is number two in sales after tabloid-style Bild. — AFP



MUNICH: German journalist Frederik Obermaier co-author of the so called "Panama Papers" investigation posing on Thursday at his office at the German daily. — AFP



LESBOS: Activists in the sea try to interfere the deportation of Pakistani migrants on board a ferry set to sail for Turkey in the port of Mytilini yesterday. — AP

GREECE RESUMES MIGRANT DEPORTATIONS TO TURKEY AFTER A FOUR-DAY PAUSE

DIKILI: Amid protests, Greece yesterday resumed deportations of refugees and migrants from its islands to Turkey after a four-day pause, sending back 124 people on two boats from Lesbos to a Turkish port.

The EU-Turkey deal, which aims to deter illegal migration, has faced several setbacks and mounting criticism in its first week of implementation. Earlier this week, 202 migrants were sent back to Turkey.

Before the first boat left Lesbos yesterday, four activists jumped into the sea to try to obstruct the operation - swimming to the front of the chartered ferry and grabbing the anchor chain - and were detained by the coast guard. The second boat made the journey without incident.

Officers from the European Union's border protection agency escorted the migrants to the boats. In the Turkish port of Dikili, health and migration officials checked the passengers amid heavy security. The migrants were then whisked onto police-escorted buses heading to a deportation center in Kizilirmaci, near the border with Bulgaria.

Some 4,000 migrants and refugees who reached Greek islands from nearby Turkey after March 20 are being held in detention camps to be screened for deportation. The returns have been held up by delays in processing asylum claims by overwhelmed Greek authorities who are also preparing to deal with applications across the country by some 50,000 migrants and refugees promised places in a slow-moving EU relocation scheme.

Preparations

A Turkish official said his country was prepared to receive higher numbers with an array of 1,000 professionals ranging from doctors to migration officials and

police deployed in Dikili. The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to the press, said that they had expected to receive 2,050 migrants yesterday.

He said those returned yesterday were primarily Afghan and Pakistani nationals. There were also four Iraqis and one each from Egypt, Morocco, Bangladesh and the Palestinian Territories. All are to be processed for deportation within two weeks.

Returns from Greece to Turkey are expected to resume next week, according to the Turkish official. On Greek islands, protests continued at overcrowded detention camps. Police cleared the main port

on the island of Chios overnight, where scores of migrants had been camped out for a week after pushing their way out of a detention camp. Police scuffled with groups Greek protesters staging rival demonstrations in support of and in opposition to the migrants.

The human rights group Amnesty International, which interviewed dozens of detainees on Chios and Lesbos, said people were being held "arbitrarily in appalling conditions." "A setup that is so flawed, rushed and ill-prepared is ripe for mistakes, trampling the rights and well-being of some of the most vulnerable people," said Gauri van Gulik, Amnesty's deputy Europe director. — AP

KOSOVO OPPOSITION TRIES TO DISRUPT PRESIDENT'S INAUGURATION

PRISTINA: Opposition supporters in Kosovo launched tear gas Friday to try to disrupt the inauguration ceremony for the country's new president, Hashim Thaci. Canisters were launched before the start of the ceremony at Pristina's main Skenderbeg Square, but it later continued normally.

The opposition has been disrupting parliamentary sessions in Kosovo since last September to protest a deal between Kosovo and Serbia that gives more powers to ethnic Serbs in Kosovo and another on a border demarcation pact with Montenegro.

Those who threw the canisters Friday were scattered in small groups surrounding the chairs for the guests. The incident occurred just before the main guests would sit down at the first line of chairs, although some diplomats were already

there. Police detained around half a dozen opposition supporters while the others were pushed away. The main opposition Self-Determination Movement Party took responsibility for throwing the tear gas, broadcasting a short movie of the action in its Facebook site.

"Hashim Thaci is not and will never be the president of the Republic of Kosovo," they said. "We shall not recognize and accept him as the president of our Republic. We shall continuously and without compromise oppose him. As we did today!" Thaci, 47, assumed his post Thursday in a swearing-in ceremony at the Parliament. The opposition boycotted that, as well as the vote Feb. 26, which it also tried to disrupt with tear gas. Its later request to void the voting was turned down by the Constitutional Court. — AP

INDIA STREET CHILDREN BACK NEW CAMPAIGN TO FIND MISSING YOUNGSTERS

CHENNAI: A group of street children is the face of a new citizens' campaign demanding better policing and community programs to track missing children in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu, where at least two children are reported missing every day.

The campaign, which launched this week, aims to spread awareness among the homeless, help police understand the challenges of street children and push the Tamil Nadu government to address safety issues of those living on the streets. "I know what it's like on the street. There is always the fear of something not good happening,"

said C. Ashok, 19, a runaway now living in a shelter run by a local charity, Karunalaya.

"I want to be the voice of the two babies stolen from Chennai's streets in the past month," Ashok added, referring to recent reports of two incidents of child kidnapping. He is one of the faces of Project Abhayam (safe shelter), which has the backing of several Tamil film stars demanding the quick rescue of missing children.

According to data released by the state crime record bureau on Thursday, 4,280 children were reported missing across Tamil Nadu last year. The number is up from the 3,373 missing in 2014. Alarmed by

the disappearance of 271 children in Tamil Nadu in the first three months of this year, the National Human Rights Commission last week asked state authorities to account for the situation. The disappearance of children has raised concerns they may be trafficked into prostitution, handed over to criminal gangs or sold for illegal adoption. "The recent cases of two babies stolen, in what appears to be a very organized and blatant manner, has rattled everyone," Paul Sunder Singh, secretary of Karunalaya, told the Thomson Reuters Foundation on Thursday.

"There is an urgent need to keep a watch on children growing up on the street

because they are the easiest targets for trafficking or child labor," he added. An estimated 40,000 people live on the streets of Chennai, Singh said. "There has to be constant public pressure on authorities to ensure these children are found."

As part of the initiative, the four children chosen as ambassadors will be trained on the issue and asked to share their experiences with a wider audience. "When you sleep on a pavement, there are often cases where any stranger will just lie down next to you and go to sleep," said E. Usha, 18, who is also an ambassador. "Nobody stirs and that is the scariest thing." — Reuters

ROYAL COUPLE TO BE EAGERLY WATCHED DURING INDIA TRIP

LUNCH WITH PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA MODI PLANNED

NEW DELHI: When the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge arrive in India on what's being called their most ambitious tour to date, they'll encounter starry-eyed giddiness along with a hint of nostalgia harkening to a 1992 visit by Princess Diana.

Prince William's mother created a firestorm of attention when she posed alone in front of the Taj Mahal, the marble mausoleum known as a monument to love because it was built by a Mughal emperor to entomb his beloved wife.

Newspaper headlines crowded suggestions that Diana was delivering a hidden message about the end of her marriage to Prince Charles. And the photo, as well as her close relationship with Mother Teresa, helped make Diana hugely popular in the country.

India, despite its fractious past in the British Empire, has always loved reading about the British royals, especially the duke and duchess. Their young children, Prince George and Princess Charlotte, will not join the trip, which begins Sunday in Mumbai.

What will she wear?

Local media are speculating on what the Duchess of Cambridge, the former Kate Middleton, will wear: the work of local designers, perhaps an Indian outfit to cope with the sizzling April heat? "There will be a lot of interest and a lot of coverage, but it's mostly going to be about pretty people and pretty pictures," media analyst and columnist Santosh Desai said.

"Photos, photos and more photos. It'll be silly to think that there will be any deeper significance to the visit," said Shailaja Bajpai, media critic with the Indian Express newspaper. But high-level visits create equally high expectations for economic ties and cultural exchanges. The two allies share their imperial history and India inherited the British judicial and parliamentary systems, along with a vast railway network. Britain's Prime Minister David Cameron has visited India twice.

"Royal visits improve atmospherics, leading to better political and economic ties," said former Indian Ambassador to Germany and France, T.C.A. Rangachari. "Such visits also provide an opportunity to the royalty to familiarize themselves with a vast country like India."



LONDON: Britain's Prince William, left, and Kate, the Duchess of Cambridge, arrive to attend the Commonwealth Day service at Westminster Abbey. — AP

Celebrities including cricket legend Sachin Tendulkar and Bollywood actors Shah Rukh Khan and Aishwarya Rai Bachchan are attending a grand ball with the royal couple in Mumbai on Sunday night. William and Kate are also expected to visit the Taj Palace hotel targeted in a 2008 attack on the city. In New Delhi, they have a scheduled lunch with Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

In a nod to William's conservation efforts, the couple will visit Kaziranga National Park in Assam state that has two-thirds of the world's population of Indian one-horned rhinos as well as endangered

swamp deer. They then will visit Bhutan at the invitation of the Himalayan kingdom's King Jigme Khesar Namgyal Wangchuck and Queen Jetsun Pema.

They plan to wind up the South Asian tour with a closely watched visit of the Taj Mahal. "He feels incredibly lucky to visit a place where his mother's memory is kept alive by so many who travel there," the Cambridges' communications secretary Jason Knauf told reporters. It is unclear if they will pose for photos at the same bench where his mother was pictured smiling shyly for the camera. — AP

INDIAN HINDU TEMPLE LIFTS BAN ON WOMEN DEVOTEES

NEW DELHI: Yesterday a Hindu temple in western India lifted a centuries-old ban forbidding female devotees from entering, after a court said women had a fundamental right to worship.

Activists have been campaigning to end Shani Shingnapur temple's traditional ban, after authorities last year blocked a woman who attempted to enter its inner sanctum. "We have followed the court order and allowed women devotees into the inner sanctum," Satish, a temple official, told AFP by phone from Ahmednagar district in Maharashtra state. Bombay High Court said last week women have a fundamental right to go into places of worship and asked authorities to ensure their safety. The court's directive followed a petition by the Bhoomata Brigade, a women's group who attempted to enter the temple in January along with dozens of other activists.

Lead activist Trupti Desai said the ban constituted gender discrimination that should not be tolerated in the 21st century. But despite the court order, hundreds of angry villagers blocked her and about 30 other women from going inside the temple at the weekend before being detained by police.

The skirmishes led the temple authorities to temporarily ban both men and women from entering the sanctum, in a bid to end the standoff. Many religious places in India traditionally bar women from entering the core area of temples and mausoleums.

Kerala's famous Sabarimala temple bans all female worshippers aged between 10 and 50 years. Women have also been prevented from entering Mumbai's Haji Ali Dargah mausoleum since 2011, with its trust saying close female proximity to the tomb of a revered saint is "a grievous sin" in Islam. — AFP

INDIAN STATE'S ALCOHOL BAN HITS WORSHIPPERS

NEW DELHI: An alcohol ban imposed in the Indian state of Bihar was supposed to clean up public life. But it has had the unintended effect of deterring worshippers from temples, where liquor is the traditional offering.

Bihar's Chief Minister Nitish Kumar this week fulfilled an election pledge to introduce prohibition—a move popular among women voters in the poverty-stricken eastern state who were sick of seeing the family income blown on booze. But it has proved less popular in the state's many Hindu temples, which have suffered a sharp drop in worshipper numbers after alcohol shops were forced to shut. Anant Marathe, a priest in Gaya district's Bhairav Sthan temple, said the number of visitors had fallen by around 70 percent. "As the tradition goes, the devotees offer alcohol to the deity," he told AFP by phone. "They pour some of it on the idol and take the rest of it home or distribute it among other devotees."

Offerings are often given on special occasions such as marriages or religious festivals, although some particularly devout worshippers give them on a daily basis. "I haven't visited the temple this week because I can't get liquor to offer," devotee Promodh Kumar told AFP, calling on the government to relax the ban to allow alcohol to be bought for religious purposes.

But Satyendra Kumar Sinha, an excise officer, said the government had no plans to make any such concessions. "We will not allow liquor sales or consumption for any purpose. The devotees can offer anything except the banned item," Sinha told AFP. — AFP

13 NORTH KOREAN WORKERS AT FOREIGN RESTAURANT DEFECT

SEOUL: Thirteen North Koreans working at the same restaurant in a foreign country have defected to South Korea, Seoul officials said yesterday. People working in North Korean-operated restaurants overseas have previously defected, but this is the first time multiple workers have escaped from the same restaurant, South Korean Unification Ministry spokesman Jeong Joon Hee told reporters in Seoul.

North Korean defections are a bitter point of contention between the rival Koreas. Pyongyang usually accuses Seoul of enticing North Korean citizens to defect, something Seoul denies. Overseas North Korean workers are usually thought to be chosen largely because of their loyalty.

Jeong said one male and 12 female North Korean workers arrived in the South on Thursday. He didn't reveal the country where they were working or the route they took to avoid diplomatic problems and possibly endanger North Koreans still working in the country.

AP investigates

The Associated Press called a number of North Korean restaurants in Asia, and all were open except one located in the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Danang, Vietnam. A person who answered the telephone at the hotel said the Pyongyang Restaurant had closed two weeks ago and all the Korean staff had left the country. She declined to provide more details or identify herself. It was unclear whether the restaurant was connected to the defections. The North Korean defectors told South Korean officials that they learned about the South and began to distrust North Korean propaganda by watching South Korean TV dramas and movies and from searching the Internet while living overseas, Jeong said.

South Korean officials believe overseas North Korean restaurants have been suffering economically since stronger international sanctions were applied against North Korea over its recent nuclear test and long-range rocket launch. Jeong said the defectors told South Korean officials that their restaurant was struggling to meet demands from North Korean authorities at home for foreign currency.

South Korea recently advised its citizens not to patronize North Korean restaurants, although such visits are not illegal. South Korea's spy agency estimates that North Korea runs about 130 restaurants in other countries - about 100 in China and the others in Russia, Southeast Asia and South Asia.

In a report to the UN General Assembly in October last year, Marzuki Darusman, a UN special reporter on human rights in North Korea, said more than 50,000 North Koreans are working in foreign countries, mostly in China and Russia, providing a source of money for Pyongyang. He cited various studies, including a 2012 report by the International Network for the Human Rights of North Korean Overseas Labor that estimated North Korea was earning as much as \$2.3 billion annually from the workers it sent abroad.

The Unification Ministry's website says more than 29,000 North Koreans have defected to South Korea as of March. But there have been only a few incidents in which large groups of North Korean defectors entered South Korea at once. North Korea in 2004 accused South Korea of kidnapping its citizens after the South airlifted 468 North Koreans from Vietnam. Seoul said the North Koreans fled their country into China and then traveled overland to Vietnam. In 2011, nine North Koreans used a small boat to defect to South Korea by sea.—AP



SEOUL: South Korean Unification Ministry spokesman Jeong Joon Hee speaks about North Korean workers' defection to South Korea during a briefing at the government complex yesterday.—AP



TAIWAN: fishermen and buyers gather at a tuna auction at Donggang fishery port.—AP

FISHING AMID TERRITORIAL DISPUTES IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA 'AS TENSIONS RATCHET UP'

CATO: As Asian countries jostle for territory in the South China Sea, one Filipino fisherman is taking a stand. He has faced down Chinese coast guard rifles, and even engaged in a stone-throwing duel with the Chinese last month that shattered two windows on his outrigger.

"They'll say, 'Out, out of Scarborough,'" Renato Etac says, referring to Scarborough Shoal, a rocky outcropping claimed by both the Philippines and China. He yells back, "Where is the document that shows Scarborough is Chinese property?"

At one level, the territorial disputes in the South China Sea are a battle of wills between American and Chinese battle-ships and planes. At another level, they are cat-and-mouse chases between the coast guards of several countries and foreign fishermen, and among the fishing boats themselves. Indonesia seized a Chinese fishing boat last month and arrested eight fishermen, only to have a Chinese coast guard vessel ram the fishing boat as it was being towed, allowing it to escape.

Vietnam's coast guard chased away more than 100 Chinese boats over a two-week period, its state media reported this week, and made a rare seizure of a Chinese ship carrying 100,000 liters of diesel oil, reportedly for sale to fishing boats in the area.

As tensions ratchet up, though, it is perhaps those who make a living at sea who feel it the most. Here are some stories from fishermen around the region:

Philippines: The guardian of Scarborough Shoal

Renato Etac has had dozens of encounters with Chinese ships. More than once, a

small team of Chinese coast guardsmen on a rubber boat approached his boat and pointed their rifles at him, but he says he knew they would not fire and risk starting a war. At other times, the Chinese will surge as if to hit his boat, but the 37-year-old fisherman uses his keen knowledge of Scarborough Shoal - where he has fished for Spanish mackerel, trevally and grouper since he was a teenager - to outmaneuver them. Etac says he just wants to defend his livelihood in waters that used to be open to all. China took control of Scarborough Shoal in 2012 after a two-month standoff with Philippine government ships. It sits about 230 kilometers west of the Philippines, and 1,000 kilometers from the Chinese coast.

"It's like quarreling, like playing games," he says. "Yelling, dirty finger, everything's there. Sometimes I use expletives in different dialects and I get to laugh when I see them, because they don't understand what I'm saying."

He enjoys what he calls the territorial "debates" in the high seas, though his earnings from a weeklong fishing expedition have dropped by more than half to 3,000 pesos (\$63), because of both the Chinese disruptions and competition.

China: Coast guard to the rescue

Chinese fishermen working out of the Hainan island port of Tanmen say they now enjoy much greater support from their country's beefed-up coast guard. They have been forced to range further out to sea because of the heavy depletion of coastal fisheries, says Li Xianchuan, a 64-year-old crew member who has been fishing in and around Scarborough, the

Spratly islands and the closer-in Paracels - claimed also by Vietnam - for 40 years.

In previous years, Chinese government ships would issue radio warnings about the presence of Philippine patrol ships around Scarborough Shoal. Conditions for Chinese fishermen have vastly improved with the addition of new and larger Chinese coast guard vessels and a more proactive approach, Li says. A call to the coast guard will bring help within two to three hours, he says.

TAIWAN: FEAR OF BANDITRY AT SEA

Heightened competition, and even banditry, is making it ever-harder to make a living, says Taiwanese fishing boat owner Hong Huai-jen. "Now, they are not only fishing in the South China Sea, but have also broken into our territorial waters," Hong says, standing by his boat in the southern Taiwan port of Donggang, which looks out on the Taiwan Strait.

His boat was surrounded last November by a group of Vietnamese fishing boats in waters off Taiwan, presumably for the purpose of robbing him. He managed to give them the slip and called the Taiwanese coast guard for help. The Vietnamese boats had dispersed by the time help arrived. He has been fishing for 14 years from his home port on Xiaoliuqiu, an island in the Taiwan Strait.

Indonesia: Ancestral disputes

Fish-rich waters around Indonesia's Natuna Islands have a long history of being contested, says Anton Leonard, a fisherman and exporter who is secretary-general of the Indonesian Fishermen's Association representing traditional fishermen.—AP



NEW YORK: Former mayor of New York City Rudy Giuliani. — AP

GIULIANI ENDORSES TRUMP

NEW YORK: Former New York mayor Rudy Giuliani, who shot to international prominence for handling the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, on Thursday endorsed Republican frontrunner and Manhattan tycoon Donald Trump. "I support Trump. I'm gonna vote for Trump," he told The New York Post tabloid ahead of the April 19 New York primary, where the controversial billionaire leads the Republican polls by double digits.

The former mayor said he expected Trump to collect most of the 95 delegates up for grabs in New York and have a "good shot" at securing the party nomination and avert the possibility of a contested convention in July.

Giuliani took aim at Trump's nearest challenger, evangelical Texas Senator Ted Cruz, for insulting New York's supposedly non-conservative values earlier in the campaign.

Prominent Republicans outside New York have coalesced behind Cruz-emboldened by the senator's victory in Wisconsin this week in a bid to deny Trump the nomination. "It's New York City. We're family. I can make fun of New York. But you can't!" Giuliani was quoted as saying by the Post.

Trump leads the Republican polls in New York at 53 percent, with Ohio Governor John Kasich on 22 percent and Cruz trailing on 18.6 percent, according to the RealClearPolitics poll average. — AFP

NEW YORK TRAVEL AGENT IN COURT OVER PAKISTANI SCAM

NEW YORK: A New York travel agent appeared in court Thursday charged with conning more than \$350,000 out of Pakistani immigrants who paid to go on Muslim pilgrimage to Makkah or fly home.

Junaid Mirza, 50, who operated travel agencies in Brooklyn and one previously located in the Empire State Building was charged on 31 counts that include scheme to defraud, money laundering and grand larceny.

He faces up to 15 years in prison if convicted, prosecutors said. "Many of the victims were hardworking Pakistani immigrants who trusted the defendant and were cheated out of a lifelong dream of taking a pilgrimage to Makkah," said Brooklyn district attorney Ken Thompson.

Mirza allegedly owned travel agencies that specialized in selling travel packages to Saudi Arabia and airline tickets to Pakistani immigrants from July 2011 to September 2015. All Muslims are expected to perform hajj-a pilgrimage to the Saudi city of Makkah at least once in their lifetime. Mirza advertised discounted trips in local Urdu-language newspapers and in pamphlets distributed in mosques, New York prosecutors said.

The victims, who included taxi drivers and home health aides, allegedly paid more than \$6,000 per person for a hajj package, but prosecutors said Mirza pocketed the cash and failed to book the airline seats. Some victims only found out they had been conned when they arrived at the airport, including a bride who missed part of her wedding festivities in Pakistan as a result, prosecutors said. Other victims were a parent traveling with three young children who were stranded at an airport in Pakistan when they were told by the airline that the defendant had never purchased their return flight. — AFP

KERRY MEETS IRAQI LEADERS IN BAGHDAD, DISCUSSES IS FIGHT

'A VERY CRITICAL TIME IN IRAQ'

BAGHDAD: US Secretary of State John Kerry made an unannounced stop in Baghdad on Friday to meet Iraq's prime minister and other top officials at a time of increased military momentum against the Islamic State but deep political uncertainty in the unstable country.

"This is obviously a very critical time here in Iraq," Kerry said. His discussions with Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi as well as Iraq's foreign minister, top Sunni official and a Kurdish regional leader were designed as a show of support for the Iraqi government as it tackles ongoing security, economic and political challenges.

A day earlier in Bahrain, Kerry said Iraq's government must "unify and rebuild its country and reclaim territory that was occupied by Daesh," using an Arabic acronym for the Islamic State. He said Iraq's neighbors also "need to support the Abadi government in its efforts to stabilize and eventually rebuild the country," stressing the importance of bringing order to Sunni-majority areas as they become liberated from IS control. Kerry's trip coincides with military advances. Iraqi forces say they entered the strategically important IS-held town of Hit on Thursday, while the Pentagon is considering establishing more small military outposts to provide artillery support and other aid to Iraqi forces readying an assault on Mosul, IS' stronghold in the country. Last month, the US opened the first such base since returning to Iraq in 2014.

But al-Abadi faces challenges of his own, still trying to establish a new Cabinet amid pressure from supporters of a hard-line Shiite cleric who last month staged rallies and a sit-in next to the government headquarters to demand reforms. A prolonged standstill could severely hamper al-Abadi's



BAGHDAD: Iraq Foreign Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari, right, receives Secretary of State John Kerry in the library at the foreign minister's villa yesterday. — AP

ability to effectively lead a country that has often broken down along sectarian divisions since the US-led overthrow of Saddam Hussein some 13 years ago.

Corruption is at the heart of the internal debates

Last August, al-Abadi proposed a sweeping reform package to combat corruption, cut government spending and merge ministries, but his efforts have been stymied by sectarian tensions and struggles to contain the Islamic State. Its forces swept across much of northern and western Iraq in the summer of 2014. While Iraqi authorities have waged a full-scale war, aided by US airstrikes, the Kurdish peshmerga forces, Shiite militias and pro-government Sunni fighters, the extremist group still holds significant territory. Kerry arrived Friday after attending a meeting with Persian Gulf allies in the

Bahraini capital of Manama, where the fight against IS figured prominently among American concerns. But the Sunni monarchies of the region are facing their own distractions, with nascent peace efforts to end civil wars in Syria and Yemen, and shared fears about Shiite Iran's interference in their affairs.

The US is trying to speed up the path to victory. Although the Islamic State has lost some 40 percent of its territory in Iraq and maybe a fifth of lands it once controlled in Syria, it continues to prove a magnet for foreign fighters, some of whom may now be returning to Europe and elsewhere with plans to kill civilians. And experts say IS' staying power may be inspiring others, who've never been in contact with the group, to wage violence in its name. Recent attacks in Brussels, Paris and California underscore Western fears. — AP

LEBANESE EXPATS FEARFUL AS GCC NATIONS...

Continued from Page 1

Deportees declined to be interviewed, fearful for relatives still in the Gulf or hoping to return when tensions between Lebanon and the GCC calm down. Ahmed, the medic, said he knows other people who have closed their Facebook accounts because they were afraid that they would be targeted for being friends with someone from Hezbollah. "People are afraid, and I am afraid too," said Ahmed. "We would love to go back to Lebanon, but there are no jobs, especially now when so many refugees are jostling for work." "I have recently renewed my residency without any problem, but I still don't feel safe," he added.

In Lebanon, stories circulate about cases of Lebanese expelled over their relatives' social media posts deemed to show sympathy for Hezbollah. For the Lebanese expatriate community, expulsion means leaving a job in the most stable and prosperous region in the Arab world and loss of income, usually used to support poorer extended family members back home. Deportation also means returning to a country overburdened with Syrian refugees and where jobs are hard to find.

Lack of clarity

Adding to the atmosphere of fear pervading the Lebanese expatriate community working in the Gulf is a lack of clarity about what sort of information is viewed by the authorities as evidence of links to or sympathy with Hezbollah. Some worry the information used could be arbitrary - such as the websites or television channels their families use. Expatriates say the broad warning issued by the Saudi Interior Ministry in a message carried by state news agency SPA in March makes anyone subject to pun-

ishment, regardless of their nationality or faith.

Bahrain last month deported several Lebanese residents suspected of links to or supportive of Hezbollah, while Kuwaiti media has said that 11 Lebanese and three Iraqis also suspected of belonging to Hezbollah were expelled. There have been no official reports of deportations from either Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar or Oman. Saudi Arabia has told its citizens that anyone with Hezbollah links, or who supports or sympathizes with the group faces punishment, including deportation for expatriates. Reinforcing that message, Saudi authorities last month detained a local Shiite cleric, Sheikh Hussein Al-Radhi, after he publicly praised Hezbollah leader Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah.

Analysts said the GCC decision to designate Hezbollah as a terrorist group was aimed primarily at choking off financial interests in the Gulf controlled by the group which the GCC has blamed for working against them in Lebanon, Syria and Yemen. The GCC had already imposed sanctions on Hezbollah after it entered Syria's war to fight with President Assad. GCC Secretary-General Abdullah Al-Zayani said the council would "take the necessary measures to implement its decision ... based on anti-terrorism laws applied in the GCC and similar international laws".

Zayani did not specify what action might follow, but Saudi Arabia, the biggest power in the grouping, before the announcement said it had blacklisted four companies and three Lebanese men for having links to Hezbollah. The GCC accused Hezbollah of committing "hostile acts" against GCC states, including recruiting young men to carry out "terrorist attacks, smuggling weapons and explosives, stirring up sedition and incitement to chaos and violence". — Reuters

KERRY'S VISIT TO HIROSHIMA SPOTLIGHTS THE G-7 MEETING

'GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY TO SHOW REALITY OF A-BOMB'

TOKYO: Next week, Secretary of State John Kerry will become the highest-ranking American government official to visit Hiroshima, where 140,000 Japanese died from the first of two atomic bombs dropped by his country in the closing days of World War II more than 70 years ago.

Kerry and the other Group of Seven foreign ministers are scheduled to visit the Hiroshima Peace Park on Monday and lay flowers to honor the dead. At least in Japan, the event will likely overshadow the rest of the foreign ministers' annual two-day meeting, where terrorism, maritime security and nuclear non-proliferation will be discussed.

Japan hopes the meeting in this city will revive momentum for efforts to stop the spread of nuclear weapons, a cause that has flagged in recent years. Weapons stockpiles have been slow to decline, and Japan's own accumulation of plutonium for use in power generation has caused security concerns.

Expectations are now running high among Japanese for President Barack Obama, a Nobel peace laureate who has proposed a nuclear-free world, to follow suit during the G-7 leaders' summit in May, to be held in the coastal city of Shima in central Japan. "Of course it would be best if Obama-san comes," said Sunao Tsuboi, a 90-year-old A-bomb survivor and head of the Hiroshima branch of a large survivors' organization. "I hope he overcomes contentions surrounding the atomic bombings."

For many years, senior US government officials avoided going to Hiroshima because of political sensitivities. Many Americans believe the dropping of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945 were justified and hastened the end of the war. Japanese atomic bomb survivors' groups, meanwhile, have campaigned for decades to bring top officials from the US and other nuclear weapon states to see Hiroshima's scars as part of a grassroots movement to abolish nuclear weapons. They are not seeking an apology. No serving US president has visited the site. It took 65 years for a US ambassador to attend Hiroshima's annual memorial service, and six more years to win Kerry's visit.

Long and delicate negotiations were needed to arrange the group visit for the six foreign ministers to the peace park and nearby museum, Japanese Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida said, because of differences of opinion on atomic weapons among G-7 members, which include Germany, Italy, Britain, Canada, France, the US and Japan. France and Britain, along with the US, have nuclear weapons. "At long last, we have obtained an agreement from each member country," said Kishida, a Hiroshima native.

Kishida hopes to win agreement to issue a "Hiroshima declaration" in addition to the ministers' final communique that will draw renewed attention to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation efforts. Japanese officials say that the international community's resolve to stop the spread of nuclear weapons has weakened amid US-Russia contention over Ukraine, North Korea's nuclear program and distraction by the Middle East conflict.

Hiroshima today is a bustling city of about 1.2 million, home to carmaker Mazda and the popular Carp baseball team. But the skeletal remains of a domed building that has become a symbol of the bombing, and peace, still stand near the epicenter. Just having the G-7 ministers in town is "a golden opportunity to show the reality of the atomic bombing," Mayor Kazumi Matsui said.

Tsuboi, the A-bomb survivor, has been invited to a Monday luncheon with the ministers but hasn't been told whether he will get to meet them. Tsuboi says he will be content just to see Kerry and his counterparts bow and observe a moment of silence because he thinks that would send a powerful message. "That's good enough. The gesture would make everyone feel good," he said. "It would be a message of peace and friendship, which everyone can agree."

Tsuboi, who survived the bombing despite severe injuries that left him unconscious for weeks, says he has long since lost a desire to seek an apology from the US. Instead, he wants to devote his life to seeking a world without war, nuclear weapons or killing. While fighting cancer, anemia and heart problems, Tsuboi travels around the globe to share his narratives for the cause. "I only care about a world where human beings can live together in peace," he said. State Department spokesman Mark Toner said in Washington this week that Kerry's visit to the Hiroshima memorial isn't expected to trigger opposition because it's "to honor the memory of all those who died during the World War II" and to underscore Obama's vision of a nuclear-free world.—AP



HIROSHIMA: Doves fly over the cenotaph dedicated to the victims of the atomic bombing at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park during the ceremony to mark the 70th anniversary of the bombing.—AP

WHY FEW AMERICANS IN PANAMA PAPERS? LAWYER DOESN'T WANT THEM

PANAMA CITY: Rich and influential people around the globe have found themselves under siege since a major data leak revealed their ties to secretive financial accounts and shell companies in low-tax havens used to hide wealth.

The uproar has brought down the prime minister of Iceland and raised questions about the presidents of Argentina and Ukraine, senior Chinese politicians, and the circle of friends of Russian President Vladimir Putin. On Thursday, British Prime Minister David Cameron became the latest politician ensnared when he acknowledged having profited from his father's investments in an offshore tax haven before being elected.

Yet few American names have cropped up in the "Panama Papers," a trove of 11.5 million confidential records detailing such accounts. That's because the Panama-based Mossack Fonseca law firm at the center of the scandal doesn't like taking on American clients, one of its founders says. Ramon Fonseca, who started the firm with Jurgen Mossack, told The Associated Press in an interview Thursday that their law firm has only a handful of American clients, most of them members of Panama's burgeoning expat retirement community. It's not out of any anti-Americanism or fear of the Internal Revenue Service.

"My partner is German, and I lived in Europe, and our focus has always been the European and Latin American market," Fonseca said at his law office. "He loves the US a lot, and I do, too. My kids were educated there," Fonseca added. But "as a policy we prefer not to have American

clients." Sueddeutsche Zeitung, the German newspaper that first obtained the documents, said the records include copies of the passports of 200 Americans and about 3,500 shareholders in offshore companies have listed addresses in the US. That's a tiny fraction of the more than 250,000 companies Mossack Fonseca has set up for clients in four decades of business.



PANAMA CITY: Partner of the Panama-based law firm Mossack Fonseca, Ramon Fonseca speaks during an interview at his office on Thursday.—AP

The reasons

One reason for the dearth of American clients may be because such companies can be easily created in US states such as Wyoming, Delaware and Nevada, attracting less attention than they might in Panama, a country with a reputation for shady financial deals and money launder-

ing. Europe is also home to countries that provide banking secrecy that could provide haven from taxes, such as Luxembourg, Switzerland and Andorra. Many Panamanians point to those activities in wealthy countries and say they are angry over what they consider a double standard behind criticism of Panama.

On Thursday, a European Union official threatened sanctions on Panama and other nations if they don't cooperate fully to fight money laundering and tax evasion. "People are fed up with these outrages," said Pierre Moscovici, who heads financial affairs for the 28-nation EU. "The amounts of money, the jurisdictions and the names associated with this affair are frankly shocking."

Panama is listed by the EU as a country that is not cooperative on tax issues, and Moscovici urged the country to "rethink its position in this regard." Panamanian President Juan Carlos Varela has said his government will cooperate more and announced plans for an international committee of experts to recommend ways to boost transparency. But he also vows to defend his country against what he says are media attacks that unfairly stigmatize Panama. In Britain, the prime minister could become the next European politician to find himself under attack. After four days fending off headlines about his family's finances, he acknowledged Thursday that he and his wife, Samantha, sold shares worth 31,500 pounds (currently \$44,300) in an offshore fund named Blaimore Holdings in January 2010 - five months before Cameron became prime minister.—AP

Kuwait Times BUSINESS

SATURDAY, APRIL 9, 2016

Cuba's future economic model in spotlight at party congress

Global markets in mixed close to a volatile week

France urges more Asians tourists ahead of Euro '16



Money and power: China Govt's link to Panama Papers scandal



GAZA CITY: A Palestinian girl looks at wedding dresses at a shop. — AFP

GAZAN NEWLYWEDS COMMIT TO LOTS OF DEBT

MARRIAGE A LUXURY WITH YOUTH UN EMPLOYMENT AT 60 PERCENT

GAZA CITY: Abdul Hakim Zoghbor and his wife Falestine resorted to unusual methods to finance their Gaza Strip wedding, including crowd-funding on the Internet. In the Palestinian enclave, where youth unemployment is over 60 percent and 80 percent of the 1.8 million residents depend on humanitarian aid, marriage is a luxury.

Couples, like the 27-year-old newlyweds who live in a small apartment, are becoming man and wife later in life and taking on debt which can take several years to pay off. So-called marriage facilitators are even flooding the airwaves of local radio stations with commercials for interest-free financing for young couples.

"Getting married is much more than a contract," says Falestine Tanani, who has kept her maiden name in keeping with Palestinian custom. "They expect so much from us," she adds, referring to the conservative Muslim society in Gaza, run by Islamist movement Hamas.

Family pressure weighs heavily on the shoulders of young couples. "Nobody marries without going into debt which takes two or three years

to pay off, sometimes by selling the gold jewelry given as a gift to the bride." A lavish ceremony is expected, with a white wedding dress for the bride, a rented function room, a meal for guests and a home ready to move into.

"You need to reckon on \$15,000 to \$20,000 (13,000 to 17,500 Euros)" to satisfy the family, Zoghbor says. The newlyweds could not raise such a sum on their own. Zoghbor, an architect, had to retrain as an IT designer and interior decorator as he could not find a job in his field in Gaza where few buildings are going up. "For that there is no need for cement," or other building materials prohibited from import to Gaza under an Israeli blockade imposed in 2006, he said.

Breaking a taboo

Tanani, an engineer by training, works with children's charities and her income is irregular, meaning that she cannot get a bank loan. Her relatives also are unable to lend a helping hand. "They're in the same situation," says the young woman who grew up in Gaza's Jabalia refugee camp, the most densely-populated in the

Palestinian territories.

To bankroll their wedding the couple broke a taboo, launching an online crowd-funding campaign to raise money from the public. They are thought to be the first couple to take that step but their decision to lay out in public family finances drew criticism in conservative Gaza.

"People do not like to talk about it," said Zoghbor. Life is difficult in myriad ways in Gaza, where Israel and Palestinian militants have fought three wars since 2008. With the imposition of the Israeli blockade, tens of thousands of permits to work in the Jewish state were revoked and unemployment spiraled. A side effect has been couples waiting longer to marry, economist Samir Abu Mudalala said. Um Mohammed Al-Mamluk was desperate to see her 23-year-old son married. With her husband sick and unable to work she turned to an industry flourishing in Gaza, that of the "marriage facilitators".

'Seeking spouse with salary'

Mohammed Al-Bahtimi runs one such com-

pany, Al-Saada, which offers a \$2,500 wedding package to help couples marry before they turn 30. "We ask (them) for a contribution of \$700 and a monthly repayment. In return we provide the banqueting hall, studio photography, music, wedding outfits, meals and transport for the guests and bedroom furniture," he said.

Um Mohammed (mother of Mohammed) was able to marry her son off on condition she repaid about \$100 a month for 18 months. "Now I ask myself how to get his little brother Mahmud, who is 21, married, and also his cousin who is already 26 and not yet settled."

Bahtimi says his company only helps those who can reimburse the wedding cost. The economic slump also means grooms are choosy about their future brides, says economist Abu Mudalala. Over the past 10 years, the number of divorces has also doubled.

"They are looking for a working wife to help them, either because they are out of work or because their income is not enough to meet the costs that have soared in recent years," he said. — AFP

GOLD SLIPS AS EQUITIES RECOVER FROM GAINS

LONDON: Gold eased yesterday as strength in equities prompted investors to cash in some of the previous day's gains, but remained on track for its biggest weekly rise in five as the Federal Reserve stayed cautious on US rate hikes.

Stocks rebounded yesterday but were still set to end a bruising and volatile week lower, fed by growing uncertainty surrounding the US economic and policy outlook. Spot gold was down 0.4 percent at \$1,234.89 an ounce at 1134 GMT, while US gold futures for June delivery were down 50 cents at \$1,237 an ounce. Prices are up 1 percent this week, chiefly due to a 1.5 percent rally on Thursday.

The metal has been hemmed into a

narrow range by uncertainty over the path the U.S. central bank will take to raising rates. Fed Chair Janet Yellen, in a conversation with former Fed chairmen on Thursday, said the US economy is still on track to warrant further interest rate hikes. But U.S. interest rate futures still see a less than 20 percent chance of a rate hike in June.

Opportunity cost

Higher rates would weigh on gold by lifting the opportunity cost of holding non-yielding bullion. Waning expectations for further rate hikes this year helped gold to its best quarter in nearly 30 years in the three months to March.

"Janet Yellen said (the Fed) will be moderate in making hikes in the future, so the markets no longer anticipate the four interest rate hikes they did at the end of 2015," LBBW analyst Thorsten Proettel said. He remains bearish on prices, he said, however, as positioning on the futures markets was looking over-stretched, while inflows into gold-backed exchange traded products were drying up. "We had huge inflows into gold ETPs in January and February, but they've just come to a stop," he said.

Data from the world's largest gold-backed exchange-traded fund, New York-listed SPDR Gold Shares, showed its holdings are little changed this week after posting their first weekly outflow this year last

week. Demand for physical gold from Asia has also been muted of late, analysts said.

"Gold demand in Asia remains weak at present - and not only from private households," Commerzbank said in a note. "After India and China imported significantly less gold of late, the Chinese central bank (PBoC) has now substantially scaled back its gold purchases too." "Until recently, the weak demand in Asia was offset by strong inflows into the ETFs, but the dynamism here has also cooled perceptibly since mid-March." In other precious metals, silver was flat at \$15.21 an ounce, while platinum was up 0.2 percent at \$953.65 an ounce, and palladium was up 0.5 percent at \$539 an ounce. — Reuters



TOKYO: People walk past an electronic stock indicator of a securities firm. — AP

GLOBAL MARKETS IN MIXED CLOSE TO A VOLATILE WEEK

INVESTORS GROW CONCERNED FOR GLOBAL ECONOMY

LONDON: Stock markets rebounded in Europe yesterday but stumbled in Asia, capping a volatile week as investors grow concerned about the health of the global economy. At around 1130 GMT, London's benchmark FTSE 100 index was up 0.7 percent compared with Thursday's close, aided by rising oil prices.

"There was a continued chirpiness to the global markets this morning, the FTSE even managing to hold onto its growth despite a woeful morning for UK data," said Spreadex analyst Connor Campbell, citing poor official manufacturing and trade figures. "Yet the FTSE was nonplussed, the 3.0-percent rebound from Brent crude helping the index to maintain its ... rise as the morning continued."

In the Eurozone, Frankfurt's DAX 30 won 0.9 percent and the Paris CAC 40 also grew 0.9 percent. "The main catalyst for this growth seems to have been the strong German trade surplus figures," added Campbell, noting that dealers had "quickly forgotten" disappointing French industrial output data.

Hong Kong ended on a high in late buying while Tokyo also recovered from

a morning sell-off to close the day in positive territory thanks the yen weakening against the dollar, giving some respite to Japanese exporters. Dealers have taken their foot off the pedal after a March advance, with analysts saying there is a sense that central banks from Asia to the Americas are running out of options to kickstart world growth.

EU banks in the negative

Last month saw the European Central Bank push interest rates deeper into negative territory in a bid to ramp up lending, a policy adopted by the Bank of Japan in January. Also, the Federal Reserve has lowered its forecasts for raising borrowing costs this year and said it did not expect to make any move until after June.

Despite the moves to loosen monetary policy, growth remains stubbornly low and experts said the banks' magic could be wearing off. "We're definitely moving to a risk-off scenario and there's been a strong flight to safety," Niv Dagan, executive director at Peak Asset Management LLC in Melbourne, told Bloomberg News. "Investors are cautious

and are extremely nervous that global central bank intervention won't actually stimulate growth in the economy." The glum outlook weighed on buying sentiment elsewhere in Asia. Shanghai slid 0.8 percent and Sydney shed 0.6 percent, while Seoul, Singapore and Wellington were also sharply lower.

Yen in retreat

However, Hong Kong ended up 0.5 percent and Japan's Nikkei-which on Thursday rose for the first time after seven straight losses-also ended a seesaw day 0.5 percent higher. Despite the recovery in the broader Nikkei index, market heavyweight Fast Retailing, operator of the Uniqlo clothing chain, dived almost 13 percent after forecasting a big fall in profit this fiscal year.

Oil prices climbed as traders look ahead to next weekend's meeting of major producers, with hopes a deal to freeze output can be reached. A surprise fall in US stockpiles also provided some much-needed relief. West Texas Intermediate was up 3.6 percent at \$38.60 per barrel and Brent gained 3.2 percent to \$40.68. — AFP

DIESEL GLUT WORSENS, CASTING REFINERY PROFITS UNCERTAIN

LONDON: Oil refineries are shifting into high gear to produce as much gasoline as possible for the world's fuel-hungry drivers - kicking the problem of a worsening diesel glut further down the road. The "margin" or profit derived from refining crude into diesel has plunged in Europe, hitting multi-year lows this week as demand for the fuel - used heavily for heating in the Northern Hemisphere - wilts towards the end of winter.

But gasoline buying and margins are surging as U.S. drivers rev up for the summer and consumers in China and India also hit the road in record numbers. Bank of America Merrill Lynch said it now expects global gasoline demand growth of 500,000 barrels per day (bpd) - some 65 percent above the 10-year average.

Traders and analysts said such lopsided demand could depress diesel profits for at least another year, as refineries running for gasoline are configured in such a way that they cannot produce it without pumping out thousands of barrels of middle distillates that the world is not consuming.

"The worst is definitely yet to come. The diesel crack can still move lower ... to negative, even," said JBC analyst Michael De-Michei, referring to the gap between the price of diesel and the cost of the crude needed to produce it - a measure of profitability. "That's not out of the question."

Gasoline demand over the past year and a half defied all expectations as drivers spurred by cheap oil hit the road in huge numbers and bought more gas-guzzling SUVs. The development was a lifeline to oil producers, encouraging refineries around the world to run at full steam. But refiners, who for years struggled to produce enough diesel to power industrial growth worldwide and who bet on flat to falling gasoline demand due to more fuel-efficient cars, spent years and invested hundreds of millions to maximize diesel.

Saudi Aramco and its partners recently opened massive new refineries in the Middle East that were built to produce more than 60 percent middle distillates, while companies including ExxonMobil, Total, Galp and Repsol invested in European refineries to boost diesel. But now that they are up and running, the diesel outlets, such as oil drilling, railroads, construction and other heavy industries, are languishing. Figures in myriad countries, including China, Brazil and the United States, show diesel consumption flatlining or falling. A warm winter across the northern hemisphere kept households from burning heating oil at the usual pace, meaning stocks of distillates did not draw down as much as they normally would over the winter and the refinery maintenance season. "There's nothing that can give a (diesel) demand boost until we have a cold winter," De-Michei said.

Burgeoning stocks, bitter pill

A string of analysts have said economic run cuts - when refineries slow production to avoid producing unwanted or unprofitable fuel - will come to the rescue. But a variety of trading and refinery sources said that if gasoline demand grows at expected levels, the profits for selling it will keep refineries from slowing - placing even more diesel into glutted storage tanks and forcing margins lower.

"It's a pretty bitter pill to swallow for those who invested (in diesel) to improve their margin," a European refinery source said. Refineries have been working for months to cut diesel production - doing everything from changing their crude slate to shutting upgrading units such as hydrocrackers. But sources said these efforts can sustainably cut only a maximum of around 2 percent for most refineries. — Reuters

BRITISH, FRENCH BANKS TOLD TO REPORT SCANDAL LINKS

LONDON: Britain's finance watchdog said Thursday that it has given banks until next week to reveal whether they have any links to the law firm at the centre of the Panama Papers leak. A spokesman for the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) said it had written to about 20 companies asking to explain their relationship with Panama-based Mossack Fonseca by April 15.

The British deadline is for the completion of initial investigations into Mossack Fonseca or companies managed or

formed by the firm, according to the Financial Times, which published extracts from the letter. "Beyond 15 April we will require updates on any significant issues or relationships identified and a full response, detailing your findings, when your investigation is concluded," the letter read.

French banks have also been asked for "additional" information on their activities in tax havens, a spokesman for France's banking and insurance watchdog ACPR

told AFP. French newspaper Le Monde reported earlier this week that the trio of British banking giant HSBC and Swiss institutions UBS and Credit Suisse set up more than 4,500 offshore companies through Mossack Fonseca.

HSBC created 2,300 offshore companies, Credit Suisse has 1,105 and UBS has 1,100, while France's Societe Generale has 979, according to the latest revelations from the vast leak of documents dubbed the Panama Papers. Le Monde reported

that 365 banks across the world had used the services of Mossack Fonseca, the firm at the centre of the allegations.

Other major banks mentioned in the report include Germany's Deutsche Bank and Nordea, which does business in Nordic and Baltic countries. Offshore companies can be used for legitimate purposes, but they have in the past been used to launder money and evade taxes. The banks cited by Le Monde have denied any wrongdoing. — AFP

SWISS FINMIN OFFERS DEFENSE FOR RICH CAUGHT UP IN SCANDAL

ZURICH: Switzerland's finance minister has defended the use of offshore companies by the world's wealthy to cut their tax bills, now under scrutiny after publication of the "Panama Papers". "You have to create these opportunities," Finance Minister Ueli Maurer, from the right-wing Swiss People's Party (SVP), told Swiss newspaper Blick in an interview published yesterday.

"Rich people pay a lot more tax than me," said Maurer. "I am not rich - and without the rich I would have to pay more tax." Four decades of documents from Panamanian law firm Mossack Fonseca, which specializes in setting up offshore companies and has offices in Zurich and Geneva, showed widespread use of those instruments by global banks and triggered investigations around the world.

Maurer's comments were not echoed by the head of Switzerland's financial watchdog Mark Branson on Thursday. He said the country's banks must clamp down on money laundering in the wake of the Panama Papers.

The Geneva prosecutor has also opened a criminal inquiry in connection with the millions of documents leaked to the German newspaper Sueddeutsche Zeitung. They then became part of a broader investigation coordinated by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists. Switzerland is the world's biggest international wealth management centre with around \$2.5 trillion in assets and has taken on more wealth of late from emerging markets, from which it is harder to determine the origin of assets, Branson said. — Reuters

PANAMA TO DEEPEN TALKS WITH OECD

PANAMA CITY: Panama will deepen talks with the OECD on sharing tax information in the wake of the "Panama Papers" scandal, its vice president told AFP in an exclusive interview on Thursday. "We are going to establish technical-level dialogue between Panama and the OECD specifically on exchanging information," said Isabel De Saint Malo, who is also the country's foreign minister.

She said the talks were agreed earlier the same day in a "very good" conversation with the head of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Angel Gurría. Panama is scrambling to avert being once again designated as a tax haven that facilitates money laundering, after the revelations of offshore dealings of many of the world's wealthy, famous and infamous in the so-called Panama Papers revelations.

Those revelations came when millions of documents were leaked from the Panamanian law firm Mossack Fonseca. The OECD has led the charge accusing Panama of not doing enough to implement transparency and information-sharing standards. Gurría this week called the country "the last major holdout" in allowing funds to be hidden from authorities in other nations.

That prompted De Saint Malo's deputy foreign minister, Luis Miguel Hincapié, to accuse Gurría of being "unfair and discriminatory." In the interview with AFP, De Saint Malo said also that Panama would improve information-sharing with France, which this week warned it was looking at putting Panama back on its blacklist of tax havens. — AFP



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

MONEY AND POWER: CHINA GOVT'S LINK TO PANAMA PAPERS SCANDAL

BEIJING: Long before the Panama Papers leaks put law firm Mossack Fonseca on front pages around the world, the company was already well known among a certain class of Chinese investor-and to the government.

The tight-lipped firm says it has cooperated with authorities in Beijing and state-backed banks to help Chinese companies take their business international, according to information gleaned from transcripts of speeches by the company's representatives and archived versions of its Chinese web site. On several occasions, it has recommended Chinese companies cloak themselves in offshore disguises to avoid foreign restrictions on and opposition to acquisitions.

Since setting up its mainland China operation in 2000, Mossack Fonseca has had at least 11 offices in the country. It currently has eight, including one in Hong Kong. The International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ), which coordinated the Panama Papers reports, said that in 2015 Mossack Fonseca collected fees for more than 16,300 offshore companies incorporated in offices in China and Hong Kong, accounting for 29 percent of its "active companies worldwide".

According to ICIJ, the semi-autonomous Chinese territory of Hong Kong housed the greatest number of intermediaries, banks and law firms that set up offshore corporations on behalf of clients. The group said the data includes the names of relatives of at least eight current or former members of China's Communist Party's Politburo Standing Committee, the country's most

powerful body. Despite that, until the leaks began last weekend, Mossack Fonseca appears to have been largely unknown among international corporate lawyers in China. The number of offices the company had was "staggering", China-based attorney Edward Lehman told AFP, adding that in almost 29 years of doing business in the country, he had "never used them once, never been solicited by them once".

But Mossack Fonseca was known in Beijing. It has arranged investment conferences with the commerce ministry and its official think tank, the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation (CAITEC), past versions of its website show.

As recently as 2014, Chinese government agencies invited Mossack Fonseca representatives to address companies on how offshoring could be used by Chinese firms as part of the country's strategy for domestic enterprises to seek markets and acquisitions abroad. "We are actively assisting Chinese private and state-owned firms' march into the international market," the company said.

Convolved structures

When it first entered the mainland, Mossack Fonseca offered free consulting services to law and accounting firms, government offices and others to educate them about the benefits of offshoring, Zhang Xiaodong told the China Economic Weekly in 2007.

Zhang was described as a partner in the company's Asia office by the magazine,

which is owned by the People's Daily group, whose flagship is the official newspaper of the Communist Party. He suggested that offshoring could be used by Chinese companies to evade restrictions imposed by foreign authorities on investment from the country.

Zhang cited Chinese state-owned oil company CNOOC's takeover bid for US energy firm UNOCAL, which was withdrawn in the face of opposition from a US committee tasked with investigating proposed investments for national security implications.

"These types of risks can actually all be avoided through the use of offshore companies," he said. "It's very hard for the other party to determine whether the investors only came from China or the investments only represent Chinese interests." In other talks, company representatives discussed using offshoring to disguise Chinese investment in Africa and Europe.

Without naming names, it said it had helped a client hide its acquisition of a European firm through a corporate structure that included an offshore company, a foundation, a company in Luxembourg, and another company in the target nation. Mossack Fonseca also said it had close ties with at least two prominent state-backed banks: Chinese Merchants Bank and Shanghai Pudong Development Bank. "For many years, our firm has maintained a good relationship with these two," the company said in a November 2008 letter posted on its website, adding that it had helped the banks conduct annual reviews of accounts held by their offshore clients. — AFP



HAVANA: In this April 4, 2016 photo, salesman Victor Rodriguez waits for customers at his stall in the Almacenes San Jose. — AP

CUBA'S FUTURE ECONOMIC MODEL IN SPOTLIGHT AT PARTY CONGRESS

ENTHUSIASM BUT LIMITED PROGRESS TO AILING ECONOMY

HAVANA: Victor Rodriguez imagines a future Cuban economy that will let him import large quantities of thread, export the women's clothing he designs and keep him from worrying about obtuse regulations such as where he can place items on his small retail stand.

"Maybe then I could think about opening a full store," he said. One month after President Barack Obama's visit, islanders are now looking to Cuba's upcoming Communist Party congress for the clearest picture yet of how far their leaders will open the economy to deeper free-market reforms - if at all.

The congress being held April 16-19 comes at a critical juncture in Cuba's history, with diplomatic relations with the US generating enthusiasm but bringing limited improvements to the island's ailing economy. It's also likely to be the last Communist Party congress with any Castro in power as President Raul Castro has said he intends to retire in 2018 when he will be 85, turning 86 that June. His older brother Fidel stepped aside at age 79 in 2006 in what he said was a temporary move after suffering a serious illness and retired for good two years later.

'The future of Cuba'

"This is basically setting the future of Cuba," said Carmelo Mesa-Lago, an economics professor at the University of Pittsburgh. The congress has already generated much attention with party members complaining about a lack of the advance debate on economic and social reforms seen in the past. The party's official newspaper, Granma, published a lengthy article explaining that instead of inviting new public discussion of reforms, this year's congress will focus on the continued implementation of market-oriented changes enacted in 2011 in Cuba's most significant economic overhaul to date.

"Everybody's wondered since 2011, what's the end game?" said William LeoGrande, an American University expert

on US-Cuba relations. "What are they anticipating Cuba will look like when the restructuring is done? Will it look like Vietnam? China? Something else?" Based on the Marxist-Leninist model, the Communist Party of Cuba is the only legal political party on the island. It holds its congress roughly every five years to map the island's political, social and economic future - except for a 14-year stretch from 1997-2011.

The latest congress will bring together 1,000 party members from throughout the island to discuss Cuba's plan going forward. Among the things members will consider this year is a description of the island's economic development model through 2030. So far, Cuban leaders have indicated the government intends to maintain strong control of the island's centrally planned economy. Less clear are the roles the state and private market will play, and how much the non-state sector will be permitted to expand.

Since assuming power in 2006, Castro has instituted scattered free-market reforms to alleviate the island's deep fiscal woes while preserving the communist system ushered in by the 1959 revolution. In 2010, he announced plans to permit more small businesses and reduce state employment. The 2011 Communist Party congress passed 313 resolutions that included legalizing car sales, encouraging the development of mid-size cooperatives with dozens of employees and eliminating an exit permit all Cubans once needed to travel outside the country.

Cubans were also permitted to buy and sell homes for the first time since the early years of the revolution. Emilio Morales, an economic analyst who heads the Miami-based Havana Consulting Group, said the reforms to date have encouraged the growth of a small business sector that includes retail enterprises like Rodriguez's clothing stand, stylish new restaurants and polished 1960 Cadillacs and other old cars serving as taxis. About 500,000 Cubans now run their own businesses, yet total private-sector employment represents just a frac-

tion of the economy - an estimated 23 percent of all employment in 2014, compared to 18 percent in 2011.

There are signs the number of self-employed workers could be leveling off: According to Cuban state figures, there were 496,400 in January, down from 504,600 in May 2015. To increase that number, Morales said the government must lift restraints on access to wholesale markets and expand private enterprise to fields such as law and engineering, which currently aren't among the 201 categories of small businesses allowed.

Majority struggle

Many Cubans are anxious to see their economy grow; the vast majority struggle to meet daily needs, with state workers earning an average of \$20 per month. Many say they want Cuba to preserve universal benefits such as free education and health care. "We should never lose what we've gained," said Graciela Hidalgo, 67, a retired Interior Ministry worker.

Six Communist Party members interviewed by The Associated Press said they believe the congress will move to expand private businesses but not embark on dramatic reforms. President Castro has cautioned he wants to move "slowly but surely" and that Cuba won't administer "shock therapy." "I think we'll keep moving in the same direction, enabling small private property, expanding some aspects of commercialization," said Esteban Morales, one of the party members interviewed and a noted intellectual.

Analysts have viewed China and Vietnam as examples of how Cuba might preserve its socialist system while moving toward a market-driven economy. Yet Cuba scholars say the reforms to date have been relatively minor compared to the early stages of mixed socialist-free market economies in those countries. "Cuba's economic situation isn't one for moving slowly and surely," said Emilio Morales, the analyst in Miami. — AP

CITIZENS PROTEST SYNGENTA DEAL AMID GMO WORRIES

BEIJING: Around 400 Chinese citizens have signed a letter to protest the purchase of Swiss-based seeds and pesticides company Syngenta by state-owned ChemChina, saying the deal would eventually lead to genetically modified crops being sown across swathes of the country.

Critics of genetically modified organisms argue the technology poses risks to public health and the environment, while advocates say such fears have not been scientifically proven and that high-yielding genetically altered crops would help ensure food security as the world's population grows.

Although relatively few people signed the letter, it marks a rare example of open opposition to state-supported corporate strategy in a nation where the government often clamps down hard on any criticism. It also underscores fears among some of the public that the government is gearing up to gradually loosen laws that prevent the cultivation of any GM varieties of staple food crops, with Beijing already permitting the import of some GMO crops for use in animal feed.

The \$43 billion all-cash deal unveiled in February is the largest foreign acquisition ever by a Chinese firm as China is looking to secure food supplies for its population. Syngenta has a portfolio of top tier chemicals and patent-protected seeds, many of which are genetically modified.

Destroying country's agriculture

"The acquisition of Syngenta and the promotion of its genetically-modified and agro-chemical agriculture in the country would destroy the country's own agriculture and food security," the protesters said in the letter, seen by Reuters. They argue GMO strains would contaminate Chinese staple crops. "ChemChina must immediately stop the suicidal acquisition from causing a disaster to the Chinese nation." Syngenta did not respond to requests for comment. A ChemChina spokesman said he had heard about the letter and that the company was waiting to learn more about it.

Yang Xiaolu, one of the protesters on the list, said the letter was handed over late last month to the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission of the State Council (SASAC), which oversees companies owned by the central government. A SASAC spokeswoman said her office had not yet seen the letter, but was looking into the matter.

Yang, a long-time anti-GMO activist, is also among the three plaintiffs who were taking China's Ministry of Agriculture to court in April last year in a bid to make public a toxicology report supporting the approval of Monsanto's popular weed killer. Reuters was unable to verify other names listed on the anti-GMO letter. China's commerce ministry spokesman Shen Danyang said in February that the ministry supported the acquisition which would help secure global food supply. The protest comes amid worries that Beijing is losing control over the supervision of GMO technology. Last month, agriculture minister Han Changfu admitted that GMO corn was illegally grown in some parts of the country, but found "no large areas of illegal planting" after Greenpeace said a majority of samples taken from corn fields in 5 counties in Liaoning province, tested positive for GMO contamination. — Reuters

STATEMENT BY GHAITH AL GHAITH, FLYDUBAI CEO

We are aware of the information that has been released by the Interstate Aviation Committee (IAC). We share the desire to get conclusive findings as quickly as possible as outlined by the International Standards And Recommended Practices in International Civil Aviation Organization's (ICAO) Annex 13. We continue to support the investigating authorities in liaison with the General Civil Aviation Authority (GCAA).

BLUMBERG ATTEMPTS TO EASE EGYPT GRAIN DRAIN

CAIRO: At the far corner of a faceless government building in Cairo an unusually high-tech attempt to stem Egypt's waste-and-theft-riddled wheat market is quietly coming online this month. A dimly lit room awash with the soft glow of CCTV feeds from around the country, Blumberg Grain's command and control centre is the central nervous system of a fast-expanding network of grain storage facilities the company says will save Egypt nearly \$2 billion in five years.

As Egypt begins its wheat harvest this month, storage systems from the grain logistics company will process and monitor about a quarter of the domestic crop for the first time. If the government signs up for a second fleet of storage sites, a decision expected by May 1, Blumberg will handle the country's entire crop by 2018.

"(The full system) will be able to save the Egyptian government approximately \$550 million a year in wheat savings, value addition and additional labor benefits," CEO David Blumberg told Reuters. "It is all monitored and evaluated from this command and control centre," he said, pointing to a monitor streaming live images from the interior of a steel hangar in the port city of Alexandria.

Egypt is the world's largest importer of wheat but also a prolific squanderer of its own crop. About 3.5 million tons of the crop is procured by the government each year and much of it is stored in dilapidated open-air sites-known as "shounas"- that offer little protection against weather, pests and theft.

To promote greater self-sufficiency in a staple that feeds tens of millions of Egypt's poorest citizens, the north African nation buys its domestic wheat at a generously subsidized rate. Egypt will pay farmers \$370 a ton this year, nearly twice the \$190 paid for foreign wheat in its latest tender. This premium makes any crop loss highly expensive, with the dollar-starved country also forced to dip into its dwindling foreign currency reserves to import additional grain to cover its domestic shortfall.

Blumberg Grain estimates that Egypt loses 40 percent of its locally procured wheat because of inadequate storage and processing techniques-from pigeons helping themselves at open-air sites to some unscrupulous farmers boosting crop weight with rocks and water to increase their returns. —Reuters

RUSSIA ENERGY MINISTER HOPES FOR OUTPUT DEAL AT DOHA TALKS

MOSCOW: Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak hopes leading oil producers will agree to freeze output at a meeting in Doha on April 17, he said yesterday, which should help the global oil market to rebalance.

Russia, Saudi Arabia, Venezuela and Qatar agreed in February to freeze production at January levels, but said at the time the deal was contingent on other producers joining in.

The April 17 meeting is aimed at cementing that agreement with other OPEC and non-OPEC producers, which could help reduce an oil glut that has driven oil prices down by around 60 percent since mid-2014.

The oil market is over supplied by around 1.5 million barrels per day, according to Moscow's estimates. "Of course, we hope (for a deal)," Novak told reporters on the sidelines of a conference. "Otherwise we would have not discussed this issue." "A freeze at January levels is being discussed, but other proposals could be made," he added.

An OPEC source told Reuters production could be frozen at January, February, March or even first-quarter levels. Russia and the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries were both pumping oil at near record volumes in January. Russia, the world's second-largest oil exporter after Saudi Arabia, was pumping at a 30-year high last month of 10.91 million barrels per day (bpd).

Two sources close to the energy ministry told Reuters yesterday production could fall to 10.84 to 10.86 million bpd this month, compared with January levels of 10.88 million bpd. Russian oil output could be 536 to 540 million tons this year, or 10.73 to 10.81 million bpd, Alexei Texler, Russia's first deputy energy minister, told reporters yesterday. Oil exports could rise by 3.5 percent this year.

Iran has rejected freezing its output at January levels, which OPEC secondary sources have estimated to be 2.93 million barrels per day, and wants to return to much higher pre-sanctions production. —Reuters



BEIJING: In this photo taken on April 7, 2016, pipes are seen at the closed Shougang Capital Iron and Steel plant. — AFP

STEELING FOR A STRUGGLE: CHINA WORKERS IN TURMOIL

MORE THAN 4,000 PEOPLE FACING UNEMPLOYMENT

TANGSHAN: Hundreds of laid-off steelworkers gathered outside their former employer's office this week to protest at losing their jobs, victims of a global glut. But the smokestacks nearby were not British; they are in China's very place blamed by European politicians for the plunging prices and excess capacity threatening the industry worldwide.

As recriminations fly over the closure of the Port Talbot steelworks, the pain of redundancy is felt as keenly in the northern Chinese steel hub of Tangshan as it is in Wales. "I have a daughter," said one man, asking to remain anonymous for fear of reprisals. "I'm the main breadwinner in the family. What can I do in the future?"

He was among 4,000 people who workers say face unemployment after state-owned steel firm Guofeng halted work at one of its hulking production zones last week, citing "uncontrollable factors". They are just the tip of the iceberg; major Chinese steel producers lost more than 100 billion yYan (\$15.5 billion) last year, an industry association said Thursday, and Beijing has said it will shed 500,000 steel jobs in coming years. The figure is more than the 328,000 people directly employed by steel companies in the entire EU.

Building boom

For European and American politicians, China is the bete noire of the global steel industry. How can their higher-wage economies compete with low-paying plants that churn out vast quantities of the metal, they ask, accusing Beijing of dumping — selling a product in foreign markets at below-cost price.

China's steel industry is huge. National production grew sevenfold from 2000 to 2014 as domestic demand boomed from massive infrastructure investment in swelling cities, and as the

government ploughed billions of dollars into heavy industry to counter the impact of the 2008 global financial crisis.

At the same time plants built by private investors expecting ever rising prices also went into operation. By 2014, China was producing some 820 million tonnes a year-about half the world total and seven times more than the second biggest producer, Japan. But domestic demand peaked the same year as China's building boom began to wane and growth slowed, analysts say, causing commodity prices to plummet.

World export prices for steel have fallen more than 70 percent from an all time high of \$1,113 per ton in July 2008 to just \$321 last month, according to the website steelbenchmarker.com. China can now produce about 1.2 billion tons of steel each year, but local demand is around 700 million tons, and companies have looked to foreign markets to make up the deficit, primarily in Asia. "In 2015 China exported about 100 million tons of steel products," Cai Rang, chairman of the China Iron and Steel Research Institute Group told state media last month-around twice as much as two years previously. The exports were "a relief for domestic capacity but a shock to the international market", he acknowledged.

That shockwave played out when India's Tata Steel announced last month it was selling the loss-making Port Talbot steelworks, with the possible loss of 4,000 employee positions and many more indirectly, triggering doom-laden warnings of worse to come for Europe's steel industry. However, World Steel Association figures show that a tiny proportion-about six million tons in 2014 — of Chinese exports go to the EU, where some 100 million tons is traded between the bloc's countries. But "because China's production is so large, even its

small proportion of exports can influence countries abroad", said Kevin Bai, a market analyst at CRU Group.

'Love our country'

Many Chinese heavy industry giants, including in steel, are lumbering state-owned firms, riddled with inefficiencies but protected by authorities fearful of unrest. Beijing this year vowed to eliminate 100 million to 150 million tonnes of capacity by 2020. It said the reforms would cost half a million jobs, but did not give a timeframe.

Ratings agency Fitch said this week that the plan "faces immense social and financial challenges". Protests have already hit China's coal sector, which faces similar issues of overcapacity, inefficiency and an excess of supply over demand, and where the government says it will cut some 1.3 million jobs.

Industrial unrest is anathema to China's ruling Communist Party, and last month it clamped down on a protest which brought the city of Shuangyashan to a standstill, where miners said dozens had been detained. Steelworkers in Tangshan fear a similar crackdown.

"Some people have been arrested," a 41-year-old Guofeng worker named Shao told AFP. "The police have warned me, and said I'll be detained if I make a fuss." Previous bouts of unemployment in China have been cushioned by a large agricultural sector to which migrant workers can return, but breakneck urbanisation has swallowed swathes of farmland over the last decade, and Shao said local workers "have no chance of going back to farming".

Guofeng refused to comment when contacted by AFP. "In the factory we are told to love our country," said Shao. "But to see my child eating one meal a day while still growing, because food prices are so high-that's not acceptable". —AFP

FRANCE URGES MORE ASIAN TOURISTS AHEAD OF EURO '16

SINGAPORE: Southeast Asian travelers were encouraged to visit France yesterday, as a top tourism official said adequate security measures had been put in place following two major terror attacks in Paris last year. France remained the world's top tourism destination in 2015 despite the attacks in the capital, senior tourism official Matthias Fekl, during a promotional visit to Singapore ahead of the Euro 2016 football championship.

A record 85 million people visited France in 2015, up from 83.8 million in 2014, and the government plans to

increase this to 100 million by 2020. "Zero risk does not exist anywhere in the world anymore, this is today's reality," Fekl, minister of state for foreign trade and tourism promotion, told reporters. "But we have enhanced security and we will be very careful of course for every event."

France was shaken by two major terrorist incidents in 2015. Gunmen and suicide bombers staged a series of coordinated attacks in Paris last November, leaving 130 people dead and hundreds wounded. The attacks were claimed by the Islamic State group. In January 2015, 12 people

were killed when jihadist gunmen attacked the office of the French satirical weekly newspaper Charlie Hebdo in Paris.

Fekl said France was determined to proceed with all scheduled culture and sporting events, including Euro 2016 which runs for a month from June 10. "Nothing could be worse than to cancel things. Once the free countries start to cancel things, terrorists have won their fight," he said. Tourism in France accounts for seven to eight percent of national wealth and employs two million people, with those from Southeast Asia making up

a large portion of the visitors.

Some 550,000 people from the region visit France annually behind China (1.7 million) and Japan (600,000), according to official data. Fekl was in Singapore following a trip to Indonesia to drum up tourist interest. The country's trade promotion agency, Atout France, recently opened offices in Singapore and Jakarta to further tap into the Southeast Asian market. French Ambassador to Singapore Benjamin Dubertret said the embassy is speeding up the visa approval process for tourists as part of the effort. —AFP

'SLUDGE' CAN HELP CHINA POWER CITIES:

LONDON: China can cut its greenhouse gas emissions and generate electricity by treating the 30 million tons of sludge its wastewater plants produce each year, the think tank World Resources Institute (WRI) said.

If just 10 percent of the sludge was treated in bioenergy plants instead of being trucked to landfills, China's carbon emissions would be reduced by 380 million tons per year, roughly the equivalent Ukraine's emissions, WRI experts said. Bioenergy - or sludge-to-power - plants convert organic matter left over from treated sewage into electricity by heating the solid waste and using microbes to digest it.

This process produces methane which then can be burnt to generate power, while sterilized leftover solid waste can be used as fertilizer or to grow potted trees to restore landscapes and improve air quality. "You can treat it as normal waste (or) can use technology to produce methane. Once you capture methane, you reduce emissions released into the air," Lijin Zhong, senior associate and water lead at WRI China office, told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

"At the same time you still have the extra bio gas which you can use for vehicles, heating systems or power generation," she said by phone from Beijing yesterday. China formally committed to halting the rise in its greenhouse gas emissions within the next 15 years in June 2015, saying they would peak by around 2030.

It has also set a target to spend about \$16 billion between 2013 and 2016 to improve sewage disposal and garbage treatment as the government struggles to find ways of treating the enormous amounts of refuse the world's most populous country generates. China has already started to invest in bioenergy plants, with four biggest cities - Beijing, Changsha, Chengdu and Hefei - already installing or planning such systems, the experts said.

Once in operation, together they would be able to reduce emissions by 700,000 tons per year - the equivalent of a third of emissions produced by cars in the United States each day, they said. The plants would also produce enough compressed natural gas to fill the tanks of 2 million taxis, while powering the plants themselves. But this relatively small contribution leaves room for more efforts to curb emissions in China, the world's largest energy consumer that accounts for a quarter of global greenhouse gas emissions.

"You can treat sludge as waste but if you change your mind the sludge is not waste but a source of energy," Zhong said. "If you can recover your energy, if you can recover resources from waste, then you are doing something to close the (ecological) loop of the city." — Reuters



CLIFTON PARK, New York: Kenny Bowman walks down a row of apple trees on Wednesday, April 6, 2016, at Bowman Orchards. — AP

BIG APPLE CHILL: COLD SNAP MAY NIP FRUIT IN THE BUD

WEATHER CHANGE GREATLY AFFECTING FARMERS' MARKET

ALBANY: Apple farmers in the East worry the late-season Arctic blast could take a big bite from their budding crops. "It definitely was cold enough so that there could be some catastrophic damage to the majority of the apple crop," said Jake Samascott, whose family grows about 100 acres of apples on their farm south of Albany.

The unseasonably cold air moved into Northeast and mid-Atlantic states this week shortly after a warm spell sped up bud growth on apple trees. Buds become more sensitive to cold as they mature, making the cold snap especially troubling in big apple-producing states such as New York. Farmers are starting to assess the damage this week with another round of plummeting temperatures looming.

"We have at least one more cold night by the end of the weekend, early next week, if forecasts hold, to get through," said Ben Wenk of Three Springs Fruit Farm in Aspers, Pennsylvania, southwest of Harrisburg.

"And of course there's not a whole lot we can do about it." Farmers are already checking individual buds for damage but don't expect to have an estimate of losses until next week at the earliest.

Samascott said his orchard could lose 90 percent of its apple crop because of temperatures that dipped to 10 degrees and below. Three Springs could lose half its early varieties like Honeycrisp and Gala. Wenk also is worried about his peaches, blueberries and strawberries. Some apple farmers try to mitigate damage by employing windmill-like machines to direct warmer air at the trees, but they are still left playing a waiting game.

'Too early to tell'

"It's almost too early to tell, but I still feel we have a crop," said Dwight Baugher of Baugher's Orchards & Farm in Westminster, Maryland. He said his apple crop "got smacked pretty good" with overnight temperatures in the mid to low 20s this week.

Damage will vary from farm to farm depending on varieties, how low local temperatures dropped and how far along the buds were. Losses can even vary around a single farm, with trees in colder valleys affected while trees on a hillside escape harm. Some orchards farther north, like in New York's Champlain Valley, are expected to escape large-scale damage because of their later growing season. "Individual farms, some will skate through and they'll be fine and there are others that probably won't have a crop, and economically it will be pretty tough," said Jim Eve of Eve Farm Service, who monitors farms in western New York. At G and S Orchards in the western New York town of Walworth, farmer Stephanie Craft said

she is trying to stay positive. Temperatures bottomed out briefly earlier this week at 11 degrees, but her trees' buds were not as far along as those across the state in the Hudson Valley. "I think we're going to - knock on wood - be all right," she said. — AP

Weekender

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British singer Shirley Bassey poses on the red carpet upon arrival to attend the 2016 Laurence Olivier Awards in London. — AFP

Rolling Stones wife pulls horses from troubled Polish stud farm

The wife of Rolling Stones drummer Charlie Watts on Thursday became the first breeder to withdraw horses from a famed Polish stud farm after two other Arabian purebreds she owned died there. Breeder Shirley Watts' withdrawal of the two pregnant mares worth nearly half a million euros follows the death of her other two horses on March 17 and April 3 and a political storm in February over a government-appointed director who admits he knows nothing about horses.

The horses left the 200-year-old Janow Podlaski stud farm, used by an array of sheikhs and celebrities, in a truck bound for Britain earlier Thursday. The state-owned farm made headlines in February when Poland's conservative government unexpectedly replaced its director with an economist with no equine expertise. The move triggered outrage at home and abroad against the Law and Justice (PiS) government, which has made several other controversial reforms since coming to power in November after eight years in opposition.

The horses that died, Preria and Amra, were worth 230,000 and 340,000 euros (\$260,000 and \$386,000) respectively. Her remaining two horses, Augusta and Pieta, are worth 40,000 and 400,000 euros. Local media reports say other breeders from Poland and abroad are thinking of following her lead and withdrawing horses. Insiders charge that the world-renowned stud farm, where a broodmare fetched a cool 1.4 million euros at auction last year, is the latest state enterprise to be threatened by the actions of the government.

In addition to former farm director and internationally acclaimed breeder Marek Trela, the government also sacked the equally respected head of the Michalow state stud farm, Jerzy Bialobok. The move sparked street protests and petitions for the reinstatement of both men, who quickly received a flood of job offers from leading Gulf state breeders. Since taking office the PiS government has pushed through several pieces of controversial legislation that have notably strengthened controls over public media and paralyzed the EU member's constitutional court. —AFP

Five acts to join Rock Hall of Fame but tensions fester

Five acts ranging from gangsta rap pioneers N.W.A. to hard rockers Deep Purple will Friday enter the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, but not everyone wants to celebrate together. The shrine to rock history will also induct radio-friendly rockers Cheap Trick and Chicago and experimental bluesman Steve Miller at a gala evening concert at the Barclays Center in Brooklyn. While many artists see the induction as career affirmation, the 2016 crop will feature notable absences—Deep Purple's defining guitarist Ritchie Blackmore and former Chicago frontman Peter Cetera, who have both moved on from their original bands.

Fans will be watching closely to see whether N.W.A. returns with Dr Dre, who went on to become a multimillionaire executive at Apple and did not show up for a one-off reunion show last year in Los Angeles. Ice Cube, another of N.W.A.'s original members, said on the eve of the ceremony that "everybody's going to be there"—but that the rappers would not perform. He voiced appreciation for the recognition but criticized organizers over the logistics for the event, which will be taped for later broadcast on HBO.

"I guess we really didn't feel like we were supported enough to do the best show we could put on," he told The New York Times. N.W.A. is only the sixth rap act to enter the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, which is based in Cleveland. Music experts vote on candidates-eligible 25 years after their first release-for induction. The group, raised in the rough Los Angeles area of Compton, shocked much of white America with their in-your-face accounts of street life and police harassment. N.W.A. won the nod on its fourth nomination shortly after the release of a hit Hollywood biopic on the group, "Straight Outta Compton."

Deep Purple—the last in a trio of British hard-rock forebearers, alongside Led



This file photo shows Cheap Trick's, Rick Nielsen during CMT Crossroads in Nashville, Tennessee. — AFP

Zeppelin and Black Sabbath, to enter the Hall of Fame—is responsible for one of rock's most famous song openings with Blackmore's heavy but bluesy riff on "Smoke on the Water." Fans' hopes for a reunion with Blackmore, who left the band in 1993 to pursue folk and other musical projects, were short-lived. Blackmore said he was told by the current Deep Purple that he was unwelcome.

Deep Purple's singer Ian Gillan gave a more detailed explanation, saying that the Hall of Fame citation did not include two relatively new band members and that it would be unfair to exclude them from the performance, although all members were welcome to attend the ceremony. Chicago, who adapted the jazz heritage of the band's namesake city to become soft rock chart-

toppers, had earlier indicated that the group would perform for the first time since 1985 with Cetera, who went on to a successful solo career. But Cetera later said that he had failed to reach an agreement with Hall of Fame organizers on a reunion song. "Personally, I'm frustrated and tired of dealing with this and it's time to move on," he said in an open letter, asking that his award be sent to him.

Cheap Trick plays nice

In sharp contrast to Deep Purple and Chicago, US heartland rockers Cheap Trick will appear with estranged veteran drummer Bun E Carlos. "We are so excited. It's an honor and we're not bitching about it one bit like everybody else does," Cheap Trick frontman Robin Zander said of the Hall of Fame induction in an interview with radio host Howard Stern. Cheap Trick, hailing from the blue-collar city of Rockford, Illinois, rose to fame through constant touring around the Midwest and eventually packed arenas—notably developing a strong fan base in Japan—with guitar-driven anthems such as "Surrender."

Carlos filed a lawsuit after the group removed him from touring in 2010. While the case was resolved, he does not appear on the band's 17th studio album released earlier this month. Steve Miller entered the cultural mix of San Francisco in the 1960s and brought together blues, jazz and American roots music, winning commercial success with the 1973 song "The Joker." He still plays regularly at age 72 and devotes much of his time to guiding the musical instrument collection at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. Despite this year's absences no act plans to boycott entirely. Most infamous were punk icons the Sex Pistols, whose frontman Johnny Rotten refused to come and called the institution a money-hungry "piss stain." — AFP

Paul Simon pursues new fusion on next album

Paul Simon, the folk star turned world music champion, plans a range of further experimentation including a collaboration with a flamenco band on his new album. "Stranger to Stranger" is the 74-year-old's first album since 2011's "So Beautiful Or So What," which had partially returned to the acoustic guitar style that made him famous as part of Simon and Garfunkel. Simon on Thursday announced the latest album, which will come out on June 3, and released a first track, "Wristband," an upbeat, ironic tale about an overzealous bouncer.

The song starts with a jazzy string bass before bringing in a flamenco rhythm section and a subtle electronic backdrop. Simon said "Wristband" was one of four songs which he recorded with a flamenco band. He also worked with Clap! Clap!, an underground Italian DJ also known as Digi G'lessio who infuses club tracks with traditional dance music from southern Africa. "It's about getting you to actually hear something in a new way. It's about making music that sounds old and new at the same time; music with a sense of mystery," Simon said in a statement on the

new album. On "Stranger to Stranger," Simon also looked to the 20th century music theorist Harry Partch who designed his own instruments with microtonal scales meaning with smaller intervals than those usually used in Western music. Working with longtime producer Roy Halee, Simon went to the late Partch's laboratory at Montclair State University in New Jersey. Simon recorded sounds from some of Partch's instruments such as cloud chamber bowls, which consist of suspended large glass containers, and the chromelodeon, a uniquely tuned keyboard.

Simon and Garfunkel were one of the signature acts of the 1960s, starting off with clean-cut folk songs before delving into fusion. The duo produced hits such as "Bridge Over Troubled Water" and "Mrs. Robinson." As a solo artist, Simon put out hits such as "Me and Julio Down by the Schoolyard" and "You Can Call Me Al." The latter song appeared on the 1986 album "Graceland," on which Simon brought South African artists into his pop songwriting. "Graceland" went on to win the Grammy for Album of the Year. — AFP



This file photo shows US singer Paul Simon performing during the 45th Montreux Jazz Festival. — AFP

HBO film explores Vanderbilt's life through her son

For much of his career, CNN's Anderson Cooper rarely talked publicly about being Gloria Vanderbilt's son. He wasn't ashamed. Cooper just didn't want the baggage, the assumption that his life was set because he was a descendant of Cornelius Vanderbilt, one of the world's richest business magnates of the 1800s. Since he has the last name of his father, actor Wyatt Cooper, it was easy to keep this quiet.

All of that changes with "Nothing Left Unsaid," a documentary that premieres Saturday on HBO (9 pm EDT). The film explores Vanderbilt's remarkable life and offers families a blueprint for conversations with aging parents. Cooper wasn't as close with his mother as he wanted to be, and when she had a health scare a year ago, realized he didn't want to be left with questions when she couldn't answer them. His mother, now 91, has likely been in the public eye longer than anyone else alive. At age 9, she was on newspaper front pages as the "poor little rich girl," the subject of a custody battle between her mother and other relatives (her father died when she was 15 months old).

Money wasn't an issue

The nickname "bothered me enormously," Vanderbilt said in an interview. "I didn't see any of the press - the newspapers were kept from me. I didn't know what it meant. I didn't feel poor and I didn't feel rich. It really did influence me enormously to make something of my life when I realized what it meant." Money wasn't an issue; Vanderbilt inherited \$4.5 million in 1941. Yet she lived a young life unmoored, with no father and a mother uninterested in child-rearing. She was fascinated with Hollywood, dated Errol Flynn when she was 17 and had a short-lived marriage as a teenager. She married conductor Leopold



Anderson Cooper and his mother Gloria Vanderbilt attend the premiere of "Nothing Left Unsaid" at the Time Warner Center in New York. — AP

Stokowski when she was 20 and he was 63. The marriage produced two children and ended when Frank Sinatra began pursuing her. Vanderbilt later married director Sidney Lumet and then Wyatt Cooper. The Cooper marriage seemed the most grounded, but he died when Anderson was 10. Even in her tenth decade, Vanderbilt said she believes she has a great romance ahead of her.

"She's the most vulnerable, optimistic person I know," Cooper said. "She's the most trusting person. I'm not as trusting as her at all. She's incredibly optimistic, and I believe the next catastrophe is right around the corner and I want to prepare for it." Cooper looks more like his father and

always believed he was most like him. Through the film and its accompanying book, he learned all he had in common with his mother. Both fruitlessly believed their fathers had left behind letters for them to read after their deaths. "The whole Vanderbilt side never had any reality to me at all," he said. "My mom didn't feel connected. She felt like a changeling, an impostor. We grew up without any real connection. My father took me to see the statue of Commodore Vanderbilt in Grand Central, and I thought all grandparents turned into statues when they died."

Cooper is a gentle guide through the film, going through boxes of memorabilia and drawing stories out of his mother. Much time is spent

on the art she has created throughout her life. Her brand of designer jeans - for many people, the thing they most associated with her - gets barely a minute in the nearly two-hour film. There's a sadness in her eyes. Vanderbilt was long estranged from her mother, and one of her sons with Stokowski cut himself off from the family for more than 40 years (since the film was made, there has been some contact). And she suffered a parent's ultimate nightmare with the loss of a son, Anderson's brother Carter.

Emotional centerpiece

In 1988, shortly after his graduation from Princeton, Carter jumped out the window of his mother's high-rise apartment. She watched, and pleaded with him to stop. Vanderbilt says in "Nothing Left Unsaid" that she contemplated following him, but the thought of how it would devastate Anderson stopped her. Carter's death, capped by Cooper and Vanderbilt visiting his grave together, is the film's emotional centerpiece. Filmmaker Liz Garbus includes an interview with Carter's former girlfriend, who says she turned down his request to come over the night of his suicide because she had a pimple and didn't want him to see it.

Vanderbilt and Cooper had no hesitation reliving the painful time. "It brings him alive when you talk about him," she said. "I'm close to a lot of his friends who were in Princeton with him and I always enjoy seeing them and talking to them." Mother and son hope that some people who see the film will be encouraged to speak to elderly relatives about their lives. "Anderson really knew little about my childhood because I'd never spoken about it," Vanderbilt said. "So we really got to know each other and became really close in a way that we never had before." — AP

Cuba Gooding Jr: Worried pastor prayed for me over OJ role

Cuba Gooding Jr revealed Thursday his role as football star-turned murder suspect OJ Simpson had taken him to such a dark place that his pastor prayed over his soul. The 48-year-old described at a celebrity charity event in Hollywood how filming FX's "The People v OJ Simpson: American Crime Story" had taken a heavy emotional toll. "I was in a dark place with it. It's overwhelming the reception I get from people I don't know, famous or not," said Gooding Jr, who won an Oscar for his role in Cameron Crowe's 1996 sports comedy Jerry Maguire.

"I went to church one Sunday and the pastor asked for me to stay after the service. And then he and his wife prayed over me because they thought there was darkness in my spirit. 'I mean it's things like that were, I'm like, 'Man, this show has really affected people.'" The 10-part series, which finished this week, followed Simpson's prosecution for the murder of his ex-wife Nicole Brown Simpson and her friend Ron Goldman. The pair were found stabbed to death outside her home and the former American football star endured one of the most highest-profile trials in US legal history. Simpson was acquitted in the case but is now serving time in prison for an armed robbery and kidnapping in Las Vegas.

'Fighting the good fight'

Gooding Jr was among a number of A-listers at the annual Motion Picture and Television Fund's "Reel Stories, Real Lives" gala evening, hosted by Adam Scott of "Parks and Recreation." He was joined on the red carpet by Danny DeVito, Michael Douglas, and Bryce Dallas Howard for the event, where actors share stories written by industry members who have benefited from the MPTF's outreach programs. In July Gooding Jr marks 25 years since starring in

John Singleton's seminal social drama "Boyz n the Hood," about black youths surviving violence and deprivation in South Central, one of the poorest parts of Los Angeles.

"We're always fighting the good fight for diversity and always trying to break down doors, so I don't think that fight will ever end," the actor told AFP. "And that movie is always almost at the top of the list for me. This was my first lead." Gooding Jr described

himself as "a young, black kid coming up in Los Angeles who had negative and positive interactions with the police." The MTPF cause is close to the heart of "Jurassic World" actress Howard, whose mother Cheryl volunteered as a young woman at the organization's residential home in Los Angeles for retired film industry workers. "It's not charity, it's a community. This is all about community building and finding a way to support one another through the difficult moments, through illnesses (and) aging, upsets, changes in the economy," she said.



Actor Cuba Gooding, Jr attends the FX's For Your Consideration Event for 'The People v OJ Simpson - American Crime Story' at The Theatre at Ace Hotel in Los Angeles, California. — AFP

'Autographs and sunglasses'

Howard shared memories of being raised on movie sets by her mother and father, film director Ron Howard, who has made more than 20 films, including "Parenthood," "Apollo 13" and

"Frost/Nixon." "I felt more comfortable with the crew. No one was pushing us to spend time with the actors because they need to have their space, and not a little redhead who can't stop talking," she said. The 35-year-old is set to begin filming the sequel to box office smash "Jurassic World," due for release in 2018, and said she was expecting the film to be "awesome, from everything I've heard so far." — AFP



File photo shows actress Charlize Theron waves as she attends the Italian State RAI TV program 'Che Tempo che Fa', in Milan, Italy. — AP

Charlize Theron gets back behind the wheel for 'Fast 8'

"Mad Max: Fury Road" star Charlize Theron is ready to rev up those engines once again in the eighth installment of the "Fast and Furious" series. Universal Pictures announced the casting Thursday on social media. Theron, who also showed off her car skills in "The Italian Job," will join stars Vin Diesel, Dwayne Johnson and Michelle Rodriguez in "Fast 8," set for release on April 14, 2017 with "Straight Outta Compton" director F Gary Gray at the helm.

The announcement teased that Theron's character will be the "crew's greatest adversary ever," although no plot has been officially announced. The seven films in the "Fast and Furious" franchise have grossed around \$1.3 billion at the domestic box office and \$3.9 billion globally since the series was launched in 2001. — AP

At 87, Robert Irwin perfects art of 'pure feeling'

What does it mean to see, to really see? Robert Irwin says it all starts with feeling. The leading postwar American artist began his career as a painter, and the first US museum survey outside his native California in four decades focuses on his gradual progression toward the evanescent, large-scale installations for which he is best known.

"You have to drop a lot of assumptions," said Irwin, dressed in his trademark baseball cap, t-shirt and jeans, on the eve of the show opening Thursday in Washington. "I started proposing the idea that the role of an artist is not in the studio, not making things, but as a kind of an esthetician." At 87, Irwin is resurgent, with another show featuring a luminous, gauzy maze at New York's Dia: Beacon museum and a huge installation at the Chinati Foundation in Marfa, Texas opening in July that has been 15 years in the making. The exhibit at Washington's Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden includes 29 works created from 1958 to 1971, a period during which Irwin progressively stripped his works of references to the natural world to focus instead on creating experiences for the public. "I don't think first, I feel first," he told AFP.

'Pure energy'

Several series of increasingly large abstract oil paintings demonstrate Irwin's step-by-step evolution from textured, expressionist strokes to straight, spaced out lines, and ultimately to fields of dots with color variations that cancel each other out and seem to disappear into the canvas. The dot paintings from the early 1960s illustrate how the artist-philosopher came to conceive his works' value in terms of the viewer's experience, rather than as mere objects. At first blush, the work appears to be nothing more than a white canvas.

But after standing before the painting for



A woman looks at Artist Robert Irwin's exhibit at the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington, DC. — AFP photos

some time, it seems to change, as if energy were pulsing from the center of the silver white space before fading again. "The dots become just pure energy," explained Irwin, who created the mesmerizing effect by producing a slight curve forward in the canvas, which was then covered painstakingly with small dots of color. Before long, Irwin was focused on extending the edge of the frame, eventually taking it apart and discarding it altogether.

'Dynamite'

Since abandoning the studio in the early 1970s in favor of large-scale installations, Irwin has insisted his work respond entirely to its physical surroundings. Of the approximately 75 site-conditioned pieces Irwin has created since 1975, some of the most memorable are his lush gardens at the Getty Center in Los Angeles and his architectural and garden design at a former Nabisco factory that houses the Dia Art Foundation's collection in Beacon, on the

banks of the Hudson River outside New York.

His keystone piece at the Hirshhorn in essence transforms the iconic circular structure into a square. "This circular thing is a rather weak idea for a museum, because it tends to dictate too much," said Irwin, who in a first for the Hirshhorn displayed nothing on its rounded walls. Across one side of an outer gallery, he placed 100 feet (30.5 meters) of scrim to give the illusion of a new, straight "wall," dramatically enhancing the remaining curved side as a result.

Daylight filters through a framed, door-like opening into the inner gallery. "The first thing you see when you walk in is that big, sweeping wall. All of a sudden, it's dynamite," Irwin said. "The whole thing, experientially, is quite powerful, but there's nothing there per se. No thing, no idea, there's no mural on the wall saying 'Stop the Vietnam War.'" Like much of Irwin's work, it's barely there yet succeeds in challenging the viewer's perception of light



Artist Robert Irwin speaks at the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden.

and space. Before launching into his full-blown installations, Irwin had played with light using discs and columns.

The painted convex acrylic or metal discs shown at the Hirshhorn, hung away from the wall, are identical in shape. But two are lit by artificial "skylights" and another by lights strategically placed on the floor and ceiling, producing a completely different result with four overlapping shadows. "Shadows are three quarters of how we see," explained Irwin, who designed the exhibit's layout in such a way that viewers come upon one disc, progress through his paintings and arrive at another-but experience them in an entirely different way.

"To give them a kick in the ass," he quipped. Most of the works shown here were made during a turbulent period in American life, from the Vietnam War to the civil rights movement and president John F. Kennedy's assassination. But Irwin is adamant that art should have nothing to do with politics, a utopian vision shared with many of his contemporaries. "Art has to do with pure feelings and the ability of human beings to articulate them," Irwin said. "I am making an argument for another way of looking at the world." — AFP

Women in craft: Making their mark, and often a living

Long a key part of crafting culture, women are now at the lead of the so-called "maker" movement around the world. Women have always been an integral part of crafting culture, and now, with help from the internet, they're at the forefront of the current "maker" movement around the world. Hobbies can become thriving sidelines or full-time livelihoods. At Etsy.com, a major online crafts marketplace that launched in Brooklyn in 2005, most of the sellers are women, says Heather Jassy, a senior vice president for the site. She says women make up 86 percent of the site's sellers in America, 94 percent in Australia and 91 percent in Canada, for example.

"We hear from our sellers that they want to make a life, not just a living," she says. "Starting a creative business gives many women the opportunity not just to follow their passion, but to retain their autonomy, and build flexibility into their lives." Greta De Parry of Chicago grew up on her dad's construction sites, poring over blueprints. "I always knew I'd follow some kind of creative path," she says. "I just didn't know what." In a first-year woodworking class at the Art Institute of Chicago, she fell in love with furni-



In this photo provided by ModernistCat, Evan Gray Gregory, a Seattle-area furniture maker, designed her "cat console" and cabinet when she moved into a small home that had little space for the unsightly gear needed for her newly adopted cat.

ture making. "It felt so natural to me, I didn't think twice about it."

She started her own line of custom pieces in 2009, and in 2014 opened an Etsy shop. Among her works are geometric stools, bar carts and bread boards made of hand-cast concrete, powder-coated steel and locally sourced hardwood. Last year, she won an award at Dwell on Design in Los Angeles for



In this photo provided by ModernistCat, Evan Gray Gregory, a Seattle-area furniture maker, designed her 'cat console' and cabinet when she moved into a small home that had little space for the unsightly gear needed for her newly adopted cat.

her Coleman steel stool.

Evan Gray Gregory of Seattle, who used to design displays at Macy's, turned her interest in woodworking into a business when she came up with a clever fix for a common problem. She'd gotten a new cat, and decided that a standard, pet-store litter box wasn't going to work.

"I couldn't find anything out there to blend



This photo provided by Amelia McDonnell-Parry, shows weavings by McDonnell-Parry, a New York-based editor and writer, who hasn't been weaving for very long but has fallen in love with the craft.

with our collection of midcentury modern pieces," she said. She designed and built a stylish litter box that drew raves from friends, and she opened Modernist Cat on Etsy in 2010. The line now includes walnut- and maple-finished crates, elevated bowls, and consoles that combine a storage shelf with a scratching pad, all designed with a midcentury modern flair. —AP

British brands eye growing Muslim consumer market



This file handout photo released by Dolce & Gabbana shows a model wearing a creation of the Abaya line, a collection of abayas and hijabs billed as capturing the "allure of the Middle East." — AFP photos

From young start-ups to business giants, British entrepreneurs are eyeing a rapidly expanding global market for Muslim consumers with a range of brands from clothes to greetings cards to online



In a recent undated handout picture released by British retailer Marks and Spencer a model poses wearing one of Marks and Spencer's full-body bathing suit or burkini suit.

gym courses. In contrast to France, where there has been an angry debate about Muslim-specific consumer products, the approach in Britain seems more business-minded. "Halal doesn't only apply to food but also to business ethics, dress etcetera," said Rauf Mirza, director of The Muslim Lifestyle Expo (MLE), which organizes trade fairs on Muslim consumer trends. The MLE this week organised a networking event bringing together 150 business leaders, experts and young entrepreneurs in central London to trade tips on the best way to profit from an expanding sector.

Famous names like the Marks & Spencer department store chain now offer Islamic fashion products in line with other world brands including Italian fashion house Dolce & Gabbana or Japan's Uniqlo. In a debate about Dolce & Gabbana's business move, French women's rights minister Laurence Rossignol compared women who wear the Muslim headscarf to "negroes who supported slavery" sparking a furious row that has put her under pressure to resign.

"Crossing the Channel, there is more pragmatism on these issues, which are seen only through an economic prism. It's seen as a business opportunity," said French businessman Ali Djedid, whose company Zeynara is based in Paris. "In France instead we immediately politicize the debate," said Djedid, a former financial analyst. "There is no doubt that there is a market, that it is growing and that we also need to adapt to modern consumer trends," he said.

'Big gap in the market'

At the MLE event, Faezah Qureshi from Yorkshire in northern England said she set up her Muslim greetings cards company Elaara after finding too many contained unsuitable images such as champagne glasses and churches. Zahra Pedersen said she launched her online fitness course "The Healthy Hijab" for women who wear the veil and are embarrassed going to the gym with men.

"There was a big gap in the market," Pedersen, who was not wearing a hijab, told AFP. Shelina Janmohamed, vice president at advertising company Ogilvy Noor, started off the London networking event with a talk on how British companies could "tap into the global Muslim lifestyle sector". — AP

Top model 'Melody Yoko' in tune with a changing Japan



Melody Yoko Reilly, one of Japan's top catwalk models, performs on the runway at the Tokyo Girls Collection in Tokyo. — AFP photos

In ultra-conservative Japan, where change often happens at a snail's pace, top catwalk model Melody Yoko Reilly believes fashion has a role to play in shifting society's attitude to race and identity. The 27-year-old, who was born in California's Redondo Beach to a Japanese mother and an American father, told AFP that mixed-race models have already altered the DNA of the fashion business there.

Reilly, who has represented dozens of brands including cosmetics maker Shiseido and casual fashion giant Uniqlo, points to the fact a half-Japanese with African American heritage, Ariana Miyamoto, won last year's 'Miss Universe Japan' title as a sign that things are changing. "You don't need to look Japanese to be Japanese anymore," Reilly said in a backstage interview as stylists fussed over her hair and make-up. "It's definitely changing and to have her as Miss Japan totally makes me happy, regardless of the haters-you're always going to have that," she added.

Miyamoto, whose mother is from Japan but whose father is black, suffered a backlash on social media after her win with many critics complaining the title should have gone to what they called a "pure" Japanese, rather than a "haafu" the Japanese for "half" or mixed race.

For Reilly, the social media trolls just showed how ridiculous the outrage over the issue was. "That just helped to prove the point that (appearance) doesn't matter," insisted the star, who often appears in Japan's glossy fashion magazines, adding: "Wake up, people: The world's changing, you better get on board!" Following in the footsteps of mixed-race beauties such as



Melody Yoko Reilly, one of Japan's top catwalk models, listens to a question during an interview in Tokyo.

Jun Hasegawa and Jessica Michibata, the bubbly brunette came to Japan in 2006 and has seen demand for models like her soar, helping a shift in the nation's attitude. "In the end it's just the Japanese mentality growing and understanding that the world is a bigger place," she explains. Japan is overwhelmingly homogenous: Multi-racial children make up around three percent of births each year, according to the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, but the rise in inter-marriage, means this figure will also jump over the next decade. Reilly, who was strutting her stuff alongside several other half-Japanese models at the recent Tokyo Girls Collection—one of the biggest events on the Japanese fashion calendar—admits that being mixed-race is a double-edged sword.

"It's a challenge because you don't really have a sense of identity," she said. "Even now I feel like I fit into Japan a little bit and a little bit into the US. "But I don't really have a

specific place I can identify with 100 percent, so it's forced me to look outside of the box and find my own sense of home." Reilly approaches her job with similar adroitness. "I'm sure that being a model looks glamorous," she said with a laugh. "But I'm a terrible morning person and you're a mannequin essentially. "People choose what you look like, they choose what you wear, they choose your make-up—you have to work very hard to make sure you know who you are."

Reilly is also hopeful of a future in Hollywood and bringing about change there too, explaining her desire to portray a more realistic view of Japan and also help boost Asian-American representation in the film industry. "It's slowly starting to change which is really exciting, so I see more opportunity than I did 10 years ago," added Reilly, who has played a snow pirate in the video game 'Lost Planet.' "I think that it's our time maybe." True to the rambunctious spirit of someone who swims with stingrays and sharks, Reilly wants to sink her teeth into action roles.

"Just because I've always been athletic and I love strong lead females," she said. "I don't think we have enough." She remembers watching Oscar-winning anime director Hayao Miyazaki's 'Princess Mononoke' when she was nine. "It didn't mean much to me then but I realize now that the main character resonated so much in me," she said. "She was such a strong female, so badass. It helped shape who I am today. "I also love Dorothy in the Wizard of Oz," Reilly smiled, briefly dropping her guard. "I definitely know I have a red shoe fetish because of that movie." — AFP

Hogwarts goes to Hollywood as theme parks mushroom



(From left) Actors Warwick Davis, Evanna Lynch, James Phelps, Oliver Phelps and Tom Felton attend the opening of the 'Wizards World of Harry Potter'.

Fifteen years after Harry Potter's first big screen adventure, Universal is enchanting a new generation of Muggles with its most spectacular conjuring trick yet—a theme park in the heart of Hollywood. The "Wizards World of Harry Potter" follows similar money-spinning ventures in Florida and Japan, but is set to be the most technologically advanced so far, incorporating state-of-the-art 3-D effects with the traditional fun of the fair.

Opening at Universal Studios beneath

the Hollywood hills yesterday, it is the latest attraction in a burgeoning film industry sideline which has become so lucrative executives are beginning to design sets with future theme parks in mind. "When you think about the property of Harry Potter—all seven books and eight movies—there's no better place than the filmmaking capital of the world to have this ultimate experience," said Thierry Coup, a senior vice-president of Universal Creative, the company's research and development divi-

sion. The last Harry Potter film was released five years ago but the character's appeal remains as strong as ever, with fans eagerly awaiting stage show "Harry Potter And The Cursed Child," which opens in London this summer. Meanwhile a spin-off movie trilogy is due to hit the big screen, starting with "Fantastic Beasts And Where To Find Them" later in the year. Together with the recently introduced "Despicable Me Minion Mayhem," the award-winning "The Simpsons" park area and "Transformers: The

Ride-3D," the Harry Potter attraction sees Universal partnering with Hollywood for a merchandising merry-go-round to rival Disney's.

Setting records

Next up for Universal is "The Walking Dead," a permanent attraction harnessing the phenomenal success of the AMC zombie drama, while Disney itself has been picking up the pace since its 2014 Magic Kingdom expansion in Florida.



An interior view of Magic Wand hop in Hogwarts is seen during the 'Wizards World of Harry Potter Opening' press preview at Universal Studios Hollywood, in Studio City, California. — AFP photos



An exterior view of Hogwarts is seen during the 'Wizards World of Harry Potter Opening'.



Actress Evanna Lynch attends the opening of the 'Wizards World of Harry Potter'.



Actor James Phelps attends the opening of the 'Wizards World of Harry Potter'.



Actor Oliver Phelps attends the opening of the 'Wizards World of Harry Potter'.



Actor Tom Felton attends the opening of the 'Wizards World of Harry Potter'.

Before 2020, the company has plans for Avatar and Star Wars lands as well as Toy Story and Frozen expansions at its theme parks on both coasts. Meanwhile, Motiongate Dubai, set to open in October, recently announced a starting slate of 27 attractions inspired by films from DreamWorks, Sony and Lionsgate, including "The Hunger Games", "How To Train Your Dragon," and "The Smurfs." The new Harry Potter attraction marks Universal's fourth foray into the boy-wizard's universe, with two Orlando launches and an opening in Osaka, Japan, seeing the company increase visitors by up to 30 percent. "There's a huge effort to really address every facet of the creative process," supervising art director Alan Gilmore told AFP at a recent visit to "Wizards World."

"The film is only one part of that, but you want to try and create a film that can be translated into all of this." Harry Potter's enduring appeal was evidenced by Universal's announcement that yesterday's opening had sold out days ahead, marking the first time ever that the park has had to halt online ticketing transac-

tions. Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti said the growth of Universal Studios-three quarters of the park has been transformed over the last five years-would create new jobs, stimulate hospitality revenues and strengthen the economy.

"In Los Angeles, tourism is surging. We've set records each of the last five years and we're just getting started," he added. The attraction, which boasts the forbidding Hogwarts castle as its iconic focal point, transports visitors into the visual landscape of J.K. Rowling's books and the Warner Bros films that followed.

'A more magical experience'

The attention to detail is impressive, from the fading patinas on the slate-gray stone blocks that make up the aged rustic Hog's Head tavern to the painstakingly worn edges of the stained furniture and the grimy floors. The quaint fictional village of Hogsmeade bustles with the chatter of merchants on the cobblestone streets and a pub packed with thirsty patrons under a snow-capped roof.

If all that sounds like the run-of-the-mill



Actor Warwick Davis attends the opening of the 'Wizards World of Harry Potter'.

theme park, the signature "Harry Potter and the Forbidden Journey" ride combining state of the art 360-degree 3-D special effects, live-action thrills and groundbreaking robotics, is anything but. Gilmore, an architect by trade, says "Wizards World" boasts many original props

from the films, including the luggage racks from the Hogwarts Express train, Hagrid's motorbike and a costume from the Yule ball. "Here, we don't have actors, we have real people. So it was very important that we at least realized the set design perfectly so that when you step into this world you feel you're in the film," he told AFP. Among a international pack of reporters and photographers seeking their inner wizard at a preview on Wednesday were a number of stars from the films, including Tom Felton, who played Draco Malfoy, and Warwick Davis (Professor Flitwick).

"Even though I've experienced much like this, having worked on the films, for me coming to 'Wizards World' is a more magical experience," said Davis, whose filmography includes several "Star Wars" episodes, "Labyrinth" and "Willow." "These environments are more immersive because you can walk into somewhere like the Three Broomsticks from Hogsmeade and it exists in reality, whereas when you make the movies these locations and sets are quite separate." — AFP



An exterior view of Hogwarts is seen during the 'Wizards World of Harry Potter Opening' press preview.



Hats at the Borsalino hat company's factory in Alessandria.
—AFP photos

Italy's **hatmaker** to the stars looks to roots for revival

From Humphrey Bogart's fedora in "Casablanca" to Harrison Ford's lucky headgear in the Indiana Jones series, Italy's Borsalino has been credited with producing some of the coolest hats in history. Michael Jackson loved them, trend-setting music star Pharrell Williams is a contemporary fan and David Bowie opted for one of the Italian company's black fedoras for what was to prove his final photo shoot. But even the endorsement of film and music royalty could not protect the historic milliner from the consequences of reckless man-

agement. At this time last year, with debts mounting and its former boss Marco Marengo on the run from fraud and tax evasion charges, there were fears Borsalino could go out of business altogether.

New investors ensured that did not happen and, a year on, they are banking on a revival in the company's fortunes based on the values of craftsmanship that made the brand so successful in the first place. A visit to the 159-year-old company's factory in Alessandria in northern Italy is like taking a trip back in time. Two of the

original machines installed by the Borsalino family in 1857 are still in use in the process of transforming Belgian rabbit fur into the smooth felt used for the fedoras immortalized by the likes of Jean-Paul Belmondo and Alain Delon in "Borsalino".

The 1970 gangster film's title was a nod to the company's hats' popularity with real-life mobsters like Al Capone. The water and steam-based process of turning the rabbit fur into felt and then shaping the hats to their final form is long and labor-intensive. But it is worth it,

according to Edouard Burrus, vice-president of Haeres Equita, the investment fund that brought Borsalino back from the brink. "We really believe in the world of artisanal luxury," he told AFP. "We are talking about real hand-made manufacturing and attention to detail."

Shaped by hand

Burrus and his business partner Philippe Camperio began the process of acquiring Borsalino in May last year with the backing of other Italian and international investors.



An employee works at the Borsalino hat company's factory in Alessandria.



An employee works at the Borsalino hat company's factory.



An employee works at the Borsalino hat company's factory.



An employee works at the Borsalino hat company's factory.

A judge approved their proposals for repaying Borsalino's creditors last month, effectively issuing the green light for a new chapter in the history of a company that produced two million hats a year in the 1920s. "We are on the final 100m," added Burrus. "We are working flat out to turn around a brand that has gone through some difficult years."

"The goal is to return it to its former glory and ensure a stable future for what is one of last independent luxury producers." With suppliers reassured about the company's finances and once again delivering the high-quality raw materials, there is a palpable sense of relief among the Alessandria factory's 114 employees. "I have been here for 30 years," said Giovanni Zamirri, whose job involves the final shaping of the hats.

"It is not a mechanical job like on an assembly line," he said. "Every hat needs attention, needs to be handled individually and that is a lovely thing for me."

In total there are 52 steps to the production of a hand-made fedora and the whole process takes seven weeks. The company is still operating below its potential but things are looking brighter with the new owners anticipating sales of 17 million euros this year, up from 15.5 million in 2015. "We currently make around 150,000 hats a year but we have demand for 220,000," said Burrus. An expansion of the workforce is in the pipeline and there are plans to target the youth, women's and US markets while holding on to the company's traditional customers in Europe, Japan and in Orthodox Jewish communities, which account for around ten percent of group sales.

"The product is known and sells all over the world but it is perhaps seen as a little 'old school'," Burrus said. "We want to give it a more youthful edge." All of which sounds like good news to Daniela Cona, one of the Borsalino



employees who feared for her job. "Happily I am still here," she told AFP. "It is a short-term contract for now but we hope the new investors will keep their promises and grow the business."

"When I started here, it was like walking on to the set of a film from the 1950s or 60s."

The hats are created one step at a time. People sometimes ask why they cost so much

and say it is just a hat like any other. But that is not true. "There are about 80 of us in the production process and every hat goes through 80 pairs of hands." — AFP



Edouard Burrus, vice president of the investment fund Haeres Equita which launched a procedure to acquire Italian hat company Borsalino, poses at the Borsalino factory in Alessandria.



LOCKY - THE ENCRYPTOR TAKING THE WORLD BY STORM

KUWAIT: Kaspersky Lab warns about the new ransomware Trojan it discovered called Locky, that is spreading pervasively across the world, whereby Kaspersky Security Network has already reported Locky attacks in 114 countries - and to date Kuwait has experienced the 3th highest number of attacks at 976.

"Ransomware is posing to be one of the fastest growing classes of malicious software. Our research shows that cryptotrojans carry out attacks in practically all regions of the world. Among other Trojans Locky caught our attention because it was very active and spread very pervasively

and quickly. We also noticed that the attacks weren't partial to any particular region, where we have received notifications about attacks in over 114 countries across all continents - no other ransomware Trojan to date has targeted so many countries at once", commented Fedor Sinitsyn, Senior Malware Analyst at Kaspersky Lab.

Analysis of the samples has shown that this Trojan is a new ransomware, written from scratch, though being a typical ransomware Trojan exhibiting no major differences from other ransomware families in its internal arrangement or its principles

of operation.

Locky, encrypts the user's file, and then displays a message with the cybercriminals' ransom demands. The Trojan is spread by mass mailings with malicious loaders attached to the spam messages in the form of DOC file. When the attachment is opened a macros downloads the Locky Trojan from a remote server and executes it, once the user is prompted to clicks on the link, Locky then reads the data and continues with the infection process.

As cybercriminals continue to look for new ways to make their victims pay, users can follow these tips to protect themselves

against the ransomware like Trojan Locky:

- Install and regularly update anti-virus software products;
- Regularly run updates for your antivirus databases, operating system and other software installed on your computer;
- Do not open attachments in emails from senders you don't know;
- Back up your files on a regular basis and store the backup copies on removable storage media or in cloud storages - not on your computer;
- Create a separate network folder for each user when managing access to shared network folders.



PRAGUE: Jan Prochazka, the president of Prague based He3Da company, presents his battery in Prague, Czech Republic. — AP

IN RACE TO IMPROVE BATTERIES, NANOTECHNOLOGY PROVIDES HOPE

PRAGUE: In the global race to create more efficient and long-lasting batteries, some are betting on nanotechnology - the use of minuscule parts - as the most likely to yield a breakthrough.

Improving batteries' performance is key to the development and success of many much-hyped technologies, from

solar and wind energy to electric cars. They need to hold more energy, last longer, be cheaper and safer.

Research into how to achieve that has followed several avenues, from using different materials than the existing lithium-ion batteries to changing the internal structure of batteries using

nanoparticles - parts so small they are invisible to the naked eye.

Nanotechnology can increase the size and surface of batteries electrodes, the rods inside the batteries that absorb the energy. It does so by effectively making the electrodes sponge-like, so that they can absorb more energy during charging and ultimately increasing the energy storage capacity.

Prague-based company HE3DA has developed such a technology by using the nanotechnology to move from the current flat electrodes to make them three dimensional. With prototypes undergoing successful testing, it hopes to have the battery on the market at the end of this year.

"In the future, this will be the mainstream," said Jan Prochazka, the president. He said it would be targeted at high-intensity industries like automobiles and the energy sector, rather than mobile phones, because that is where it can make the biggest difference through its use of his bigger electrodes.

In combination with an internal cooling system the batteries, which are being tested now, should be safe from overheating or exploding, a major concern with existing technologies. Researchers at the University of Michigan and MIT have likewise focused on nanotechnology to improve the existing lithium-ion technology.

SELF-DRIVE TRUCKS 'FUTURE OF EUROPE'S BUSY HIGHWAYS'

THE HAGUE: Six convoys of semi-automated "smart" trucks arrived in Rotterdam's harbour after an experiment its organisers say will revolutionise future road transport on Europe's busy highways.

More than a dozen self-driving trucks made by six of Europe's largest manufacturers arrived in the port in so-called "truck platoons" around midday, said Eric Jonnaert, president of the umbrella body representing DAF, Daimler, IVECO, MAN, Scania and Volvo.

"Truck platooning", similar to concepts with self-driving cars, involves two or three trucks that autonomously drive in convoy and are connected via wireless with the leading truck determining route and speed.

Wednesday's arrival concludes the first-ever cross-border experiment of its kind with self-driving trucks which left home factories from as far away as Sweden and southern Germany, Jonnaert told AFP.

"Truck platooning will ensure cleaner and more efficient transport. Self-driving vehicles also contribute to road safety because most accidents are caused by human failure," said Dutch Minister Melanie Schultz van Haegen.

For instance, because the trucks are connected via wireless they brake at the same time to always maintain the same distances between them, added the Dutch infrastructure and environment ministry.

"The advantage of truck platooning is that you have trucks driving at a consistent speed," said Jonnaert, saying the concept will greatly aid traffic flow on Europe's heavily congested roads.

The trucks used in Wednesday's test however are still semi-automated and despite computers allowing them to drive by themselves, human drivers were still required on board. The proponents of truck platooning say several hurdles still need to be ironed out and road users will not see self-driving trucks just yet.

Difficulties include standardising regulations across the continent to enable self-driving convoys and designing systems that will enable communication between different trucks from different manufacturers, Jonnaert said.

"This is all part of a journey, which we are on as the automotive industry, towards highly-automated vehicles," said Jonnaert.

The Netherlands, which currently holds the revolving EU presidency, will hold an informal summit mid-April to discuss changes to regulations needed to "make self-driving transport a reality," Dutch officials said.

Meanwhile, a Chinese auto firm said Friday it is buying two foreign companies and their self-driving technologies for more than \$1 billion, as the world's second-largest economy seeks to boost its foothold in the autonomous car market.

Ningbo Joyson Electronic Corp. said it has signed an agreement to buy US-based Key Safety Systems (KSS) Holdings Inc. for \$920 million, according to a statement to the Shanghai stock exchange, where it is listed.

Ningbo, which provides driver control systems to auto giants such as General Motors and Mercedes-Benz, said it also plans to buy the car navigation business of Germany's TechniSat Digital GmbH for \$204.6 million, the statement added.

The announcement comes as China fast-tracks plans to put more self-driving cars on its roads and improve car safety technology in the country, the world's largest auto market.

KSS supplies air bags for normal cars and is developing autonomous car-safety systems, including collision avoidance technology. TechniSat provides navigation systems and is developing technology for connected cars, which can help vehicles maintain safe distances and avoid accidents. — AFP



PRAGUE: In this picture taken on March 9, 2016, Jan Prochazka the president of Prague based He3Da company, tests his battery in Prague, Czech Republic. In the global race to create more efficient and long-lasting batteries, some are betting on nanotechnology - the use of minuscule parts - as the most likely to yield a breakthrough. — AP

FACEBOOK BANS 'OVERLY PROMOTIONAL' SPONSORED CONTENT

LOS ANGELES: Facebook has adopted a new policy for branded content that forbids aggressive marketing tactics and will force publishers to tag their marketing clients in sponsored posts — and the social company will begin pulling down material that doesn't comply with the rules.

Under the new program, Facebook users will see a "with" tag when a publisher shares banded content (see example above, showing Lady Gaga's performance at the 2016 Grammy Awards sponsored by Intel). Facebook defines branded content as any post

with text, photos or video from a media company, celebrity or influencer that specifically mentions or features a third-party product, brand or sponsor.

Some branded content is now verboten on Facebook. The company said that based on user feedback, its updated branded-content guidelines prohibit "overly promotional" features, such as persistent watermarks and pre-roll ads. In addition, cover photos and profile pictures must not feature third-party products, brands or sponsors. Branded content integrations that are

allowed to be posted on Facebook include content like product placement, end cards and marketers' logos.

"This update is something that media companies, public figures, influencers and marketers have been asking for, as branded content is a growing and evolving part of the media landscape," Facebook said in announcing the new policy.

With the new policy, Facebook is introducing a new tool for publishers and influencers to tag marketing partners in the Page composer. In Facebook's Ads Manager and Power

Editor, there will be a "Sponsor" field. When marketers are tagged, they will be notified, have access to post-level data and have the option of sharing the post.

"We think transparency is a good thing. This is a reflection of the growth of native content," David Grant, president of digital publisher PopSugar Studios, said in a statement.

Facebook touted the change as a boon for marketers, allowing them to more easily use their branded content creative for ads and to actively engage in sponsorships. — Reuters

US ADVISED TO EXAMINE 'HACK BACK' OPTIONS AGAINST CHINA

WASHINGTON: The United States remains ill-prepared to combat state-backed cyber intrusions from China and lawmakers should look at whether US-based companies be allowed to 'hack back' to recover or wipe stolen data, a congressional advisory body said.

That's the primary recommendation of this year's report by the US-China Economic and Security Review Commission that examines the national security implications of the relationship between the two world powers.

The report says China's increasing use of cyber espionage has already cost US companies tens of billions of dollars in lost sales and expenses in repairing the damage from hacking. It says in many cases, stolen trade secrets have been turned over to Chinese government-owned companies.

The commission, typically very critical of Beijing, is appointed by both parties in Congress but makes no bones about the "inadequate" US response, saying China has also infiltrated a wide swath of US government computer networks.

"The United States is ill-prepared to defend itself from cyber espionage when its adversary is determined, centrally coordinated, and technically sophisticated, as is the CCP and China's government," the report says, referring to the ruling Chinese Communist Party.

Cybersecurity has become an increasingly sore point in US-China relations. It remains to be seen whether a September agreement between President Barack Obama and China's President Xi Jinping that neither government will support commercial cyber theft will lead to an easing in the tensions.

Among the most serious breaches in the past year in which China is suspected was against the Office of Personnel Management, revealed in April. Hackers gained access to the personal information of more than 22 million US federal employees, retirees, contractors and others.

"The Chinese government appears to believe that it has more to gain than to lose from its cyber espionage and attack campaign. So far, it has acquired valuable technology, trade secrets, and intelligence. The costs imposed have been minimal compared to the perceived benefit. The campaign is likely to continue and may well escalate," says the report.

China describes itself as a victim of hacking and says that is combating cybercrimes. It denied involvement in the OPM hack.

The commission's report says US law does not allow retaliatory cyberattacks by private citizens and corporations, nor does it appear to allow 'hack backs' to recover, erase or alter stolen data in offending computer networks. It says international law has not kept up with developments in cyber warfare, and recommends Congress assess the coverage of US law in this regard. — AP



BEIJING: In this April 29, 2015, file photo, a security guard points while walking past a display booth for Google at the Global Mobile Internet Conference in Beijing. — AP

US CITES CHINESE INTERNET FILTERS AS TRADE BARRIER

BEIJING: The American government has cited Chinese Internet controls as a trade barrier in a report that comes as Beijing tries to block its public from seeing news online about the finances of leaders' families.

Chinese filters, which block access to websites including the Google search engine and social media such as Twitter, are a "significant burden" on businesses, the US Trade Representative said in an annual report on trade conditions.

It gave no indication Washington plans to take action but highlights the economic cost of pervasive Chinese censorship that also draws criticism from human rights and pro-democracy activists. On such issues, Washington is at odds with Beijing, which sees strict control over information as essential to protecting the Communist Party's monopoly on power. China restricts access to online materials by requiring traffic to pass through state-controlled gateways linked to the global Internet. Controls have been tightened since President Xi Jinping became party leader in 2012.

The filters, known informally as the Great Firewall of China, are in line with Beijing's advocacy of "Internet sovereignty," or allowing governments to impose control on the freewheeling Internet within their bor-

ders. Xi called in a speech in December for the creation of a global "governance system" for cyberspace.

This week, Chinese Web users have been blocked from seeing news reports about documents from a law firm in Panama that say relatives of political figures including Xi own offshore companies. State media have carried brief reports on the revelations but with no mention of Chinese figures.

Chinese regulators block access not just to websites operated by human rights or pro-democracy activists but also to dozens of news, entertainment and social media services that operate freely in other countries. "Outright blocking of websites appears to have worsened over the past year, with eight of the top 25 most-trafficked global sites now blocked in China," the USTR says in its National Trade Estimate.

It said much of the blocking appears to be arbitrary, including a home improvement website in the United States.

Asked about the complaint, a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman said Beijing welcomes foreign investment and protects the rights of foreign companies.

FILTERS HINDER OPERATIONS

"Policies aimed at attracting foreign

investment will not change, nor will policies to protect their lawful rights and interests and to create a good business environment," said Hong Lei on Friday at a regular briefing. "We hope all countries can respect another nation's choice of the route for Internet development, Internet management and Internet public policy, as well as its right to participate in regulating the international Internet."

Foreign and local companies in China that rely on the Internet for sales, accounting and other internal functions complain the filters hinder their operations. Almost 80 percent of companies that responded to a survey released in January by the American Chamber of Commerce in China said they were "negatively impacted" by the controls.

More than half said they were blocked from using online tools or accessing information. Only 5 percent said they were not hindered in any way. Chinese also complain the filters hamper their ability to interact with customers or business partners abroad or apply to foreign universities. Some get around the filters by using virtual private networks, or VPNs, that route traffic through unblocked websites, but Beijing has begun to block them as well. — AP

SATURDAY, APRIL 9, 2016

OSN FIRST

MORE

00:00 Survivor: Kaoh Rong
01:00 Sleepy Hollow
02:00 Deadline Gallipoli
03:00 Grey's Anatomy
04:00 Survivor: Kaoh Rong
05:00 Sleepy Hollow
06:00 Good Morning America
08:00 The Fosters
09:00 24
10:00 Prison Break
11:00 American Idol
13:00 24
14:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
15:00 American Idol
17:00 Live Good Morning America
18:00 Survivor: Kaoh Rong
19:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
20:00 Prison Break
21:00 Grey's Anatomy
22:00 Unforgettable

OSN FIRST

COMEDY+2

00:00 Two And A Half Men
00:30 The Big C
01:00 Man Seeking Woman
01:30 Late Night With Seth Meyers
02:30 Hot In Cleveland
03:00 The Tonight Show With Larry Wilmore
03:30 Two And A Half Men
04:00 The Big C

04:30 Man Seeking Woman
05:00 Fresh Off The Boat
05:30 Black-Ish
06:00 Two And A Half Men
06:30 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
07:30 My Name Is Earl
08:00 The Bernie Mac Show
08:30 Community
09:00 Late Night With Seth Meyers
10:00 Two And A Half Men
10:30 My Name Is Earl
11:00 Fresh Off The Boat
11:30 2 Broke Girls
12:00 The Simpsons
12:30 Community
13:00 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
14:00 The Bernie Mac Show
14:30 Two And A Half Men
15:00 My Name Is Earl
15:30 Community
16:00 Black-Ish
16:30 2 Broke Girls
17:00 The Simpsons
17:30 Hot In Cleveland
18:00 The Tonight Show With Larry Wilmore
18:30 The Bernie Mac Show
19:00 Late Night With Seth Meyers
20:00 The Muppets
20:30 Dr. Ken
21:00 Last Man Standing
21:30 Life In Pieces
22:00 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
23:00 Hot In Cleveland
23:30 The Tonight Show With Larry Wilmore

OSN FIRST HD

COMEDY

00:30 Hot In Cleveland
01:00 The Tonight Show With Larry Wilmore
01:30 Two And A Half Men
02:00 The Big C
02:30 Man Seeking Woman
03:00 Fresh Off The Boat
03:30 Black-Ish
04:00 Two And A Half Men
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19:30 Life In Pieces
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21:00 Hot In Cleveland
21:30 The Tonight Show With Larry Wilmore
22:00 Saturday Night Live
23:00 Man Seeking Woman
23:30 Late Night With Seth Meyers

OSN FIRST HD

00:00 Deadline Gallipoli
01:00 Grey's Anatomy
02:00 Survivor: Kaoh Rong
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15:00 Live Good Morning America
16:00 Survivor: Kaoh Rong
17:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
18:00 Prison Break
19:00 Grey's Anatomy
20:00 Unforgettable
21:00 Criminal Minds
22:00 The Blacklist
23:00 Mad Dogs

OSN MOVIES

ACTION+2

00:15 Bad Ass 3: Bad Asses On The Bayou
01:45 Poker Night
03:45 Transit
05:30 The Outsider
07:15 Battleship
09:30 Snow White And The Huntsman
11:45 12 Rounds
13:45 Transit
15:30 Battleship
17:45 The Marine 4: The Moving Target
19:30 Snow White And The Huntsman
21:45 The A-Team

OSN MOVIES HD

ACTION

01:45 Transit
03:30 The Outsider
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07:30 Snow White And The Huntsman
09:45 12 Rounds
11:45 Transit
13:30 Battleship
15:45 The Marine 4: The Moving Target
17:30 Snow White And The Huntsman
19:45 The A-Team
22:00 I, Robot

OSN MOVIES HD

COMEDY

00:15 Revenge For Jolly!
02:00 Cas & Dylan
04:00 UHF
06:00 Charlie And The Chocolate Factory
08:00 Pitch Perfect
10:00 Beethoven's Treasure Tail
12:00 Rush Hour
14:00 Bad Parents
16:00 Pitch Perfect
18:00 Orange County
20:00 Malavita
22:00 Role Models

OSN MOVIES

DRAMA+2

01:00 The Guest
03:00 I'll Follow You Down
05:00 Frank
07:00 Escape
08:45 Jack Strong
11:00 United Passions
13:00 Escape
15:00 Grand Central

17:00 The Fold
19:00 United Passions
21:00 Blue Ruin
23:00 As Cool As I Am

OSN MOVIES

DRAMA

01:00 I'll Follow You Down
03:00 Frank
05:00 Escape
06:45 Jack Strong
09:00 United Passions
11:00 Escape
13:00 Grand Central
15:00 The Fold
17:00 United Passions
19:00 Blue Ruin
21:00 As Cool As I Am
23:00 Viktor

OSN MOVIES HD

FAMILY

01:00 The Pacifier
03:00 Dinosaur
05:00 How To Train Your Dragon 2
07:00 The Princess Diaries
09:00 Toy Story 3
11:00 My Girl 2
13:00 Brave
15:00 Alice In Wonderland
17:00 Big Miracle
19:00 Mighty Joe Young
21:00 Treasure Planet
23:00 Alice In Wonderland

OSN MOVIES HD

FESTIVAL

01:15 Five Easy Pieces
03:00 The Sixth Sense
04:45 Upside Down
06:45 Walk The Line
09:00 Diana
11:00 Upside Down
13:00 Late Bloomers
14:30 Anna Karenina
17:00 Diana
19:00 The Brass Teapot
21:00 Titli
23:30 Rush

OSN MOVIES HD

01:15 Annabelle
03:00 Barely Lethal
05:00 Seventh Son
07:00 50 To 1
09:00 Barely Lethal
10:45 The Rewrite
12:45 The Expendables 3
15:00 Into The Storm
16:45 The Cobbler
18:45 The Longest Ride
21:00 Dark Places
23:00 Stretch

OSN MOVIES HD +2

01:00 The Expendables 3
03:15 Annabelle
05:00 Barely Lethal
07:00 Seventh Son
09:00 50 To 1
11:00 Barely Lethal
12:45 The Rewrite
14:45 The Expendables 3
17:00 Into The Storm
18:45 The Cobbler
20:45 The Longest Ride
23:00 Dark Places

OSN MOVIES HD

KIDS

01:15 Pim And Pom: The Big Adventure
02:45 K-9 Adventures: Legend Of The Lost Gold
04:30 True Story Of Puss'n Boots
06:00 Baby Geniuses And The Mystery Of The Crown Jewels
07:45 The Adventures Of Don Quixote
09:30 Justin And The Knights Of The Valour
11:15 Delhi Safari
13:00 K-9 Adventures: Legend Of

The Lost Gold
14:45 Mamma Moo And Crow
16:30 Justice League vs. Bizarro League
18:00 Justin And The Knights Of The Valour
20:00 The Heart Of The Oak
22:00 Mamma Moo And Crow
23:45 Justice League vs. Bizarro League

OSN MOVIES

PREMIERE +2

00:15 The Taking Of Deborah Logan
02:00 The Inbetweeners Movie 2
04:00 The Signal
05:45 Last Knights
07:45 The Fault In Our Stars
10:00 The Imitation Game
12:00 Paranoia
14:00 Last Knights
16:00 The Love Punch
17:45 The Imitation Game
19:45 Godzilla
22:00 Slow West

OSN MOVIES HD

PREMIERE

00:00 The Inbetweeners Movie 2
02:00 The Signal
03:45 Last Knights
05:45 The Fault In Our Stars
08:00 The Imitation Game
10:00 Paranoia
12:00 Last Knights
14:00 The Love Punch
15:45 The Imitation Game
17:45 Godzilla
20:00 Slow West
22:00 Inappropriate Comedy

OSN ON DEMAND HD

01:20 Grey's Anatomy
02:20 Man Sayarbah Al Malyoun
03:20 2 Broke Girls
04:05 The Rewrite
06:05 Bark Ranger
07:50 Fresh Off The Boat
08:30 Black-Ish
09:10 American Idol
11:20 Grey's Anatomy
12:30 The Rewrite
15:00 Cooties
16:45 Man Sayarbah Al Malyoun
17:50 2 Broke Girls
18:35 American Idol
20:50 Saturday Night Live Bil Arabi
22:20 Ta'er Al Hob
23:25 Madrasat Al Hob

OSN SPORTS 1 HD

02:30 Chronicles Of A Champion
03:00 Golfer
03:00 Super League
05:00 NHL
07:00 Trans World Sport
07:55 Live NRL Premiership
10:00 Super Rugby Highlights
10:30 Live Super Rugby
12:40 Live Super Rugby
15:00 Super Rugby Highlights
15:30 Super Rugby Highlights
16:00 Super Rugby Highlights
16:30 Super Rugby Highlights
17:00 Super Rugby Highlights
17:30 Super Rugby Highlights
18:00 Live Super Rugby
20:10 Live Super Rugby
22:00 Live The Masters

OSN SPORTS 2 HD

00:00 NHL
02:00 Super Rugby Highlights
02:30 Super Rugby Highlights
03:20 HSBC World Rugby Sevens Highlights
03:50 Live HSBC World Rugby Sevens Series
09:30 HSBC World Rugby Sevens Highlights
10:10 Live HSBC World Rugby Sevens Series
15:00 WWE Smackdown
17:00 NRL Premiership
19:00 Formula-E Championship
Sound Of The Future
19:30 Gillette World Sport
20:00 Live Fight Night



THE MARINE 4: THE MOVING TARGET ON OSN MOVIES ACTION HD

SATURDAY, APRIL 9, 2016

OSN SPORTS 3 HD

02:30 HSBC World Rugby Sevens Series
05:30 Golfing World
06:30 Inside Sailing
07:00 Live AFL Premiership
09:55 NRL Full Time
10:25 Live NRL Premiership
12:25 Live NRL Premiership
14:30 Inside Sailing
15:00 The World Sailing Show
15:30 Trans World Sport
16:15 European Tour Weekly
16:45 Inside The PGA Tour
17:15 Live The Masters - Featured Group

OSN SPORTS 4 HD

01:00 WWE Bottom Line
02:00 WWE Superstars
03:00 WWE Main Event
04:00 The Masters
09:00 World Rugby
09:30 Formula-E Championship Sound Of The Future
10:00 WWE Bottom Line
11:00 WWE Main Event
12:00 World Rugby
12:30 Live AFL Premiership
15:45 Formula-E Championship Sound Of The Future
16:15 This Is PGA Tour Latinoamerica
16:45 WWE NXT
17:45 WWE Superstars
18:45 Live The Masters - Amen Corner

amc

01:05 Hi, Mom!
02:35 Divorcing Jack
04:25 The Beast Of Hollow Mountain
05:45 Breakin'
07:10 Death Rides A Horse
09:05 Impromptu
10:50 Teen Witch
12:20 It Runs In The Family
13:45 Still Life: A Three Pines Mystery
15:15 The Magnificent Seven
17:20 The Crocodile Hunter: Collision Course
18:50 The Man In The Iron Mask
21:00 Night Manager
22:00 Night Manager
23:00 Breaking Bad

ANIMAL PLANET HD

00:45 Human Prey
01:40 River Monsters
02:35 Tanked
03:25 Shamwari: A Wild Life
03:50 Shamwari: A Wild Life
04:15 Gator Boys
05:02 Treehouse Masters
05:49 River Monsters
06:36 Swamp Brothers
07:00 Swamp Brothers
07:25 Treehouse Masters
08:15 Treehouse Masters
09:10 Treehouse Masters
10:05 Treehouse Masters
11:00 Dog TV
11:55 In Search Of The King Cobra
12:50 Echo And The Elephants Of Amboseli
13:20 Echo And The Elephants Of Amboseli
13:45 Running Wild
14:40 Lion Battlefield
15:35 Animal Cops South Africa
16:30 Shamwari: A Wild Life
17:00 Shamwari: A Wild Life
17:25 Echo And The Elephants Of Amboseli
17:55 Echo And The Elephants Of Amboseli
18:20 Rugged Justice
19:15 Gator Boys
20:10 Australia Doesn't Just Want To Kill You
21:05 Ten Deadliest Snakes With Nigel Marven
22:00 Rugged Justice
22:55 In Search Of The King Cobra
23:50 Gator Boys

BBC FIRST

00:15 Doctors
00:45 Father Brown
01:30 Happy Valley
02:25 Happy Valley
03:20 Stella
04:05 Doctors
08:30 Eastenders
10:30 Death In Paradise
11:25 Death In Paradise
12:20 Death In Paradise
13:20 Casualty
14:10 Doctors
14:40 Doctors
15:15 The Musketeers
16:10 The Musketeers
17:05 The Musketeers
18:00 Doctors
18:30 Eastenders
19:00 Moone Boy
19:25 Father Brown
20:10 Dickensian
21:00 Dickensian
21:50 Happy Valley
22:45 Ripper Street
23:40 Doctors

ci

00:00 The Haunting Of...
01:00 The Last Goodbye
01:30 The Last Goodbye
02:00 The First 48

03:00 The Killer Speaks
04:00 Nightmare In Suburbia
05:00 The Last Goodbye
05:30 The Last Goodbye
06:00 Martina Cole's Lady Killers
07:00 The FBI Files
08:00 The FBI Files
09:00 Homicide Hunter
10:00 Fred Dinenage: Murder Casebook
11:00 The First 48
12:00 The First 48
13:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
14:00 I Love You But I Lied
15:00 Frenemies
15:30 Frenemies
16:00 Frenemies
16:30 Frenemies
17:00 Fred Dinenage: Murder Casebook
18:00 I Love You But I Lied
19:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
20:00 Nightmare In Suburbia
21:00 Nightmare In Suburbia
22:00 Killer Kids
23:00 Homicide Hunter

D HD

00:20 Kidnap And Rescue
01:10 Misfit Garage
02:00 Overhaulin'
02:50 Extreme Car Hoarders
03:40 How Do They Do It?
04:05 How Do They Do It?
04:30 How Do They Do It?
05:00 How Do They Do It?
05:30 How Do They Do It?
06:00 Fast N' Loud
06:50 Fast N' Loud

07:40 Fast N' Loud
08:30 Fast N' Loud
09:20 Fast N' Loud
10:10 Gold Rush
11:00 Diamond River Hunters
11:50 Alaska: Battle On The Bay
12:40 The Liquidator
13:05 Storage Wars Canada
13:30 Storage Wars Canada
13:55 Storage Wars Canada
14:20 Storage Wars Canada
14:45 Garage Gold
15:10 Garage Gold
15:35 Garage Gold
16:00 Garage Gold
16:25 Garage Gold
16:50 Edge Of Alaska
17:40 Ice Lake Rebels
18:30 You Have Been Warned
19:20 Troy
20:10 The Carbonaro Effect
20:35 The Carbonaro Effect
21:00 Edge Of Alaska
21:50 Ice Lake Rebels
22:40 Railroad Alaska
23:30 Wheels That Fail
23:55 Wheels That Fail

SC DISCOVERY science

00:20 Through The Wormhole With Morgan Freeman
01:08 Da Vinci's Machines
01:55 Space Pioneer
02:42 Eco-Tech
03:29 Mythbusters
04:16 Da Vinci's Machines
05:03 Space Pioneer
05:50 Building The Biggest
06:37 How Do They Do It?

07:00 How Do They Do It?
07:23 How It's Made: Dream Cars
11:30 How Do They Do It?
11:53 Food Factory
14:57 Mythbusters
18:05 Space Pioneer
21:15 Secret Space Escapes
22:00 Eco-Tech

Disney Channel

00:00 Violetta
00:45 The Hive
00:50 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
01:15 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
01:40 Hank Zipzer
02:05 Binny And The Ghost
02:30 Violetta
03:15 The Hive
03:20 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
03:45 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
04:10 Hank Zipzer
04:35 Binny And The Ghost
05:00 Violetta
05:45 The Hive
05:50 Mouk
06:00 Lolirock
06:25 Sofia The First
06:50 Gravity Falls
07:15 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
07:40 Jessie
08:05 Shake It Up
08:30 Shake It Up
08:55 Hannah Montana
09:20 Hannah Montana
09:45 H2O: Just Add Water
10:10 I Love Violetta
10:25 Full Out
12:00 Violetta Recipes
12:15 Whisker Haven Tales With The Palace Pets
12:20 Jessie
12:45 Jessie
13:10 Austin & Ally
13:35 Best Friends Whenever
14:00 Gravity Falls
14:25 Descendants Wicked World
14:30 Alex And Co
14:55 Dog With A Blog
15:20 Dog With A Blog
15:45 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
16:10 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
16:35 Gravity Falls
17:00 Liv And Maddie
17:25 Mako Mermaids
17:50 I Love Violetta
18:00 Jump In
19:30 Gravity Falls
19:55 Girl Meets World
20:20 Girl Meets World
20:45 Good Luck Charlie
21:10 Good Luck Charlie
21:35 H2O
22:00 Binny And The Ghost
22:25 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
22:50 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
23:10 Hank Zipzer
23:35 Binny And The Ghost

H HD HISTORY

00:20 Grave Trade
01:10 Lost In Transmission
02:00 Duck Dynasty
02:50 Aussie Pickers
03:40 Swamp People
04:30 Storage Wars: New York
05:00 Hunting Hitler
06:00 Ultimate Wheels
06:50 Ax Men
07:40 Duck Dynasty
08:30 Counting Cars
08:55 Swamp People
09:45 Lost In Transmission
10:35 Leepu And Pitbull
11:25 Alone
12:15 The Curse Of Oak Island
13:05 Aussie Pickers
13:55 Duck Dynasty
14:45 Lost Worlds
15:35 American Restoration
16:00 Ultimate Wheels
16:50 Lost In Transmission
17:40 Leepu And Pitbull
18:30 Pawn Stars
18:55 Pawn Stars Australia

19:20 Aussie Pickers
20:10 The Curse Of Oak Island
21:00 Alone
21:50 Ax Men
22:40 Lost Worlds
23:30 Mankind The Story Of All Of Us

food network

00:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
00:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
01:00 Chopped
02:00 Cutthroat Kitchen
03:00 Man Fire Food
03:30 Man Fire Food
04:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
04:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
05:00 Iron Chef America
06:00 Chopped
07:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
07:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
08:00 Chopped
09:00 Amazing Wedding Cakes
10:00 The Pioneer Woman
10:30 The Pioneer Woman
11:00 Siba's Table
11:30 Siba's Table
12:00 Barefoot Contessa
12:30 Barefoot Contessa
13:00 Chopped
14:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
17:00 Chopped
18:00 Siba's Table
18:30 Siba's Table
19:00 Private Chef
19:30 Private Chef
20:00 Chopped
21:00 Cutthroat Kitchen
22:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
22:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
23:00 Chopped

FINE LIVING

00:10 Hawaii Life
00:35 World's Most Extreme Homes
01:00 House Hunters
01:30 House Hunters
01:55 Rehab Addict
02:20 Rehab Addict
02:45 Rehab Addict
03:10 Fixer Upper
04:05 Caribbean Life
04:30 Hawaii Life
04:55 Extreme Homes
05:45 Million Dollar Rooms
06:35 Rehab Addict
07:00 House Hunters
07:25 House Hunters
07:50 Restoration SOS Virginia
08:15 Hawaii Life
08:40 Healthy Gourmet
09:05 Healthy Gourmet
09:30 Beachfront Bargain Hunt
10:00 Beachfront Bargain Hunt
10:25 Caribbean Life
10:50 Hawaii Life
11:15 Rehab Addict
11:40 Rehab Addict
12:10 Curb Appeal
12:35 Curb Appeal
13:00 House Hunters
13:25 House Hunters
13:50 Cousins On Call
14:15 Killer Kitchen Makeover
14:45 Giada's Weekend Getaways
15:10 Giada's Weekend Getaways
15:35 Rachel Hunter's Tour Of Beauty
16:00 Rachel Hunter's Tour Of Beauty
16:25 America's Most Desperate Kitchens
16:50 America's Most Desperate Kitchens
17:15 Healthy Gourmet
17:40 Healthy Gourmet
18:05 Flip Or Flop
18:30 Flip Or Flop
19:00 Tiny House, Big Living
19:25 Tiny House, Big Living
19:55 House Hunters
20:20 House Hunters
20:45 Hawaii Life
21:10 Restoration SOS Virginia
21:35 Rehab Addict
22:00 Million Dollar Contractor
22:30 Million Dollar Contractor
22:55 Million Dollar Rooms
23:45 Caribbean Life

ORIENTATION AT SCIENTIFIC EXCELLENCE ACADEMY



Bhavans through its various ventures, has been creating awareness in students about the emerging trends in the field of education and career, and has been guiding them aptly to achieve their goals.

SEAK, another venture of Bhavans' Kuwait has crossed a major milestone. It now functions independently under the name SCIENTIFIC EXCELLENCE ACADEMY, set up in SALMIYA, BLOCK 10, KUWAIT.

Scientific Excellence Academy Kuwait (SEAK) organized an orientation program for the students and parents at Indian Educational School, Kuwait on the 2nd of April 2016. The purpose of the program was to enlighten the students and parents about the objectives and conduct of the Foundation and Coaching classes and to ensure parental involvement in monitoring the performance and progress of their wards.

Mr T Premkumar, Principal, Indian Educational School, Kuwait in his address to the gathering, stressed on the importance of conceptual learning. He also acquainted the students with the changing trends in examinations and reiterated the importance of being focused and goal oriented. More insight on SAT examinations

and the apt time to take it was also given by Mr T Premkumar.

Coordinator of SEAK, Ms Anselma Tessy in her presentation highlighted the content, objective and the methodology of the courses at SEAK. The Foundation Program focuses on strengthening the students' conceptual clarity of the fundamentals in Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry (Biology for class 9&10) and Reasoning. The course and tests are designed so as to inculcate the habit of application of concepts, thereby paving way for effective learning. Valuable information regarding the IIT JEE/AIPMT Examinations and SAT was shared during the presentation.

Meghavarnika a student of SEAK who has an excellent academic track record, shared her experience at SEAK with the audience and received plaudits. The commendable performers for the academic year 2015-2016 were accorded merit certificates. In his concluding talk, Chairman of Bhavans Middle East, Mr N K Ramachandran Menon accentuated the aim of SEAK and reinforced the importance of being focused and goal oriented, the hallmark of Bhavans' ventures.





KEEPING ALIVE THE SPIRIT OF NATIONAL AND LIBERATION DAYS AT IISM



Kick starting the spirited atmosphere of National and Liberation Day celebrations of Kuwait, India International School, Mangaf observed the day highlighting the iconic history behind the independence of Kuwait. Rejoicing in the spirit of nationalism, with pride and salutation to our host country, a weeklong celebration is planned starting from 15th of February 2016. On this momentous occasion, students were attired in traditional and flag colored dress. The well decorated corridors gave a new facelift to the appearance of the school and promoted a sense of unity and harmony among the multinational student community.

Saluting the rich legacy of Arabic language over the globe, the whole week was also observed as Arabic Week. An assortment of activities was planned to promote and enhance Arabic communication skills. The festivities unraveled with the special assemblies arranged by all the sections separately which was dedicated to the great martyrs who sacrificed their lives for the freedom of this beautiful country.

Assemblies were presented by the Senior and Junior Sections on 15th and 17th February respectively. Kuwait's national language perpetuated a dignified place in the program. The gesture and the mannerism of the Kuwait's tradition and culture were well imbibed by the students.

The highlights of the program were dance performances, speech, poem recitation, conversation, solo and group songs, presentation of moral values, etc which proclaimed the hallmark of the country's rich tradition and benevolent culture. The skit on moral values engraved the spiritual aspects of an honest life. Competitions like Arabic Handwriting, Poster and Arabic Dictionary Making were also conducted by the Junior Section during the week. The pinnacle of the festivities will be with a grand program by the KG Section on 24th February.

The esteemed presence of Mr Khalid and Mr Nabeel, the inspectors from the Ministry of Education, elevated the meritment of the occasion. They were extremely happy to witness the unconditional love for Kuwait that the students and teachers of IISM demonstrated throughout the celebration. They also stated that they were pleased by the hospitality and benevolence of the Indians and added that such gestures will further strengthen the ties between India and Kuwait. The School Director, Mr Malayil MoosaKoya, Principal, Sr Vice Principal and Vice Principals also witnessed the proceedings while encouraging the students all the entire way. The School Director addressed the gathering in Arabic and he extended special appreciation to the departments of Arabic and Islamic, students and teachers who were tirelessly toiling for making this event a memorable one.



BRITISH MP PERFORMS LIFE-SAVING CANCER OPERATIONS FOR PALESTINIANS

GAZA CITY, Palestinian Territories:

British lawmakers normally spend their breaks catching up on paperwork or holidaying, but one parliamentarian has instead travelled more than 2,000 miles to the Palestinian territories to carry out life-saving breast cancer surgery. Philippa Whitford, a parliamentarian for Central Ayrshire in Scotland and a breast cancer expert before entering parliament, travelled to provide care for a number of Palestinian women, who face an uphill struggle to get quality treatment.

Whitford carried out four major cancer operations in the occupied West Bank last week, before travelling to Gaza on Sunday to advise hospitals there on how to improve their care. One operation was on a woman with "very advanced" cancer, said the lawmaker, who returned to the United Kingdom on Thursday. "It was very large in the breast and very advanced in the lymph nodes. She had had chemotherapy, but it hadn't got a lot smaller and she still had a lot of disease."

"It was just a difficult operation and we knew it would be," she said, adding that initial signs suggested it had been successful. Whitford, who became a lawmaker for the left-wing Scottish National Party (SNP) in the 2015 British election, said breast cancer treatment in the



GAZA: A handout image shows Philippa Whitford (right), a parliamentarian for Central Ayrshire in Scotland and a breast cancer expert, performing a breast cancer surgery on a Palestinian woman at a hospital in Gaza city — AFP

Palestinian territories suffered from a lack of planning, resources and Israeli restrictions.

In Gaza, breast cancer kills more women than any other cancer, according to a 2011 research paper by researchers from Harvard Medical School. Palestinian

militants in Gaza have fought three wars with Israel since 2008. The strip, run by Islamist movement Hamas, has also been under an Israeli blockade since 2006.

Full breast removal

There are regular shortages of medi-

cines including those to treat cancer and no radiotherapy in the coastal enclave. "Getting anything into Gaza is not secure. You can't say 'we get a delivery every month and it will be here and the hospital will be stocked.' So they are forever running out of things," Whitford said. She said that, while in England doctors would usually remove just a part of the breast, in Gaza they tend to remove the whole breast—whether through lack of training or due to limited medical facilities.

Radiotherapy is available in Israel and east Jerusalem, but Palestinians say travel permits are hard to obtain, border points can be closed depending on events, and some cannot afford the trip. More than 120,000 Palestinians entered Israel for medical treatment in 2015, mostly from the West Bank, according to Israeli officials. The lack of quality treatment in Palestinian territories, Whitford said, meant recurrence rates are believed to be more than double those in the United Kingdom. No delegation of British lawmakers has been permitted entry into Gaza by Israel since 2009. Earlier this year a delegation of members of the European parliament was refused entry. But Whitford applied and entered as a single doctor rather than in a delegation, thus skirting Israel's restrictions. — AFP

SOME KEY GAPS IN AMERICANS' KNOWLEDGE ABOUT ZIKA VIRUS

'WITH GOOD INFORMATION, PEOPLE CAN TAKE THE RIGHT STEPS TO PROTECT THEMSELVES'

WASHINGTON: Americans don't know a lot about the Zika virus that is linked to birth defects and creeping steadily closer to the US, according to a new poll that found about 4 in 10 say they've heard little to nothing about the mosquito-borne threat. Even among people who've been following the Zika saga at least a little, many aren't sure whether there's a vaccine or treatment - not yet - or if there's any way the virus can spread other than through mosquito bites.

Still, with mosquito season fast approaching, more than half of the population supports a variety of efforts to control summer swarms - from spraying pesticides to releasing genetically modified mosquitoes, says the poll conducted by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. The government is considering a field trial in the Florida Keys of male mosquitoes, which don't bite, that are genetically altered so that when they mate with wild females, the offspring quickly die. The poll found 56 percent of people would support introducing such mosquitoes into areas affected by Zika.

"I think it's kind of the wave of the future, to be honest," said Janis Maney, 63, of Pensacola, Florida, who sees mosquitoes nearly year-round in her warm climate. She's open to "anything that would control those little buggers." The Zika virus has exploded throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. While adults typically suffer mild, if any, symptoms, there's an increasingly strong link between infections in pregnant women and fetal death and devastating birth defects - babies born with small heads that signal a damaged brain.

US health officials are warning pregnant women and those attempting to conceive

to avoid traveling to Zika-affected areas. More than 300 cases of Zika have been diagnosed in the US, all so far associated with travel. But the mosquitoes capable of spreading Zika live in parts of the US. And while experts don't expect an epidemic here, they worry that small clusters of cases are likely, particularly in Florida or Texas, if the insects bite returning travelers and then someone else. "We have only weeks to prepare before the mosquitoes, and perhaps the virus, get ahead of us," said Dr Edward McCabe of the March of Dimes.

Leah Zeleski, 27, of Lincoln, Nebraska, said she won't travel too far south this summer. A nursing student, Zeleski calls this a "very scary" time for women of childbearing age and wonders what scientists will discover next about Zika's risks, unknown until the current outbreak began in Brazil last year. Zeleski said she'll wear insect repellent and cover up during mosquito season. The AP-NORC Center poll found that among people who've heard about Zika, 90 percent know mosquitoes can spread it but there are some other key gaps in knowledge:

1- About 1 in 5 couldn't say whether Zika was linked to birth defects.

2- Zika also sometimes spreads through sexual intercourse, but 14 percent wrongly thought it couldn't, and another 29 percent said they didn't know. That's worrisome, because the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says men who've traveled to Zika-affected areas either should use condoms with their pregnant partners or avoid sex until the baby's born.

3- More than half didn't know if there was a vaccine or treatment for Zika - there is not - or a diagnostic test. There are tests but they're not perfect, and they're being used

primarily with pregnant women.

More public education is needed before there are any homegrown Zika infections, said Gillian SteelFisher of Harvard's school of public health, whose own polling has found even more misconceptions about Zika. "We have an opportunity, before there's a case, to get people to worry where they need to and not where they don't," SteelFisher said. "With good information, people can take the right steps to protect themselves."

The poll found few people - 16 percent - are very worried that the US will experience much Zika. "I've kind of grown numb" about outbreak warnings in recent years, said Valerie White, 24, of Montgomery County, Maryland, who doesn't plan to travel during her pregnancy. "Once people realize it's a problem, there's usually a quick response, so I'm not worried." Only a quarter of people said US athletes should withdraw from the Olympics in Brazil this summer.

When it comes to those genetically modified mosquitoes, some activists in Florida have argued against them - but the new poll found only 16 percent of Americans overall are opposed to the strategy to control Zika, and 26 percent are neutral. In previous surveys, genetically modified food ingredients have generated more public concern. The AP-NORC poll of 1,004 adults was conducted March 17-21 using a sample drawn from NORC's probability-based AmeriSpeak panel, which is designed to be representative of the US population. The margin of sampling error for all respondents is plus or minus 3.8 percentage points. Respondents were first selected randomly using address-based sampling methods, and later interviewed online or by phone. — AP

CDC: TEENS WITH SLEEP ISSUES MORE OFTEN TAKE DANGEROUS RISKS

NEW YORK: High school students who get too little sleep - or too much - are also more likely to drive drunk or take other risks, according to government researchers. The scientists say they don't know if sleep issues cause teens to take dangerous risks, or whether both are a reflection of depression or other problems. But the link between sleep and injury-causing risks is striking - especially when it comes to drinking and driving, said the study's lead author, Anne Wheaton of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

"I thought that was really, really surprising and just really worrying," she said. Students who get only five or six hours a night were twice as likely to say they'd driven while drinking in the previous month, compared to kids who regularly got a full night's sleep. That was also true of kids who got 10 or more hours per night, compared to the regular sleepers, the researchers found. The CDC released the study Thursday. It's based on in-school, anonymous, paper-and-pencil surveys of more than 50,000 high school students conducted nationally in 2007, 2009, 2011 and 2013.

Too-little sleep is very common, and too-much sleep is pretty rare. About 69 out of 100 high school students get insufficient sleep - defined as seven hours of sleep or less on average school night. About two out of every 100 get too much - 10 or more hours. Previous research has found a link between insufficient sleep and injuries from car crashes, sports or workplace accidents. The CDC investigators wanted to probe which students got proper sleep, and to see if it was related to which kids said they recently had decided not to wear seat belts or bike helmets, or were texting while driving, drinking while driving, or riding with a drunk driver.

For adults, the recommended amount of sleep is seven to nine hours each night. Previous CDC research suggests at least a third of adults get less than that. Doctors offer tips for good sleeping that include sticking to a regular bedtime schedule, getting exercise each day and avoiding caffeine and nicotine at night. Parents are advised to keep kids away from TV, video or cell phone screens before bedtime. — AP

HUNGRY PENGUINS CHASE ANTARCTIC'S SHIFTING KRILL

PETERMANN ISLAND, Antarctica: Waddling over the rocks, legions of penguins hurl themselves into the icy waters of Antarctica, foraging to feed their young. Like seals and whales, they eat krill, an inch-long shrimp-like crustacean which forms the basis of the Southern Ocean food chain. But penguin-watchers say the krill are getting scarcer here around the western Antarctic peninsula, under threat from climate change and fishing. "Krill is the power lunch of the Antarctic. It's a keystone species for everybody," says Ron Naveen, leader of the US conservation group Oceanites, as penguins squawk on the rocks behind him. In a vast ocean whose water flows influence the whole planet, krill rely on the sea ice to protect them and provide algae to feed them while they grow.

The ice is getting scarcer. The peninsula has warmed by three degrees Celsius over the past half-century, according to groups such as the World Wildlife Fund. Scientists suspect that shifting ice patterns are effecting penguin populations. "The interaction between warming temperatures, increasing ocean acidity and of course to some

extent, although that's not clear yet, an interaction with the fishing industry fishing for krill, will put pressure on predator populations that are mostly krill feeders," such as penguins, says Steven Chown, a biologist at Monash University in Australia.

Trawling for supplements

On the rocky shores and blue icebergs of the peninsula and its islands, brown fur seals bark and jostle each other. Humpback whales flash their white bellies as they heave out of the depths. Among hordes of orange-beaked Gentoo penguins waddles the occasional Adelie penguin with white rings round its eyes, or the Chinstrap, with a fine black stripe at its throat. The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) says Adelies and krill are both potentially threatened by future climate change.

Species such as Adelies are also threatened by krill-fishing, it says. The Antarctic creatures are having to share the krill with humans. "Krill fishing may be occurring too close to where the penguin breeding colonies are," says Naveen. "And perhaps



PETERMANN ISLAND, Antarctica : A Gentoo is pictured in Petermann Island, Antarctica. — AFP photos



PETERMANN ISLAND, Antarctica : The remains of a penguin are pictured in Petermann Island, Antarctica.

more importantly, areas where the penguins are foraging." Fishing boats catch 300,000 tons of krill a year, the IUCN says, made into feed for farmed fish and "Omega 3" oil supplements, said to soothe sore joints and other complaints.

Cilia Indahl, head of sustainability at Norwegian fishing company Aker BioMarine, says the total amount of krill caught is just 0.5 percent of the 60 million tons eaten each year by sea creatures. But the company has developed a method to minimize environmental harm, she says. The boats trawl slowly, using special filtered nets to avoid catching other creatures. "We will also have to consider where we fish for krill, making sure that there is minimum overlap with other animals like penguins and whales and where they feed," she says.

Penguins and politics

Fishing in Antarctica is monitored by the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR). Member countries must agree between them on catch

limits and no-fish areas. Environmentalists insist that CCAMLR renew key regulations on krill fishing when it gathers for its annual meeting in October. "There's going to be a fight about whether or not the subdivision of the krill catch, that protects foraging predators like penguins, will be continued," says Andrea Kavanagh, head of the penguin conservation campaign of The Pew Charitable Trusts, a US non-government organization, referring to the system of restrictions on krill fishing in certain areas.

"Some countries such as Russia and China indicated they did not see the need for it at last year's meeting. They want to be free to catch as much krill as possible near the Antarctic Peninsula, including right next to penguin colonies that have been in decline for the last three decades." Some countries have proposed setting aside a big protected zone in the Ross Sea, a remote, unspoiled Antarctic area of rare species. But campaigners and officials involved in the talks complain of resistance by China and Russia to that proposal too. — AFP

CLINIC PAGE



Kuwait Times
THE LEADING INDEPENDENT DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF





Dr. Fahad Al-Mukhaizeem
د. فهد علي المخيزيم

Consultant Pediatrician استشاري أطفال
M.B. Bch. FRCPC. FAAP. PEM



Al-Jabriya - Block 1A - St. 1 - Mazaya Building - 15th Floor - Clinic B - Tel.: 22269369 - Fax: 22269368



KNCC PROGRAMME FROM THURSDAY TO WEDNESDAY (07/04/2016 TO 13/04/2016)

SHARQIA-1
OBSERVANCE 12:15 PM
OBSERVANCE 2:30 PM
NO FRI+SAT
KUNG FU PANDA 3 2:15 PM
FRI+SAT
KUNG FU PANDA 3 4:15 PM
OBSERVANCE 6:15 PM
BATMAN V SUPERMAN: DAWN OF JUSTICE 8:00 PM
OBSERVANCE 11:00 PM
OBSERVANCE 12:45 AM

SHARQIA-2
THE BOSS 12:30 PM
SARDAAR GABBAR SINGH - Telugu 1:30 PM
THE BOSS 2:30 PM
MA3 AL KHATAR (Kuwaiti Film) 4:30 PM
THE BOSS 6:30 PM
MA3 AL KHATAR (Kuwaiti Film) 8:30 PM
THE BOSS 10:30 PM
MA3 AL KHATAR (Kuwaiti Film) 12:30 AM

SHARQIA-3
BATMAN V SUPERMAN: DAWN OF JUSTICE 1:00 PM
BATMAN V SUPERMAN: DAWN OF JUSTICE 4:00 PM
BATMAN V SUPERMAN: DAWN OF JUSTICE 7:00 PM
BATMAN V SUPERMAN: DAWN OF JUSTICE 10:00 PM
10 CLOVERFIELD LANE 1:00 AM
10 CLOVERFIELD LANE 1:45 PM
SARDAAR GABBAR SINGH - Telugu 4:00 PM
SARDAAR GABBAR SINGH - Telugu 7:15 PM
SARDAAR GABBAR SINGH - Telugu 10:30 PM

MUHALAB-1
THE BOSS 12:15 PM
THE BOSS 2:15 PM
KUNG FU PANDA 3 4:15 PM
KUNG FU PANDA 3 6:15 PM
MA3 AL KHATAR (Kuwaiti Film) 8:15 PM
THE BOSS 10:30 PM
MA3 AL KHATAR (Kuwaiti Film) 12:30 AM

MUHALAB-2
OBSERVANCE 12:00 PM
BATMAN V SUPERMAN: DAWN OF JUSTICE 1:45 PM
SARDAAR GABBAR SINGH - Telugu 1:30 PM
OBSERVANCE 4:45 PM
OBSERVANCE 6:30 PM
OBSERVANCE 8:15 PM
BATMAN V SUPERMAN: DAWN OF JUSTICE 10:00 PM
OBSERVANCE 1:00 AM
SARDAAR GABBAR SINGH - Telugu 10:15 PM
OBSERVANCE 1:30 AM

MUHALAB-3
BATMAN V SUPERMAN: DAWN OF JUSTICE 12:30 PM
NO FRI+SAT
KUNG FU PANDA 3 11:30 AM
KUNG FU PANDA 3 1:30 PM
BATMAN V SUPERMAN: DAWN OF JUSTICE 3:30 PM
BATMAN V SUPERMAN: DAWN OF JUSTICE 6:45 PM
OBSERVANCE 10:15 PM
SARDAAR GABBAR SINGH - Telugu 3:30 PM
SARDAAR GABBAR SINGH - Telugu 6:45 PM
SARDAAR GABBAR SINGH - Telugu 10:00 PM
OBSERVANCE 1:15 AM

FANAR-1
THE BOY AND THE BEAST 12:15 PM
THE BOY AND THE BEAST 2:45 PM
THE BOY AND THE BEAST 5:15 PM
MA3 AL KHATAR (Kuwaiti Film) 7:45 PM
THE BOSS 10:00 PM
MA3 AL KHATAR (Kuwaiti Film) 12:05 AM

FANAR-2
MR. RIGHT 1:00 PM
KUNG FU PANDA 3 3:00 PM
KUNG FU PANDA 3 5:00 PM
KUNG FU PANDA 3 7:00 PM
MR. RIGHT 9:00 PM
MR. RIGHT 11:00 PM
MR. RIGHT 1:00 AM

FANAR-3
OBSERVANCE 12:45 PM
OBSERVANCE 2:30 PM
JU ON: THE GRUDGE 3 (JU-ON: THE BEGINNING OF THE END) 4:45 PM
OBSERVANCE 6:45 PM
JU ON: THE GRUDGE 3 (JU-ON: THE BEGINNING OF THE END) 8:45 PM

OBSERVANCE 10:45 PM
OBSERVANCE 12:45 AM

MARINA-1
OBSERVANCE 12:15 PM
THE BOSS 2:00 PM
THE BOSS 4:00 PM
OBSERVANCE 6:00 PM
OBSERVANCE 8:00 PM
THE BOSS 10:00 PM
OBSERVANCE 12:05 AM

MARINA-2
MR. RIGHT 12:30 PM
MR. RIGHT 2:30 PM
BATMAN V SUPERMAN: AWN OF JUSTICE 4:30 PM
MR. RIGHT 7:30 PM
BATMAN V SUPERMAN: DAWN OF JUSTICE 9:30 PM
MR. RIGHT 12:30 AM

MARINA-3
MA3 AL KHATAR Kuwaiti Film) 11:45 AM
MA3 AL KHATAR (Kuwaiti Film) 2:00 PM
MA3 AL KHATAR (Kuwaiti Film) 4:15 PM
KUNG FU PANDA 3 2:00 PM
KUNG FU PANDA 3 4:15 PM
KUNG FU PANDA 3 6:15 PM
MA3 AL KHATAR (Kuwaiti Film) 8:15 PM
MA3 AL KHATAR (Kuwaiti Film) 10:30 PM
MA3 AL KHATAR (Kuwaiti Film) 12:45 AM

AVENUES-1
KUNG FU PANDA 3 11:30 AM
KUNG FU PANDA 3 1:45 PM
KUNG FU PANDA 3 4:00 PM
KUNG FU PANDA 3 6:15 PM
KUNG FU PANDA 3 8:30 PM
10 CLOVERFIELD LANE 10:45 PM
10 CLOVERFIELD LANE 1:00 AM

AVENUES-2
MR. RIGHT 12:30 PM
MR. RIGHT 2:45 PM
MR. RIGHT 5:00 PM
MR. RIGHT 7:15 PM
MR. RIGHT 9:30 PM
MR. RIGHT 11:45 PM

AVENUES-3
MA3 AL KHATAR (Kuwaiti Film) 12:15 PM
MA3 AL KHATAR (Kuwaiti Film) 2:30 PM
MA3 AL KHATAR (Kuwaiti Film) 4:45 PM
MA3 AL KHATAR (Kuwaiti Film) 7:00 PM
MA3 AL KHATAR (Kuwaiti Film) 9:15 PM
MA3 AL KHATAR (Kuwaiti Film) 11:30 PM

360°- 1
MA3 AL KHATAR (Kuwaiti Film) 1:15 PM
MA3 AL KHATAR (Kuwaiti Film) 3:30 PM
MA3 AL KHATAR (Kuwaiti Film) 5:45 PM
MA3 AL KHATAR (Kuwaiti Film) 8:00 PM
MA3 AL KHATAR (Kuwaiti Film) 10:15 PM
MA3 AL KHATAR (Kuwaiti Film) 12:30 AM

360°- 2
3000 NIGHTS - Arabic 12:30 PM
3000 NIGHTS - Arabic 2:45 PM
3000 NIGHTS - Arabic 5:00 PM
3000 NIGHTS - Arabic 7:15 PM
3000 NIGHTS - Arabic 9:30 PM
3000 NIGHTS - Arabic 11:45 PM

360°- 3
KUNG FU PANDA 3 12:45 PM
KUNG FU PANDA 3 3:00 PM
KUNG FU PANDA 3 5:15 PM
KUNG FU PANDA 3 7:30 PM
KUNG FU PANDA 3 9:45 PM
BATMAN V SUPERMAN: DAWN OF JUSTICE 12:15 AM

AL-KOUT.1
BATMAN V SUPERMAN: DAWN OF JUSTICE 1:00 PM
KUNG FU PANDA 3 2:00 PM
KUNG FU PANDA 3 4:00 PM
BATMAN V SUPERMAN: DAWN OF JUSTICE 6:00 PM
BATMAN V SUPERMAN: DAWN OF JUSTICE 9:00 PM
BATMAN V SUPERMAN: DAWN OF JUSTICE 12:05 AM

AL-KOUT.2
THE BOSS 12:45 PM

A leading company is looking for a professional, dynamic candidates for following post:

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With the following qualifications:

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2. Non-Kuwaiti with transferable residence visa (preferably Arabic nationality)
3. Previous experience with same discipline is preferable.
4. Previous experience of at least 3 years is a must.
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Hospitals

Sabah Hospital	24812000
Amiri Hospital	22450005
Maternity Hospital	24843100
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700
Chest Hospital	24849400
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010
Adan Hospital	23940620
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khaldiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381



Flight Schedule

DIAL 161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

In case you are not travelling, your proper cancellation
of bookings will help other passengers use seats

Arrival Flights on Saturday 9/4/2016

Arrival Flights on Saturday 9/4/2016				Departure Flights on Saturday 9/4/2016			
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	Airlines	Flt	Route	Time
MSC	501	Alexandria	00:05	AIC	976	Goa/Chennai	00:05
THY	772	Istanbul	00:10	BBC	044	Dhaka	00:10
MSC	415	Sohag	00:10	JAI	573	Mumbai	00:25
JZR	267	Beirut	00:30	MSR	615	Cairo	00:30
FDB	069	Dubai	00:55	FDB	072	Dubai	00:30
KKK	6506	Istanbul	00:55	PIA	240	Sialkot	00:40
DLH	635	Doha	01:00	KLM	413	Amsterdam	00:55
QTR	1086	Doha	01:15	MSC	502	Alexandria	01:05
JZR	539	Cairo	01:20	MSC	416	Sohag	01:05
SAI	441	Lahore	01:30	JZR	502	Luxor	01:15
PGT	858	Istanbul	01:40	THY	773	Istanbul	01:40
RJA	642	Amman	01:45	DLH	635	Frankfurt	02:00
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	01:45	SAI	442	Lahore	02:30
JZR	552	Alexandria	01:50	ETH	621	Addis Ababa	02:45
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:15	THY	765	Istanbul	02:45
UAE	853	Dubai	02:25	PGT	859	Istanbul	02:55
OMA	643	Muscat	03:05	UAE	854	Dubai	03:45
FDB	067	Dubai	03:15	OMA	644	Muscat	04:00
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:15	KKK	6505	Istanbul	04:05
MSR	612	Cairo	03:15	FDB	068	Dubai	04:05
QTR	1076	Doha	03:25	ETD	306	Abu Dhabi	04:10
PGT	860	Istanbul	03:30	MSR	613	Cairo	04:15
KAC	544	Cairo	03:40	PGT	861	Istanbul	04:30
KAC	514	Tehran	03:50	QTR	1077	Doha	04:35
DHX	170	Bahrain	05:10	RJA	643	Amman	06:25
THY	770	Istanbul	05:15	QTR	1087	Doha	06:30
JZR	529	Asyut	06:00	THY	771	Istanbul	06:45
KAC	412	Manila/Bangkok	06:15	GFA	212	Bahrain	06:50
PAL	668	Manila/Dubai	06:25	JZR	240	Amman	06:55
BAW	157	London	06:40	FDB	070	Dubai	07:05
FDB	5061	Dubai	07:15	JZR	164	Dubai	07:15
JZR	503	Luxor	07:25	JZR	324	Al Najaf	07:55
KAC	382	Delhi	07:30	FDB	5062	Dubai	07:55
KAC	346	Ahmedabad	07:35	BAW	156	London	08:25
KAC	206	Islamabad	07:40	JZR	778	Jeddah	08:30
KAC	204	Lahore	07:40	FDB	054	Dubai	08:30
SVA	512	Riyadh	07:50	KAC	511	Mashhad	08:40
FDB	053	Dubai	07:50	KAC	539	Sharm el-Sheikh	08:50
KAC	302	Mumbai	07:50	SVA	513	Riyadh	08:50
KAC	344	Chennai	08:15	KAC	671	Dubai	09:15
KAC	332	Trivandrum	08:15	JZR	534	Cairo	09:25
KAC	352	Kochi	08:20	KAC	787	Jeddah	09:30
UAE	855	Dubai	08:25	ABY	126	Sharjah	09:45
KAC	284	Dhaka	09:00	UAE	856	Dubai	09:50
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	09:05	KAC	101	London/New York	10:00
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:05	ETD	302	Abu Dhabi	10:00
QTR	1070	Doha	09:30				
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40				
SYR	341	Damascus	10:30				
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40				
UAE	873	Dubai	10:40				
IRM	1188	Mashhad	11:10				
JZR	325	Al Najaf	11:20				
RBG	553	Alexandria	11:30				
IRC	6511	ABD	11:40				
JZR	165	Dubai	11:50				
IAW	157	Al Najaf	11:55				
NIA	151	Cairo	12:20				
FDB	075	Dubai	12:25				
JZR	241	Amman	12:30				
UAE	871	Dubai	12:45				
MSR	610	Cairo	13:00				
THY	766	Istanbul	13:10				
IRC	526	Mashhad	13:35				
TBM	6313	Mashhad	13:45				
FBA	831	Al Najaf	13:50				
KAC	672	Dubai	14:00				
QTR	1078	Doha	14:05				
JZR	779	Jeddah	14:05				
KNE	231	Riyadh	14:10				
MSR	575	Sharm el-Sheikh	14:15				
FDB	057	Dubai	14:20				
GFA	221	Bahrain	14:20				
KAC	512	Mashhad	14:30				
KAC	540	Sharm el-Sheikh	14:50				
KNE	529	Jeddah	14:55				
KAC	788	Jeddah	15:00				
KNE	683	Madinah	15:05				
OMA	645	Muscat	15:10				
ETD	303	Abu Dhabi	15:10				
ABY	127	Sharjah	15:35				
UAE	857	Dubai	15:45				
JAD	301	Amman	15:55				
RJA	640	Amman	16:00				
KNE	531	Jeddah	16:05				
FDB	051	Dubai	16:10				
QTR	1072	Doha	16:15				
JZR	535	Cairo	16:20				
KAC	118	New York	16:30				
JZR	787	Riyadh	16:45				
NIA	251	Alexandria	16:50				
KAC	562	Amman	16:55				
KAC	680	Muscat	16:55				
IRA	669	Mashhad	17:10				
SVA	510	Riyadh	17:15				
JZR	357	Mashhad	17:30				

Word Search Puzzles

Easter

Find and circle all of the words that are hidden in the grid.
The remaining 34 letters spell a secret message.

C O S E L P I C S I D C H U R C H Y
S R N E S A C R A M E N T E S A A S
G T U T H F A P B U N N Y D U D E R
G T N C R O A A P M E M A S S R N A
E E T I I S L A S U O E D E E Y O F
L C D N S F R Y C T R T N T J A I E
P A N O E A I H W B I D U A F D T S
Y A V E D M A X T E E N S L A S C T
D E L E T R A S I W E N G O M R E I
R Y A M I I I T H O O K R C I U R V
C A S S S R N S S I N O I O L H R A
A D T T H I A E T E A R O H Y T U L
L I S C N I C I P S T C E C S A S I
V L U T O N D D T E C W R Y O E E G
A O P R A A M O T S U C E O A D R I
R H P N R E E G G H U N T N S R A V
Y T E T A M A R Y A D R U T A S P E
E P R L G G S C E L E B R A T I O N

ASH WEDNESDAY DEATH JESUS PENITENCE
BREAD DISCIPLES LAST SUPPER PRAYER
BUNNY EGG HUNT LENT RESURRECTION
CALVARY EGGS MARY ROAST
CELEBRATION EUCHARIST MASS SACRAMENT
CHOCOLATE FAMILY MEAL SATURDAY
CHRIST FASTING NEW TESTAMENT SUNDAY
CHURCH FESTIVAL PALMS THURSDAY
CROSS FRIDAY PARADE TOMB
CRUCIFIXION HOLIDAY PASSOVER TRADITION
CUSTOM HOLY WEEK PENANCE VIGIL

Yesterday's Solution

Oliver Twist

D T R E A E E N I W D E B S R M S N E K C I D
L T A S L L O Y G F O M T E H E L P U L A C
E R E G D D L L O D O F R E K B W N R T H E
I R S A N E N I V S L E R T S M I D O G H L S
F I E R V E M D B A I A E O U M E S S S A T U R
M B T E E W S E O H M K S S B P R A Y R E I O A R
G S B G D N R L O M R A L R E T N A W C E O
A Y Y S E O E O P E U A K R A O C L S Y F T O N
B I E O B R O L O M E S G C A M N R W L F S T O
R O L N D L C I H S H K I I H A N O I U I A
E M R N G L A K O G R I N L S A T N L E D A N C
T C A S T A S T O R T I M L S D T I F L O S W C
L H H B F O B U H T H O U S E B R E A K E R Y
O I I C U W H R E C E G N A F R M B E A I G L I R
B T O L C I S T W I R E V I L O H U M M N S T
C O L R L P T I S T O L A S N C M O N K S E G N E
O I P S S B R O W N L O W A T T I L O C K E I
A N H E G R U E L S O W E R B E R R Y E N D I
C G A Y N S N I K B M T L G H B R I T T L E S
H I N E S B I R C H A R L O T T E T H L I A J

AGNES FLEMING DODGER LIMBKINS ORPHAN
BARNEY BEADLE DUFF LOCKET PICKPOCKET
BEADLE FAGIN LONDON PISTOL
BLATHERS GALLOWES LOSBERNE ROSE MAYLIE
BOLTER GAMFIELD MAGISTRATE SIKES
BRITTLES GILES MONKS SOWERBERRY
BROWNLOW GRIMWIG MR. FANG SURGEON
BULL'S-EYE GRUEL MRS. BEDWIN TOBY CRACKIT
BUMBLE HANDKERCHIEF MRS. CORNEY TOM CHITLING
CHARLEY BATES HARRY MAYLIE MRS. MANN TRAPS
CHARLOTTE HOUSEBREAKER NANCY UNDERTAKER
COACH INHERITANCE NOAH WAISTCOAT
COURT JAIL OLD SALLY WILL
DICKENS LEEFORD OLIVER TWIST WORKHOUSE
DOCTOR

The hidden sentence is: TREATS OF THE PLACE WHERE OLIVER TWIST WAS BORN AND OF THE CIRCUMSTANCES ATTENDING HIS BIRTH

Daily SuDoku

5				6	9			
8	2			7				
		1			2			5
				7			9	5
	6						8	
	3	5			8			
7				8			2	
					4			6
				3	9			4

hard

CROSSWORD 1221

1	2	3		4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11		12	13	14
15				16									17		
18			19					20			21				
22						23		24		25					
			26			27	28		29						
30	31	32				33					34	35	36	37	
38					39		40			41		42			
43				44		45				46	47		48		
49			50		51		52	53	54		55	56			
57					58						59				
			60	61		62				63				64	
65	66	67				68				69		70			
71					72			73					74	75	
76					77		78	79				80			
81					82							83			
84					85								86		

ACROSS

1. Any of various units of capacity.
4. Outstanding United States athlete (1914-1956).
12. A female person who has the same parents as another person.
15. A plant hormone promoting elongation of stems and roots.
16. A state in south central United States.
17. A coral reef off the southern coast of Florida.
18. A large fleet.
20. A durable fabric formerly loomed by hand in China from natural cotton having a yellowish color.
22. Enduring strength and energy.
25. A histamine blocker and antacid (trade name Zantac) used to treat peptic ulcers and gastritis and esophageal reflux.
26. A silvery soft waxy metallic element of the alkali metal group.
27. The grasses.
30. Relating or near the pubis.
33. (of a young animal) Abandoned by its mother and raised by hand.
34. A primeval personification of air and breath.
38. A medicinal drug used to evoke vomiting (especially in cases of drug overdose or poisoning).
40. An agenda of things to do.
42. Fraught with extreme danger.
43. An emergency procedure consisting of external cardiac massage and artificial respiration.
44. The upper side of the thighs of a seated person.
46. A white metallic element that burns with a brilliant light.
48. A room equipped with toilet facilities.
49. Queen of the Olympian gods in ancient Greek mythology.
51. British admiral.
55. Any of various perennial South American plants of the genus Loasa having stinging hairs and showy white or yellow or reddish-orange flowers.
57. A republic in the Middle East in western Asia.
58. A spirit believed by Muslims to inhabit the earth and influence mankind by appearing in the form of humans or animals.
59. (of complexion) Blemished by imperfections of the skin.
60. The blood group whose red cells carry both the A and B antigens.
62. (Greek mythology) A Titan who was forced by Zeus to bear the sky on his shoulders.
64. An intensely radioactive metallic element that occurs in minute amounts in uranium ores.
65. Jordan's port.
68. A nonenterprising person who is not paying his way.
71. A medium for oil-paints.

73. A mask with a filter protects the face and lungs against poisonous gases.
76. The compass point midway between northeast and east.
77. The property of having little body fat.
80. Aircraft landing in bad weather in which the pilot is talked down by ground control using precision approach radar.
81. A decree that prohibits something.
82. A salt or ester of arsenic acid.
83. A barrier constructed to contain the flow or water or to keep out the sea.
84. (nautical, aeronautical) Situated at or toward the stern or tail.
85. Insects having usually a single pair of functional wings (anterior pair) with the posterior pair reduced to small knobbed structures and mouth parts adapted for sucking or lapping or piercing.
86. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.

DOWN

1. Slanting diagonally across the grain of a fabric.
2. A member of the British order of honor.
3. A Tibetan or Mongolian priest of Lamaism.
4. Relating to or included in the zodiac.
5. A Kwa language spoken in Ghana and the Ivory Coast.
6. A metric unit of volume or capacity equal to 100 liters.
7. An associate degree in applied science.
8. A blood group antigen possessed by Rh-positive people.
9. An electrically charged particle.
10. Affect with wonder.
11. The capital and largest city of Yemen.
12. The universal time coordinated time on board the spacecraft.
13. The United Nations agency concerned with atomic energy.
14. Make synchronous and adjust in time or manner.
19. Of or related to the amnion or characterized by developing an amnion.
21. Make uniform.
23. A drug combination found in some over-the-counter headache remedies (Aspirin and Phenacetin and Caffeine).
24. An informal term for a father.
28. An awkward stupid person.
29. An emotional response that has been acquired by conditioning.
31. The topmost one of two.
32. United States baseball player (born 1925).
35. The capital of Lombardy in northern Italy.
36. An implement used to erase something.
37. A state in the western United States.
39. Open-heart surgery in which the rib cage is opened and a section of a blood vessel is grafted from the aorta to the coronary artery to bypass the blocked section of the coronary artery and improve the blood supply to the heart.
41. An international organization of European countries formed after World War II to reduce trade barriers and increase cooperation among its members.
45. Appeal or request earnestly.
47. A flat wing-shaped process or winglike part of an organism.
50. Jordan's port.
52. A computer network consisting of a worldwide network of computer networks that use the TCP/IP network protocols to facilitate data transmission and exchange.
53. A river that rises in western New Mexico and flows westward through southern Arizona to become a tributary of the Colorado River.
54. Clothing for the head.
56. English scholastic philosopher and assumed author of Occam's Razor (1285-1349).
61. A narrative song with a recurrent refrain.
63. A member of the Indian people of northern California and southern Oregon.
66. Fiber from an East Indian plant Hibiscus cannabinus.
67. An active and efficient cause.
69. A city in western Germany.
70. (Irish) Chief god of the Tuatha De Danann.
72. A beautiful and graceful girl.
74. Someone who works (or provides workers) during a strike.
75. God of love and erotic desire.
78. Of southern Europe.
79. The compass point that is midway between north and northeast.

Yesterday's Solution

S	A	G		F	A	L	L	O	F	F		P	O	C	K
U	S	A		O	G	A	L	A	L	A		E	P	H	A
M	A	D		R	A	G	U	S	A		I	D	E	A	L
A	R	D	E	B			D	I	V	A		I	N	T	I
C	H	I	M	E	R	A			S	O	L	A	C	E	
				B	A	I	C			R	A	M	A	D	A
O	R	D	E	R			A	B	B	E		A	B		L
S	A	I	D			A	D	H		D	I	T		A	L
C	P	R			E	L	I	A			A	I	G	R	E
A	H	A	B				A	G	A	M	A		I	D	L
R	E	C	A	P				A	B	A		A	N	S	E
				N	O	A	H			C	L	A	C	K	
A	L	L	E	G	R	O				A	R	U	G	U	L
B	A	A			R	A	P	I	E	R		L	O	G	A
E	M	U			O	V	E	R	R	I	D	E		L	I
D	A	D			M	A	H	A	R	A	J	A		I	D

F1 TO BRING BACK 2015 QUALIFYING FORMAT

PARIS: Formula One is set to revert to the 2015 qualifying format after a two-race experiment with 'progressive elimination' this season was widely lambasted as a fiasco by teams and fans.

The agreement will come into force from the Chinese Grand Prix in Shanghai on April 17. "At the unanimous request of the teams in a letter received today, Jean Todt, president of the FIA, and Bernie Ecclestone, commercial rights holder representative, agreed, in the interests of the

Championship, to submit a proposal to the F1 Commission and World Motor Sport Council to revert to the qualifying format in force in 2015," said an FIA statement.

"This proposal, if approved by the F1 governing bodies, will take effect as from the Chinese Grand Prix and will apply for the rest of the season. "Jean Todt and Bernie Ecclestone welcomed the idea put forward by the teams to have a global assessment of the format of the weekend for 2017."

The teams were already celebrating

a victory over F1's rulers. "Unity is the only way to overcome difficulties," Ferrari tweeted. Meanwhile, Red Bull wrote on Twitter: "When you hear about #F1 quali..." which was accompanied with a video of their Russian driver Daniil Kvyat pumping his fists.

The 'elimination' format used in Australia and Bahrain this year saw cars steadily eliminated one by one and was meant to finish in a top-two shoot-out.

But both rounds of qualifying at Melbourne and Sakhir saw the track

empty of action in the closing stages, a miserable sight for fans as well as live television coverage.

Now, the 2015 system of three qualifying rounds will return for the rest of the season after 11 teams wrote to the sport's powerbrokers insisting on a return to the format first used in 2006.

The elimination system appeared doomed as soon as it was introduced with Ecclestone saying in Australia: "I watched it, but I have to say I wasn't enthusiastic about it from day one."

"It was pretty crap." — AFP

MARQUEZ TO CONTINUE AUSTIN DOMINANCE

LOS ANGELES: Spain's Marc Marquez, who has ruled the Circuit of the Americas in Austin, Texas, since 2013, will try to extend that dominance tomorrow and stretch his lead atop the MotoGP standings.

The Honda rider has won three straight in Austin—all from pole position. The run started in 2013, when his first victory at the age of 20 made him the youngest MotoGP race winner ever.

"It's a track that I like, where I feel strong, and where I've always had good races and good fun," Marquez said of the fast track nestled in hills outside the Texas capital, which is hosting the only MotoGP race this season in America after the loss of Indianapolis from the calendar.

Marquez, world champion in 2013 and 2014, arrives Stateside off a win in Argentina and an eight-point lead atop the standings over Italian rival Valentino Rossi.

Nevertheless, Marquez wasn't feeling complacent. "The track rewards strong acceleration, which hasn't been one of our strongest points so far this year, so we'll have to wait and see how we can manage the situation," he said. "We'll keep working hard, as we did in Argentina, and we'll try to find the best pace for the Sunday race."

Austin unkind to Rossi

Austin has been less than hospitable to Rossi, who could be in for another tough week after battling to second place in Argentina.

That race saw riders change their bikes at half distance due to rear tyre issues, and Rossi's second M1 encountered an issue with the rear that left him unable to challenge for the win.

Yamaha riders have struggled in Austin, and Rossi's third place finish last year is his only podium place at Circuit of the Americas.

"We have to work hard in Austin because it's crucial to understand quickly how bike, tyres, electronics and this track work together," nine-time world champion Rossi said. "Furthermore, in the last laps of the race I'm not very strong so we need to improve with the bike on these tyres."

"Historically it is a difficult circuit for us and for Yamaha, but last year I was able to land on the podium so I will try also this year." — AFP



AUSTIN: In this April 12, 2015, file photo, Marc Marquez, of Spain, rides by his crew after winning the MotoGP Grand Prix motorcycle race at the Circuit of the Americas in Austin, Texas. — AP



LIVERPOOL: This is a Saturday, April 11, 2015 file photo of jockey Leighton Aspell as he smiles after winning the Grand National horse race aboard Many Clouds at Aintree Racecourse Liverpool, England. — AP

AINTREE FORECAST GOOD FOR MANY CLOUDS, RECORD-BREAKER ASPELL

LIVERPOOL: Leighton Aspell, who famously once retired, stands on the brink of racing history today as the first jockey to win the £1 million (\$1.4 million) Grand National three years in succession. The 39-year-old Irishman, who hung up his boots for a couple of seasons in 2007, has never had cause to regret his decision to return to race riding. In 2014 he landed the holy grail for a jump jockey in the shape of the world's most famous chase on 25-1 shot Pineau De Re. And last year he was back in the Aintree winner's enclosure after an exhilarating exhibition of jumping over Liverpool's fabled fences on Many Clouds.

"My aim, when I came back, was to resurrect my career, be successful, make a living out of it and provide for my family. "I couldn't even have begun to dream about this," he told British tabloid The Daily Mirror.

Rare it is for a National winner to return 12 months later and repeat the feat, Red Rum was the last to defend his crown over four decades ago in 1974. But Many Clouds, blissfully unaware of the historical

odds stacked against him, lines up in the 4 mile 2 furlong showpiece due off at 1615GMT with all the credentials to suggest he will justify 7-1 favouritism. Trained by Oliver Sherwood the nine-year-old runs in the colours of British businessman Trevor Hemmings who owns Championship football side Preston North End.

Hemmings is that luckiest of souls, in racing terms at any rate, being the owner of not only the 2015 National winner but also Hedgehunter, the 2005 victor, and Ballabriggs, who landed the race in 2011. No owner has ever won four Nationals.

Perfect preparation

Many Clouds has enjoyed the perfect preparation for his title defence. He ran well behind subsequent Gold Cup third Don Poli back at the iconic track in the Liverpool suburbs in December, and filled the runner-up spot again behind Hennessy winner Smads Place at Cheltenham, in January. Then in a clear sign that he is coming to the boil at just the right time he trotted up by ten lengths in his final prep at

Kelso a month ago. Sherwood gave his stable star a glowing pre-race report. "He's come right at the right time and as I've said Kelso was the first time he's been 100 per cent fit this season," he told The Racing Post. Sherwood added: "The fences still need jumping, but I'm very happy with where we are and it's very exciting and I'm enjoying the ride. He's fresh and very well."

While his connections and fans and thousands of once-a-year punters around the world—the race has an estimated global television audience of 500 million—will be shouting him home, bookmakers are dreading a Many Clouds victory.

"Over £20 million will be put on Many Clouds as the 8-1 hot favourite and returning champion," Simon Clare of Corals told British press on the eve of the meeting.

"A victory today would make history of the worst kind for British bookies, as the biggest ever payout on the Grand National. It could be up to £200m."

David Williams, of Ladbrokes, added: "The gamble on Many Clouds is already making bookies weak at the knees." — AFP

WADA: KENYA HAS UNTIL MAY 2 OR WILL BE NON-COMPLIANT

NAIROBI: The World Anti-Doping Agency has given Kenya a final deadline of May 2 to bring its program in line with the global code or risk an international ban.

Kenya missed its second deadline this year on Tuesday, when an independent compliance review committee decided Kenya's anti-doping program was still "not in compliance" with the global code, WADA said in a statement on Thursday.

Unless Kenya passes doping legislation and formally adopts regulations for its new national anti-doping body by next month, the review committee will ask WADA's board to declare it non-compliant, WADA said. The WADA board meets in Montreal on May 12.

Although being non-compliant with

WADA's rules doesn't immediately affect Kenyan athletes,

it could spur the IAAF to consider further sanctions, including a possible international ban on the East African nation with a rich history of distance running champions.

IAAF president Sebastian Coe has not ruled out further action against Kenya if the country has serious problems with its anti-doping program. The IAAF last year banned Russia from international athletics after WADA declared it non-compliant because of corrupt activity by anti-doping and athletics authorities.

WADA's decision gave Kenya a little over three weeks to pass the law criminalizing doping, the biggest problem among the proposed reforms. The leg-

islation has been debated once by Kenyan lawmakers but suffered numerous delays because of the country's system of passing laws.

Kenyan officials expressed confidence the latest extension would be enough to get the law passed despite already missing Feb. 11 and April 5 deadlines. "We are all happy about this and confident that parliament will enact the bill within this period," Anti-Doping Agency of Kenya chief executive Japhter Rugut told The Associated Press.

Kenyan athletics federation vice president Paul Mutwii said "This is great ... athletes were jittery about anything that would make them not go to the Olympics. But with that one month, everything will be OK and they can

continue to train and do well in Rio."

Doping regulations aren't the only problems Kenya faces. Four senior athletics officials were suspended pending investigations by the IAAF into allegations they attempted to extort money from athletes in return for lenient bans. Also, an investigation by the AP recently found Kenyan runners who were banned for doping were still competing in international races.

Since the 2012 London Olympics, 40 Kenyan athletes have been banned, a rate of one nearly every month. The biggest name so far is Rita Jeptoo, who was about to win \$500,000 for being the top women's marathon runner in 2014 before it was announced she failed an out-of-competition test for the blood booster EPO. —AP

ROUSSEFF SCRAPS TORCH-LIGHTING TRIP TO GREECE

ATHENS: Embattled Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff has cancelled plans to attend the Rio de Janeiro 2016 Olympics torch-lighting ceremony in ancient Olympia later this month, Greece's Olympic Committee (HOC) said yesterday.

Rousseff, facing an impeachment effort over a series of scandals and probes in Brazil, had been set to attend the April 21 event along with Greek President Prokopis Pavlopoulos and the head of the International Olympic Committee, Thomas Bach.

The ritual at the birthplace of the Olympic Games in ancient Greece, traditionally marks the countdown to the world's biggest multi-sports event with a torch lighting ceremony and the start of a torch relay.

"The President of Brazil Dilma Rousseff has cancelled her presence at the event according to information provided to the Hellenic Olympic Committee (HOC) by the embassy of Brazil," event organisers HOC said in a statement.

There were no further details on her decision not to attend. Rio will host the first Olympics in South American from Aug 5-21, with their torch relay starting on May 3 in the capital Brasilia and ending in Rio on the day of the opening ceremony. However, preparations have been hit by the country's recent economic downturn, with Games organisers racing to save money through a series of last minute cost-cutting measures. They have also battled polluted waters, where sailing and rowing events will be held, as well as the threat of the mosquito-borne Zika virus that has spread across the continent. Ticket sales have also been lagging compared to previous Games with less than half of them sold, according to data announced by organisers last month.

Police and prosecutors have also said they suspect corruption in Olympic building projects carried out by the same construction and engineering firms charged with graft in a major scandal involving state-run oil company Petrobras. — Reuters



BASRA: Iraqi women take part in a local cycling championship on the highway between the southern city of Basra and the central provinces yesterday. — AFP



ROUILLE: French adventurer and quadruple amputee Philippe Croizon (L) poses with his copilot Matthieu Bouthet before driving the first laps in his Team Croizon-Tartarin race car in Rouille, western France, on Thursday. After swimming across the English Channel in 2010, Croizon has decided to participate in the 2017 Paris-Dakar race. — AFP

LIMBLESS MAN TO RIDE DAKAR RALLY NEXT YEAR

ROUILLE: Frenchman Philippe Croizon has no arms and no legs but that didn't stop him becoming the first quadruple amputee to swim the English Channel. And the 48-year-old adventurer has set his sights on a new challenge: To complete the Dakar Rally.

Croizon will drive a specially modified buggy during the gruelling two-week rally in Argentina next January, using just the stumps of his arms. "As I can neither touch the steering wheel or the peddles, I'll drive using a hydraulic joystick," he said.

"I'll manage the acceleration, braking and direction with the stump of my right arm. "With the left, I'll operate a selector. I push a button to talk to my co-driver, I push to gear shift up and pull to come back down; that replaces the

clutch—it's like a video game!"

Croizon has been living life from a wheelchair since 1994 when he was electrocuted while trying to take down his television aerial, subsequently having all four limbs amputated.

On Thursday, he was strapped into the seat to test the two-wheel buggy for the first time.

"I'm bound up like a roast dinner!", he joked. Because of his disability, Croizon's co-driver will have a lot more tasks than is the norm. "Usually I just look after the navigation but here I also have to start the engine, work the indicators, the horn, the windscreen wipers," said Matthieu Bouthet about his role in the 340 horsepower, V6 Nissan powered buggy. The vehicle is capable of reaching speeds of up to 150kph

(93mph) but Croizon isn't aiming to win the rally. "The aim is not to go for a time. My dream is not to challenge Sebastien Loeb, but to cross the finishing line in Buenos Aires," he said. "Seeing my dream through, not being one of the 51 percent who abandon, like last year."

Croizon will need to get used to spending 10-15 hours a day strapped into his buggy and he is giving himself eight months to prepare. "As before every adventure, I'm not going light-heartedly. I'm undertaking a massive physical training programme to prepare my arms, my glutes." There's just one more step to take, though, before Croizon can be sure to take part.

He needs to raise 600,000 euros (\$683,000) and he's currently short by 200,000 euros. —AFP

MOMOTA 'REGRETS BETRAYAL' AS POSSIBLE RIO BAN LOOMS

TOKYO: Japanese Olympic badminton medal hope Kento Momota made a sombre apology yesterday after jeopardising his place at this summer's Rio Games by visiting an illegal casino. The 21-year-old world number two, who last August became the first Japanese man to win a world championship medal with a bronze in Jakarta, and fellow offender Kenichi Tago face being booted off the Olympic team by the country's ruling body.

"I wanted to help bring joy and strength to the people of Fukushima by competing at the Rio Olympics," said Momota, who grew up in Fukushima, close to the site of the 2011 nuclear disaster.

"I deeply regret betraying every-

one's support and expectations," he added, speaking at a press conference aired on live television. "I had a duty to lead the Japan team but I let my curiosity get the better of me."

Japanese officials are set to hold an emergency board meeting this weekend to decide what action to take after the pair's team, NTT East Japan, confirmed the players placed bets at an underground casino which was raided by police last year.

Nippon Badminton Association Secretary General Kinji Zeniya burst into tears on television on Thursday and promised harsh sanctions, insisting it was "probably impossible" for the players to represent Japan in Rio. Momota, who has withdrawn from his

defence of the Singapore Open next week over the controversy, appeared to have dyed his highlighted hair black again as an act of contrition as he admitted to visiting the casino six times and gambling away 500,000 yen (around \$4,500).

Tago, a six-time Japanese champion who confessed to frequenting the casino on a more regular basis and spending over \$90,000, sobbed: "I'm deeply sorry for letting everyone down."

Government ministers lined up to condemn Momota, with Olympic Minister Toshiaki Endo fuming on Thursday: "It's a betrayal of the Olympic spirit. If proven, then 100 per cent he has no right to represent

Japan." Gambling is largely illegal in Japan and the incident comes after a betting scandal that sent shockwaves through the country's most popular sport, baseball, just as it is bidding for inclusion in the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. A ban for Momota would be a severe blow to Japan's Olympic hopes after he backed up his strong showing at the world championships by becoming the first Japanese player to win the Super Series Masters Finals in Dubai last December. People found guilty of gambling in Japan can face jail terms of up to five years.

Publicly operated gambling for sports such as horse racing and "keirin" bicycle racing, however, is legal. — AFP

RACING EYE TOULON'S SCALP

PARIS: Toulon will have to get past the hefty obstacle of a Dan Carter-inspired Racing 92 team in quarter-final action this weekend in their bid to nail down an unprecedented fourth consecutive European Cup title.

The star-studded Toulon side, with World Player of the Year Carter's long-time All Black teammate Ma'a Nonu at centre, landed an early blow over their last-four rivals in the Top 14 two weeks ago, a late Frederic Michalak penalty enough to snatch a 21-20 win.

"Toulon are reigning European champions and have experienced players," said Racing hooker Dimitri Szarzewski.

"We know what to expect—a big physical challenge against players capable of making the difference. We have to play the perfect match." History is certainly on Toulon's side come Sunday's game in Paris, the Mourad Boudjellal-financed club having won all of their last nine knockout matches in the Champions Cup.

Their only loss came in their first quarter-final against Perpignan in 2011. But with Carter pulling the strings behind a powerful pack, Racing have the capability to dethrone the champions.

In all, four mouth-watering fixtures will be played out today and tomorrow, an all Anglo-French affair with five teams from the Premiership and the three from the Top 14.

Aside from Toulon's trio of titles, three of the remaining English clubs won five titles in eight heady seasons, albeit between 2000-07 — Northampton (2000), Leicester (2001, 2002), Wasps (2004, 2007). English champions Saracens were beaten by Toulon in the 2014 final and lost out to Clermont in last season's semi-final.

Domestic rivals

But Saracens have been Europe's form side this season, claiming six pool wins from six to advance as top seeds and a match against domestic rivals Northampton.

"We have gone close in Europe over the last couple of seasons but we have not been able to get our hands on the trophy, which is what everyone wants to do," said Saracens flanker Jackson Wray.

"We obviously did well in the pool stage, we were really happy with how that part of the competition went and the competitiveness of the Premiership means we are confident of hitting that level again." Saracens welcome back the likes of Owen Farrell, Maro Itoje and Billy Vunipola, who were all vital parts of England's Grand Slam-winning Six Nations squad.

"The guys have come back and, as you would expect, they are buzzing and that enthusiasm and confidence rubs off on other guys," said Wray. Wasps take on Exeter in what could be a classic of running rugby. Wasps racked up big pool victories over Leinster (51-10 and 33-6), reigning champions Toulon (32-6) and Bath (36-10), and Exeter coach Rob Baxter admitted he was wary of their attacking game.

"The best way to nullify Wasps' attack isn't to defend it. The best way is to attack it yourself, to have the ball," Baxter said. "I think we have got to make sure we remember that. If we are attacking, they haven't got the ball, and that is a pretty good form of defence. That's the approach I want us to have."

On paper, the easiest of task seems to be Leicester's, at home against Stade Francais. The French champions have suffered a disastrous domestic campaign in their Top 14 title defence and sit only one place above the relegation places with realistically no hope of making the end of season play-offs. "We'll go there with no complex, with a lot of enthusiasm because it's our only knock-out phase," Stade's Italy captain and No 8 Sergio Parisse said. — AFP



AUGUSTA: Jordan Spieth tees off on the 12th hole during the first round of the Masters golf tournament Thursday, in Augusta, Ga. — AP

MASTERFUL SHOW FROM
'FLAWLESS' SPIETH

AUGUSTA: Jordan Spieth picked up where he left off at the Masters. After a dominating victory a year ago, the 22-year-old Texan threw up three early birdies on a breezy Thursday at Augusta National to claim the top spot on the leaderboard.

Spieth set a tournament record with 28 birdies in 2015, romping to his first major title with an 18-under score. That sparked one of the great years in golf history, as he went on to capture the US Open at Chambers Bay, just missed out on a play-off in the British Open, and took the runner-up spot behind Jason Day at the PGA Championship.

Day is now the top-ranked player in the world and came into the Masters as the betting favorite. Spieth might have something to say about that. He birdied the third hole, rolled in a 10-footer for another birdie at the sixth, and took

advantage of the par-5 eighth to become the first player to reach 3 under. He made the turn with a 33, one stroke ahead of Daniel Berger and a pair of Englishmen, Paul Casey and Matthew

Fitzpatrick. Even though the course was softened overnight by strong thunderstorms, the wind whipping across Augusta National made it tough to go low. It didn't seem to bother Spieth, who is trying to become only the fourth player to win back-to-back titles.

Tiger Woods was the last to do it in 2001 and 2002. The others: Jack Nicklaus and Nick Faldo.

Rivals

On the 30th anniversary of his sixth and last Masters title, Nicklaus joined Gary Player to hit the ceremonial opening tee shots shortly after sunrise. Arnold Palmer could only watch, having decided not to swing the club this year because of health issues.

The 86-year-old Palmer did ride a cart out to the first tee, offering that familiar wink and thumbs-up. He also posed for a picture with his two longtime rivals and friends, who combined to win seven straight Masters in the 1960s and collectively won 34 major championships.

Player, the 80-year-old South African who said he prepared by doing 1,300 sit-ups and crunches, belted his drive down the middle. The 76-year-old Nicklaus hit it higher and shorter. "Gary won his tournament this year," Nicklaus said with a grin. "I hit a pop-up." "I wouldn't be too concerned about me outdriving you too much," Player replied, "because you did it to me for 50 damn years."

But this moment was all about Palmer.

"It was gratifying and sad, because everything shall pass," Player said. "But it was nice to have him on the tee. I dedicated my first tee shot to him in respect. It's a very special moment." After the original "Big Three" stepped aside, the 80th Masters began for real.

Rickie Fowler's pursuit of his first major title got off to a rocky start, with a drive into the trees leading to a double-bogey at No 1. He bounced back with three birdies before a bogey at the seventh sent him around the turn with an even-par 36.

Day and four-time major champion Rory McIlroy had afternoon tee times. — AP

INDIAN PREMIER LEAGUE SET TO EASE T20 HEARTACHE

NEW DELHI: The glitzy Indian Premier League (IPL) starts today, helping to ease the heartache of millions of fans following India's failure to win the World Twenty20 on home soil this month. India's short-form extravaganza, famous for its fireworks and dancing cheerleaders as well as unwanted corruption scandals, gets under way with the Mumbai Indians taking on the Rising Pune Supergiants. Fans hope the cash-rich league, featuring blockbuster stars including Chris Gayle and Virat Kohli, will soothe the pain of India's shock semi-final defeat to eventual World T20 champions West Indies.

India went into the tournament as favourites but seriously under-performed, losing to New Zealand and only beating

Bangladesh on the last ball before prevailing over Australia to scrape into the final four. "It was a below par performance by Dhoni and company. I hope IPL helps us overcome the pain of the semi loss," Kolkata Knight Riders supporter Nehal Ahmed told AFP.

The ninth-edition of the franchise-based competition, which has revolutionised world cricket, will see eight teams clash in 60 matches at 10 different venues across India. "We Indian fans have a short memory. A good two months of IPL and we will forget all about World T20," said fan Modit Dhasmana, another ardent admirer of IPL razzamatazz.

The IPL is the most popular domestic league in the world but has been plagued

by controversies since its inception in 2008, with corruption and match-fixing cases often taking centre-stage.

A spot-fixing scandal in 2013 led to two teams-Chennai Super Kings and Rajasthan Royals-being suspended last year for two seasons. They have been replaced by Pune and Rajkot-based Gujarat Lions, who will be making their IPL debut in this edition, which runs until 29 May, when the final is in Mumbai.

The IPL, which has spawned a host of similar leagues around the world, was the brainchild of cricket administrator Lalit Modi, who is refusing to return from Britain to India to face corruption charges.

Despite the controversies, the IPL has attracted a host of foreign players who

have shaped or resurrected their careers and in turn have become household names in India.

Gayle, Kohli and AB

Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) Secretary Anurag Thakur believes the success of the IPL in attracting global stars, sell-out crowds and massive television revenues has proved critics wrong. IPL chairman Rajeev Shukla has insisted the reputation of the tournament remains intact despite the controversies.

"The response we have got during (the) bidding process shows how IPL is still popular and credibility is not lost," he said, referring to the league's auction earlier this year. — AFP

PENCE GRAND SLAM POWERS GIANTS PAST DODGERS 12-6

SAN FRANCISCO: Hunter Pence hit a grand slam in the eighth inning, Joe Panik drove in three runs to key San Francisco's comeback, and the Giants beat the Los Angeles Dodgers 12-6 in their home opener Thursday. The Dodgers' 31-inning shutout streak ended in the fifth, one inning shy of the record to begin a season set by the 1963 St. Louis Cardinals. Chris Heston (1-0) worked the sixth in relief of Jake Peavy for the victory as San Francisco erased a 4-0 deficit. Bruce Bochy bested his former outfielder and now-Dodgers manager Dave Roberts in their first matchup. In the fifth, Los Angeles finally gave up its first runs of 2016 when the Giants got to Alex Wood (0-1). Joc Pederson hit a two-run homer for the Dodgers.

YANKEES 8, ASTROS 5

Mark Teixeira sliced a tiebreaking, three-run homer in the seventh inning and Starlin Castro connected again, sending New York past Houston. The Yankees took two of three in the season-opening series against the team that beat them in the AL wild-card game last October. Castro kept up his torrid start with a solo home run and a single off the wall, making him 7 for 12. The former Cubs infielder has eight RBIs, the most by any player in his first three games for the Yankees since the stat became official in 1920, STATS said. Brian McCann also homered for the Yankees, and Jacoby Ellsbury doubled twice. Alex Rodriguez made it 5-all with his first hit of the season, an RBI single in the fifth. Tyler White hit his first homer in the majors, drove in four runs and got three hits for the Astros. He's 6 for 9 since making his big league debut this week. White and Preston Tucker lined consecutive home runs off Nathan Eovaldi in the second. Chasen Shreve (1-0) was the winner and Andrew Miller earned his first save. Will Harris (0-1) took the loss.

MARLINS 6, NATIONALS 4

Miami reliever David Phelps entered after a rain delay and shut out Washington for four innings while delivering his first career RBI at the plate, and the Marlins spoiled the Nationals' sloppy home opener in front of a dwindling crowd. While Phelps (1-0) replaced Adam Conley following a 1-hour, 25-minute break because of a thunderstorm in the second with the score 3-all, Nationals starter Tanner Roark (0-1) surprisingly remained in the game. Roark allowed four runs - three earned, all in the first - and nine hits in four innings. Bryce Harper was presented with his 2015 NL MVP and Silver Slugger trophies during pregame festivities and hit his second homer of 2016 in the seventh, a solo shot off Bryan Morris. Harper flied out to deep center to open the ninth against A.J. Ramos, who worked around a walk for his first save, striking out Daniel Murphy looking to end it.

REDS 10, PHILLIES 6

Jay Bruce homered twice and matched a career

high with five RBIs, and Cincinnati made a winner of top pitching prospect Robert Stephenson in his major league debut by beating Philadelphia to complete a season-opening sweep. Eugenio Suarez hit his first career grand slam and Bruce connected for a three-run shot as the Reds scored eight times in the fourth inning, ruining the big league debut of reliever Daniel Stumpf. Bruce capped the 13-batter outburst with an RBI single. Stephenson (1-0), a first-round draft pick in 2011, allowed six hits and four runs - three earned - in five innings. He was optioned back to Triple-A Louisville after the game. Cedric Hunter, Ryan Howard and Carlos Ruiz homered for the Phillies. The Reds are 3-0 for the second consecutive season. The loss was Philadelphia's eighth straight in Cincinnati. The Phillies are 0-3 for the first time since 2007. They have dropped seven in a row overall to the Reds. Charlie Morton (0-1) allowed six runs over 3 2/3 innings in his Phillies debut.

WHITE SOX 6, ATHLETICS 1

Mat Latos gave up one hit over six shutout innings for his first win since last July, Jose Abreu hit a two-run homer and Chicago beat Oakland to give manager Robin Ventura his 300th career win. Latos (1-0) was stellar in his White Sox debut. He retired 13 of the first 14 batters and didn't allow a baserunner until Chris Coghlan's one-out single in the fifth - one pitch after left fielder J.B. Shuck dropped Coghlan's foul ball. Abreu homered off Kendall Graveman (0-1) and added a sacrifice fly during Chicago's four-run ninth.

ORIOLES 4, TWINS 2

Ubaldo Jimenez pitched seven sharp innings



SAN FRANCISCO: Hunter Pence #8 of the San Francisco Giants hits a grand slam home run in front of Austin Barnes #28 of the Los Angeles Dodgers and umpire John Tumpane #74 during the eighth inning at AT&T Park on Thursday in San Francisco, California. — AFP

and Baltimore rallied to beat Minnesota for a three-game sweep. Manny Machado and rookie Joey Rickard homered for the Orioles, who trailed 2-0 in the sixth before coming back against Phil Hughes (0-1). Jimenez (1-0) gave up a first-inning homer to Joe Mauer and an unearned run in the second before bouncing back to hold the Twins at bay. The right-hander allowed eight hits, struck out nine and walked none. Jimenez retired 12 of the final 14 batters he faced, striking out seven.

Orioles rookie Dylan Bundy worked the eighth and Darren O'Day got his first save.

CUBS 14, DIAMONDBACKS 6

Anthony Rizzo matched his career high with six RBIs and the Chicago Cubs beat the Arizona Diamondbacks, but lost Kyle Schwarber with a sprained ankle in an outfield collision. Schwarber was hurt in the second inning when he collided with Dexter Fowler, a play that resulted in an inside-the-park home run for Arizona's Jean Segura. Segura also started the game with a homer. He is the eighth player in major league history to lead off with a home run and hit an inside-the-park homer in the same game. John Lackey (1-0) gave up six runs in eight hits over six innings in his Cubs debut, but got the win thanks to a five-run Chicago fourth inning. The Diamondbacks were up 3-0, 4-2 and 6-4, but starter Rubby De La Rosa (0-1) couldn't hold the leads.

ANGELS 4, RANGERS 3

Albert Pujols hit a bases-loaded single with two outs in the ninth inning to give the Los Angeles Angels their first victory of the season. Yunel Escobar drove in the Angels' first two runs with a homer and RBI single in the opener of a four-game series. Sam Dyson (0-1), who escaped a bases-loaded, no-out jam in the Angels' eighth, gave up a one-out single by Johnny Giavotella in the ninth and a walk to Escobar. Both advanced on a grounder to third by pinch-hitter Carlos Perez, and Pujols greeted Shawn Tolleson with a line drive to left-center on a 1-0 pitch after Andrew Faulkner's intentional walk to Mike Trout. Huston Street (1-0) pitched a perfect inning to get the win. — AP

MLB results/standings

Cincinnati 10, Philadelphia 6; Chicago White Sox 6, Oakland 1; NY Yankees 8, Houston 5; Miami 6, Washington 4; San Francisco 12, LA Dodgers 6; Baltimore 4, Minnesota 2; Chicago Cubs 14, Arizona 6; LA Angels 4, Texas 3.

American League					National League				
Eastern Division					Eastern Division				
	W	L	PCT	GB					
Baltimore	3	0	1.000	-	Washington	2	1	.667	-
NY Yankees	2	1	.667	1	NY Mets	1	1	.500	0.5
Tampa Bay	2	2	.500	1.5	Miami	1	2	.333	1
Toronto	2	2	.500	1.5	Atlanta	0	2	0	1.5
Boston	1	1	.500	1.5	Philadelphia	0	3	0	2
Central Division					Central Division				
Detroit	2	0	1.000	-	Chicago Cubs	3	0	1.000	-
Chicago White Sox	3	1	.750	-	Cincinnati	3	0	1.000	-
-					Pittsburgh	3	0	1.000	-
Cleveland	1	1	.500	1	Milwaukee	1	2	.333	2
Kansas City	1	1	.500	1	St. Louis	0	3	0	3
Minnesota	0	3	0	2.5	Western Division				
Western Division					LA Dodgers	3	1	.750	-
Seattle	2	1	.667	-	San Francisco	3	1	.750	-
Houston	1	2	.333	1	Colorado	2	1	.667	0.5
LA Angels	1	2	.333	1	Arizona	1	3	.250	2
Oakland	1	3	.250	1.5	San Diego	0	3	0	2.5
Texas	1	3	.250	1.5					

PENGUINS DOWN CAPITALS TO CLINCH PLAYOFF HOME-ICE ADVANTAGE

WASHINGTON: Sidney Crosby scored in overtime and the streaking Pittsburgh Penguins rebounded after blowing a three-goal lead to beat the Washington Capitals 4-3 on Thursday night to clinch home-ice advantage in the first round of the playoffs. The Penguins have won eight games in a row and 14 of their past 15 to vault into second place in the Metropolitan Division. The Presidents' Trophy-winning Capitals have lost three consecutive games for the first time all season and have dropped four of their past five. Matt Cullen scored twice and Matt Murray stopped 27 shots for the Penguins, who have thrived since losing star center Evgeni Malkin to an upper-body injury. Conor Sheary also scored for Pittsburgh. Marcus Johansson had two goals and Andre Burakovsky one for Washington. Braden Holtby made 31 saves but fell short in his second attempt to tie Martin Brodeur's single-season record of 48 wins.

STARS 4, AVALANCHE 2

Jason Dickinson scored in his first NHL game, and Dallas beat Colorado to move closer to the Central Division and Western Conference titles. With one game remaining for each team, the Stars and St. Louis are tied with 107 points, but Dallas holds the tiebreaker. Dallas hosts Nashville, and St. Louis hosts Washington, both on Saturday night. Dickinson was recalled from Texas of the AHL earlier Thursday because of injuries to Stars forwards, including 30-goal scorers Tyler Seguin and Jason Spezza. The game was scoreless until Dickinson backhanded a shot past Calvin Pickard from short range at 15:13 of the first period. Colton Sceviour and Jordie Benn scored on the power play in the second period, and Antoine Roussel added an empty-net goal with 3:06 remaining for the Stars. Francois Beauchemin and Shawn Matthias scored for Colorado in the third period.

BLUES 2, BLACKHAWKS 1, OT

Vladimir Tarasenko scored his second goal of the game at 3:37 of overtime, and St. Louis cooled off Chicago in a possible playoff preview. Tarasenko also tied it with 1:16 left in regulation with a laser from the left circle on a rebound attempt off a shot from Kevin Shattenkirk. His team-best 39th goal was an easy one, with Alex Pietrangelo making a nice pass to set up an open net for the winner. St. Louis won for the eighth time in nine games to remain tied with Dallas for the Central Division lead. Jonathan Toews scored for Chicago.

BRUINS 5, RED WINGS 2

Torey Krug had a goal and two assists, Brad Marchand and Loui Eriksson each added a goal and assist, and Boston beat Detroit to keep its playoff hopes alive. Tuukka Rask had 13 saves, and David Pastrnak and Lee Stempniak also scored to help Boston tie Detroit for third place in the Atlantic Division. Alexey Marchenko and Andreas Athanasiou scored for Detroit.

MAPLE LEAFS 4, FLYERS 3, OT

Jake Gardiner scored a power-play goal at 2:51 of overtime to lift Toronto past Philadelphia. The Flyers fell a point behind Boston and Detroit for the eighth seed in the Eastern Conference. But Philadelphia would secure a playoff berth by winning its last two games. The Bruins and Red Wings each have one game left and one of them is guaranteed a playoff berth that goes to the third-place team in the Atlantic Division. Wayne Simmonds scored the tying goal for the Flyers with 58 sec-

onds left and goalie Steve Mason pulled for the extra skater. With Andrew MacDonald in the penalty box for tripping, Gardiner ripped a slap shot past Mason to win it for the Leafs. William Nylander, Colin Greening and Michael Grabner also scored goals for Toronto, and Jonathan Bernier made 41 saves. Brayden Schenn and MacDonald also scored for the Flyers.

LIGHTNING 4, DEVILS 2

Jonathan Drouin scored the winning goal in his second-chance return to the NHL and Tampa Bay beat New Jersey to clinch home-ice advantage for the first round of the playoffs.

third pick overall in the 2013 draft walked away from the Lightning's American Hockey League affiliate in Syracuse in January after they refused to trade him. Tampa Bay suspended him and he did not return to the minors until asking general manager Steve Yzerman for a second chance. Drouin returned March 7 and had nine goals in a 10-game span. With Steven Stamkos (blood clot) and Ryan Callahan (lower body) out, the Lightning recalled the 21-year-old Drouin on Thursday, and it paid off.

ISLANDERS 4, RANGERS 1

John Tavares had a goal and an assist,



BOSTON: Detroit Red Wings defenseman Mike Green (25) trips over Boston Bruins center Frank Vatrano (72) after chasing the puck in the third period of an NHL hockey game, Thursday, in Boston. — AP

PREDATORS 3, COYOTES 2, OT

Roman Josi scored 20 seconds into overtime, and the Nashville Predators rallied in the third period to beat the Arizona Coyotes 3-2 on Thursday night in their home finale. The Predators trailed 2-0 with Arizona goalie Mike Smith making save after save until Connor Murphy went to the penalty box for elbowing at 7:13 of the third. Nashville needed only 13 seconds before captain Shea Weber scored his 20th goal this season from the left circle, and Filip Forsberg tied the franchise-record with his 33rd goal with 18.3 seconds left to force overtime. The puck had barely dropped when Josi scored quickly with a wrister past Smith. Antoine Vermette and Shane Doan scored for Arizona.

CANADIENS 4, HURRICANES 2

Max Pacioretty had a goal and an assist in Montreal's victory over Carolina. Charlie Lindgren had 26 saves in his first NHL appearance and Darren Dietz scored his first NHL goal late in the first period for Montreal. Daniel Carr and Lars Eller also scored. Riley Nash and Noah Hanifin scored for Carolina, and Cam Ward stopped 27 shots. No penalties were called against Carolina, with just one against Montreal.

FLAMES 7, CANUCKS 3

Mikael Backlund had his first NHL hat trick to help Calgary beat Vancouver. Backlund scored on a power play, at even strength and short-handed. The 27-year-old Swede has a career-high 21 goals after scoring only five goals through his first 50 games. Dougie Hamilton, Joe Colborne, Deryk Engelland and Sam Bennett also scored for Calgary. Nikita Tryamkin scored his first NHL goal, and Bo Horvat and Emerson Etem also scored for Vancouver.

SENATORS 3, PANTHERS 1

Buddy Robinson scored his first NHL goal to in Ottawa's victory over Florida. Craig Anderson made 32 saves in his 60th start of the season for Ottawa, and Mika Zibanejad and Cody Ceci added goals. Jaromir Jagr scored for Florida. The 44-year-old Jagr has 27 goals this season.

KINGS 2, DUCKS 1

Milan Lucic and Kris Versteeg scored 93 seconds apart in the second period, and the Los Angeles Kings closed in on just their second division title in franchise history. Jonathan Quick made 19 saves for the Kings, who opened a two-point lead on the Ducks atop the Pacific Division. The three-time defending Pacific champion Ducks still have a game in hand, but the Kings would clinch their first division title since the 1990-91 Smythe Division crown with a home victory over Winnipeg on Saturday in their regular-season finale. Ryan Kesler scored an early goal and John Gibson stopped 27 shots for the Ducks, who have lost three of four.

JETS 5, SHARKS 4

Dustin Byfuglien scored with 10 seconds remaining to give the Winnipeg Jets their first three-game winning streak of the season. Mark Scheifele had two goals for the Jets, who had won two straight 10 times before finally breaking through. Andrew Copp and Blake Wheeler also scored for the Jets. Patrick Marleau, Joe Pavelski, Joe Thornton and Paul Martin scored for the Sharks, who lost for the second time in their last six.—AP

NHL results/standings

Boston 5, Detroit 2; Tampa Bay 4, New Jersey 2; NY Islanders 4, NY Rangers 1; Toronto 4, Philadelphia 3 (OT); Pittsburgh 4, Washington 3 (OT); Montreal 4, Carolina 2; Ottawa 3, Florida 1; Nashville 3, Arizona 2 (OT); St. Louis 2, Chicago 1 (OT); Dallas 4, Colorado 2; Calgary 7, Vancouver 3; Los Angeles 2, Anaheim 1; Winnipeg 5, San Jose 4.

Western Conference													
Central Division													
	W	L	OTL	GF	GA	PTS							
Dallas	49	23	9	264	228	107	Tampa Bay	46	30	5	225	196	97
St. Louis	49	23	9	223	196	107	Detroit	41	29	11	209	221	93
Chicago	47	26	8	231	204	102	Boston	42	30	9	239	224	93
Nashville	41	26	14	226	212	96	Ottawa	37	35	9	230	246	83
Minnesota	38	32	11	215	204	87	Montreal	37	38	6	216	234	80
Colorado	39	38	4	213	235	82	Buffalo	34	35	11	196	215	79
Winnipeg	34	39	8	211	236	76	Toronto	29	41	11	197	241	69
Pacific Division							Metropolitan Division						
Los Angeles	48	28	5	222	191	101	Washington	55	17	8	247	190	118
Anaheim	44	25	11	211	189	99	Pittsburgh	48	25	8	244	200	104
San Jose	45	30	6	240	210	96	NY Islanders	45	26	9	227	207	99
Arizona	35	38	8	209	244	78	NY Rangers	45	27	9	233	215	99
Calgary	34	40	7	229	259	75	Philadelphia	39	27	14	206	215	92
Vancouver	30	38	13	187	240	73	Carolina	35	30	16	196	221	86
Edmonton	31	43	7	200	241	69	New Jersey	37	36	8	179	207	82
Eastern Conference							Columbus	32	40	8	210	247	72
Atlantic Division							Note: Overtime losses (OTL) are worth one point in the standings and are not included in the loss column (L).						
Florida	46	26	9	234	201	101							

Eric Condra and Cedric Paquette also scored and Ben Bishop made 20 saves as the injury plagued Lightning snapped a two-game losing streak and won for only the third time in seven games. Valtteri Filppula scored an empty-net goal in the final minute.

Sergey Kalinin scored twice for the Devils. As much as they wanted home-ice advantage, the story for the Lightning was Drouin. The

Thomas Greiss made 36 saves and the New York Islanders earned their first regular-season sweep of the New York Rangers. Shane Prince also had a goal and an assist, and Frans Nielsen and Casey Cizikas added goals for the Islanders. They moved into a tie for third with the Rangers with 99 points in the Metropolitan Division. Rangers defenseman Kevin Klein scored with 2:48 left to end Greiss' shutout bid.

NAPOLI EYES ON JUVENTUS TRIP TO SAN SIRO

MILAN: The fall-out from Gonzalo Higuain's four-match ban will overshadow Serie A this weekend, when the Argentine striker and his Napoli team-mates will be glued to a crucial San Siro clash between AC Milan and Juventus.

Sitting three points behind Juventus before last week's games, Napoli's bid for a first Serie A title in 26 years looks to be in tatters following a shock 3-1 defeat at Udinese that saw Higuain lose the plot after being shown a red card.

Higuain pushed and insulted referee Massimiliano Irrati and had to be restrained by teammates before being dragged off the pitch. His moment of madness led to a four-match ban and, with Juventus now six points in front, will be seen as a pivotal moment in Napoli's title quest. Although Napoli are set to appeal what they regard as an "unfair sanction", their best hopes now lie with Juventus slipping up along the way as they look to secure a fifth consecutive title.

But the champions are on an unbeaten run of 21 games, and defender Andrea Barzagli believes Juve's strength and belief will prevail. A win would allow coach Massimiliano Allegri to walk away victorious from the club that sacked him in January 2014. "Winning at Milan would be a big step towards the title. We will have one less game to play and be even closer to our objective," Barzagli told juventus.com.

"In recent years we've become a stronger side thanks to our belief and to the hard work we've put in, so we feel like we deserve our place in the table. "But our feet are firmly on the ground." A 21st win in 22 games would take Juve's lead over Napoli to a morale-sapping nine points a day before Maurizio Sarri's men host basement side Verona at the San Paolo.

But Milan haven't surrendered yet, and Napoli's players will be praying the Rossoneri cause an upset with a home win that would reignite the title race and boost Milan's Europa League hopes.

New reality

Milan are currently 24 points behind Juventus, 14 off the last Champions League spot and six behind Inter Milan, who occupy the last Europa League spot. The pressure on coach Sinisa Mihajlovic increased after last week's 2-1 defeat at Atalanta, meaning Milan have taken only two points from their last four games.

It is hardly what you expect from a club that have been European champions seven times, but struggling to qualify for the Champions League is now the reality for Rossoneri fans. Meanwhile, captain and midfielder Riccardo Montolivo says the club, and the players, are fully behind the boss.

"The team is and always will be behind Mihajlovic. I know him better than anyone else here, and when he's under pressure that's when you get the best out of him," said Montolivo.

"Together, we're working hard to get out of a sticky situation. It will be a tough game on Saturday, but we'll be a different side when we go out on the pitch."

Milan will have one eye on Inter's visit to Frosinone earlier on Saturday, although Roberto Mancini's men are expected to prevail at the league strugglers having won the corresponding fixture 4-0 earlier this season. Higuain will serve the first match of his ban on Sunday, when Manolo Gabbiadini should step into the centre of Sarri's three-pronged attack alongside Lorenzo Insigne and Jose Callejon.

Anything less than a win against a Verona side that has been rooted to the bottom most of the campaign would likely spark early title celebrations in Turin.

It would also boost Roma's hopes of overtaking Napoli and clinching the league's second automatic Champions League qualifying spot. Roma are third but only four points behind Napoli before hosting Bologna on Monday. —AFP



BILBAO: Athletic Bilbao's Aritz Aduriz, second right, duels for the ball with Sevilla's goalkeeper David Soria during the quarterfinal first leg of the Europa League soccer match, between Athletic Bilbao and Sevilla, at San Mames stadium, in Bilbao, northern Spain, Thursday. Sevilla won the match 2-1.—AP

SUAREZ-LESS BARCA SEEK WIN AT REAL SOCIEDAD

MADRID: Barcelona must overturn a terrible run of results away to Real Sociedad in recent years to prevent losing their grip on the Spanish title race when they visit Anoeta today. Despite tasting defeat for the first time in 40 games on their last La Liga outing at home to Real Madrid last weekend, Barca still hold a commanding six-point lead over Atletico Madrid with Real a further point adrift and just seven games remaining.

However, the European champions haven't won in their last six trips to San Sebastian, including defeats in the last three seasons in La Liga. "We have shown in recent years that we can beat Barca and we can do it again today," Real Sociedad's former Real Madrid midfielder Asier Illarramendi told the club's website.

"This team can beat anyone when we play well. "Until it is mathematically decided Barca will have to fight and I am sure Atletico and Real Madrid won't give up." Barca have particularly bad memories of their last visit to Anoeta as a 1-0 defeat plunged the club into crisis and left coach Luis Enrique on the verge of the sack. Luis Enrique had left Lionel Messi and Neymar on the bench as a

punishment for arriving back later than their teammates from their Christmas break. Barca recovered in style from that setback to land the treble six months later, but their quest to become the first side to retain the Champions League could play a major role in the coach's selection as they hold a precarious 2-1 lead over Atletico heading into the second leg of their quarter-final tie on Wednesday.

Luis Suarez scored both Barca's goals against Atletico on Tuesday, but the Uruguayan will definitely miss out as he is suspended. Munir El Haddadi is likely to replace Suarez with Sergi Roberto, Arda Turan and Rafinha—who made his first appearance after a six-month injury layoff in midweek—in contention to start in midfield.

Champions League considerations are likely to weigh heavily on the minds of Atletico and Real bosses Diego Simeone and Zinedine Zidane. Atletico can close to within three points with victory at Espanyol before Barca kick-off today. Fernando Torres looks certain to start as he will be suspended for the Champions League return leg after being sent-off having opened the scoring at the Camp Nou on Tuesday.

Benzema doubtful

Real's hopes of an 11th European Cup also suffered a huge blow as they were shocked 2-0 by Wolfsburg on Wednesday leaving Zidane's men needing a monumental effort when the Germans visit the Santiago Bernabeu to progress to the last four.

Having admitted his side suffered physically after their efforts in the Clasico last weekend, Zidane is likely to ring the changes for the visit of Basque minnows Eibar on Saturday.

Karim Benzema is set to miss out despite the knee injury that forced him off against Wolfsburg being diagnosed as just a knock. Dani Carvajal, Isco, James Rodriguez and Jese Rodriguez are all set to feature, but Gareth Bale and Cristiano Ronaldo are expected to start. At the other end of the table, Valencia need to snap a run of four consecutive league defeats to ensure they aren't dragged into a relegation scrap when Sevilla visit the Mestalla seeking their first away win of the season.

Villarreal and Athletic Bilbao's Europa League commitments could also have serious consequences at the bottom as they host struggling Getafe and Rayo Vallecano respectively. —AFP

BORUSSIA BOSS WARNS BAYERN AHEAD OF STUTTGART DERBY

BERLIN: Borussia Dortmund's CEO Hans-Joachim Watzke has warned Bayern Munich that his team is ready to pounce in the Bundesliga title race should Pep Guardiola's leaders slip up at Stuttgart on Saturday.

With only six games left, the Bavarian giants are five points clear of second-placed Dortmund but face a tricky tie at Stuttgart in the south Germany derby.

Guardiola's side has shown signs of fatigue in recent weeks. They laboured to a 1-0 win over Benfica in the Champions League on Tuesday on the back of a workmanlike 1-0 victory over relegation-threatened Eintracht

Frankfurt in the league. "Bayern have to go to Stuttgart and that won't be a friendly game," said Watzke, indulging in some mind games certain to annoy Bayern's bosses.

"Bayern need to make sure they give nothing more away this season, otherwise we will certainly be there (to take advantage)." Likewise, Dortmund must keep winning to stand any chance of a first league title since 2012 and they are at arch-rivals Schalke on Sunday in the Ruhr Valley derby.

Bayern are bidding to come the first German club to win four straight Bundesliga titles, having won the league at a canter for

the last three seasons. But Watzke is pleased that Dortmund still have even a remote chance of breaking the Bavarians' monopoly.

"At this stage of the season in recent years, it's all been decided. At least now we are forcing Bayern into keep producing top performances," he added, with Dortmund seeking to keep the pressure up until the final league weekend on May 14. In Stuttgart, Bayern will be without Dutch winger Arjen Robben, who has not played since mid-March because of a groin injury.

"I am working on my return, but there is no schedule," he told magazine Kicker.

And France winger Kingsley Coman struggled in Wednesday's training session after a leg knock. Stuttgart will be without Ivory Coast midfielder Serey Die, who will miss the rest of the season with a torn groin.

Guardiola is set to rotate his squad to keep his stars fresh for Wednesday's Champions League quarterfinal, second leg, at Benfica as the Bavarians take their slender 1-0 lead to Portugal.

After he sat out Thursday's 1-1 draw at home to Liverpool with a foot injury, Dortmund's Ilkay Gundogan is doubtful for Sunday's derby against Schalke.—AFP


Matches on TV
(Local Timings)

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE

West Ham United v Arsenal	14:45
beIN SPORTS 2 HD	
Aston Villa v Bournemouth	17:00
beIN SPORTS 9 HD	
Southampton v Newcastle	17:00
beIN SPORTS 7 HD	
Crystal Palace v Norwich City	17:00
beIN SPORTS 11 HD EN	
Watford v Everton	17:00
beIN SPORTS 8 HD	
Swansea City v Chelsea	17:00
beIN SPORTS 2 HD	
Man City v West Bromwich	19:30
beIN SPORTS 2 HD	

SPANISH LEAGUE

Real Madrid v SD Eibar	17:00
beIN SPORTS 3 HD	
Espanyol v Atletico	19:15
beIN SPORTS 3 HD	
Real Sociedad v Barcelona	21:30
beIN SPORTS 3 HD	
Real Betis v Levante	23:05
beIN SPORTS 2 HD	

ITALIAN CALCIO LEAGUE

Frosinone v Inter Milano	16:00
beIN SPORTS 4 HD	
Sassuolo Calcio v Genoa CFC	19:00
beIN SPORTS 7 HD	
AC Chievo Verona v Carpi	19:00
beIN SPORTS 4 HD	
AC Milan v Juventus FC	21:45
beIN SPORTS 4 HD	

GERMAN BUNDESLIGA

Werder Bremen v Augsburg	16:30
beIN SPORTS 10 HD	
Eintracht v Hoffenheim	16:30
beIN SPORTS	
Hamburger v Darmstadt	16:30
beIN SPORTS	
Stuttgart v Bayern Munich	16:30
beIN SPORTS 5 HD	
Ingolstadt v Monchengladbach	16:30
beIN SPORTS 1 HD	
VfL Wolfsburg v FSV Mainz 05	19:30
beIN SPORTS 5 HD	

FRENCH LEAGUE

Guingamp v PSG	18:00
beIN SPORTS 6 HD	
Angers v GFC Ajaccio	21:00
beIN SPORTS	
Caen v Lorient	21:00
beIN SPORTS 6 HD	
Stade de Reims v Nantes	21:00
beIN SPORTS	
Saint Etienne v Troyes	21:00
beIN SPORTS	
Toulouse FC v Bastia	21:00
beIN SPORTS	

GRITTY CITY CAN'T AFFORD TO RELAX, WARNS NAVAS

MANCHESTER: Manchester City have edged closer to a place in the Champions League semi-finals but Jesus Navas has warned they can't afford to relax when they return to Premier League action today.

City's 2-2 draw at Paris St-Germain in the first leg of their quarter-final has made them favourites to progress to the last four following next Tuesday's return meeting at Eastlands.

But before that, City face a visit from West Bromwich Albion as they look to make sure they are not reliant on winning the Champions League to guarantee playing in the competition again next season.

And City know they can't afford any distractions as they look to secure a top-four finish - regardless of whether they go on to win Europe's elite club competition for the first time.

Manuel Pellegrini's side are currently in fourth place, but only one point ahead of Manchester United and three in front of West Ham. Their 4-0 win at Bournemouth last Saturday was only their second victory in seven league games and, remarkably, the 2014 champions have not won a home league fixture since mid-January. Mid-table West Brom, seemingly with little to play for, have never won at Eastlands and another win today would give City a double over the Midlands for the fifth successive season.—AFP

LIVERPOOL EARN DRAW ON KLOPP'S DORTMUND REUNION

DORTMUND: Jurgen Klopp's Liverpool grabbed a precious away goal on his emotional return to Borussia Dortmund as Thursday's Europa League quarter-final, first leg finished in a 1-1 draw. A superb finish from Liverpool striker Divock Origi was cancelled out by a bullet header from Dortmund captain Mats Hummels but the result favours the English side ahead of the return at Anfield in a week's time. On his much-hyped return to the Ruhr Valley, Liverpool manager Klopp received a warm welcome at Dortmund's Signal Iduna Park, where he enjoyed seven years as Borussia coach in which he won two Bundesliga titles and one German Cup.

His name received a loud cheer from the home fans when it was read out before kick-off and he hugged Dortmund CEO Hans-Joachim Watzke on the halfway line during the warm-up. Both sets of supporters gave a rousing rendition of the two clubs' anthem 'You'll Never Walk Alone' in front of a sell-out crowd of 65,848, but once kick-off came it was down to business.

Dortmund made the stronger start with two clear chances in the opening half. With a quarter of an hour gone, Marco Reus snapped up Adam Lallana's clearance but fired his low drive just wide of Liverpool goalkeeper Simon Mignolet's right post.

The game had to be paused on 21 minutes when James Milner's free-kick found Dejan Lovren. The Croatian clashed heads with Roman Weidenfeller in the goal-mouth scramble and the Dortmund goalkeeper needed medical treatment before he could carry on.

Dortmund then wasted a golden chance when the Liverpool defence left Henrikh Mkhitaryan unmarked, but the midfielder dragged his shot just wide on 34 minutes. And the hosts were left to regret their missed opportunities when Liverpool struck. Milner, who was superb all night, flicked a pass to Origi and the Belgian striker slotted past Weidenfeller with a superb low drive, and a slight deflection, with 36 minutes gone.

Klopp produced his trademark pumped-fist celebration on the touch-line and Liverpool almost got a second when Milner's shot was blocked by Lukasz Piszczek on 40 minutes.

Dortmund coach Thomas Tuchel brought on ex-Liverpool midfielder Nuri Sahin for Germany international Erik Durm at the start of the second half to give the hosts fresh impetus, and they were level within three minutes of the restart. Hummels attacked a Mkhitaryan cross and got up above Lallana to head home the equaliser. However, only a brilliant save from Weidenfeller just moments later stopped Liverpool going 2-1 up.

Philippe Coutinho found space and hit his shot towards the bottom left corner, but the Dortmund shot-stopper got down in time as it finished all square.

Dortmund were arguably better on the night, but Klopp's Liverpool will start next Thursday's return leg at Anfield as favourites to reach the semi-finals.—AFP



DORTMUND: Liverpool's Adam Lallana, left, and Dejan Lovren, center challenge for the ball with Dortmund's goalkeeper Roman Weidenfeller, right, during the Europa League first leg quarterfinal soccer match between Borussia Dortmund and Liverpool FC in Dortmund, Germany, Thursday. — AP

ARSENAL CAN LEARN FROM LEICESTER 'FAIRYTALE'

LONDON: Arsene Wenger insists he has not given up on Arsenal's Premier League title challenge but admits there are lessons to be learnt from Leicester's dominance at the top of the table.

Wenger's third-placed side, who lie 11 points adrift of the leaders, head to West Ham today where they will seek the third successive victory they need to keep their slender hopes of becoming champions alive. Consecutive wins against Everton and Watford have raised hopes they could yet end a frustrating season on a high but Wenger is realistic enough to know Arsenal's main priority is to ensure they do not get dragged back towards those clubs - including West Ham - currently on the fringe of the top four. And if, as expected, Wenger is forced to contemplate another failed bid to deliver the title to the Emirates Stadium for the first time since 2004, the manager will point to Leicester's recruitment strategy as the key to the leaders' unexpected success.

"What we learn from Leicester City is what I knew for a long time, which is that it's not just only down to the amount of money you spend," Wenger said. "It's down to the quality of players you bring in and sometimes the opportunities are not always necessarily linked with the amount of money. "If you look well, they finished very strongly last season and on top of that they brought some players in who have given them something more, like N'Golo Kante. He had a huge impact."

RAISED EYEBROWS

With games running out, Wenger acknowledges Arsenal need to win virtually all their remaining matches to

have any chance of a stunning title triumph. "We know that we need nearly the perfect run and we know as well that we don't look only in front of us, we look behind us as well," he added. "We are chased by a group of teams who can make it very difficult for us so we have just to focus on our performance and hope we finish in a very strong way. "As long as it's mathematically possible, there's a strong possibility we can catch Leicester."

"You look at the difficulty of the Premier League and they have been very consistent but every game is very, very tight. That can go the other way." Aaron Ramsey could return to the squad but Wenger is unlikely to change the starting line-up that has delivered successive wins. West Ham won at Arsenal on the opening day of the season, a result that raised eyebrows at the time. The Hammers' form since then, however, has demonstrated that performance was no one off and while last weekend's home draw with Crystal Palace dented their hopes of qualifying for the Champions League, boss Slaven Bilic and his players have not given up on reaching the top four. "We are both fighting for a place in Europe and from their point of view, they're trying to be champions," Bilic said.

"They admitted that they must win all their remaining games, so it's a big game with a lot at stake."

The game marks the start of a defining eight days in West Ham's season with the FA Cup quarter-final replay with Manchester United on April 13 followed by a trip to Leicester next Sunday. "We play Arsenal, then have a cup replay against Manchester United, then go to Leicester," Bilic said.—AFP

Sports



**Limbless man
to ride Dakar
Rally next year**

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OAKLAND: Stephen Curry #30 of the Golden State Warriors goes up to score on a reverse layup against the San Antonio Spurs in the third quarter of an NBA Basketball game at ORACLE Arena on Thursday in Oakland, California. —AFP

WARRIORS DOWN SPURS TO KEEP CHASE ALIVE

OAKLAND: Stephen Curry scored 27 points and the Golden State Warriors became the second team to win 70 games in a season by beating the San Antonio Spurs 112-101 on Thursday night, wrapping up home-court advantage throughout the playoffs. The Warriors (70-9) bounced back from their second loss in three home games two nights earlier against Minnesota and joined the 1995-96 Chicago Bulls as the only teams to win 70 games. Golden State can break Chicago's single-season record of 72 wins by sweeping the final three games, including a rematch in San Antonio tomorrow. Harrison Barnes scored 21 points and Draymond Green added 18 to help the Warriors avoid losing back-to-back games for the first time this season. Golden State has outscored the opposition by 14.6 points per game following its nine losses. Kawhi Leonard scored 23 points for the Spurs, who will enter the playoffs next weekend as the second seed in the West.

HEAT 106, BULLS 98

Dwyane Wade scored 21 points, Joe

Johnson added 17 and Miami shook off a slow first half to beat Chicago, clamping down in the final minutes for its ninth win in the last 10 home games. Goran Dragic and Hassan Whiteside each had 16 points and 12 rebounds for Miami, which has 14 consecutive games of scoring 100 or more at home - the second-longest such streak in franchise history. Luol Deng scored 13, Josh Richardson had 11 and Amare Stoudemire added 10 for the Heat (46-32), who remained fifth in the Eastern Conference. Jimmy Butler scored 25 points for the Bulls (39-40), who now need a series of miracles to get into the postseason. Pau Gasol finished with 21 points and 12 rebounds, and Derrick Rose scored 17 for Chicago.

HAWKS 95, RAPTORS 87

Jeff Teague scored 23 points, Kyle Korver added 14 and Atlanta held off Toronto. It was one of the season's best performances for the Hawks, who remained in third place in the Eastern Conference by beating the East's No. 2 seed. With Paul Millsap scoring 13 points and

Al Horford, Tim Hardaway Jr. and Mike Scott each adding 11, Atlanta used a balanced attack to knock off Toronto for the first time in four tries this season. The Hawks have won 16 of 21 and are a half-game ahead of Boston for the third spot in the East. Toronto dropped 31/2 games behind first-place Cleveland. Kyle Lowry and DeMar DeRozan each finished with 16 points and Jonas Valanciunas had 13 for the Raptors. Toronto has dropped two of three.

SUNS 124, ROCKETS 115

Mirza Teletovic scored 26 points off the bench, P.J. Tucker added 24 and Phoenix dealt another blow to Houston's dwindling playoff chances. It's the second straight loss for the Rockets, who entered the day in ninth place in the Western Conference after a loss at Dallas on Wednesday. The game was back and forth through the first few minutes of the fourth quarter before the Suns took over. They scored 10 straight points, with eight coming on free throws, to take a 117-110 lead with 1:03 left and send fans streaming for the exits. Tyson Chandler added 21

points for the Suns, who snapped a NBA-high, seven-game skid. James Harden led Houston with 30 points.

TIMBERWOLVES 105, KINGS 97

Gorgui Dieng had 18 points and 13 rebounds, Zach LaVine and Nemanja Bjelica also scored 18 points, and Minnesota beat Sacramento. The Timberwolves led for most of the game in following up their victory at Golden State by sweeping the four-game series against the Kings. Karl-Anthony Towns had 17 points and 10 rebounds and Andrew Wiggins scored 15 points for the Timberwolves. Bjelica made four 3-pointers and his point total was a career high. Darren Collison had 19 points and six assists in the Kings' third straight loss. Quincy Acy scored 17 points, Willie Cauley-Stein had 15 and Rudy Gay finished with 13 points and 13 rebounds. Kings coach George Karl rested DeMarcus Cousins, the team's leading scorer and rebounder, and Rajon Rondo, who leads the NBA in assists. This was Sacramento's 32nd different starting lineup. — AP