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RIYADH: (Left) HH the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah is welcomed at the airport by Saudi King Salman yesterday. (Right) US President Barack Obama and King Salman walk together to a meeting at Erga Palace yesterday. — KUNA/AP



By B Izzak and Agencies

KUWAIT: Kuwait's state oil firm said yesterday it expects to restore full production within three days after workers ended a strike in a surprise about-turn that triggered a renewed slide in world prices. The walkout by thousands of staff of Kuwait Petroleum Corp (KPC) and its subsidiaries on Sunday in a dispute over planned pay cuts had slashed the state's output from 3.0 million barrels per day to 1.5 million and prompted a brief rally in world prices.

But early yesterday, the Kuwait Oil Workers Union announced its members were returning to work after what it called an "extremely successful" strike that had made the government pay attention to their concerns. Staff were already returning to work in response to the union's call, KPC said, adding that operations at its installations were resuming. Company spokesman Sheikh Talal Khaled Al-Sabah said a gradual return to normal production of 3.0 million bpd "would take around three days".

The union's surprise announcement, which came just hours after its leaders had vowed to continue the strike until all their demands were met, quashed hopes the disruption could help ease a persistent supply glut and saw oil shed nearly a dollar on world markets. Prices "are coming under pressure again... after oil workers in Kuwait agreed to end their strike against wage and job cuts and work to return output to pre-strike levels", said analyst Craig Erlam at trading firm Oanda.

The climbdown by the union came after an appeal by acting oil minister Anas Al-Saleh on Tuesday night for staff to return to work so that negotiations could be held on their demands. "We cannot sit at the negotiat-

ing table while the strike is still going on. Return to work and come and negotiate," he told the private Al-Rai satellite television.

HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Mubarak Al-Sabah met yesterday with the union's leaders after they called off the strike. They discussed "the negative impact of the strike and halting production at the vital oil facilities in addition to losses" caused by the industrial action, said an official statement. The premier said the government would fully respect any right for employees under the law but it was not possible to "respond to any demands under the pressure of work stoppage and disruption to vital interests," said the statement quoted by the official KUNA news agency.

The union has yet to comment on the talks. The workers' demands include dropping plans to cut some benefits in the face of falling oil prices and excluding the sector from a new payroll scheme for public employees. Saleh, who is also finance minister, said the government had not yet implemented any decision regarding oil workers' pay. The prime minister said KPC did not plan to cut its workers' wages or their end of service indemnities. But he added that the company had decided to reduce future pay rises in line with spending cuts adopted in other state organizations.

He said that average monthly pay for oil sector staff in Kuwait was around \$22,000, compared with about \$4,200 for civil servants. Saleh said that KPC planned to cut the annual pay rise received by its staff from 7.5 percent of their basic salary to 5.0 percent. Kuwait posted budget windfalls for 16 consecutive fiscal years due to high oil

Continued on Page 13

OBAMA MEETS SAUDI KING

RIYADH: US President Barack Obama held talks with Saudi Arabia's King Salman yesterday as he began a two-day visit hoping to ease tensions with the historic US ally. Riyadh and its Sunni Arab Gulf neighbors have bristled at what they see as Washington's tilt towards their regional rival Shiite Iran after Tehran's landmark nuclear deal with world powers. Obama, making probably his last visit to Riyadh as president, attends a summit of Gulf leaders today hoping to focus on intensifying the fight against the Islamic State group and resolving the wars in Syria and Yemen.

King Salman greeted the arriving Gulf leaders at a central Riyadh airbase but was not present when Obama landed at King Khalid International Airport in the city's north. It was a more low-key reception than for Obama's previous trip to the kingdom, after the death of King Abdullah in January 2015. Then, Salman along with his crown prince and deputy crown prince greeted Obama as a military band played.

After waving and walking down a red carpet on the stairs from Air Force One, he was greeted this time by Prince Faisal bin Abdulaziz, the governor of Riyadh, and Foreign Minister Adel Al-Jubeir. Saudi state news

channel Al-Ekhbaria did not broadcast Obama's arrival although it did have live coverage of the Gulf leaders' landing.

"I and the Saudi people are very pleased that you Mr President are visiting us," Salman said at his Erga Palace before a two-hour meeting with Obama, who responded that the United States was "very grateful for your hospitality". The kingdom's official Saudi Press Agency gave no detail of the talks but said they included "combating terrorism". Obama was to meet later with Abu Dhabi's Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan to see how to "reinforce cooperation to defeat the Islamic State group", the White House said.

Tensions between Riyadh and Washington have increased sharply due to what Saudi Arabia sees as Obama's disengagement from traditional US allies in the region and opening towards Iran. Though the visit is being touted as an "alliance-building" effort, "it will just as likely highlight how far Washington and Riyadh have drifted apart in the past eight years," Simon Henderson, of the Washington Institute for Near East

Continued on Page 13

HOUTHIS JOIN PEACE TALKS IN KUWAIT

SANAA: Yemen peace talks are to start today in Kuwait, the United Nations said, after rebels agreed to join the delayed negotiations following assurances pro-government forces would respect a ceasefire. "The Yemeni peace negotiations will start tomorrow in Kuwait under the auspices of the United Nations," UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric said from New York. A delegation of rebels left Yemen's capital yesterday to join the talks saying the United Nations had assured them over the ceasefire.

Representatives of the Houthi rebels and their allies boarded an Omani plane bound for Kuwait via Muscat, said a Sanaa airport official. The UN-brokered talks had been set to open in Kuwait on Monday but were put off after the Iran-backed insurgents failed to show up over alleged Saudi violations of the ceasefire, which took effect on April 11.

Continued on Page 13

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KUWAIT: His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah arrives to attend a ceremony to honor winners of Kuwait's International Quran Memorization and Recitation Competition.



His Highness Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah awards a contestant. — KUNA photos

CROWN PRINCE ATTENDS QURAN AWARDS CEREMONY



Minister of Justice and Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Yaqoub Al-Sane speaks at the event.



A contestant receives his award from His Highness Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.



His Highness Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah is honored during the event.



Dr. Mohammad Mundekar, head of the panel of judges selecting the winners makes his speech.

KUWAIT: Under the patronage of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah attended a ceremony to honor winners of Kuwait's International Quran Memorization and Recitation Competition, held at Bayan Palace yesterday.

The ceremony was also attended by National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem, His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-

Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, the nation's ministers, governors and state senior officials in the Army and the National Guard.

In his speech at the event, Minister of Justice and Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Yaqoub Al-Sane said that the competition and the awards ceremony have propagated the name of Kuwait and made it known to everyone that Kuwait sponsors this event to show that it champions the val-

ues of coexistence, tolerance, pluralism, and accepting the other. He congratulated the winners of this year's competition, stressing the need for shunning extremism and embracing the true values of Islam and the Holy Quran.

In a similar speech, Dr. Mohammad Mundekar, head of the panel of judges selecting the winners, thanked His Highness the Amir for his patronage and His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince for attending this year's ceremony, finalizing a

competition in which many competitors from around the world took part.

He asked that everyone should follow the instructions of the Holy Quran in pursuing that which is good in life and shunning that which is bad, stressing the need to embrace tolerance and togetherness among all strata of the public. At the end of the ceremony His Highness Deputy Amir and Crown Prince handed awards to this year's winners of the annual competition which is currently in its seventh year. — KUNA

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CROWN PRINCE MEETS SAUDI IMAM

KUWAIT: His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah welcomed the Imam of Al-Masjid Al-Nabawi Ali bin Abdulrahman Al-Huthaifi and his accompanying delegation yesterday. Minister of Justice, Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Yaqoub Al-Sane and His Highness the Crown Prince's Protocol Chief Sheikh Mubarak Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah attended the meeting. Meanwhile, His Highness Sheikh Nawaf met with National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah at Bayan Palace. — KUNA



KUWAIT: His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with the Imam of Al-Masjid Al-Nabawi Ali bin Abdulrahman Al-Huthaifi. — KUNA

GCC STATES, US PARTNERS FOR GULF PEACE: ENVOY



MANAMA: Kuwaiti Ambassador to Bahrain Sheikh Azzam Mubarak Al-Sabah (right) attends a reception held by the US diplomatic mission. — KUNA

MANAMA: The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) States and the United States of America are partners in making peace in the Gulf region, the Kuwaiti envoy to the Kingdom of Bahrain said. Dean of the diplomatic corps, Kuwaiti Ambassador to Bahrain Sheikh Azzam Mubarak Al-Sabah made the affirmation during a reception held by the US diplomatic mission, marking the United States' National Day which falls on July 4.

Member States of the Gulf Cooperation Council view America a strategic partner for achieving stability and security in the region, in a fashion that serves global sustainable development and peace, Ambassador Sheikh Azzam stated. The reception was held last Tuesday aboard a battleship of the US Fifth Fleet, stationed in the Kingdom.

Sheikh Azzam's remarks coincides with a planned US-GCC Summit, due in Riyadh today, involving in addition to President Barack Obama and top leaders of the GCC member countries, including His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. Countering terrorism is forecast to be among the main topics of the top-level deliberations. Bahrain, Kuwait and the other GCC countries are allies or maintain close ties with Washington. — KUNA

KIPCO SUPPORTS 'WOMEN IN CORPORATE WORLD' CONFERENCE

EVENT DISCUSSES GENDER DIVERSITY IN WORKPLACE

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Projects Company (KIPCO) is partnering with Alghanim Industries and Gulf Bank in the upcoming conference, 'Women in the Corporate World: Beyond the Glass Ceiling'. The event will take place on Wednesday, May 4, at Jumeirah Messilah Beach Hotel.

This conference brings together influential international, regional and local leaders to discuss the importance of having gender diversity in the workplace and ways in which women can break through the glass ceiling that is keeping them from rising up the corporate ladder. Participating as an international keynote speaker is Randi Zuckerberg, former Director of Market Development and Spokesperson for Facebook. The agenda also includes local keynote speakers and two panel discussions on 'How to Make Work-Life Balance a Reality' and 'How Gender Role Identity Affects Career Succession'.

Eman Al-Awadhi, KIPCO's Group Communications Director,



Eman Al-Awadhi

said: "Supporting gender diversity and equality in the workplace is an issue that is being discussed at the highest level across the globe. Gender diversity was highlighted at the World Economic Forum in Davos this year, and statistics from the International Monetary Fund suggest that the gender gap in the Middle East is three times larger than that in most developing economies."

She added: "At KIPCO, we believe that it is important to understand the key challenges that women face in the workforce and what could be done to motivate and drive more of them to join the private sector, as well as to create an internal culture where women can thrive in their work and also rise up the ranks to the top. Partnering with Alghanim Industries and Gulf Bank on this conference will offer us the opportunity to further support gender diversity to improve corporate culture and to create a more socially and economically balance environment."

PREMIER MEETS OIL UNIONISTS: 'NO BUCKLING TO COERCIVE DEMANDS'

KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah yesterday emphasized that there is no room at all to respond to coercive demands, such as abstaining from work or disrupting public interests or vital services, which is highly dangerous and poses a serious threat to state pillars. His Highness the Premier made his comments during a meeting at Bayan Palace with chairman of the Oil and Petrochemical Industries Workers Confederation and heads of other oil trade unions.

Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak responded to the meeting request in the wake of an initiative by the confederation to end the strike, which began on Sunday, as all workers were back to work yesterday morning. The meeting focused on the negative impact of the oil and petrochemical workers' strike, namely the disruption of production at vital oil facilities and the ensued losses.

During the meeting, His Highness the Prime Minister thanked the workers

who did not respond to the call for the strike so as not to disrupt work in the oil sector, prioritizing public interests. Their positive reaction was in line with a national conviction of the necessity of protecting public funds and avoiding harm to public interest.

Deep regret

His Highness the Premier expressed deep regret over the huge material damage and excessive losses to public funds and the national economy caused by the strike. He referred to other direct and indirect losses to Kuwait's reputation and status.

Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak appreciated the confederation and its members, for their courage to return to the right path, prioritizing public interests, through their national initiative to end the strike, a move to be taken into account.

In addition, His Highness the Prime Minister reiterated what was previously stressed by the cabinet, namely con-

stant and full respect to the legal rights of workers in all government bodies and state sectors. Disputing these rights or detracting them is out of question. In the meantime, His Highness the Premier underlined that he would spare no effort to do justice to all sincere efforts, distinguished and efficient staff and jobs of risky nature in all state bodies.

Critical conditions

Amid the critical economic conditions the country is experiencing due to the unprecedented falls of oil prices and the ensued serious repercussions and challenges, all Kuwaitis, officials and citizens, have to manifest a spirit of national responsibility, sacrifice and positive reaction to these threats, prioritizing public interests, to guarantee the defeat of these conditions, Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak.

His Highness the Prime Minister underlined the fact that Kuwait is a state of institutions and impartial and efficient judiciary, a real source of pride,



His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah

and that there is always room for others' opinion. There is no way for dictating views, His Highness the Premier said, and also stressed the significance of

calm and civilized dialogue. The cabinet will never accept an act that might harm state interests, reputation or status, nor will all sincere Kuwaitis. — KUNA



NEW YORK: Interior Undersecretary Lieutenant General Suleiman Al-Fahad (left) attends a special session of the UN General Assembly. — KUNA

KUWAIT LASHES OUT AT LEGALIZING DRUGS

NEW YORK: The State of Kuwait has expressed concern at some states' decision to legally allow narcotics saying the step threatens countries' stability. The growing cyber networks and criminal gangs have boosted drug trade, trafficking and money laundering, Interior Ministry's Undersecretary Lieutenant General Suleiman Al-Fahad said, addressing a special session of the UN General Assembly. The Kuwaiti official warned spread of narcotics would undermine nations' economic development, their stability and the rule of law. Kuwait has already mapped out a full-

scale strategy, according to international standards, to combat narcotics, he added. Kuwait has special programs, rehabilitation centers and hospitals, to treat the addicted and help them re-integrate as ordinary citizens into the Kuwaiti society.

Kuwait Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation Center, the Undersecretary has elaborated, promotes anti-drugs awareness, holds seminars and activities for that purpose. In conclusion, Undersecretary Fahad, drew the world attention to the fact that spread of narcotics is linked to soaring violence and terrorism globally. — KUNA

CABINET DEMANDS 'SIMPLE' CHANGES TO ELECTRICITY BILL

LAWMAKER WARNS OF SPORTS BETTINGS SPREAD

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: The cabinet wants amendments to be made to the electricity tariff categories bill that was initially approved by the parliament and will be voted on next Tuesday. According to sources familiar with the cabinet's thinking, the government demands that any changes made to be 'simple' ones. The government believes that excluding citizens in private, investment and commercial residences contradicts with its plans to rationalize and cut expenses because it would only achieve 40 percent of the sought financial reform, the sources noted.

The sources added that the government wants to reduce the number of categories and increase tariffs if consumption exceeds 3,000 kilowatts and not 6,000 kW as MPs suggested. The sources explained that the government intends to strongly back the law, and it might make some concessions in return for passing the economic reform plan that would speed up privatization, impose fees and taxes on companies and reduce the state's administrative structure.

Sports betting

In other news, MP Saud Al-Hurajji warned of the spread of sports-related betting on the results of the local league matches' results, say-

ing that betting contradicts with sharia and defames Kuwait's sports reputation. Accordingly, Hurajji urged the Ministry of Youth Affairs and the Finance Ministry to coordinate joint action to fight the phenomenon, especially since some local clubs, players, trainers and referees were allegedly involved in the betting. Hurajji gave an example of a footballer playing in a club who had never won any championships, saying that he made a deal that his team would lose in return for KD 19,000. To do so, he agreed to commit a silly mistake that cost his team a penalty kick in the final moments of the match so that a fourth goal could be scored, Hurajji added.

New stadium

Separately, MP Ahmed Al-Qudhaibi urged the government to allocate a piece of land in Kazema desert in the north of the country to build an international stadium with a 65,000-seat capacity to be named after His Highness the Amir according to the build-operate-transfer (BOT) system. Turajji suggested that the stadium should include outdoor tennis courts, basketball, volleyball and handball courts, and an international sports medical center, rehabilitation center, parking spaces and service, recreational and commercial facilities. In other news, Chairman of the parliament's budgets and final

statement committee MP Adnan Abdulsamad said that the committee met yesterday and discussed the Public Authority for Youth's (PAY) budget for 2016-2017.

Medical city

The parliament's health affairs committee yesterday met with a team from the Ministry of Health (MoH) to discuss the project of the medical city at Sabah health zone. In this regard, the committee's rapporteur MP Saadoun Hammad Al-Otaibi said that the ministry team briefed the committee about the current number of hospital beds, noting that it was 4,853, and that once the medical city was built and an extra 9,313 beds were added, the total number would rise to 14,166 beds. Hammad added that the ministry plans include building three 300-bed health insurance hospitals in Jahra, Farwaniya and Ahmadi, in addition to five polyclinics in each governorate. In other news, MoH stressed that Sheikh Jaber Hospital, currently under construction in South Surra, would be finished by the fourth quarter of this year. The ministry also denied the presence of any obstacles hindering the project and stressed that construction was going according to schedule and the contract signed between the Ministry of Public Works and the executing contractor.

Crimes

report



MOTORIST HURT IN FAHAHEEL ROAD ACCIDENT

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: A collision on Fahaheel road left one motorist injured. Firefighters had to free the man who was trapped inside his vehicle due to the collision. The man was handed over to paramedics and taken to a nearby medical facility. An investigation was opened to determine the circumstances that led to the accident.

Environmental law

Environment police found three restaurants in Salmiya and Andalus in violation of environmental and engineering conditions according to the environment protection law. The restaurants installed strainers that do not meet environmental conditions, besides pouring oil in the sewer system, which is a clear violation of article 18 and article 33 of the environment law.

Drug arrests

An army first lieutenant was arrested and sent to the Drugs Control General Department (DCGD) for possession of liquor and 42 illicit tablets. Meanwhile, two Indian nationals were arrested by Ahmadi police, one with an expired residency and wanted for a KD 2,500 debt. The two had 139 bottles of suspected liquor. Also, Ahmadi police arrested a citizen with 35 illicit tablets (valium), one envelope of shabu (meth), another with herbs suspected of being narcotic, in addition to drug paraphernalia. In the meantime, Farwaniya police raided a liquor factory in Jleeb Al-Shuyukh where 35 bottles were found, and three Asians including a woman were arrested and sent to DCGD.

No injuries in fires

Fire broke out in a Khaitan building yesterday. Farwaniya, Subhan and technical rescue centers responded and discovered that the blaze was started by a woman in a failed bit to commit suicide. The woman was unharmed. Police authorities took over the case. Separately, a fire broke out in a nine-storey building on the sixth floor. Mangaf and Fahaheel centers responded and the fire was contained and put out, as the rescue team evacuated the building. No injuries were reported. Also yesterday, South Salmiya fire center put out a fire in a vehicle which was totally destroyed, and firemen kept the fire from spreading and put it out. No injuries were reported.



NO INJURIES IN SHADADIYA UNIVERSITY FIRE



By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Al-Shadadiya University caught fire yesterday, causing material damage to the building but no injuries were reported. The Kuwait Fire Service Directorate (KFS) sent six teams who managed to put the fire under control, Public Relations Department Director Colonel Khalil Al-Amir said in a statement. An investigation was opened to reveal the causes of the fire. The university's construction process faced several mishaps in recent years.

Three consecutive fires in June 2013 caused severe damages, while a landslide in 2014 left two Egyptian construction workers dead and created an eight-meter-deep hole in the ground. Officially known as the 'Sabah Al-Salem University City', the facility is located on an approximate six million square meters' plot southwest of Kuwait City. Construction at Al-Shadadiya University started in 2010, six years after the decree to build it was issued in 2004. The current deadline for the project to finish is 2019.



COURT ADJOURNS 'TERRORIST CELL' CASE TO TOMORROW

KUWAIT: The court of appeals adjourned yesterday looking into the 'terrorist cell' case number 302/2016, in which 26 defendants are involved, to tomorrow for further questioning of the accused. The court listened to a number of defendants during its hearing today, and asked the Public Prosecution to address some government bodies to send reports concerning some defendants involved in the case.

Last January 12, the criminal court sentenced two of the defendants, the first and the 23rd one on the list of defendants in the terrorist cell, to death, while one of the accused in the 26 member cell was given a sentence of life imprisonment.

Other accused defendants in the case received sentences from five to ten to 15 years in prison. One of them was fined about KD 5,000 while another was



The Palace of Justice

acquitted of all charges against him. Furthermore, the court ordered the confiscation of all weapons that were possessed by the terrorist cell.

Last September, the public prosecutor lodged criminal charges against the terrorist cell known as the 'Al-Abdali Cell', in which 26 defendants were put on trial over possession of huge caches of weapons and ammunition, as well as espionage for Iran and Hezbollah. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Cabinet Affairs Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah and British Ambassador Matthew Lodge cut the cake during a ceremony to celebrate Queen Elizabeth's birthday. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

SHEIKH MOHAMMAD HAILS STRONG TIES WITH BRITAIN

KUWAIT: Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah has lauded the solid ties between Kuwait and Britain. In a statement during celebrations held at the British embassy on the occasion of Queen Elizabeth's birthday yesterday, Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah recalled Britain's support to Kuwait over history, since the protection agreement in 1899. He also highlighted Britain's major role in the Liberation of Kuwait from the Iraqi Invasion of the country in 1990. On the deal with the European Union (EU), including Britain, to buy Eurofighter jets, the minister thanked both for cooperation in this vital field, Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) reported.

Meanwhile, British Ambassador to Kuwait Matthew Lodge thanked partners and guests for supporting this year's celebration, and said: "We are here to celebrate the 90th birthday of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, born on 21 April in 1926. It is a huge honor and a privilege to stand in the beautiful gardens of this historic residence as British Ambassador on such a happy occasion. For nearly 20 months, I have observed firsthand the close relationship between our two countries and have seen the depth and breadth of the ties that connect us. Even if I were to talk for hours, I could not cover the full range of those ties."

"We were privileged at the start of the year to



Kuwait Times Editor-in-Chief Abd Al-Rahman Al-Alyan is pictured with British Ambassador to Kuwait Matthew Lodge.

join in the celebration of the 55th anniversary of independence, 25th anniversary of liberation, and the 10th anniversary of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's ascension to the throne," he added.

"On this, Her Majesty's 90th birthday, the British Embassy honored the United Kingdom's longest

serving monarch, and celebrate with Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II on this happy day", the British Embassy said in a statement. The reception was attended by over 500 guests who were kept entertained by the musical talents of The Pipes and Drums of The Black Watch, 3rd Battalion - The Royal Regiment of Scotland.



Diplomats attend the event.



Kuwait Times Editor-in-Chief Abd Al-Rahman Al-Alyan greets Cabinet Affairs Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah.

STATEMENT BY THE AMBASSADOR OF SOUTH AFRICA MP BONA ON THE HOSTING OF THE SOUTH AFRICA WEEK

On April 27, 2016, South Africa will mark 22 years since the dawn of Freedom and Democracy on 27 April 1994. In celebration of this milestone, the South African Embassy will host a South Africa week from 25-28 April. The purpose of the South Africa week is to highlight South Africa's achievements and the road ahead, to strengthen relations and partnerships with Kuwait, present trade and investment opportunities, and to promote the attractive and abundant tourism destinations and experiences in South Africa.

The South Africa Week will kick off with the South African National Day celebration on 25 April, followed by a food festival, food tasting and food products promotions in partnership with the Western Cape Fine Foods Initiative and major retailers in Kuwait from the 26-28 April.

A South African Chef will visit Kuwait to prepare South African cuisines for the food festival and food tasting events. On 26 April, the Embassy will host a food festival at the Marina Hotel for Invited Guests from the food and hospitality industry, Kuwait travel trade, and the media. The Embassy and the Western Cape Fine Foods Initiative will also have food tasting and food products promotion events at the Shamiya Cooperative on April 27th and the LuLu Hypermarket on April 28th from 18:00 to 23:00. We invite the Kuwait community to visit the Shamiya Cooperative and LuLu Hypermarket for a taste of South Africa and to see the high quality and affordable South African food products. The mission looks forward to a successful South Africa week in partnership with all Kuwait partners and stakeholders.

MEXICO, KUWAIT DISCUSS AGRICULTURAL COOPERATION

MEXICO CITY: Kuwait's Ambassador to Mexico Samih Johar Hayat discussed with Minister of the Secretariat of Agriculture, Livestock, Rural Development, Fisheries and Food of Mexico (SAGARPA) Jose Eduardo exchanging visits and expertise between the two countries.

A Kuwait Embassy statement said yesterday the two men also tackled how both countries can exchange expertise in the fields of fish and livestock and the possibility of holding joint scientific and technical research on fisheries and aquaculture development and to encourage coordination among businesspeople in both countries to explore investment opportunities.

The statement quoted the Kuwaiti ambassador as saying that Mexico possesses huge potential, urging Kuwaiti businesspeople to start dialogue with their Mexican counterparts

on how to employ such potential in order to take advantage of the large economic and trade opportunities available.

The Mexican Federal Minister said he would pay an official visit to Kuwait on May 18-19 as the personal envoy of Mexican President Enrique Pena Nieto, heading a high-level delegation representing various ministries and establishments.

The delegation will look into ways of developing trade and economic relations with their counterparts at the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and industry in order to complete the fruitful results and implement the agreements signed between the two countries in various areas during the visit of Mexican President to Kuwait at the end of last January. — KUNA

ARAB MEDIA FORUM REVIEWS NEXT MEETING'S AGENDA

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: The organizers of the Arab Media Forum (AMF) held a press conference yesterday to provide more information about the 13th edition of the forum that will be held on May 1 and 2, 2016 under the patronage of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, titled 'Media, Challenges and Elements'.

Madhi Al-Khamis, Secretary General of the AMF, reviewed the main topics and agenda of the forum. "The AMF this year consists of various activities including symposia, discussion sessions and workshops. The first day will be of two parts - a youth dialogue, which will cover various topics, and Qatari disabled child Ghanim Al-Miftah will speak about his experience with social media and how he has over one million followers. Then other young media personalities from Arab countries will speak, in addition to hosting popular sports media persons," he said.

"The opening ceremony will include an honoring ceremony for media personalities who have spent over 20 years working in this field, in addition to awarding young journalists. And for the first time, the winners of the Arab Publishing Prize will be awarded as well as the special stars of social media," added Khamis.

The second day of the forum will discuss other important issues. "It will include important issues such as the effect of media on decision makers,

the crises in the Arab world, the role of the media in communications, development and investments, and others. The guest country in this year's forum will be Jordan. The personality of the closing ceremony will be Dr Suad Al-Sabah, who will be honored for her long career in this field. A poet will present poems and popular Kuwaiti singer Nawal and popular Lebanese singer Majida Al-Roumi will perform," he concluded.

Executive Director of Zain Waleed Al-Khashti expressed his happiness to sponsor this important event. "Zain is the diamond and main sponsor of the AMF as we believe in the importance of the media and the role it plays in communication. Almost everybody uses mobile phones to spread news or comment on news, and many also read the digital editions of newspapers on their devices. We need to spread awareness about social media and the new electronic media law, and the AMF provides this benefit," he noted.

The Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Science (KFAS) is participating in this year's forum. "We believe in the role of the media in transferring information about sciences and spreading scientific culture, which helps in developing technology. So this forum is not far from our issues and helps in developing the knowledge of individuals through their participation in such activities," noted Salam Al-Ablani, Head of the Scientific Culture Department at KFAS.



KUWAIT: (From left) Waleed Al-Khashti, Executive Director of Zain, Madhi Al-Khamis, Secretary General of the Arab Media Forum, Bader Al-Khashti from State Holding Qatar, Salam Al-Ablani, Head of the Scientific Culture Department at Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Science (KFAS) and Manar Al-Rashid from KFAS attend the press conference. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

'I INTEND TO BUILD KUWAIT' FOR COMPETENT GENERATION: DASHTI

KUWAIT: The 'I intend to build Kuwait' project for students' guidance will help inculcate values of loyalty, belonging, success and happiness in order to produce a new successful generation and build a positive society capable of promoting the nation, founder Ali Dashti said.

It is a national initiative organized by the Kuwaiti development union and implemented by the national academic guidance voluntary team, Dashti said yesterday as the project was launched, patronized by Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education Dr Bader Al-Essa.

The two-day project is open freely for students of all categories, Dashti said,

adding that it offers training courses for academic excellence and personal development, in addition to a workshop to help participants choose their studying path. It also includes an exhibition for private universities, Dashti said.

This project is organized for the second year in a row and is considered a window for students' excellence in all aspects of their life, educational, professional and psychological and skills. According to Dashti, 'I intend to build Kuwait' includes two major parts, the first offers lecture and training courses for life skills and education excellence. The second includes a workshop themed 'My life as I choose it'. — KUNA

HEALTH MINISTRY INAUGURATES USE OF SENSORY IMPAIRMENT TREATMENT ROOMS

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Health has started using sensory impairment rooms or clinics in which to treat children with special needs, a ministry official said yesterday. Sensory impairment is when one of your senses; sight, hearing, smell, touch, taste and spatial awareness, is no longer normal and needs rehabilitation.

Dr Jamal Al-Harbi, Assistant Undersecretary For Supportive Medical Assistance Services at the ministry, indicated in a press conference that the first such room is now in use at the physiotherapy hospital, capable of treating 36 cases a day.

It is one of six rooms being prepared to treat disabled children with sensory impairment problems, he said, noting that these rooms will soon be available at hospitals in Al-Jahra, Farwaniya, Adan, and Al-Sabah. He added that specialists evaluate children in these rooms on an individual basis before charting out a treatment plan for them. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Dr Jamal Al-Harbi inspects a sensory impairment room at the physiotherapy hospital yesterday. — KUNA



ZAIN, UNHCR SIGN MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING TO SUPPORT REFUGEES

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) signed a memorandum of understanding with Zain Telecommunication Company during a signing ceremony on Tuesday at the UN House in West Mishref. "The memorandum of understanding aims to support refugee issues and improve their situation," said Hanan Hamdan, Head of the UNHCR Kuwait office.

Hamdan said that this cooperation with the private sector is an extension of the strategic partnership, linking the Commission with Kuwait. She praised the role of Kuwait-led relief work around the world, led by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the humanitarian leader, praising the cooperation between the Commission, foreign media and charity organizations in Kuwait.

Hamdan stressed the importance of the partnership with Zain, "Zain is a great telecommunication company, and has enormous human and technical capabilities that can make a difference in millions of people's lives through the use of technology and social media that can serve humanitarian issues and highlight Kuwait's humanitarian efforts as well," she explained.

Forefront

Eaman Al-Roudhan, CEO of Zain, said Kuwait is in the forefront of countries in the field of humanitarian action because

"we have a great leader in His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and this makes us proud as Kuwaitis." Roudhan added that due to the increase in the number of refugees, Zain decided to bear part of the social responsibility and its strategic partnership by supporting volunteer work. She explained that the memorandum of understanding signed will organize cooperation between Zain and the United Nations in providing training programs, spread awareness about refugees and teach people how to use modern technology to serve refugees with the help of Zain staff.

Meanwhile, Kuwaiti journalist and humanitarian activist Arwa Al-Waqyan expressed sadness seeing the suffering of children in refugee camps during her visit in November to a refugee camp in Erbil in Iraqi Kurdistan with the United Nations. Waqyan said that the camps lack the basic needs to live, including heating in the winter and cooling in the summer. "Refugees have diseases because of undrinkable water, which is a real challenge in the lives of refugees and displaced people to live normally," she noted.

She added that the Kurdistan region has a population of about five million people, which means one refugee for every five people, according to 2014 reports, and the number has increased. She said that Erbil needs more attention because what UN offers to refugees is more than its economic capabilities and refugees need more healthcare too.



MAFRAQ: UN Secretary General's envoy for humanitarian Affairs Abdullah Al-Maatouq attends the inauguration of the second phase of Kuwait's 'second model village' in Al-Zaatari camp for Syrian refugees. — KUNA

KUWAIT TO HOST MEETING OF SYRIA'S MAJOR DONORS

MAFRAQ: Kuwait will host the seventh meeting of Syria's major donors on May 2 to follow up humanitarian operations inside and outside Syria, said UN Secretary General's envoy for humanitarian Affairs Abdullah Al-Maatouq.

Maatouq, also an advisor at the Amiri Diwan, made the remark Tuesday on the sidelines of a ceremony of inaugurating the second phase of Kuwait's 'second model village' in Al-Zaatari camp for Syrian refugees in Jordan.

He added that the upcoming meeting will follow up resolutions taken during the fourth Syria Donors Conference, which was held in London last February to support Syrian refugees, during which a sum of \$10 billion was pledged.

Kuwait, along with the UK, Germany, Norway and the UN co-hosted the Conference that brought together leaders from around the globe to raise funding critical to helping millions of people who have been impacted by the devastating crisis. Kuwait had hosted the three previous conferences.

On the May 2 meeting, Maatouq noted it is regularly held with major donors every three months to follow up the process of expending pledges and allocate sums required to carry out humanitarian and relief projects, in addition to coordinating with UN agencies and donor countries. He expected that countries and bodies which took part in the fourth conference will honor their pledges this year as donors did at the third conference hosted by Kuwait. He noted that pledges of donor countries are allocated to support Syrian refugees and host countries as well, mainly Jordan and Lebanon.

Concerning the village, Maatouq said that His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah directed the village to be fully-serviced. According to some official figures, the Syrian crisis, which entered its sixth year, led to about 13.5 million either internally displaced persons or refugees.

As for Tuesday's event, some vivid projects, including two schools, a medical center and a mosque, at the camp were inaugurated in collaboration with the UNICEF, Jordan's Ministry of Education and the European Union. The camp, which is hosting about 80,000 Syrian refugees, is adjacent to the Syrian borders. A number of dignitaries, including Kuwait's Ambassador to Jordan Dr Hamad Al-Duaij, representatives of ministries of education and health and Awqaf, and the camp's officials, took part in the inauguration ceremony. — KUNA

MILITARY FACILITIES IN JAHRA TO BE RELOCATED

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: Head of the Jahra committee at the Municipal Council Meshari Al-Motoutah said the committee agreed to transfer military facilities adjacent to residential areas in Jahra after selecting alternative sites. Motoutah added that those camps need to be relocated through a strategic plan in collaboration with the defense ministry and the municipality. "Those sites will primarily be turned into residential areas or parks," he underlined. In other news, Municipal Council member and head of Hawally committee Yousef Al-Ghareeb asked why Kuwait Municipality did not take part in the recent inspection of spas and massage centers that was made by the Cabinet's joint committee in various governorates.

KPI, IDEMITSU ESTABLISH JOINT VENTURE IN VIETNAM

TOKYO: State-run Kuwait Petroleum International (KPI) and Japan's leading refiner Idemitsu Kosan Company have applied for registration of a joint venture company in Vietnam to sell petroleum products in the Southeast Asian country, Idemitsu announced in a statement.

"KPI and Idemitsu intend to promote retail and wholesale operations, mainly through the construction and management of service stations across Vietnam," the Tokyo-based firm said. The joint venture, called Idemitsu Q8 Petroleum LLC, will be the first wholly foreign-owned firm in the oil product distribution and retail sectors in Vietnam.

"Through the establishment of a petroleum product distribution company, KPI and Idemitsu will achieve a stable supply of products to the growing Vietnamese market, where demand for petroleum products is expected to follow a steady upward trend, thereby contributing to the social and economic development of Vietnam," said Idemitsu.

The two companies are major investors in the Nghi Son Refinery and Petrochemical LLC, which is constructing Vietnam's second oil refinery to be operational in 2017, according to Idemitsu. The 200,000-barrel-per-day Nghi Son Refinery and Petrochemical Project is 35.1 percent evenly owned by KPI and Idemitsu, 25.1 percent by state-owned PetroVietnam and 4.7 percent by Japan's Mitsui Chemicals Inc.

KPI's parent company Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) will supply all the feedstock for the facility, which will also include petrochemical units, energy facilities, a pipeline and storage systems, along with an information management system. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Eaman Al-Roudhan, CEO of Zain Kuwait (left) and Hanan Hamdan, Head of the UNHCR Kuwait office attend the press conference.

KUWAIT CALLS FOR EMERGENCY MEETING ON NETANYAHU'S GOLAN HEIGHTS' REMARKS

CAIRO: The Arab League decided to hold an emergency meeting at the level of delegates, upon Kuwait's request, tomorrow to discuss repercussions of remarks of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on the occupied Golan Heights.

This came in a reply to Netanyahu, who said during a cabinet meeting held in the territory on Monday that Israel would not return the Golan Heights to Syria, adding that the Heights, which Israel annexed dur-

ing the six-day War of 1967, would remain "Israeli forever".

The League announced in a statement on Tuesday that it received a request from Kuwait's permanent mission, calling for convening an extraordinary session at the level of permanent delegates as soon as possible. It added that the meeting aims to take action towards this new escalation, which flagrantly violates international law and resolutions of international legitimacy. — KUNA



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Al-Anbaa

ABOUT THE BRIDGE

By Saleh Al-Shayegi

It is absolutely unacceptable to make fun of people, their customs, traditions, beliefs or religions. Following the recent historic visit of Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz to Egypt, which was a very significant one that resulted in agreeing on several cooperation projects and strategic agreements that will benefit both countries, namely Egypt, and the rest of the Arab world, we found that instead of looking at the bright side and positive effects of that visit, many people in Egypt got busy making fun of and mocking a neighboring brotherly country with whom they share many common things.

Being funny and humorous is okay, but this is not right in all circumstances, at all times or occasions. Making fun of and degrading others is absolutely rejected and is not the right thing to do. The Egyptian people are far more dignified and know better than to point venomous remarks against those who reached out to it with peace, love and open hearts.

However, it is the media machine of venomous people who hate Egypt and antagonize it that is behind this; those who are eager to see Egypt isolated both internationally and in the Arab world in retaliation for their so-called right in ruling Egypt - those who had been routed out of office by waves of millions of roaring Egyptians who were watched and heard worldwide and documented in history books. Those millions were only denied by misled people with venomous grudges eating their hearts out.

The bridge both countries agreed to build will not be the only gate for Saudis coming to Egypt, supposedly on convoys of camels to occupy Egyptian beaches as some of those envious people claimed and posted fake Photoshop images making fun of them. All Egypt's gates including airports, ports and land border exits have been receiving millions of Saudi and others for ages.

— Translated by Kuwait Times



Al-Anbaa

MINISTRY MULLS INCREASING PUBLIC SERVICES PRICES

KUWAIT: In a bid to increase government revenues, the finance ministry is currently keen on accelerating the study of a project on studying all public services provided by various government bodies, said informed sources, noting that the ministry addressed all concerned ministries and establishments requesting suggestions about increasing the prices of services they provide.

The sources said that the ministry has finished reviewing lists of all services, goods and suggested prices, and urged

various bodies to provide similar lists since 1995. The sources added that the ministry explained the measure by its wish to improve public services and the performance of governmental apparatuses. The sources gave an example of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, noting that it provided a list of 362 services it provides, including 73 free ones. "The ministry asked for list of new services, beneficiaries, how many times a year the service would be provided and any extra costs," explained the sources. — Al-Qabas

Al-Anbaa

THE 'KUWAITI'

By Dr Saleh Al-Ojairi

Before the official issuance of Kuwaiti citizenship certificates in 1961, we used to differentiate between Kuwaitis and others using measures that are different from those used nowadays. Someone who used to bring goods to sell in Safat square and then leave was not considered a Kuwaiti. A sailor who used to come over from neighboring countries to dive for pearls during the four-month summer pearl diving season and then leave was not considered a Kuwaiti.

A Kuwaiti was usually someone who owned and rented a property for long periods, someone from a well-known family that had lived in Kuwait since ancient days, someone who practiced a specific profession for some time and was known by people accordingly or someone who had a continuous commercial, literary or professional activity and became famous amongst people. These used to be the ways to know Kuwaitis.

It is noteworthy to mention that the answer to the question about who a Kuwaiti was then is very complicated and can only be achieved by inquiring about someone or using norms prevailing amongst people, which were, unlike the modern Kuwaiti citizenship and its limited conditions, foolproof.

In recent decades, young people have confused things by naming some singers as 'Kuwaiti', such as the Jewish Dawood Ezra Al-Kuwaiti and Saleh Al-Kuwaiti, whose grandchildren live in Israel and known as the 'Kuwaiti' family. They even have a street in Tel Aviv named as the 'Al-Kuwaiti Brothers'. The reason for calling singers at that time 'Kuwaiti' was that they had no opportunity to sing except in private parties and thus they usually had to leave to neighboring countries like Iraq, Bahrain and Pakistan to sing, and thus the people there called them 'Kuwaiti'!

— Translated by Kuwait Times

Crime

Report

School official questioned over beating student

KUWAIT: The father of an elementary school student accused an official of beating his seven-year-old son with a metal object, causing severe bruises that prevented him from sitting, apart from the extreme fear he suffered all day. The father said the boy's maternal aunt went to pick him up at the end of the school day, and met one of the school officials, who told her "forgive me, I beat your boy". The aunt thought it was a simple thing, but when the boy got into the car, she noticed he was not able to sit, and when she asked him what was wrong, he refused to say anything and began shivering. When the aunt insisted to know, he told her he was drinking water along with his classmate when the official came and beat them. The father took his son to hospital, received a medical report, and filed a complaint at Sabah Al-Salem police station.

Fight

Two men got into a fight over differing views at a diwaniya. They started ridiculing each other, then got into a fight, as one of them used an egal (headdress gear), while the other used everything he could reach, until the fight was broken up by those in the diwaniya. Both went to hospital, got medical reports, and complained at the police station.

Investor swindled

An Egyptian woman was swindled by a compatriot who convinced her to invest in a women's beauty salon, taking KD 3,000 before disappearing. The woman went to Salmiya police station and filed a case. Police are investigating.

Suicide attempt

A Sri Lankan woman tried to put an end to her life by ingesting medical products at her employer's Rabiya house. A security source said the woman was rushed to hospital unconscious by her sponsor, who told them he found empty medicine bottles which she seems to have taken. Doctors performed a gastric lavage and admitted her to hospital. Police are investigating.

Search for harasser

An Iraqi woman pressed charges against a Palestinian man, saying that he disturbed her with messages after she visited a bookstore he works in. A security source said the woman told Salmiya police she went to a bookstore for some work and left her phone number on the invoice to be called when the job is complete. But at midnight, she was surprised by the man sending her a message of admiration. The source said that she told the man to stop bothering her but he did not stop and kept sending messages.

Family feud

Old differences between a Syrian man and his cousin turned into a fight that resulted in one of them sustaining stab wounds. The victim lodged an attempted murder complaint at Nugra police station. A security source said the Syrian submitted a medical report stating that he received stab wounds in the right shoulder and bruises to the face. Police are investigating.

Deportation

Director of Jahra detectives Colonel Salem Mardhi recommended the deportation of an Egyptian man in a report he sent to the Director of the General Criminal Detectives Department Major General Mahmoud Al-Tabbakh for public interest. A security source said a Moroccan woman told Jahra police that she noticed a man always on the roof of a building opposite to the one she stays in, adding he may be taking pictures. Jahra detectives were informed and he was arrested, and then when his phone was checked, a huge amount of women's pictures taken in various places and from under the stairs were found.

Sexual assault

Hawally prosecutor sent a Tunisian woman to the medical examiner to make sure about her claims that she was raped violently for a whole day. She said that she met a man who was very nice to her and told her he will marry her. He asked her to come with him and visit his family in Maidan Hawally. She said she went with full confidence as the man was well-behaved. But when she entered the apartment where his family was supposed to be, she was surprised the apartment was empty. — Al-Rai



ABK SPONSORS BOWLING TOURNAMENT FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

KUWAIT: Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) announced its sponsorship of a bowling tournament event for students with special needs. The event, organized by and hosted at the Capital Boys Bowling Center in Daiya on 10 April, 2016, saw the participation of over 30 students from various schools. The event was attended by Sheikh Talal Al-Mohammed Al-Sabah, President of the World Ten Pin Bowling Association, the Kuwait Bowling Federation and the Asian Bowling Federation, Faisal Al-Maqseed, Assistant Undersecretary of the Ministry of Education for Educational Development & Activities and Fawzy Al-Thunayan, General Manager of Board Affairs at ABK.

ABK actively supports the special needs segment in Kuwait, in line with its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) focus for 2016. It is committed to raising awareness of this segment and promoting a sense of equality amongst the general public.

The Bank recently sponsored several other initiatives that focus on engaging individuals with special needs, through different activities that allow them to socialize and interact in the midst of an uplifting and friendly environment. For more information on Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait please visit www.eahli.com or contact a customer service agent via 'Ahlani' at 1899899.



NO REQUEST TO MOVE TRANSFORMERS: MINISTRY

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Electricity and Water (MEW) said it has not received any request to move transformers in residential Shuwaikh, and that what was published about the MEW's intention to move one of the transformers from one place to another is totally untrue.

Director of the distribution network Dhuhui Al-Hamly said the ministry did not receive any request to move any secondary transformer in residential Shuwaikh, although this area has transformers that suffer from high loads to a point that they cannot take any additional load, so the ministry conducted a study to reduce loads on the network to ensure its stability and boost power for consumers and deal with repeated power outages. Hamly said MEW asked the municipality to designate locations for secondary transformers, as it is the authority concerned with the organizational aspect. — Al-Anbaa

FREEZE ON PRICES COLLAPSES BEFORE CONSTRUCTION STEEL

KUWAIT: In the first challenge of the recent decision by the ministry of commerce and industry to freeze all prices, the ministry is currently facing severe criticism because of up to over 35 percent increases in construction steel prices, said informed sources, questioning whether the ministry would be able to put its decision into practice.

The sources said consumers were recently shocked by repeated steel price increases despite the ministry's decision that was published in the official gazette. "The factory price of a ton of steel used be KD 135 before the new decision and has now jumped to KD 185 per ton," said the sources, noting that the 'freeze' decision failed to prevent these price increases. — Al-Qabas



KUWAIT: The Commercial Bank of Kuwait (CBK) presented a brand new BMW X5 to Kowthar Abdullah Essa Fayrouz, winner of the second draw of a campaign dedicated to Kuwaiti employees in the public, private and oil sectors who transfer their salaries to their CBK account.

PARDONED INMATES RELEASED TODAY

KUWAIT: Lists of the beneficiaries of the Amiri pardon on the occasion of the national days are ready and prisoners are supposed to be released today during a ceremony organized by reform institutions. Security sources said the lists include nearly 1,100 individuals, 37 of whom are to be released immediately, while some will have jail sentences reduced and canceling of deportation orders for Kuwaitis' relatives.

The sources said the Amiri pardon committee at the prisons sector reviewed 2,500 files of prisoners to make sure they meet the pardon conditions, and found 1,100 who do meet them. Some of those conditions include that the prisoners should not have benefited from previous Amiri pardons, show good conduct during the serving of the sentence, must not be jailed on murder cases unless pardoned by the family, and should not be jailed over debts unless by obtaining approval to pay back. They also should not be sentenced on state security or drugs cases. Sources said cases related to social media including insults, threats to kill or encroachment on the Amiri entity are not included. — Al-Rai



KUWAIT: A team from the prevention sector inspected safety and fire prevention equipment in the education ministry diwan building project in South Surra. — By Hanan Al-Saadoun

Kuwait Times International

THURSDAY, APRIL 21, 2016



Carter asks the Gulf nations to do more in order to help Iraq

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OBAMA, EU LEADERS TO MEET OVER IS GROUP, MIGRATION AND LIBYA



NEW YORK: Republican Presidential candidate Donald Trump waves to the crowd after winning the New York state primary on Tuesday. — AFP

TRUMP, CLINTON RE-ENERGIZED AFTER BIG WINS

NEW YORK: Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump hit the campaign trail yesterday after their big primary wins in New York, with the Democratic frontrunner locking up the nomination, while the Republican billionaire's path to victory remains unclear.

The routs on their home turf reset the races in their favor, with Clinton putting an end to rival Bernie Sanders' multi-state winning streak and Trump righting his ship after a series of losses to Ted Cruz that have raised the specter of a brutal battle at a contested convention in July. "The race for the Democratic nomination is in the home stretch and victory is in sight," Clinton told jubilant supporters late Tuesday in Manhattan.

Clinton—the former secretary of state, first lady and senator from New York—widened her already substantial delegate lead by securing 57.9 percent of the vote. Sanders, who was born and raised in Brooklyn but represents Vermont in the US Senate, received 42.1 percent—clearly a letdown for a campaign which had predicted a strong showing.

In her victory speech, the 68-year-old Clinton shifted her focus to the general election match-up with Republicans, extending an olive branch to Sanders supporters after a particularly tense New York primary battle.

"It's humbling that you trust me with the awesome responsibility that awaits our next president," she said. "And to all the people that supported Senator Sanders, I believe there's much more that unites us than divides us." But the self-declared democratic socialist Sanders, who was recharging his batteries in Vermont, expressed determination to remain competitive. "There are five primaries next week and we think we are going to do well and we think we have a path to victory," he insisted to reporters.

Sanders, 74, returns to the campaign trail Thursday in Pennsylvania, which holds its primary on April 26, as do Connecticut, Delaware, Maryland and Rhode Island.

Trump confident

Trump wasted little campaign time, scheduling campaign stops in a trio of states Wednesday including Pennsylvania and Maryland. Clinton holds two events later Wednesday in Philadelphia.

Trump scored a blowout victory Tuesday with 60.5 percent of the vote, against 25.1 percent for Ohio Governor

John Kasich, and 14.5 percent for Trump's main rival Cruz, an arch-conservative Texas senator who was thumped after daring to criticize "New York values." "We don't have much of a race anymore," a confident Trump said after his victory secured him at least 89 of the 95 New York delegates at stake.

"Senator Cruz is just about mathematically eliminated," he said, noting how Trump's campaign is nearly 300 delegates ahead. Trump's provocative candidacy has appalled establishment Republicans, many of whom have joined an effort to block him from winning the nomination.

But Trump, 69, toned down his divisive rhetoric Tuesday, declining to use his epithet "Lyn' Ted" to belittle his rival, although he continued to take subdued digs at the "rigged" primary delegate system. Even with his New York victory, Trump is far from guaranteed the 1,237 delegates necessary to win the Republican nomination outright before the July convention in Cleveland.

He has now won 847 delegates, according to a CNN tally, with some 670 delegates at stake in the remaining 15 Republican primaries. Cruz added zero New York delegates to his total of 553, while Kasich has 148.

Humbled

In many other states, though, Cruz's campaign has shown more savvy than Trump's in working the complex delegate system. If Trump does not reach the 1,237 threshold, he fears Republican grandees will conspire to deny him the nomination in Cleveland, even if he is well ahead in delegates.

For the past two weeks, the real estate mogul has expanded and reshuffled his campaign inner circle, notably adding expert Paul Manafort to oversee his delegate-getting and convention operations. Cruz, angling for a contested convention, downplayed Trump's New York command performance as nothing more than "a politician tonight winning his home state."

In a recent Philadelphia speech where he invoked former presidents Ronald Reagan and John F. Kennedy, Cruz called on Republicans to coalesce behind him. "We must unite the Republican Party because doing so is the first step toward uniting all Americans," he said. Trump and Clinton are well ahead in polls in Pennsylvania and Maryland, the two big primary prizes on April 26. — AFP

US STUDENTS GIVEN SATs THAT WERE ONLINE BEFORE EXAM

NEW YORK: At least five times in the past three years, US high school students were administered SAT tests that included questions and answers widely available online more than a year before they took the exam, a Reuters analysis shows.

Reuters reported last month that the College Board, the not-for-profit that owns the college entrance exam, had often reused SATs overseas after first giving the test in America and even after some test questions began to circulate online.

The news agency also reported that the organization had sometimes recycled exams in the United States, including last January. That was during a regular Saturday exam sitting, the day most Americans take the SAT.

But the College Board has recycled SATs more frequently than the occasional Saturday. Reuters found that tests were also reused in the United States during special midweek sittings, on Sundays and during makeup exams,

even though some questions and answers from those tests had been discussed online.

A test given on yesterday, April 15, 2015, for example, previously had been administered in June 2013, Reuters determined. A copy of that test booklet was available in advance on a website called CrackSAT.net. Between the time the booklet was posted and early 2015, the website reported that the document had been downloaded more than 53,000 times. — Reuters

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SOUTH SUDAN AND REBELS SAY DEAL REACHED FOR MACHAR'S RETURN

JUBA: South Sudan's government and rebels said yesterday a deal had been reached to let rebel leader Riek Machar return to the capital to form a unity government, resolving differences that led to a delay this week that had worried peace monitors.

Rebel spokesman James Gatdet Dak told Reuters by telephone from Nairobi that Machar, who had been due to return early this week before the latest in a series of delays since last year's peace deal, was now expected

to fly into Juba on today.

Machar and his rival, President Salva Kiir, signed an agreement in August to end a two-year conflict in which thousands of people have been killed and more than two million forced to flee their homes. But clashes have flared since then.

The United States and the UN Security Council have both voiced concern over the latest delay to the return of Machar, who is due to take up the post of First Vice President next

to Kiir as part of a power sharing deal.

The body monitoring the peace deal, the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (JMEC), which includes Western powers, African representatives and others, also said it was worried. "I'm happy to announce to you that we as a government have accepted that Riek should come with 195 (members of his) forces accompanying him and his chief of staff," Peter Bashir Gbandi, acting foreign minister, told a news conference in Juba.

A government official earlier said Machar was held up because he had wanted to bring equipment and troops into Juba in excess of what was agreed with Kiir's camp. Machar told Al Jazeera television the government was creating "obstacles".

"We have given him clearance also for all the three planes that are coming with him," Gbandi said, without giving a timing. Kiir's sacking of Machar as his deputy in 2013 precipitated the crisis that led to a conflict in

December 2013. Fighting has often run along ethnic lines, pitting Kiir's dominant Dinka ethnic group against Machar's Nuer.

The conflict, which erupted barely two years after South Sudan's independence in 2011, has hammered the economy and left swathes of the 11 million population without enough food. Oil production, South Sudan's main source of revenue, has tumbled as oil fields have been cut off and global prices have dropped. — Reuters



GENEVA: Ramzy Ezzeldin Ramzy, second left, Deputy Special Envoy for Syria attends a meeting with Syrian ambassador to the United Nations and Head of the government delegation Bashar al-Jaafari, third left, during Syria peace talks at the United Nations. — AP

SYRIA'S WARRING PARTIES SPAR OVER COLLAPSING CEASE-FIRE

UN TO EVACUATE 500

BEIRUT: The head of Syria's government delegation at the Geneva talks lashed out yesterday at the country's Western- and Saudi-backed opposition, calling them "politically immature" and saying their walkout from the negotiations removes a "major obstacle" to finding a political solution to the conflict.

The remarks by Bashar Ja'afari, who is also Syria's UN ambassador, echoed earlier barbs by a Turkey-based opposition leader who accused President Bashar Assad's forces of effectively having "buried" the cease-fire in Syria.

The verbal sparring came as activists reported that ambulances and buses entered four besieged communities in Syria to evacuate around 500 sick residents.

At the United Nations, Stephane Dujarric, the spokesman for the UN chief, told reporters plans were underway to evacuate the 500 who are in "urgent need of life-saving medical attention." He did not give details on the timing or where the people would be taken. "The sad thing is, we should not have to negotiate medical evacuations," Dujarric added.

International aid organizations have pleaded for the evacuation of dozens of residents with urgent medical needs from these communities, which have been besieged by government forces and rebels. The deal is also part of the now-teetering cease-fire agreement in place since Feb. 27, which greatly reduced violence in the first weeks but has all but collapsed now amid fierce fighting in Syria's north in the past week.

On Tuesday, at least 44 people, mostly civilians were killed in government airstrikes on opposition-held areas in northern Idlib province. The day before, the opposition declared that the government's violations of the cease-fire were unacceptable.

Anas al-Abda, the leader of the Turkey-based Syrian National Coalition, said there will be no quick

return by the opposition to the talks in Geneva if the current situation continues. "The regime buried the truce yesterday," Al-Abda said, speaking at a press conference in Turkey. He was referring to the strikes in Idlib.

He also claimed that there have been more than 2,100 violations of the truce by government forces in the past 53 days. "There will be no quick return to negotiations if the current situation continues," al-Abda said.

The SNC is part of the Higher Negotiations Committee, the Syrian opposition coalition negotiating in Geneva. Al-Abda's comments come after HNC chief Riad Hijab said Tuesday there can be no solution in Syria with Assad remaining in power and called for international monitors to observe a cease-fire in Syria. Hijab vowed to fight "even with stones" to depose Assad, shifting sharply to a tone of conflict over conciliation.

In Geneva, Ja'afari said yesterday that members of the opposition were "extremists" and "mercenaries." He ridiculed Hijab's comments, referring to him as "sulking" child, and denounced the opposition's walkout as "politically immature."

He reiterated that his government's position is that any political solution for Syria would include a broad-based unity government, an amended constitution and parliamentary elections. "Any group that thinks otherwise is living an illusion, is undermining the Geneva talks, is wasting their time and ours," Ja'afari said.

The HNC does not want Assad to have any role in a future Syria. UN special envoy Staffan de Mistura said he will take stock of where the talks stand on Friday. The calculated gamble by the opposition to jeopardize what diplomats have called the best chance in years to bring a diplomatic end to Syria's five-year war reflects its growing frustration over

unproductive peace talks and hundreds of government cease-fire violations in recent weeks.

The opposition coalition accuses the government of preparing an assault on the city of Aleppo, ignoring its demands for the release of thousands of detainees, and rejecting or avoiding requests for UN-led humanitarian aid shipments in recent weeks. It says those are signs of bad faith by Assad's side and accuses Damascus of stalling for time in the Geneva talks.

Yesterday, activists posted pictures of buses driving into the town of Madaya, which fell under siege to government and allied Lebanese Hezbollah forces last year. Images of starving residents and children in the town and other places have fuelled calls for ending sieges, warning that they threaten to kill critically ill or injured people. According to activists and a media report on Hezbollah's Al-Manar TV, about 500 residents were to be evacuated yesterday.

Madaya, northeast of Damascus, and Zabadani, near the border with Lebanon, have been besieged by government forces and allied militia for months. Fouaa and Kfraya villages in the northern province of Idlib have been blockaded by rebels for over a year.

The Britain-based Observatory for Human Rights said the buses of the Syrian Red Crescent came under fire in Madaya. There was no immediate comment from the Red Crescent. The Observatory said six people have already been evacuated on medical grounds from Fouaa and Kfraya while two were evacuated from Zabadani in the deal sponsored by the United Nations and coordinated by the Red Crescent.

The evacuation would be the first major one since the cease-fire. In December, 460 people from the four communities were evacuated. Keaten reported from Geneva. Associated Press writers Zeina Karam in Beirut and Cara Anna at the United Nations contributed to this report. — AP

CARTER ASKS THE GULF NATIONS TO DO MORE IN ORDER TO HELP IRAQ

RIYADH: Defense Secretary Ash Carter pressed reluctant defense ministers from six Gulf nations Wednesday to provide more economic and political support to Iraq now to help the war-torn nation in its fight against the Islamic State Group.

In a series of sessions, Carter urged the Arab countries to specifically help with the reconstruction of cities of Ramadi and Hit as well as Anbar province, areas that have been won back from the militant group but left in near-shambles. He said helping the Iraqi people go home and rebuild their lives would lead to a more lasting victory and promote a more inclusive government.

The defense ministers' meeting was aimed at laying the groundwork for a summit today among President Barack Obama and heads of state from the Arab countries. A senior defense official said the defense chiefs had a robust discussion, but came to no solid agreements on the increased aid.

The official said it appears the Gulf nations will be willing to consider doing more. But the Sunni leaders want to wait until they see more political improvements in Baghdad and greater participation and aid for the Sunni population before they agree to do more.

The US has been unhappy with what the Gulf nations have been willing to do in the fight, both with their military forces and financial contributions. In recent comments to The Atlantic Magazine, Obama described Gulf countries, among others, as "free riders" that show "an unwillingness to put any skin in the game" when it comes to their own regional security. Those comments have chilled Obama's welcome at the summit.

And, while Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and other Gulf states are part of the US-led coalition battling the Islamic State group in Iraq and Syria, they have done only limited airstrikes in Syria.

Carter told a news conference later that Sunni support for a multi-sectarian government in Iraq will insure that the Islamic

State group "stays defeated." "What we would like, and what we discussed today, is to do more," said Carter, who spoke at Riyadh Palace alongside Gulf Cooperation Council Secretary-General Abdullah al-Zayani.

At the meeting were defense ministers from the six GCC nations - Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, United Arab Emirates, Oman and Qatar. The ministers also reaffirmed ways that their militaries can work more together, including in training, exercises and missions with their special operations and naval forces.

One proposal would have each country designate a special operations unit to go through enhanced training so it could work more closely with all the other nations. The ministers also talked about ways to counter threats from Iran - a high priority for the Gulf countries who have been dismayed with the US move to reduce sanctions on Tehran in exchange for the nuclear agreement.

Al-Zayani said at the news conference that Carter expressed the US commitment to stand with the Gulf nations against Iranian threats, including weapons smuggling into countries such as Yemen.

The US official said that the US wants to see a continued push to interdict the weapons shipments from Iran to insurgent groups in Yemen and other areas. The official was not authorized to discuss the issues publicly ahead of the meeting, so spoke on condition of anonymity.

US officials also want Gulf nations to have a more formal diplomatic presence in Baghdad, arguing that involvement with the Shiite-dominated Iraqi government will decrease the deep sectarianism fracturing the country. There have been significant investments in the region's air forces in recent years, but the widely dispersed fight against Islamic State militants in Iraq and Syria requires a greater emphasis on special operations missions and naval forces, said the official. — AP



RIYADH: Defense Secretary Ash Carter, left, and CIA Director John Brennan. — AP

ISRAELI INTEL COOPERATION WITH EGYPT AT 'UNPRECEDENTED' LEVEL

JERUSALEM: Israel has seen "unprecedented" intelligence cooperation with Egypt and Jordan as the fight against the Islamic State group nudges them to work together more closely, a military chief said Wednesday.

Major General Yair Golan said "there is a strong feeling in the region... that we have to put aside past animosities and concentrate on mutual interests and working together" to deal with the jihadist threat.

The Israeli military's deputy chief of staff spoke of an "unprecedented level of cooperation" mainly regarding intelligence. "But that's between defense establishments, and I wouldn't describe that as some sort of reconciliation between the people," Golan said at a news conference for foreign journalists. "But it is a good starting point, and I'm quite optimistic concerning that." Egypt and Jordan are the only Arab countries that have signed peace treaties with Israel, but relations between them remain delicate, particularly over their support for the Palestinian cause.

Jihadists in Egypt's Sinai Peninsula pledged allegiance in November 2014 to IS, which controls parts of Iraq and Syria and also has a presence in conflict-ridden Libya. Jihadist fighters have long used Sinai as a base and launched an insurgency after the military overthrew Egypt's Islamist president Mohamed Morsi in 2013.

Jordan, which borders Iraq and Syria, has for years struggled with homegrown extremists and is part of a US-led coalition carrying out air strikes against IS. In a sign of the sensitivity in Egypt-Israeli relations, Egypt's parliament in March dismissed a

deputy after he held talks with Israel's envoy to Cairo during a dinner at his home. Tewfik Okasha's hosting of Israeli ambassador Haim Koren sparked outrage in parliament, where one lawmaker hit him with a shoe.

Risk of 'full-scale war'

Golan also spoke of the threat Israel says Iran poses in the region, saying it is determined to spread its influence through the Middle East.

Israel will closely monitor whether Iran complies with the nuclear deal it struck with world powers last year, which the Israeli government strongly opposed, he said. "Look at their involvement in Iraq, their involvement in Syria, in Lebanon, in Yemen, in Sudan and other places," Golan said. "Just unbelievable. You can find Iran today everywhere."

Iran has backed Israeli enemy Hezbollah, and Golan said the Lebanese Shiite militia's improving capabilities deeply concerned Israel. He said that could result in "full-scale war", including a harsh response from the Israeli military. "Comparing that to anything we've experienced before, no doubt, this is the most severe threat we've ever experienced before," Golan said.

Of a possible future crisis, he said "we're not going to see small war in Lebanon. It's going to be decisive. It's going to be full-scale war..." He said that because of the presence of Hezbollah fighters in civilian areas, "there is no other way to take out this threat without really creating large damage to the Lebanese infrastructure, to Lebanese houses and other civilian facilities." — AFP

US SUPREME COURT: TERROR VICTIMS CAN COLLECT \$2BN FROM IRAN

WASHINGTON: The US Supreme Court ruled yesterday that Iran must hand over nearly \$2 billion in frozen assets to survivors and relatives of those killed in attacks blamed on the Islamic republic.

In a 6-2 decision, the court upheld rulings in favor of victims and relatives of the 241 US service members killed in the 1983 bombing of US Marine barracks in Beirut, the 1996 Khobar Towers bombing that killed 19 Americans in Saudi Arabia, and other attacks blamed on Iran.

More than 1,000 Americans are affected by the decision. Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg wrote the court's opinion rejecting the Iranian central bank's efforts to block \$1.75 billion in payments to victims and relatives.

"We are extremely pleased with the Supreme Court's decision, which will bring long-overdue relief to more than 1,000 victims of Iranian terrorism and their families, many of whom have waited decades for redress," said Theodore Olson, the former US solicitor general who represented the relatives of the victims.

It was also a win for President Barack Obama's administration and for Congress, which passed a 2012 law ordering Iran's Bank Markazi to turn over frozen bond assets it held in a New York account at Citibank. "Today's decision is a long awaited victory for justice and in recognizing that the survivors are entitled to this compensation," Senator Robert Menendez, who helped author the legislation, said in a statement.

Iran argued the law was unconstitutional as it violated separation of powers, with US lawmakers ordering a particular result in a legal

case, but federal courts rejected that claim and backed the law. The lower courts also denied the central bank's request for legal immunity. The Supreme Court agreed. The 2012 law "does not transgress constraints the Constitution places on Congress and the president," Ginsburg wrote in the majority opinion.

"We perceive in (the statute) no violation of separation-of-powers principles, and no threat to the independence of the judiciary."

Instead, she said, the law "directs courts to apply a new legal standard to undisputed facts."

Constitutional dilemma

Chief Justice John Roberts filed a dissenting opinion, in which Justice Sonia Sotomayor joined. "Contrary to the majority, I would hold that (the law) violates the separation of powers" between the executive, legislative and judicial branches of government, Roberts wrote.

"No less than if it had passed a law saying 'respondents win,' Congress has decided this case by enacting a bespoke statute tailored to this case that resolves the parties' specific legal disputes to guarantee respondents victory."

He used an analogy in which a neighbor sues another and wins by persuading a legislature to enact a statute backing his position for his specific case.

"Imagine your neighbor sues you, claiming that your fence is on his property," Roberts wrote. "Your neighbor wins. Who would you say decided your case: the legislature, which targeted your specific case and eliminated your specific defenses so as to ensure your neighbor's victory, or the court, which presided over the fait accompli?"

'Deceptive practices'

Several months before signing the 2012 bill into law, Obama signed an executive order freezing all Iranian assets, potentially freeing them up for seizure.

At the time, he pointed to the "deceptive practices of the Central Bank of Iran and other Iranian banks." The case before the court had marked a rare alliance between Obama and both houses of Congress, which are controlled by his Republican foes.

The court's decision comes at a time of hopes for better ties between longtime foes Tehran and Washington, following a nuclear agreement last year between Iran, the United States and five other major powers. It also coincides with growing controversy over a draft bill in Congress that could allow families of the September 11 attacks to sue the Saudi government in 2001 attacks.

There are only eight justices currently sitting on the court following the death in February of Justice Antonin Scalia. So far, Senate Republicans have refused to schedule hearings on Obama's nominee to fill the ninth seat. That leaves the court short-handed and evenly split between justices who lean conservative and those who tend to back liberal positions.

Since Scalia's death, the top court has already deadlocked in three decisions, meaning their rulings set no new national precedents and leave lower court rulings intact. — AFP

US RELUCTANT TO CHANGE DATA PACT AFTER EU WATCHDOGS' CONCERNS

BRUSSELS: The United States does not want to change the substance of a data transfer pact agreed in February with the European Commission, a senior official said, after EU privacy watchdogs voiced concerns over elements of the deal.

Stefan Selig, US Undersecretary of Commerce for International Trade, said the United States would evaluate the EU regulators' opinion - published last week - very carefully, but would be wary of reopening the agreement.

The EU-US Privacy Shield was agreed in February after two years of talks and will help companies move Europeans' data to the United States without setting up complex legal contracts to comply with strict EU data transfer rules. Transatlantic trade in digital services is estimated to be worth over \$250 billion a year and cross-border data transfers are used for everything from completing credit card transactions to targeting advertising based on consumer preferences.

Calling the EU data protection authorities' opinion on the Privacy Shield an "important milestone", Selig said the United States would take it into consideration. But "we are also very cautious about not upsetting what was a delicate balance that was achieved when we negotiated the original text, so would be chary about doing anything that would do just that."

Last week, the EU's 28 data protection authorities - known as the Article 29 Working Party - published a non-binding opinion on the framework which called for more reassurances over US surveillance practices and the independence of a new US privacy ombudsman.

Leaving some of the regulators' concerns unaddressed could increase the chances of the Privacy Shield being challenged in court by privacy advocates, such as its predecessor was. "By doing so, it (the Privacy Shield) will be open to significant attacks by the public, and a court challenge is all but guaranteed," said Aaron Tantleff, partner at law firm Foley & Lardner LLP.

The previous data transfer framework, Safe Harbor, was struck down in October by a top EU court on concerns about US mass surveillance practices. These rose to the fore after former US intelligence contractor Edward Snowden leaked details about the US government's Internet spying programs. While the regulators' opinion is non-binding it is important because they can suspend specific data transfers and enforce data protection law across the EU.

The Privacy Shield needs to be approved by EU member state representatives before it can enter into force, something the European Commission and Washington hope can be done by June. — Reuters

3 CHARGED WITH SEVERAL CRIMES IN FLINT WATER CRISIS

TAMPERING WITH EVIDENCE AMONGST THE CHARGES

LANSING: Two state regulators and a Flint employee were charged yesterday with evidence tampering and several other felony and misdemeanor counts related to the Michigan city's lead-tainted water crisis.

The charges — the first levied in a probe that is expected to broaden — were filed against a pair of state Department of Environmental Quality officials and a local water treatment plant supervisor and stem from an investigation by the Michigan attorney general's office.

Michael Prysby, a DEQ district engineer, and Stephen Busch, who is a supervisor with the DEQ's Office of Drinking Water, were both charged with misconduct in office, conspiracy to tamper with evidence, tampering with evidence and violations of water treatment and monitoring laws.

Flint utilities administrator Michael Glasgow was charged with tampering with evidence for changing lead water-testing results and willful neglect of duty as a public servant. Busch is on paid leave after being suspended earlier. Prysby recently took another job in the agency. Glasgow testified at a legislative hearing that Prysby told him phosphate was not needed to prevent lead corrosion from pipes until after a year of testing.

For nearly 18 months after Flint's water source was switched while the city was under state financial management, residents drank and bathed with improperly treated water that coursed through aging pipes and fixtures, releasing toxic lead. Republican Gov. Rick Snyder announced in October that the city would return from the Flint River to its earlier source of treated water, the Detroit municipal system. But by that time, dangerously high levels of the toxic metal had been detected in the blood of some residents, including children, for whom it can cause lower IQs and behavioral problems.

State of emergency

The city has been under a state of emergency for more than four months, and people there are using filters and bottled water. In January, Republican Attorney General Bill Schuette opened an investigation and appointed a special counsel to lead the probe because his office also is defending Snyder and others in lawsuits filed over the water crisis. The state investigation team has more than 20 outside attorneys and investigators and a budget of \$1.5 million.

Schuette, Genesee County Prosecutor David Leyton, special counsel Todd Flood and other investigators scheduled a news confer-



DETROIT: Attorney General Bill Schuette speaks at the Detroit Police Officers Association. — AP

ence yesterday afternoon in Flint to make a "significant" announcement, according to an advisory distributed to the media. A spokesman for Schuette's office declined comment Tuesday night.

In addition to the lead contamination, outside experts also have suggested a link between the Flint River and a deadly Legionnaires' disease outbreak. There were at least 91 cases, including 12 deaths, across Genesee County, which contains Flint, during a 17-month period. That represents a five-fold increase over what the county averaged before.

The failure to deploy lead corrosion controls after the city's switch to the Flint River is consid-

ered a catastrophic mistake. The DEQ has acknowledged misreading federal regulations and wrongly telling the city that the chemicals were not needed.

State officials were slow to respond to experts' and residents' concerns. After the crisis broke open, DEQ Director Dan Wyant and the department's communications director Brad Wurfel resigned. Snyder announced the firing of Liane Shekter Smith, the former chief of the DEQ's Office of Drinking Water and Municipal Assistance. Susan Hedman, the director of the US Environmental Protection Agency's Chicago-based Midwest office, also resigned. — AP

OBAMA, EU LEADERS TO MEET OVER IS GROUP, MIGRATION AND LIBYA

PARIS: President Barack Obama will meet with French, British, Italian and German leaders in Hannover next week for discussions expected to touch on Syria, Libya, the Islamic State group and migration, European officials said yesterday.

Obama, French leader Francois Hollande, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, Britain's David Cameron and Italy's Matteo Renzi will attend the informal session on Monday and will deal with "pressing international topics," the French presidency said in a statement. British and French officials said the leaders would tackle issues including instability in North Africa, the situation in

Syria and the European migration crisis.

The five-way meeting follows an already-planned visit by Obama and Merkel to an industrial technology fair in Hannover, in central Germany. Christiane Wirtz, a spokeswoman for Merkel, said the chancellor invited the other leaders to Germany but gave few details of their agenda. "The American president isn't in Europe every month, and it is certainly a good opportunity for the four European heads of state and government to exchange views with the American president," she said in Berlin. "There are enough issues, if you look for example at the situation in Syria, Libya, refugees ... (and) Ukraine." — AP

BYU STUDENTS INVESTIGATED BY SCHOOL AFTER REPORTING RAPE

SALT LAKE CITY: Madeline MacDonald says she was an 18-year-old freshman at Brigham Young University when she was sexually assaulted by a man she met on an online dating site.

She reported the crime to the school's Title IX office. That same day, she says, BYU's honor code office received a copy of the report, triggering an investigation into whether MacDonald had violated the Mormon school's strict code of behavior, which bans premarital sex and drinking, among other things.

Now MacDonald is among many students and others, including a Utah prosecutor, who are questioning BYU's practice of investigating accusers, saying it could discourage women from reporting sexual violence and hinder criminal cases. Tens of thousands have signed an online petition calling on the university to give victims

were going to do," she said. Two years later, no arrest has been made in the assault case. All BYU students must agree to abide by the honor code. Created by students in 1949, it prohibits such things as "sexual misconduct," "obscene or indecent conduct or expressions" and "involvement with pornographic, erotic, indecent or offensive material." Violators can be expelled or otherwise punished.

Mary Koss, a public health professor at the University of Arizona who is an expert on sexual assault, questioned whether BYU is fulfilling its legal duty under federal Title IX to support victims of sexual violence.

"The students agreed to be governed by that honor code when they came there," she said. "But they cannot put things in their contract to students that are in violation of federal guidelines on civil rights." Alana Kindness, executive director of the Utah Coalition Against Sexual Assault, warned: "The impact of that practice is that students at BYU who are sexually assaulted will not report that assault."

US Education Department spokeswoman Dorie Nolt would not comment directly on BYU. But she said in an email that "schools should consider whether their disciplinary policies have a chilling effect on victims' or other students' reporting of sexual violence offenses."

Some US colleges with codes of conduct have an immunity clause under which they investigate and punish only the perpetrator of the more severe offense. Madi Barney, a 20-year-old BYU student who says that she, too, was sexually assaulted and now faces an honor code investigation, started a petition last week calling for an immunity clause. More than 89,000 people have signed, some of whom said they had similar experiences at BYU, according to the petition website Care2.

Barney said that she was raped in her apartment last September by a man she met at a gym. A suspect was arrested and is awaiting trial. Barney said she has been informed by the university that until the honor code investigation has been completed, she cannot sign up for any more classes after this semester. She has filed a Title IX sex-discrimination complaint against BYU with the Education Department's Office of Civil Rights.

The university would not comment on the case, citing federal privacy law. The Associated Press doesn't normally identify possible victims of sex crimes, but Barney said she wants her name to be used so she can help change the policy.

Craig Johnson, the Utah County prosecutor assigned to the case, said the criminal investigation is being hindered by BYU's insistence on determining if Barney broke school rules. He said his focus has been pulled away from the case because of worries Barney will move home to California and refuse to take part in hearings and interviews.

"How excited is she really going to be to come back to Utah where she was raped and her school kicked her out?" Johnson said. However, Johnson's bosses in the Utah County Attorney's Office said in a statement that BYU has not harmed the case. — AP



PROVO, UTAH: Madeline MacDonald poses for a photograph. — AP

immunity from honor code violations committed in the lead-up to a sexual assault.

What BYU will do

This week, BYU announced that in light of such concerns, the school will re-evaluate the practice and consider changes. "I hope we have a system that people feel they can trust, particularly again the victims of sexual assault," BYU President Kevin Worthen said in a video released yesterday. "And that we have one that creates an environment in which we minimize the number of sexual assaults on campus."

BYU would not say how many students who complained of sexual violence have been investigated by the honor code office or whether any of them have been punished. In MacDonald's case, she said BYU eventually called to tell her she hadn't violated the code. But she said she was made to feel guilty by the university.

"For those two weeks, I wasn't sure if they were going to decide to kick me out or what they

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patients' circumstances and life style. HCA acquired an interest in LOC and partners and supports LOC in its activities. LOC has recently opened a new Centre at The Wellington Hospital.

SARAH CANNON RESEARCH INSTITUTE (SCRI)

Sarah Cannon Research Institute (SCRI), in partnership with HCA Inc., is a global strategic research organization, based in the USA and now in the UK, focusing on advancing therapies and accelerating drug development. It is one of the largest clinical research programs, conducting community-based clinical trials in oncology, cardiology, gastroenterology and other therapeutic areas through affiliations with a network of more than 700 physicians in the United States and United Kingdom. Additionally, SCRI offers management, regulatory and other research support services to drug development sponsors and strategic investigator sites. SCRI recently launched Sarah Cannon Research UK, a cancer drug development program in the United Kingdom that provides access to Phase I clinical trials for patients.

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TAIWAN OFFICIALS IN BEIJING TO NEGOTIATE OVER DEPORTATIONS

BEIJING: Taiwanese officials are seeking to ensure fair treatment for their nationals who were deported from Kenya to face wire fraud charges in China, a case that has prompted concerns that Beijing is bringing additional diplomatic pressure on the island it considers its own territory.

A 10-member delegation of judicial and police officials arrived in Beijing yesterday for talks that will also try to set up a mechanism for cooperation on such cases, team leader Chen Wen-chi said before departing Taiwan. "We hope both sides can work together on crime investigation and share out the work and help each other for dealing with this case," said Chen, who heads the Justice Ministry's department of international and cross-strait legal affairs.

Chen and her delegation made no further comments after arriving in Beijing just before noon. Along with holding discussions with their Chinese counterparts, they were expected to visit the Beijing detention center where the 45 suspects deported from Kenya are being held before returning to Taiwan on Friday.

In Taiwan, Premier Simon Chang said that the delegation would discuss having the suspects transferred to Taiwanese custody during the investigation, but that it would be a lengthy process. Another possibility would be to have them serve their sentences in Taiwan if convicted in China, Chang said, adding, "We cannot be optimistic" about their coming home any time soon.

China claims jurisdiction in the Kenya case because it says the alleged victims of the fraud artists were residents of mainland China. Officials and state media have also complained that Taiwan doesn't punish such

crimes harshly enough, encouraging others to try their luck at such relatively low-risk, low-overhead scams that can potentially lead to massive payouts.

Taiwan says Beijing violated a tacit understanding under which both sides agreed not to interfere in the legal affairs of their citizens abroad. China's moves on the deportations are widely seen an attempt to assert its claims to sovereignty over Taiwan and legal authority over its residents, particularly in the run-up to the inauguration of Taiwan's independence-leaning President-elect Tsai Ing-wen next month.

The sides split amid civil war in 1949 and China has long sought to isolate Taiwan diplomatically by preventing it from maintaining formal ties with most countries and international organizations such as the United Nations.

While Beijing has observed an undeclared diplomatic truce under the administration of outgoing China-friendly President Ma Ying-jeou, observers say Beijing could take a much harder line if Tsai refuses to meet basic conditions, including recognizing the claim that Taiwan is part of China.

Taiwanese criminals have been blamed for a proliferation of telephone and computer scams in which fraudsters posing as police, insurance agents or government officials attempt to trick their victims into providing personal financial information or transferring money.

Chinese broadcaster CCTV has aired footage of some of the Taiwanese suspects deported from Kenya handcuffed and wearing prison garb. Some have admitted to taking part in scams and expressed



BEIJING: Officials from Taiwan arrive at the VIP exit of the airport yesterday. — AP

remorse, part of China's controversial practice of broadcasting confessions from suspects prior to their trials.

Facing intense public pressure, Taiwanese officials managed last week to convince Malaysia to deport a separate group of Taiwanese criminal sus-

pects to Taiwan despite Beijing's request that they be sent to China. However, with little evidence of their alleged crimes and no arrest warrants, police released them upon arrival in Taiwan, prompting outrage in China. — AP



IDOMENI, GREECE: Children play with an umbrella amid strong winds at a makeshift camp for migrants and refugees at the Greek-Macedonian border yesterday. — AFP

PODEMOS LAWMAKERS ON HUNGER STRIKE IN SPAIN IN FAVOR OF REFUGEES

MADRID: Four lawmakers from Spain's far-left party Podemos and its allies said yesterday they are on a week-long hunger strike to try to rally public support of refugees. The lawmakers began their hunger strike on Saturday and are calling on people to occupy public squares for 24 hours on Friday, the day they plan to end their action, in a gesture of support for those people at the centre of Europe's biggest migrant crisis since World War II.

The idea stems "from the shame we felt over the agreement between the European Union and Turkey, seeing how Europe violates international law," Podemos lawmaker Pedro Arrojo told AFP. Under a controversial deal reached in March Turkey agreed to take back all migrants arriving at the Greek islands, in an effort to relieve the pressure on the European Union which has seen over a million migrant arrivals since early 2015.

In return the EU promised to resettle one Syrian refugee for every Syrian taken back by

Turkey, capped at 72,000. Visa-free travel will also be granted to Turks within the border-free Schengen Zone under the deal and Turkey's stalled EU membership bid will be reassessed. But the EU-sanctioned deportations have drawn sharp criticism, with Human Rights Watch describing them as "abusive" and expressing concern about the fate of the deportees.

'Simply atrocious'

Arrojo, who has consumed only water with salt and sugar since Saturday, said he hoped to transform public indignation over the plight of migrants "into action." "We have seen that initiatives are starting to bloom. There is a parish that is collecting shoes for refugees," said Arrojo who represents to northeastern city of Zaragoza for Podemos.

Twenty-four hour assemblies are planned for a dozen cities on Friday, including Madrid, he added. Podemos was born out of the "Indignado" protest moment against corruption

and economic inequality that filled Spanish squares in 2011. Miguel Anxo Fernan Vello, a lawmaker with regional Galician party En Marea which is allied to Podemos, said he was taking part in the hunger strike because he was angered that Spain has welcomed only a handful of refugees since the migrant crisis started.

Spain's conservative government agreed last year to accept around 16,000 refugees from Greece and Italy but so far only 18 have arrived. "This is not a failure, this is simply atrocious," he told AFP.

Over 178,000 people have risked their lives crossing the Mediterranean so far this year, and 737 have died or gone missing while making the perilous journey to Europe, according to the International Organization for Migration.

The UN refugee agency said on yesterday it feared around 500 migrants from Africa had drowned in the Mediterranean, in what could be one of the worst tragedies since the start of the migrant crisis. — AFP

INDIA'S TENDULKAR BATS FOR CAMPAIGN AGAINST CHILD LABOR ON TWITTER

MUMBAI: Indian cricket legend Sachin Tendulkar, chess champion Viswanathan Anand and Bollywood stars took to Twitter this week to support a campaign against child labor, using their fame to draw greater attention to the issue.

The campaign, launched by Indian insurer Reliance General Insurance and children's rights NGO Child Rights and You (CRY), used the hashtag #DONT_EMPLOY_LITTLE_ONES to urge people to promise not to use child labor. Bollywood stars Soha Ali Khan and Mandira Bedi also tweeted their support.

"Every child deserves to chase dreams. Let dreams be chased," Tendulkar tweeted. The former India captain's tweet was retweeted almost 2,000 times and liked nearly 5,000 times. There are 5.7 million Indian child workers aged between five and 17, out of 168 million globally, according to the International Labor Organization.

More than half the Indian children work in agriculture, toiling in cotton, sugarcane and rice paddy fields, and over a quarter in manufacturing, embroidering clothes, weaving carpets or making matchsticks.

Children also work in restaurants and hotels, and in middle-class homes.

"Millions of children in India, engaged in labor, are battling minimum wages, long working hours, suffering abuse and exploitation and being brutally deprived of their basic rights," CRY director Anita Bala Sharad said in a statement.

The campaign also asks people to stop using restaurants and other businesses that employ child labor, and to ensure out-of-school children and their parents are made aware of the law that guarantees free education up to the age of 14.

"We firmly believe that every single citizen has a moral obligation to ensure that child safety - a child's right to safety and a safe environment - is not taken away from children," Reliance General CEO Rakesh Jain said in the statement. Non-profits in India are increasingly taking to social media to raise awareness of causes including domestic violence and child labor. There are estimated to be more than 350 million internet users and more than 134 million active social media users in the country. — Reuters

NEW FEARS FOR PRESS FREEDOMS AS HONG KONG EDITOR SACKED

HONG KONG: The sacking of a respected Hong Kong newspaper editor triggered a furious backlash from journalists and pro-democracy campaigners yesterday, in what was seen as the latest blow to press freedoms in the city.

Keung Kwok-yuen was fired overnight Tuesday from investigative newspaper Ming Pao, whose former chief editor was stabbed by masked attackers in the street two years ago.

Fears are growing in the semi-autonomous city that China is tightening its political grip in a number of areas, including pressuring and influencing local media. Keung's sacking coincided with Ming Pao publishing a front-page story Wednesday linking top Hong Kong businessmen and politicians to new revelations from the Panama Papers leak.

The trove of Panama Papers documents, released by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists this month, has exposed how Panama law firm Mossack Fonseca helped China's rich and powerful funnel their wealth into tax havens.

Ming Pao's front page yesterday reported that pro-Beijing actor Jackie Chan and high-profile Hong Kong politicians including Henry Tang, a former leadership candidate, have offshore accounts. According to a statement by the Ming Pao Staff Association, Keung was fired in the early hours of Wednesday in what was billed as a streamlining exercise.

"The association is dubious over the inci-

dent, and questions the company's surface reason of saving resources," it said. "It is penalising editorial personnel with different opinions," it said, adding that members were "extremely angry and dissatisfied".

Reporters said the decision to sack Keung was taken by Malaysian chief editor Chong Tien Siong, who is seen as pro-Beijing. Chong was brought in two years ago to replace veteran investigative journalist Kevin Lau, triggering protests by newspaper staff. Soon after, Lau was stabbed in the street leaving him severely wounded, sparking major concerns over reporting freedoms.

"The decision (to sack Keung) has set all the alarm bells ringing," said Emily Lau, chairwoman of Hong Kong's Democratic Party. "The whole profession is trembling like a leaf because of political and economic pressures." The Hong Kong Journalists Association said reporters were in shock over Keung's sacking and described the reasons as "far-fetched".

"We are deeply worried and unsettled about the space and degree of freedom for local news," it said in a statement. In a new report yesterday, campaigning NGO Reporters Without Borders said Hong Kong's press freedoms had dipped slightly in 2015 — it is now ranked 69th in the world.

Its report said Hong Kong media could still cover sensitive stories but "the need to fight to protect their editorial positions from Beijing's influence is increasingly noticeable". — AFP

RUSSIA ACCUSES SYRIAN OPPOSITION OF USING BLACKMAIL AT GENEVA TALKS

MOSCOW: Russia yesterday accused the Saudi-backed Syrian opposition of employing blackmail by suspending its participation in peace talks in Geneva.

The Russian Foreign Ministry said the tactics deployed by the High Negotiations Committee showed it was not capable of reaching a deal and could not be the sole representative for the opposition at the talks. "The Geneva forum should be a 'workshop' for agreeing on the outlines of Syria's future secular statehood and for determining the ways of reaching that, but not an 'eastern bazaar' with elements of crude blackmail in respect of the international community," the ministry said in a statement.

"By issuing ultimatums, the Riyadh group, it seems, is trying to mask the fact it has no concrete and realistic proposals." Russia spoke out after a Western diplomat warned the fragile peace talks might not resume for at least a year if they were abandoned now and as the opposition urged more

military support for rebels after declaring a truce was over.

The Russian statement described as groundless opposition allegations that forces loyal to Syrian President Bashar al-Assad were violating an agreement on a cessation of hostilities and on granting access for humanitarian supplies. "It turns out that certain opposition forces and those external forces which are their patrons are continuing to rely exclusively on achieving their own plans and clearly inflated ambitions, acting on the principle 'all or nothing'," the Russian Foreign Ministry said.

The actions of the Saudi-backed opposition underlined the importance of having other moderate opposition groups participate in the talks, it said. The ministry said it supported the decision of Staffan de Mistura, the United Nations envoy to the talks, to carry on with the negotiations despite the decision of the High Negotiations Committee to suspend its participation. — Reuters

EU TO PROPOSE VISA-FREE TRAVEL FOR TURKS MAY 4 IF TERMS MET

BRUSSELS: The European Union's executive said yesterday it will propose on May 4 granting Turks visa-free travel to the bloc from late June in a deal under which it is to stop uncontrolled migration into Europe - provided Ankara meets the remaining conditions.

A first European Commission report on implementation of last month's EU-Turkey agreement said good progress had been made but more resources and commitments were needed to carry out sustained returns of migrants from Greece to Turkey and to resettle Syrian refugees from Turkey directly to Europe.

The Commission did not say how many of the 72 benchmarks for visa liberalization Turkey has yet to complete but it pointed to several areas where work remains to be done. They include reducing a backlog of asylum applications, granting all refugees legal access to the labor market, strengthening visa requirements for countries that pose a high migration risk, taking necessary steps to protect fundamental rights and ending discrimination against citizens of EU member state Cyprus, which Turkey does not recognize.

Migration Commission Dimitris Avramopoulos, speaking to reporters, declined to say how many benchmarks Turkey now met but stressed that Ankara's compliance was improving by the day. "It's not a question of number, it's how quickly the process is going on," he said, while repeating the Commission's position that there could be no liberalization until all conditions were fulfilled. "I believe that at the end, if we continue working like this, most of the benchmarks will be met."

The EU executive also urged Ankara to improve readmission of Turkish nationals who overstay in Europe and are expelled, and of third country nationals from all EU member states, so that an EU-Turkey Readmission Agreement is fully effective from June 1.

Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu said on Tuesday that Ankara was fulfilling all the terms of the EU deal and if the Europeans did not meet their part, Turkey would stop applying its side of the bargain. The Commission will present its third visa liberalization progress report for Turkey on May 4 and if Turkey takes the necessary measures to fulfill the remaining benchmarks, the report will be accompanied by a legislative proposal for transferring

Turkey to the visa-free list," the report said.

Separately, the Commission proposed easing visa requirements for Ukrainians, something it had promised for months as part of efforts to help Kiev in its confrontation with Russia. Avramopoulos said he hoped member states and lawmakers would endorse the proposals "very, very soon". Addressing concerns about immigration similar to those raised by the offer to Turkey, the Commission statement stressed that Ukrainians would not have a right to work in the EU.

"NO POLITICAL DISCOUNT"

The proposal must be approved by a weighted majority of EU governments representing at least 16 of the 28 member states and 65 percent of the EU population, and a majority in the European Parliament to take effect. It is disputed in Germany and France, where many fear a flood of Turkish migrants, although the change would not allow Turks to work or stay longer than three months. German EU lawmaker Markus Ferber, from Chancellor Angela Merkel's conservative Bavarian sister party, said Turkey should not be given any "political discount". — Reuters

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DEATH TOLL FROM TALEBAN ATTACK IN KABUL RISES TO 64

KABUL: The death toll from Tuesday's Taliban attack in Kabul rose sharply overnight from 28 to 64, according to the Afghan Interior Ministry. Gen. Abdul Rahman Rahimi, Kabul's police chief, said yesterday during a press conference that two investigative teams have been appointed to investigate the attack in Kabul. He added that most of the casualties were civilians, including women and children.

The attackers targeted an agency that provides protection for high-ranking government officials, similar to the US Secret Service. A suicide bomber detonated an explosives-laden truck outside the compound, and a pair of gunmen entered the compound in the aftermath before being killed.

The Taliban have claimed responsibility for the attack. Regarding the attack Rahimi said,

"The initial reports show that the attack was planned outside of the borders of our country" - language that Afghan officials often use to blame neighboring Pakistan, who they accuse of harboring the Taliban leadership.

The country's chief executive Abdullah Abdullah postponed an upcoming visit to Pakistan and headed to the scene of the attack on Tuesday, his spokesman, Jawed Faisal, said. "The government raised the call for peace, but unfortunately the answer by the enemy was fighting, violence, bloodshed, killing innocent people," Abdullah said.

Hundreds of family members of the victims gathered at area hospitals awaiting word of their conditions overnight and Kabul residents started an emergency blood donation campaign to help the victims. — AP



KABUL: Afghan security forces secure the area after a suicide attack on Tuesday. — AP



TOKYO: A woman walks dogs past St. Mary's International School. — AP

JAPAN CATHOLIC SCHOOL SEX-ABUSE VICTIMS DEMAND TO BE HEARD

'THEY DECIDED TO DO NOTHING'

TOKYO: The Roman Catholic Church's sex abuse scandal has stretched into one of the least Catholic countries: Japan, where former students at a prestigious all-boys parochial school allege they were molested or raped by religious brothers who taught there decades ago.

Three former students at St. Mary's International School in Tokyo told The Associated Press they were sexually abused by brothers there. One described "health checkups" in which a brother touched boys' testicles. Another says he was raped in the chapel by two brothers at age 11. That former student received an in-person apology from one of the men, Brother Lawrence Lambert, in 2014. The former student's account of the meeting suggests Lambert might have initially confused him with yet another victim whose assault went unreported.

The former student said the school sent Lambert away after the 1965 attack, only to have him return to serve as elementary-school principal for nearly two decades. Allegations from former students have been published in an English-language Tokyo newspaper but otherwise have received little attention in Japan. There are only about 500,000 Catholics in the country of 127 million, and the school is aimed at foreigners like the three former students rather than Japanese.

The investigation

Many sex-abuse victims choose not to come forward in conservative Japan. Unlike in the US, in Japan victims must press charges for cases to proceed. Japan's statute of limitations is 10 years for rape and seven years for sexual assault.

School officials say they reported the chapel rape allegations to Tokyo police when the victim approached them in 2013. Yet Tokyo police spokesman Satoru Matsunaga said there were no records of the case in their files and no investigation

is ongoing. Though the victim said his family made St. Mary's aware of the attack in 1965, Saburo Kagei, who has headed the school since 2013, said he had been unaware of them.

In October 2014, St. Mary's set up an investigative panel to look into sex abuse at the school. Their findings are not ready, and the head of the panel declined to comment. Kagei acknowledged Lambert's apology without confirming the attack or any other sexual abuse. "The last thing we would want any child to go through is any kind of harm," he said. "We want to uphold and take care of the children who are placed in our care."

Founded by the Brothers of Christian Instruction in 1954, St. Mary's runs from first to 12th grade. Its 900 students hail from 60 countries, and it boasts having 13,500 alumni. It bills itself as the "most prestigious international school for boys."

The Archdiocese of Tokyo declined to comment, saying St. Mary's is handling the matter. Conrad Lord, a lawyer for The Brothers of Christian Instruction, which runs St. Mary's, said Lambert's apology had been obtained by "coercion," and that both brothers were wrongfully accused, but declined to comment further.

The Vatican does not get involved in specific cases. Brother Albert Heinrich, who heads the brotherhood in the US and taught at St. Mary's in the 1980s, said he learned of the abuse only in recent years. "I had no knowledge at that time of any alleged problems at the school," he said in an email from Alfred, Maine.

Religious brothers are not ordained as priests, but take vows of poverty, chastity and obedience and work in a variety of ministries, including education. Teja Arboleda, 53, a former St. Mary's student who says he was sexually abused by a brother in the mid-1970s, said students at the time "were told

not to say anything. Otherwise, they would do something bad to us."

Arboleda, a movie producer, is working on a documentary about sex-abuse survivors at Catholic schools around the world, including St. Mary's, titled "Ring Around the Collar."

"Most of them will not talk about it for the rest of their lives. Many of them are in denial," he said in a telephone interview from Dedham, Massachusetts. "People, I think, often believe this only takes place in the United States because Americans are much more vocal." Arboleda says he was sexually abused by a brother who died in 1980. Ferdinand Stoer, another former St. Mary's student, said he was abused by the same teacher. Stoer, 56, said his class of about 30 students underwent a health checkup in which they were told to take off all their clothes; then the brother touched their testicles while they coughed. He was not a medical doctor.

"It was weird," said Stoer, who lives in Sacramento, California, and like Arboleda agreed to have his name published. Some of the boys talked about it among themselves, but he did not tell his parents, and the checkup was not taken up as a problem at the school at that time. In fall 2014, Stoer and some other alumni received an email in which Kagei acknowledged sex abuse allegations had been made against former teachers. Stoer assumed it was about the checkups.

In fact, the email was sent after the former student who said he was raped began reaching out to school and church officials and authorities in Japan and Canada. Police in Quebec, where the Brothers of Christian Instruction are based, said they have no jurisdiction over crimes in Japan.

No lawsuits have been filed over any of the allegations. Now 61, the former student believes he deserves compensation but has little hope that will happen. "Nothing can be done," he told the AP. "They decided to do nothing."

The gruesome details

The AP generally does not identify victims of sexual abuse who do not wish to be named. The former student remembers many details of the rape, down to what his mother had made him for lunch that day: rollmops, or pickled herring held with wooden skewers. He is Jewish, and the school lunches served at St. Mary's weren't kosher.

He decided to eat alone, in the chapel. The two brothers walked in, making signs of the cross, and announced he had to be punished for eating there.

He was forced to face a table. His pants were pulled down. He was quiet. He thought maybe he was going to be spanked. He didn't know what was happening. All he remembers is the pain. One brother raped him, and then the other man pulled his T-shirt over his head and raped him again. When he was finally alone, he looked down and saw he had been clenching his fist so hard a rollmop skewer had stabbed through the skin of his palm.

He did not tell anyone, but his family's maid found his bloodied underwear in the laundry. He initially refused to tell his parents who attacked him, but finally said he could not tell because "Brother Lawrence" might do the same thing to his 4-year-old brother. The former student said his family did not pursue charges but demanded that Lambert be kept away from children. They were told he was re-assigned to Canada after the rape. Decades later, he learned that Lambert returned to St. Mary's, serving as principal of its elementary school from 1982 until retiring in 2011. After that, he lived at a brothers' residence in Japan. — AP

INDIAN GOVERNMENT ROLLS BACK ON PENSIONS

CHENNAI: Garment workers across the southern Indian states of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu welcomed the government's decision to scrap a controversial proposal to change the rule on pension withdrawals but said the battle for their rights was far from over.

The government on Tuesday dropped its proposal - to allow the employer's contribution to the Employee Provident Fund to be released only at the retirement age of 58 - after thousands of protesters clashed with police in the information technology hub of Bengaluru.

"The rollback is a small victory for workers' unions. But with sweeping labour reforms being introduced, we are worried that the rights of the workers will be overshadowed by the welfare of big corporations," said R. Karruppusamy, director of Rights Education and Development Centre, a charity working with women in the textile industries in Tamil Nadu. Under the existing rules workers and employers contribute equally to the EPF, and workers can withdraw the full amount saved at any time - for instance for education, healthcare or taking a leave on a house.

Unions were opposed to the proposal to limit withdrawals to the worker's share of the fund, and to force workers to leave the government contributions in the fund until retirement.

India is among the largest textile and clothing manufacturers in the world, supplying leading international brands. The textile industry is also the second largest employer in the country after agriculture. Workers and rights groups say the hundreds of small and medium-sized enterprises use forced labour and treat workers poorly, abuses ranging from withheld salaries to debt bondage.

"These workers, mostly women, work in vulnerable conditions very tolerantly. The government is pushing them to a corner which is why they took to the streets, losing three days of wages," said R Prathibha, president of the Bengaluru-based Garment and Textile Workers Union, which led the campaign against a change in the use of pension fund savings.

Trade unionists have also been challenging the government over the gradual reduction in social security benefits for workers in the textile and garment industries.

"There are hundreds of small and medium enterprise employing young girls that do not give medical benefits, bonus or annual wage hike. None of the social welfare schemes are implemented here and the employee is practically paid daily wages," Karruppusamy told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

Many firms have stopped offering their staff benefits such as health schemes, bonus provision, and cooperative stores in mill compounds, and pay an overall contract sum instead. Activists say the existing laws are in theory beneficial for workers, but there is inadequate monitoring of the way they are implemented.

In the case of the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013, he said there were no active committees to monitor complaints in the more than 400 textile mills in Tamil Nadu's Erode region alone. "Ensure compliance" (with the law) is the slogan of trade unions across the region have adopted as workers in Bengaluru prepare to start work when their factories reopen after being closed for two days of protests. — Reuters



KARACHI: Pakistani security officials inspect a police van after an attack by gunmen on security members guarding a polio vaccination team yesterday. — AFP

GUNMEN KILL SEVEN POLICE IN PAKISTAN

COPS WERE GUARDING POLIO TEAM

KARACHI: Motorcycle gunmen yesterday shot dead seven policemen guarding a polio vaccination team in Pakistan's southern port city Karachi, officials said, a brazen attack in the country's economic hub.

Feroz Shah, a senior police official, told AFP that eight gunmen carried out the killings in two separate attacks in the city's western Orangi Town neighborhood. "The gunmen first opened fire on three policemen in the streets of Orangi Town, killing them all," he said, adding: "Later they shot dead four policemen, who were sitting in a police mobile van" a few streets away.

Abdul Kareem, an official in Abbasi Shaheed Hospital where the bodies were taken, also confirmed the casualties. The polio workers, who were unharmed in the attack, were on the third day of an immunization drive. Provincial home minister Sohail Anwar Syal, told the private Dunya TV channel: "The policemen sacrificed their lives to protect the polio workers."

No group immediately came forward to claim responsibility, but Islamist outfits including the Pakistani Taliban say the polio vaccination drive is a front for espionage or a conspiracy to sterilize Muslims. Police and rangers later cordoned off the areas where their colleagues had been killed. The interior of the police van was heavily soaked with blood, with an officer's cap lying on the front seat.

Speaking to the media, provincial police

chief Allah Dino Khawaja announced a \$50,000 for the arrest of the gunmen, as well as \$20,000 compensation to each of the victims' families.

Frequent target

Pakistan is one of only two countries in the world where polio, a crippling childhood disease, remains endemic. Attempts to eradicate it have been badly hit by militant attacks on immunization teams that have claimed more than 100 lives since December 2012.

In 2014 the number of polio cases recorded in Pakistan soared to 306, the highest in 14 years, before falling to 54 in 2015. The most recent attack came in January, when a suicide bomber blew himself up outside a polio vaccination centre in the southwestern city of Quetta, killing 15 people-two civilians and 13 security officials.

Authorities want to vaccinate 35 million children under the age of five, wiping out the disease by the end of 2016. In Karachi, a heavy metropolis of around 20 million, authorities have enlisted 2,500 female "neighborhood vaccinators" drawn from local communities to support the program. Islamist opposition to all forms of inoculation grew after the CIA organized a fake vaccination drive to help track down Al-Qaeda's former leader Osama Bin Laden in the Pakistani garrison town of Abbottabad. The terror chief was killed during a US special forces raid in 2011. — AFP

PRIEST DEPORTED TO INDIA IS SUBJECT OF ABUSE LAWSUIT IN US

MINNEAPOLIS: A Catholic priest who was deported to his native India after completing his jail sentence in Minnesota for sexually abusing a child is the subject of a new lawsuit against a diocese in India that allegedly returned him to ministry with Vatican approval.

Attorney Jeff Anderson filed the lawsuit in federal court in Minnesota on Monday on behalf of Megan Peterson, who says the Rev. Joseph Palanivel Jeyapaul abused her starting in 2004 when she was 14 or 15 and he was a priest at her church in the northern Minnesota town of Greenbush. Her lawsuit seeks unspecified damages in excess of \$75,000 from the Ootacamund Diocese in India's Tamil Nadu state.

"This is not only shocking, it's a total break of the pledge Pope Francis has made that he will not return to the practices of the past," Anderson said.

Peterson said at a news conference Tuesday that she felt "abused, degraded and re-victimized all over again" when she learned that Bishop Arulappan Amalraj lifted Jeyapaul's suspension in February after consulting with the Vatican.

"Children deserve to be protected in India and nobody is doing this at this point,"

Peterson said. Anderson said the Ootacamund Diocese was responsible for the anguish Peterson feels from knowing that he has access to children again. He said the federal court has jurisdiction to consider the case because the Indian diocese sent the priest to Minnesota and supervised him, so it did business in the state of Minnesota, but he also acknowledged that enforcing any judgment could be tricky. Officials with the diocese in India did not immediately respond to an email from The Associated Press seeking comment.

Jeyapaul fled the United States after he was charged, but was arrested in India and eventually extradited to Minnesota. He pleaded guilty last year to molesting one girl, whose name hasn't been made public. Under a plea deal, charges of molesting Peterson were dismissed. Jeyapaul was sentenced to a year in jail, but was freed because he had served almost three years in jail fighting extradition and awaiting trial.

The Associated Press doesn't normally name victims of sex crimes but Peterson has gone public in hopes of empowering other abuse survivors. Both women reached settlements earlier with the Diocese of Crookston in Minnesota. — AP



Fishermen prepare dinner before they go fishing in the Brahmaputra River in Guwahati in India's Assam state yesterday. Brahmaputra is one of Asia's largest rivers, which passes through China's Tibet region, India and Bangladesh before converging into the Bay of Bengal. — AP

EMIRATI TYCOON LAUNCHES \$1.14BN EDUCATION FUND

DUBAI: A billionaire businessman from the United Arab Emirates launched the Arab world's largest education fund yesterday, setting aside \$1.14 billion (4.2 billion dirhams) in grants for underserved youth from the region. The Abdulla Al-Ghurair Foundation for Education said it plans to provide scholarships for 15,000 Middle Eastern students over the next 10 years. The recipients will be students in need of financial assistance who also qualify for entrance to the region's top universities.

Fund Chairman Abdul Aziz Al-Ghurair said his family has allocated a third of their wealth for the initiative. He said the endowment is likely to grow over the coming years as the family's business revenues increase, with the scholarship fund intended to continue well beyond its initial 10-year mark. "It has to be significant in size. It has to make an impact in the region," Ghurair told AP, describing the foundation as a "perpetual endowment".

The Ghurair family has stakes in a number of businesses, including the Dubai-based Mashreq Bank, as well as in iron and steel, packaging, cement and insurance companies. In the presence of Dubai ruler Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum, the foundation signed its first agreements yesterday with The American University in Cairo, The American University of Beirut, The American University of Sharjah and Khalifa University in Abu Dhabi.

The first batch of students will be receiving scholarships

as early as this upcoming fall semester, said the fund's CEO Maysa Jalbout. "We're looking to have young people who are well-rounded, who can think critically, who are creative," Jalbout told the AP. "We're hoping to help them enter the top universities, both in the region and globally, so that they can be competitive and be able to compete on a global level for the jobs of the future."

More than half of the 369 million people living in the Middle East are under 25 years old, but unemployment runs high in part because many do not have access to quality education or jobs. According to a Brookings Institute paper co-written by Jalbout and Columbia University doctoral candidate Samar Farah, Arab governments have struggled to meet the needs of young people, with the pace of development trailing behind.

The Middle East had the world's highest youth unemployment rates in 2014, with 46 percent of women and 24 percent of men unemployed, according to the International Labor Organization. The paper notes that in Sudan, for example, 39 percent of youth were either unemployed, not in education or not receiving training. In recent years that rate was around 28 percent for Egypt and the Palestinian territories, and roughly 25 percent for Jordan and Tunisia. The figure for Saudi Arabia was 19 percent, despite the kingdom having the region's largest economy and spending billions to boost education. — AP

IN ABOUT-FACE, OIL WORKERS END STRIKE...

Continued from Page 1

prices but posted a budget deficit in the 2015/2016 year which ended March 31. For the 2016-17 fiscal year, it projects a record deficit of \$38 billion, equivalent to 30 percent of gross domestic product.

Kuwait has liberalized the price of diesel and kerosene and is considering cutting subsidies on other services. But it is facing difficulties in cutting spending which has increased more than fourfold since 2006, mostly on wages and subsidies.

MPs yesterday hailed the decision to call off the three-day strike. MP Ahmad Al-Azemi welcomed the initiative by the union to call of the strike and resort to peaceful talks to resolve the dispute. Azemi however insisted that he has not backed down on a request by himself and several MPs to hold a special parliamentary session to debate the oil strike and the workers' demands. He said he and some MPs are trying to push for a negotiated settlement between the government and the workers that safeguards Kuwaiti national interests at the same time.

The special session was requested by 10 MPs for today to debate the rights of oil workers and their strike but the government rejected the request because it was not consulted before filing the request. MP Mansour Al-Dhafiri also welcomed the workers' initiative to return to work, adding that negotiations are the best way to resolve any dispute. He said that all are required to give priority to national interests ahead of personal interests, adding

that the workers' initiative to call off the strike is evidence of their love and dedication to their country.

MP Ali Al-Khamees said calling off the strike will give MPs the motivation to defend the rights of workers, adding that he will oppose any measure to cut the benefits of the oil workers or other employees. MP Abdullah Al-Turajji reiterated his calls for the resignation of KPC chief Nezar Al-Adasani after holding him responsible for the strike. KUNA had reported that the unions ended the strike by praising HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, and saying their action showed their "ability to affect the production process". The unions "entrusted His Highness the Amir (with) the protection of rights of the employees in the oil sector," the unions said, according to KUNA. It said workers wouldn't be disciplined for taking part in the strike.

Adel Al-Fadhel, a spokesman for the Kuwait Oil Company Workers' Union, confirmed workers went back to work yesterday. He said HH Sheikh Sabah spoke to the head of one of the unions Tuesday by telephone to assure his support for the workers. "We're glad to announce that the strike has succeeded in preserving the rights of the workers in the oil sector," Fadhel told AP. "His Highness the Amir intervened and guaranteed to preserve the rights of the workers according to the law." Fadhel did not elaborate. The Amiri Diwan later denied HH the Amir spoke to any union official regarding the strike. Fadhel declined to immediately comment on the denial.

'HIJAB DAY' AT PARIS UNIV DIVIDES OPINION

PARIS: Students at an elite Paris university sparked fierce debate yesterday by inviting classmates to wear the Muslim veil for a day in a bid to "demystify" a practice that is highly divisive in France. Students at Sciences Po urged women to take part in Hijab Day "if you too think all women should have the right to dress as they wish and have their choice respected". France is grappling with rising Islamophobia after a wave of terror attacks by jihadists, and the students' Facebook page said that those agreeing to put on the veil would "experience the stigmatisation experienced by veiled women in France".

A dozen students handed out flyers at the university by a table covered in colorful headscarves with a sign reading: "France got 99 problems but Hijab ain't one", adapted from a hit by US rapper Jay Z. "It is to raise awareness, open the debate and give the floor to women who are often debated on in public but rarely heard," said Laetitia, one of the organizers. Another student, Imen, said she wore a veil for the first time yesterday morning on the metro and felt "stares" in her direction.

The organizers' Facebook page lashed out at Prime Minister Manuel Valls who earlier this month said the veil was being used as a political symbol for the "enslavement of women". France has banned the full-face veil in public places, and Valls said the headscarf was being used by some as a challenge to the country's prized secular society. His comments came after the minister for women's rights sparked a furore last month when she compared veiled

women to "negroes who accepted slavery".

'A Sharia Day Next?'

The Sciences Po initiative, which trended at the top of French Twitter under the hashtag #HijabDay, drew a mixture of praise and anger. Former agriculture minister Bruno Le Maire, who teaches at Sciences Po and is also angling for the right-wing Republicans party's presidential nomination, expressed his "disapproval" on Twitter. "In France women are visible. No to proselytizing," he wrote.

Writing on its Facebook page, the student wing of the far-right National Front (FN) criticized an initiative coming from a "Parisian middle class disconnected from social reality". "This initiative is particularly nauseating when women all over the world are fighting to throw off their shackles. In Iran, for example, women have acid thrown in their faces if they don't wear the veil," it said.

Philosopher and author Bernard-Henri Levy tweeted: "Hijab Day at Sc Po. When will there be a sharia day? Stoning? Slavery?" But a feminist group on campus, Politique'elles, threw its support behind the move. "Whatever they wear, whether a miniskirt or a veil, (women) are criticized," a group statement said. "Feminism must remain universal to defend all women, independent of their religion, origin or social class." The university distanced itself from the initiative in a statement on Twitter, saying the fact it was taking place on the campus "should not be interpreted as support". — AFP

HOUTHIS JOIN PEACE TALKS IN KUWAIT

Continued from Page 1

The Yemeni government delegation which arrived in Kuwait at the weekend, had threatened to pull out if the talks did not start today morning. The delegation, in a statement, also accused the Houthi rebels of violating the ceasefire in many areas.

The talks are the most important attempt yet to resolve Yemen's devastating conflict, which the United Nations says has killed more than 6,400 people and forced almost 2.8 million forced from their homes. A Saudi-led coalition launched air strikes in Yemen 13 months ago after the rebels, who had seized control of Sanaa in 2014, advanced in other parts of the country. President Abedrabbo Mansour Hadi's government fled to main southern city Aden but its members still spend most of their time in Riyadh.

The loyalists have managed since July to reclaim large parts of the south, including temporary capital Aden, but have been unable to dislodge the Houthi rebels and their allies from Sanaa and other key areas. On Tuesday, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon had urged Hadi's government and the rebels to work with his envoy Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed "so that talks can start without further delay".

The rebels' Al-Masirah television quoted Houthi representative Saleh Al-Sammad as saying they agreed to join the talks after receiving assurances from the UN envoy and ambassadors that loyalists would respect the ceasefire. A Western diplomat in Kuwait said representatives of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council sent a message to the rebels saying they "understand their fears" and urging them to "quickly join" the talks.

The rebels had been assured the agenda for the talks would be "clear and tackle issues that could help achieve peaceful solutions," said Mahdi Al-Mashat, a representative of rebel leader Abdulmalik Al-Houthi. Writing on Facebook, Mashat warned however that "we will have the right to suspend our participation" if the assurances are not met.

A representative of the rebel-allied General People's Congress party, Yasser Alawadi, had said on Twitter that his delegation would travel to Kuwait today. The GPC is led by former Yemeni president Ali Abdullah Saleh, who ruled the country for 33 years until 2012 and has joined forces with the Houthis. Yemeni sources close to the talks say the insurgents are demanding the lifting of UN sanctions against Saleh and Houthi leaders.

Yemen's internationally recognized government is demanding the Houthis abide by a Security Council resolution calling for a political process and for the rebels to withdraw from cities they seized while surrendering their weapons. Clashes have continued despite the ceasefire. A military officer said yesterday that 16 rebels and three pro-government fighters had been killed over the previous 24 hours in clashes in the Nahm region, northeast of Sanaa. There were intermittent clashes in Nahm and Marib, east of Sanaa, yesterday, local sources said.

Committees formed jointly by the rebels and loyalists to monitor the ceasefire deployed yesterday in both areas, said Ahmed Rabie, a spokesman for pro-government members of the committees. The conflict has raised tensions between Sunni Arab states led by Saudi Arabia and its main regional rival, Shiite powerhouse Iran. — AFP

OBAMA MEETS SAUDI KING

Continued from Page 1

Policy, wrote in Foreign Policy magazine. "For Obama, the key issue in the Middle East is the fight against the Islamic State... For the House of Saud, the issue is Iran." Iran's emergence from international isolation after the nuclear deal has raised deep concerns among Gulf Arab states, who oppose Tehran indirectly in a range of Middle East conflicts. The weeks before the visit were marked by Saudi outrage over Obama's comments published in the April edition of US magazine The Atlantic. He said the Saudis needed to "share" the Middle East with their Iranian rivals, because competition between Riyadh and Tehran has helped to feed proxy wars and chaos in Syria, Iraq and Yemen.

Arab News columnist Mohammed Fahad Al-Harathi yesterday became the latest Saudi commentator to lament "the United States' disengagement from assisting in resolv-

ing the region's problems". Also clouding the visit is congressional draft legislation that would potentially allow the Saudi government to be sued in US courts over the Sept 11, 2001 attacks on the United States, in which nearly 3,000 people were killed.

Fifteen of the 19 hijackers in the attacks claimed by Al-Qaeda were Saudi citizens. No Saudi complicity has been proven and the kingdom has never been formally implicated. Obama, making his fourth trip to the kingdom, has stated his opposition to the draft legislation. Ahead of the visit the White House emphasized the strength of an alliance that has endured more than 70 years. Despite worries in the Gulf, Washington remains a major weapons supplier and has bases in the region. Obama will be joined at today's summit of the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council by Defence Secretary Ashton Carter and Secretary of State John Kerry. — AFP



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Kuwait Times

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Focus

BATTLE TO BOYCOTT
ISRAEL GOES GLOBAL

By Joe Dyke

When word spread that the Ahava cosmetics firm would move its factory from the occupied West Bank, it set off alarm bells among Israelis for reasons nothing to do with its products. There were suspicions that Ahava, which sells Dead Sea minerals and mud around the world, had made the decision because of mounting pressure to shift its operations from the Palestinian territory. The beauty products company said in a statement that it would "establish an additional plant" inside Israel, but has yet to explicitly confirm the West Bank factory will close.

Yet activists are seeing it as a victory for their campaign known by the initials BDS - or Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions - that calls for a boycott of Israel until it withdraws from the occupied territories. The campaign is a decade old, but recent moves like Ahava's have raised the question of whether it has now gained steady momentum. It has become an increasingly global fight, with skirmishes taking place not only in the West Bank but in courtrooms, parliaments and university campuses in New York, Paris and London.

Supporters of the campaign point to past moves by companies like SodaStream, which pulled out of the West Bank in Sept 2015, and British-Danish security giant G4S, which will leave Israel altogether. But at the same time, some companies in the West Bank are proudly expanding, defying pressure not only from BDS but also the European Union, which recently began requiring products from Israeli-occupied territory to be labelled. Israel is not taking BDS lightly, with officials calling it a "strategic threat" and budgeting 118 million shekels (\$31 million) to fight it this year. Both sides recently held strategy conferences and, perhaps unsurprisingly, both claim to be winning. Strategic Affairs Minister Gilad Erdan told the pro-Israeli conference his government was seeking to "be able to thwart (criticism) in real time and even be one step ahead of BDS."

'Never Leave This Place'

BDS has sought to use the anti-apartheid campaign in South Africa in the 1980s as an example. Israelis and others however accuse it of going beyond legitimate criticism into anti-Semitism, claims campaigners deny. "They can't respond in the traditional way... to accuse of being terrorists or funded by terrorists. It is easy for the world to see this is not true," Jamal Juma, a member of the BDS executive committee in Ramallah, told AFP. "So they are trying internationally to criminalize the movement."

Even the Palestinian government does not support a total boycott of Israel, though it does urge bans on products made in settlements on occupied land. Some 2.8 million Palestinians live in the West Bank and annexed east Jerusalem in near constant tension with more than 500,000 Israeli settlers. Israeli settlements and industrial zones in the Palestinian territory, which receive significant government subsidies, are considered illegal under international law.

The anti-occupation NGO Gush Shalom estimates a glut of companies have left the West Bank in recent years, and even smaller firms face pressure to depart. The Psagot winery now produces 250,000 bottles a year, but founder Yaakov Berg says he turned down a multi-million-dollar investment in the firm as the investors wanted him to relocate to inside Israel. "I would never leave this place," he said.

The wider impact on Israel's economy so far seems limited. Settlements represent only two-to-three percent of Israel's trade and the Yeshiva Council, which represents Israeli settlements, said the number of factories in settlements grew from 680 in 2011 to 890 in 2015.

But while smaller, ideologically motivated firms such as Psagot are unlikely to change course, some analysts say larger ones are feeling the pressure. Ofer Zalsberg of the International Crisis Group think-tank said major firms that would have happily invested in the West Bank five years ago are now wary of doing so.

Moving the Goalposts?

Israeli officials fear BDS's influence is slowly moving the goalposts. In October, the European Union introduced labelling on products from the West Bank, while the US ambassador has been unusually outspoken in his criticism of Israel's West Bank policies. Zalsberg said the Israeli government fears becoming delegitimized, as well as further measures such as excluding West Bank settlers from the automatic visas to European countries granted to Israelis.

Ben-Dror Yemeni, an Israeli journalist who campaigns against BDS, admitted they may never win the battle for public support in some countries. "Right now the battlefield is public opinion in the West and I think they might prevail - the BDS supporters," he said. "It is so easy to sell this anti-Israel propaganda." Israel has instead increasingly focused on measures limiting BDS legally. —AFP

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THE US AND SAUDI ARABIA
STUCK WITH EACH OTHER
FOR BETTER OR WORSE...

YEMEN WAR TESTS SAUDI MILITARY AMBITIONS

By Angus McDowall, Phil Stewart and David Rohde

Six years ago, Saudi and American officials agreed on a record \$60 billion arms deal. The United States would sell scores of F-15 fighters, Apache attack helicopters and other advanced weaponry to the oil-rich kingdom. The arms, both sides hoped, would fortify the Saudis against their aggressive arch-rival in the region, Iran. But as President Barack Obama makes his final visit to Riyadh this week, Saudi Arabia's military capabilities remain a work in progress - and the gap in perceptions between Washington and Riyadh has widened dramatically.

The biggest stumble has come in Yemen. Frustrated by Obama's nuclear deal with Iran and the US pullback from the region, Riyadh launched an Arab military intervention last year to confront perceived Iranian expansionism in its southern neighbor. The conflict pits a coalition of Arab and Muslim nations led by the Saudis against Houthi rebels allied to Iran and forces loyal to a former Yemeni president. A tentative ceasefire is holding as the United Nations prepares for peace talks in Kuwait, proof, the Saudis say, of the intervention's success.

But while Saudi Arabia has the third-largest defense budget in the world behind the United States and China, its military performance in Yemen has been mixed, current and former US officials said. The kingdom's armed forces have often appeared unprepared and prone to mistakes. UN investigators say that air strikes by the Saudi-led coalition are responsible for two thirds of the 3,200 civilians who have died in Yemen, or approximately 2,000 deaths. They said that Saudi forces have killed twice as many civilians as other forces in Yemen.

On the ground, Saudi-led forces have often struggled to achieve their goals, making slow headway in areas where support for Iran-allied Houthi rebels runs strong. And along the Saudi border, the Houthis and allied forces loyal to former Yemeni president Ali Abdullah Saleh have attacked almost daily since July, killing hundreds of Saudi troops. Instead of being the centrepiece of a more assertive Saudi regional strategy, the Yemen intervention has called into question Riyadh's military influence, said one former senior Obama administration official. "There's a long way to go. Efforts to create an effective pan-Arab military force have been disappointing."

Behind the scenes, the West has been enmeshed in the conflict. Between 50 and 60 US military personnel have provided coordination and support to the Saudi-led coalition, a US official told Reuters. And six to 10 Americans have worked directly inside the Saudi air operations centre in Riyadh. Britain and France, Riyadh's other main defense suppliers, have also provided military assistance.

Last year, the Obama administration had the US military send precision-guided munitions from its own stocks to replenish dwindling Saudi-led coalition supplies, a source close to the Saudi government said. Administration officials argued that even more Yemeni civilians would die if the Saudis had to use bombs with less precise guidance systems.

Saudi officials see the intervention as a qualified success, halting Iranian expansionism in Yemen and bringing their opponents to the negotiating table. They compare it to the 1991 Gulf War when a military threat was addressed overwhelmingly by military power. They said Saudi-led forces have stabilized large parts of the country and allowed its government under President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi to remain viable. They also dispute the number of civilian deaths and have announced investigations into the strikes.

Among many of their fellow Gulf Arabs, who believe they face a broader struggle against Iran, the war continues to be popular. At a forum in Riyadh this week the mostly young audience started to cheer when

speakers said the campaign had demonstrated a new self-reliance. Spokesman for the Saudi-led Arab coalition, Brigadier General Ahmed Al-Asseri, said the main goal of degrading Houthi capabilities had been achieved. Coalition-backed Yemeni forces had paused after taking ground north of Sanaa at the request of the UN and to encourage talks, he said.

Prince Sultan bin Khaleed Al-Faisal, a former Saudi special forces officer and now a senior fellow at the King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies in Riyadh, said the intervention had succeeded. "You cannot say there is no progress," he said. "The enemy is on the back foot. They are surrounded in every single city that they are in and they are blockaded from the sea."

Selling Stuff

The United States has been helping equip and train Saudi armed forces since US President Franklin Roosevelt and Saudi King Abdulaziz Al Saud struck an oil-for-security alliance in 1945. "Our tanks are American. Our infantry vehicles are American. Our jet fighters are American," said Asseri, the Saudi general. "Our command and control system is American, so having these people working with us is normal." Some of the largest bene-

faced little opposition in Washington was the deal's failure might have resulted in Saudi Arabia buying arms from Russia or China. They also said the sales boosted US defense contractors as the Obama administration cut military spending in Iraq and Afghanistan. "We sold them that stuff," said one US official, "because that's what creates jobs in America."

Advancing Step By Step?

Even with more weaponry, the Saudi-led coalition has struggled in Yemen. That's been apparent in its bombing campaign from the start. "Initially there was far too much reliance on the (Riyadh-backed) Yemeni government for intelligence and far too little effort to confirm it," said a Saudi with knowledge of the campaign. He said targeting rules had improved in the second half of last year. But Brigadier General Samir Haj, a Yemeni and the official spokesman for the government's military forces, told Reuters that the coalition has "joint military operations rooms in Aden and Riyadh which work together with the coalition countries to coordinate targets for both air strikes and battle operations on the ground."

Problems with targeting are particularly embarrassing because they were also issues during the border war between Saudi Arabia

Secretary of Defence for the Middle East from 2012 to 2015, said it takes time for any country to learn how to use advanced weapons systems. "It's going to be an imperfect process that advances step by step," Spence said.

Michael Knights, an expert on the conflict in Yemen at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, said the fact that the Saudi military had been able to maintain a year-long intervention in a country as complex as Yemen has surprised some observers. "They're able to maintain operational tempo for a year," Knights said. "These are things that if you'd asked somebody about this two years ago, they would say there's no way Saudi can do that."

But investigations by the UN, Human Rights Watch exposed scores of Saudi mistakes. A January report by a UN Security Council panel of experts found that the Saudi-led coalition had carried out attacks that appeared to violate international humanitarian law 152 times, including 41 strikes on residential neighbourhoods, 22 on medical facilities and 10 on marketplaces. UN investigators also found at least 38 violations by Houthi and Saleh forces.

The Saudis "are dropping bombs with a large payload on a house in the middle of a residential neighbourhood," said Belkis Wille, Human Rights Watch's Yemen researcher, who just spent three weeks in the country investigating civilian deaths. "If you do that, you are bound to cause collateral damage. Using these kinds of bombs in this context is indiscriminate."

Asseri, the Saudi-led coalition spokesman, has repeatedly questioned such investigations, saying they are often carried out remotely or with guidance from locals employed by the Houthis, and that they have made little effort to engage with the coalition or Yemen's government. UN officials said they have a team of 19 investigators stationed inside Yemen who visit the sites of attacks on their own. They said the team members, both foreigners and Yemeni nationals, follow a thorough methodology that UN human rights investigators use worldwide and are not taken to sites by Houthis. "We collect our information direct from the scene of incidents and from witnesses and victims," said Rupert Colville, spokesman for the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. "We are careful to avoid manipulation by any of the warring parties." Asseri said the Saudi air force uses the same procedures as those of the US air force to assess targets, and checks information against images from drones and a no-hit list. He said munitions were selected to avoid causing harm beyond the selected target.

US officials said they have urged the Saudi-led coalition to better distinguish between military targets and civilians. Asseri said a Saudi colonel with a doctorate in law has been appointed to run an investigative commission into civilian deaths and is now selecting members.

Border Problems

One of the stated goals of the Saudi-led campaign was to protect the kingdom's borders. In many ways, though, the war has made them less secure.

The mountainous western stretch of the Yemeni border, which runs from the Red Sea to the Empty Quarter desert, is rife with smuggling and illicit crossings. The Houthis had not attacked Saudi Arabia along the frontier since 2010. Beginning in July 2015, though, when the coalition regained complete control of Aden after three months of brutal street fighting and airstrikes, the Houthis and Saleh's forces began to launch near daily attacks across the border. The assaults have killed and injured around 400 civilians inside Saudi Arabia, the coalition said. Diplomats say around 400 Saudi soldiers and border guards have died. —Reuters



Houthi supporters rally in solidarity with the group in the Yemeni capital Sanaa on April 17, 2016. — AFP

ficiaries of the alliance have been US defense contractors. Vinnell Arabia, now a Northrop Grumman subsidiary, has received multimillion-dollar contracts to train Saudi Arabia's National Guard since 1975, for instance, including a five-year contract worth up to \$550 million in 2010. In an effort to counter Iran, US arms sales grew under President George W Bush administration and even more under the Obama White House.

The primary goal of the huge 2010 sale was to defend against Iran, according to both American and Saudi officials. The Obama administration also saw a chance to turn Saudi Arabia into a regional military power that could act as a stabilizing influence in the Middle East. Saudis emphasize their own interests rather than those of the United States. "Saudi Arabia chooses and buys its weapons according to its own strategic planning, needs and interests, not those of anyone else," said Prince Sultan. "The whole premise that we bought weapons to play a role for someone else is false."

Whatever the motivation, between 2009 and 2015, IHS Jane's estimates that General Dynamics delivered \$5 billion worth of weaponry to Saudi Arabia, Boeing \$2.9 billion and Raytheon \$2.5 billion. European defense contractors profited, as well with Eurofighter, a European consortium, delivering \$5.6 billion in arms to Saudi Arabia and UK-based BAE Systems delivering \$2.9 billion during the same period, according to Jane's estimates.

Current and former US officials said one of the reasons arms sales to Saudi Arabia had

and the Houthis in 2009-2010, US embassy cables released by WikiLeaks show. A cable dated Feb 7, 2010 noted one instance in which Saudi jets aborted an air strike on a target supplied by the Yemeni government because it turned out to be the headquarters of a senior general and rival of then president Saleh. Six years on, errors are still occurring. Just last month, two American-made laser-guided bombs struck a market and killed at least 97 civilians, 25 of them children, along with 10 Houthi fighters, according to Human Rights Watch investigators who reached the site of the bombing. UN investigators who reached the site reported 96 civilian dead, including 24 children.

Asseri said the coordinates had been provided by coalition-backed Yemeni forces fighting in that area, and the bombs had struck a gathering of Houthis, not civilians. US officials said the United States does not provide detailed targeting information to the Saudis in Yemen. "We're giving them broad intelligence of the area," said a third US official, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

American officials said they have repeatedly tried to find ways to improve Saudi targeting. As well as the extra precision-guided bombs, the Pentagon sent US military lawyers to train their Saudi counterparts on how to ensure the legality of coalition strikes. They say the Saudis have American software designed to help them determine whether certain munitions might cause destruction beyond the target.

Matthew Spence, who served as the Obama administration's Deputy Assistant

LANDA TAKES TRENTRINO LEAD, NIBALI STRUGGLES

ROME: Spaniard Mikel Landa took command of the Giro del Trentino yesterday as he won the epic 220km second stage from Arco to Anras in Austria. Favourite for overall victory Vincenzo Nibali, a twice former winner of the event, surprisingly struggled on the final ascent and only managed to finish the day 21st, more than 30-seconds back. His Astana team-mate Jakob Fuglsang is second overall at 10sec after finishing fifth on the stage, 13sec behind Landa. The Team Sky leader had attacked solo on the final climb to the finish in Anras after the day's breakaway had been reeled in 15km from the end. Landa started to tire in the final kilometre but managed to hold off Russian Serguei Firsanov, who finished second at 4sec. Italian veteran Damiano Cunego, a three time Trentino winner, was third at 13sec in a small group of chasers. Nibali, who like Landa is preparing for May's Giro d'Italia, finally lost 32sec as even another team-mate in Michele Scarponi finished ahead of him. Other potential overall contenders, Romain Bardet and Domenico Pozzovivo of the AG2R team, came in seventh and eighth respectively to sit fifth and sixth on the overall standings. —AFP



KENYA CAUGHT AGE CHEATING IN UNDER-20 WC QUALIFIERS

SEOUL: Kenya have been thrown out of the under-20 World Cup qualifying competition for the 2017 finals in South Korea for fielding five over age players, the Confederation of African Football (CAF) said yesterday. The east African country has been disqualified for using the ineligible players in the first leg of a qualifier for next year's Africa Cup of Nations, which also serves as the World Cup qualifying tournament, against Sudan on April 3 which ended 1-1. Kenya were due to host the return leg this weekend but CAF has instead awarded Sudan a place in the next round of the competition for places at the 2017 finals in Zambia. African soccer's governing body said Kenya's Theodore Kibet, Nicholas Kipkirui, Eugene Moses, Boniface Muchiri and Erick Ouma were all born before the cut off date of Jan. 1, 1997. "Football Kenya Federation clearly violated the competition regulations and is consequently disqualified and the U-20 Sudan team is qualified to the next round," CAF general secretary Hicham El Amrani said in a letter sent to the Kenyans. — Reuters

MLS TIGHTENS SECURITY MEASURES ACROSS GROUNDS

NEW YORK: Fans attending Major League Soccer games will be subjected to screenings and bag checks as part of beefed-up security measures, the league said Tuesday. A range of enhanced security measures will be rolled out at matches throughout the United States from this weekend in an effort to bring the MLS into line with other sports. "Under the new security policy, all guests will be fully screened upon entry into MLS venues," a statement said. "The screenings will be conducted via a full pat down or with the use of a search wand of magnetometers." The new measures will also see fans banned from bringing large purses, coolers, briefcases, backpacks, computer bags, camera bags or luggage into venues. "Public safety is a top priority and the enhanced security measures will ensure that fans are able to continue to enjoy MLS and SUM events in a safe environment," said MLS president and deputy commissioner Mark Abbott. —AFP



Secretary General Al-Azmi in a group picture.



Chairman Shafi Al-Hajiri

KDSC PRESIDENT AL-HAJIRI TO BE AWARDED IN BAHRAIN

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Kuwait Disabled Sports Club (KDSC) President Shafi Al-Hajiri won the social responsibility in the sports sector award at the GCC countries level, by the regional network for social responsibility which is based in Bahrain.

The club received a letter from the awarding officials telling that Al-Hajiri was selected for this prize along with other sports personalities. The club said winning this award came after the work and achievements and efforts of Al-Hajiri were accounted for as far as the Kuwait and Gulf disabled sports are concerned. The Disabled Sports Club said in a statement that Al-Hajiri received an invitation to receive the award during a ceremony to be held in Manama, Bahrain on June 1, under the patronage of the Second Deputy of the Higher Council for Youth and Sports, Honorary President of Bahrain's Olympic Committee Sheikh Essa bin Rashid Al-Khalifa.

Al-Hajiri said he was happy for this win which is the result of efforts by all members of the board and general assembly, adding that the generous support Kuwait sports receive from the political leadership contributed to the success of the club's sports activities. Al-Hajiri dedicated the win to HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, HH the Crown Prince and club members.

AL-NASSER DEFEAT AL-WAHDA 11-6 IN TARGET BALL COMPETITION



Aziz



Abdallah Al-Harz



Dhari Al-Botti

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Competitions of the local tournament for the disabled continued at Kuwait Disabled Sports Club, under an outstanding technical level by player in the three sports being played shooting, athletics and target ball for the blind. Results of the target ball for the blind saw Al-Nasser team defeat Al-Wahda with the score of 11-6, making sure it will win the tournament one day ahead of its conclusion, as it won the opening match with the score of 7-5 against Tahreer team.

In the prone rifle shooting competition shooter Fahad Al-Muwaizri won first place followed by Essa Al-Fadhly and Salman Al-Fadhly. Meanwhile in athletics Ahmad Naqa finished first in the 300m running with wheel chairs, while Faisal Al-Rajhi won the 60m event. In the Mace throw while sitting Hamid Wabdan was the winner, while female player Basima Faraj won the shot put sitting. Abdelrahman Al-

Kandari won the discus throw sitting, as Abdallah Al-Harz was declared winner of the combination discus throw, while Dhari Botti won the combination shot put standing.

Deputy President of Kuwait Disabled Sports Club Nasser Al-Ajmi said in a statement the tournament enjoyed large participation and characterized by strong competition between all participants.

He said these competitions are meant to prepare participants for the Paralympics games to be held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil next September.

Al-Ajmi said the club decided to organize the fourth and final championship this season next May and will include basketball on wheelchairs, swimming for men and women and table tennis. Al-Ajmi thanked Information Minister, State Minister for Youth Affairs Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah, and Director General of Public Sports Authority Sheikh Ahmad Mansour Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah for their support. On his part player Othman Al-

Tarkeet said he was happy with the level of the athletics events and his participation for the first time. He said the participants will also participate in the swimming competition in the fourth and final tournament.



Othman Al-Tarkeet

GREEKS AND BRAZILIANS READY FOR OLYMPIC FLAME

ATHENS: Greece, beset by economic difficulties and a migration crisis, will hold a traditional ceremony today for the Rio Olympics as Brazil battles its own political woes.

The dress rehearsal for the lighting of the Olympic flame in ancient Olympia went ahead smoothly yesterday, and the official ceremony today will launch a four-month torch relay culminating at Maracana Stadium for the Games opening ceremony on August 5. The torch harks back to the ancient Olympics, when a sacred flame burned throughout the Games. The tradition was revived in 1936 for the Berlin Olympics.

The Olympic torch relay will run through part of Greece before being handed over to Brazilian officials on April 27 for the start of a 95-day relay across the South American country a week later. A highlight of the Greek leg will be the passing of the torch on April 26 through the refugee camp of Eleonas, where one of the hundreds of refugees housed there will carry the flame. The runner's name is to be announced on Friday, Greek organisers said.

REFUGEE ATHLETES

The International Olympic Committee has given the green light for a team of up to 10 refugees to take part at the Rio Olympics. So far, 43 high-performance athletes, who are also refugees, have been identified as possibly being eligible for the Games in Brazil. Bach said the final number would depend on meeting qualifying criteria, adding that the team would compete under the flag of the IOC. "We have all been touched by the magnitude of this refugee crisis. By welcoming this team, we want to send a message of hope to all the refugees in the world," Bach, who visited Eleonas in January, said in March. While Greek President Prokopis Pavlopoulos will be attending Thursday's official ceremony, his Brazilian counterpart Dilma Rousseff has cancelled her planned attendance as she is currently fighting for her political life amid a deep recession, impeachment proceedings, mass protests and a corruption scandal. Brazil will be represented at Olympia by the president of the Rio 2016 organising committee, Carlos Nuzman, and sports minister Ricardo Leyser. Actress Katerina Lehou, playing a high priestess, will light the flame on Thursday using the rays of the sun reflected off a concave mirror. After giving thanks to the ancient Greek sun god Apollo, Lehou will light the Rio Olympic torch held by the first relay runner, artistic gymnast Lefteris Petrounias, Greece's reigning world champion on the still rings. Petrounias will pass it on to Brazilian volleyball legend Giovane Gavio, an Olympic gold champion at the 1992 Barcelona and 2004 Athens Games who is now director of volleyball for Rio 2016. Gavio had also carried the torch in Rio de Janeiro during the relay for the Athens 2004 Games. The Olympic torch will be handed over to Nuzman in the presence of Pavlopoulos, Bach and Greek Olympic Committee president Spyros Capralos on April 27 in a ceremony at the historic all-marble Olympic stadium in Athens, site of the first modern Games in 1896.

GAMES 'ON SCHEDULE'

Preparations in Rio have been overshadowed by a government crisis, with Rousseff facing impeachment after being accused of juggling government accounts to disguise budget shortfalls during her 2014 reelection. However, Rousseff insisted Tuesday that preparations for the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro are ahead of schedule.

"The Games are in a totally adequate situation, we're even a little ahead of schedule and more so than we had planned for," Rousseff told a press conference in Brasilia. — AFP



Al-Nasser and Al-Wahda match



Female fans

UCI PRESIDENT AIMS TO BOOST TRACK CYCLING AT 2024 OLYMPICS

LAUSANNE: The 2024 Olympics can boost track racing's reputation, International Cycling Union President Brian Cookson hopes, with more medal events and better-suited venues. "If people think track cycling is in any way in decline, the message is: 'No, it is not,'" Cookson told The Associated Press in an interview yesterday. Despite the popular success of track cycling at the 2012 London Games, the next two Olympic velo-

dromes have been among the most stressful venue issues for the UCI and local organizers. A delayed velodrome is the last venue being built in Rio de Janeiro, and the 2020 Olympic velodrome is 120 kilometers (75 miles) from downtown Tokyo.

Cookson acknowledged to being "a little frustrated" with Rio delays, which include a canceled test event, while using an existing velodrome two hours' travel from Tokyo at

Izu was a "less than desirable solution." The UCI has already been encouraging the four 2024 Summer Games bidders to begin planning for track cycling, even though there are almost 18 months to the hosting vote. The candidates are Budapest, Hungary; Los Angeles; Paris; and Rome. "Absolutely, we are," Cookson said. "We have talked to them already." Paris clearly meets the UCI's velodrome needs, having hosted

the 2015 track world championships in a new arena at Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines, about 25 kilometers west of the capital city's center.

In Rio, a velodrome built for the 2007 Pan-American Games was demolished for not being up to Olympic standards and a new arena is being built at the Olympic Park. The Siberian pine track is currently being laid, and the arena has yet to be

linked up to the main electricity grid, Cookson said. On Tuesday, Rio sports director Agberto Guimaraes personally assured the UCI leader at a meeting of the 28 Summer Games sports federations that the velodrome would be ready for a June 25-27 training event. "Nobody is taking for granted your venue," Guimaraes said. "I can promise you your venue will be ready in June." — AP

SCANDALS WON'T TAINT LONDON 2017

LONDON: Recent scandals that have tarnished athletics will not overshadow the 2017 World Championships in London, the head of the event's organising committee vowed on Tuesday.

Athletics is still reeling from the two World Anti-doping Agency (WADA) independent reports that resulted in Russian athletes being banned over state-sponsored doping and revealed corruption at the top of global governing body the IAAF.

But Niels de Vos, London 2017 director and CEO of UK Athletics, told journalists in London: "It's about looking outwards, not looking inwards."

"There's still huge appetite to watch athletics in the UK and there always has been. I'm as confident as you can be, without ignoring the realities of life, that London 2017 will have exactly the same level of success (as the London 2012 Olympics).

"And the reason is, people are interested in athletics. People aren't interested in governing bodies. We are, because we work for them, or you (the media) are, because you write about them. But the public aren't."

"It's emotion, it's passion. That's why people want to come and see it, because-excuse my language-it's bloody amazing. It's an amazing sport to watch live."

With Russian athletes still banned and

Kenya missing a succession of compliance deadlines, doping has cast a pall over the build-up to this year's Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro.

But while De Vos admits that it is "impossible to say with certainty" that London 2017 will not be tainted by doping, he says it will be "without doubt the cleanest championship ever".

De Vos was speaking after an announcement that 1.5 million tickets for the World Championships and World ParaAthletics Championships will go on sale in a ballot that will run from August 1-22 this year.

The two events are being held consecutively at London's Olympic Stadium in July and August next year. Children's World Championships tickets will cost £9.58 (\$13.81, 12.14 euros), in a nod to the 100 metres world record of 9.58 seconds set by Jamaican sprint superstar Usain Bolt at the 2009 event in Berlin.

"I always say that the children are the future and I commend the organisers of London 2017 on this initiative to give young people the chance to buy affordable tickets," Bolt said in a statement released by organisers. "I hope it will inspire many of them to get into athletics and look forward to seeing many young people filling seats next summer." — AFP



The job swap - Man City FC and GT Academy

WORLD-CLASS FOOTBALLERS BECOME RACING DRIVERS IN NISSAN'S DREAM JOB SWAP

DUBAI: Manchester City players have experienced the 'Dream Job Swap', exchanging their boots for racing suits and becoming race drivers for a day.

David Silva, Bacary Sagna, Eliaquim Mangala and Fernando got behind the wheel of Nissan's Juke NISMO RS, taking to the track tutored by some of Nissan's best GT Academy drivers and went head-to-head in an intense session of car control.

The job swap concept was inspired by a Nissan-commissioned study* that found over one in five (22%) nine to 13-year olds consider becoming a professional footballer their ultimate dream job.

And just under one in six (16%) nine to 13-year olds believe that being a footballer is the most exciting career, topping the poll for young boys - with over a quarter (26%) voting footballer as the most exciting job in the world.

Youngsters are clearly dreaming of following in the Nissan GT Academy drivers' footsteps too, with 64% of the 1,000 respondents highlighting 'learning to drive' as their most exhilarating future milestone, with racing driver taking second place (19%) for young boys as the most exciting job in the world.

Jean-Pierre Diernaz, Vice President for Marketing at Nissan Europe said: "Excitement is at the heart of everything we do at Nissan. We're focused and committed to bringing innovation and excitement to everyone - be that football fans or budding racing drivers - by making advances in research, technology and engineering which are propelling Nissan towards a thrilling future." The video can be viewed here: https://youtu.be/bcHgsSV_3j8

Nissan have also been studying what gets European adults excited, with football also rating highly in a survey commissioned as part of

the Nissan Excitement Index - looking to explore and understand the science behind football excitement, with Nissan announcing a partnership with sports science experts Loughborough University.

The Study of over 5,000 Europeans from the UK, France, Spain, Germany and Italy found that adults get more excited about watching football than any other pastime. More than half (55%) revealed that watching football is the moment or activity that gets them excited week-to-week or month-to-month.

European adults are all in agreement that their favourite football club is more exciting than their current job.

When asked to rate the two aspects of their lives they found most exciting, one in four (24%) chose their football club, compared to less than one in five (18%) who chose their current job.



LONDON: Chief Executive of London 2017, Niels de Vos (C) and athlete Robbie Grabarz (L) attend a launch event for the London 2017 World Athletics Championships in central London. — AFP

RIDERS CALLS FOR LIFE BANS FOR TECHNOLOGICAL CHEATING

PARIS: International riders association (CPA) president Gianni Bugno has called for life bans for those caught with motorised bicycles.

Bugno, a twice former world champion and two time Giro d'Italia winner during his racing career, was speaking to Italian newspaper Corriere della Sera a day after the newspaper and French TV programme Stade 2 claimed to have detected possible cases of technological doping during the Strade Bianche and Coppi e Bartali races in March. Bugno called on the International Cycling Union (UCI) to get tougher on cheats and do more to weed them out.

"The CPA is asking for the UCI to impose exemplary and severe sanctions such as life bans for the riders who commit offences because they throw mud all over the honest cycling of the majority," Bugno said. During its report, Stade 2 had used a thermal camera to detect heat sources it claimed could point to the use of a motor in the bicycle. While there have been rumours motorised bicycles have been used for years, the only rider to be caught with a motor was Belgian under-23 cyclocross competitor Femke Van den Driessche.

Bugno called for the UCI to use thermal cameras but the world cycling governing body denied those would be more effective than current testing methods.

"The UCI has been testing for technological fraud for many years, and with the objective of increasing the efficiency of these tests, we have been trialling new methods of detection over the last year," the UCI said in a statement sent to cyclingnews.com.

"We have looked at thermal imaging, x-ray and ultrasonic testing but by far the most cost effective, reliable and accurate method has proved to be magnetic resonance testing using software we have created in partnership with a company of specialist developers.

"The scanning is done with a tablet and enables an operator to test the frame and wheels of a bike in less than a minute.

"We have tested bikes at many races this year (for example 216 at Tour of Flanders, 224 at Paris-Roubaix) and will continue to test heavily in all disciplines throughout the year. Co-operation from teams and riders as we have deployed these extensive tests has been excellent." — AFP

DOPING-HIT KENYA EYE OLYMPIC SEVENS SUCCESS



Biko Adema and the Kenya 7s Rugby team

SINGAPORE: With Kenya's famed track and field team still unsure whether it will be allowed to compete at the Rio Olympics, an unlikely new medal prospect has emerged for the African nation-their men's sevens rugby outfit.

Hardly a world power in the 15-a-side game, Kenya has suddenly popped up as a genuine medal contender in sevens, which will be played in Rio as rugby returns to the Olympics after a 92-year hiatus.

Currently ranked seventh in the world, ahead of traditional heavyweights including England and France, Kenya served notice of their intentions for Rio by winning the Singapore leg of the sevens world series, beating Fiji in Sunday's final.

It was Kenya's first tournament win in a world series event after they had made two previous finals, in Australia in 2009 and New Zealand in 2013, and it could not have come at a better time with the Olympics just four months away and the country's athletics team under a doping cloud. "For our players, this win will give them huge amounts of self-belief," Kenyan coach Benjamin Ayimba said. "We've always had the potential, but knowing now that we can beat the best will give us even more confidence for success in future tournaments. This will make us an even better and more dangerous team to play against."

As Kenya's players celebrated their win with a gospel song and impromptu jig at Singapore's National Stadium, their victory lit up rugby's social media sites, with even Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta tweeting his congratulations to the underdog team.

Their emergence is well-timed for Kenya, with the country's track and field team facing the possibility of being banned from Rio unless it passes a new anti-doping law following a string of positive tests.

'A VERY BIG STEP'

Kenya has only ever won medals in two different sports at the Olympics: athletics and boxing. Of the 25 gold medals Kenya has won, 24 have been in track and field. But the rugby sevens team is hoping to change that.

"We hope it inspires the kids to play rugby and it just gives them a lot more heroes to look up to so, for us, it's a major milestone," Ayimba said. "The target for Rio is always to win."

Kenya already has some budding heroes in its ranks, none more so than Collins Injera, the 29-year-old speedster who ranks second on the all-time sevens try-scoring lists. Injera kicked a 40-metre penalty after the siren to clinch a 15-12 win over Argentina in the semi-finals, then scored two of his team's six tries in the 30-7 rout

of Fiji in the final.

Like most of the top Kenyan rugby players, Injera grew up running and playing soccer before switching to rugby in his early teens. The son of a professor, he made his international debut a decade ago and has been scoring tries at a regular frequency, though he is more widely known for what he once did after one of his touchdowns.

At the London Sevens last year, Injera celebrated his 200th try by pulling a marker pen from his socks and scrawling his name on a television camera, as tennis players often do. Unaware that the cameras need a protective covering, he unwittingly ruined a lens valued at about 60,000 pounds (US\$86,000).

His try-scoring celebrations have been more subdued since then and even as he closes in on the all-time record, his only thoughts are on winning in Rio, where Kenya have already qualified for both the men's and women's tournaments.

"Kenyan rugby has come a long way, it's such an amazing thing," Injera said. "Everyone is working towards the Olympics so or us, (winning in Singapore) was a very big step. "Rugby is really developing in Kenya. We're putting new systems into the junior levels to help build up the game and now that we've won a final, more people will start following us." — AFP



Gianni Bugno

AUSTRALIA'S SCOTT OPTS OUT OF OLYMPICS TO FOCUS ON PGA TOUR

SYDNEY: Australian world number seven Adam Scott has confirmed he will skip the Rio Olympics in August, the 2013 Masters champion citing scheduling conflicts as the main reason for opting out of golf's return to the Games after a 112-year absence.

"My decision has been taken as a result of an extremely busy playing schedule around the time of the Olympics and other commitments, both personal and professional," Scott said in a statement on Tuesday.

"I have informed the Australian team captain (Ian Baker-Finch) and relevant authorities, who are understanding of my position and I wish the Australian Olympic team the very best of luck in Rio."

Baker-Finch had hoped Scott would put his indifference to competing at the Games to one side and form a powerful team with world number one Jason Day, who is expected to compete.

Marc Leishman is next in line to take Scott's spot but the world number 34 said he would consider any potential threat posed by the Zika virus to the health of his wife Audrey, who has immune system issues, before deciding whether to compete. Golf's return at the Aug. 5-21 Olympics has been met with varying degrees of enthusiasm from its players and Fiji's Vijay Singh, a three-time major winner, announced last week that Zika virus fears would prevent him from going to Brazil. — Reuters



Maria Sharapova

ITF PRESIDENT SAYS HEARING SCHEDULED IN SHARAPOVA CASE

LAUSANNE: A disciplinary hearing has been scheduled in Maria Sharapova's doping case, with a ruling possible before Wimbledon starts. International Tennis Federation president David Haggerty said yesterday that the Tennis Integrity Unit typically takes "two to three months" to process a case. That could deliver a verdict in June.

Haggerty said he has not been told details by the independent investigation unit, including when and where the hearing will be held.

Sharapova was provisionally suspended after announcing on March 8 that she tested positive for meldonium at the Australian Open in January. The Russian said she had been prescribed the blood-flow boosting drug since 2006, and had been unaware the World Anti-Doping Agency had prohibited its use from Jan. 1.

Russian officials want Sharapova to play at the Rio de Janeiro Olympics in August. Sharapova will not have her provisional ban lifted pending the verdict, despite WADA publishing new guidelines to sports bodies last week amid uncertainty over how long meldonium remains in an athlete's body.

Some athletes among nearly 200 who have tested positive claim they had not tak-

en the drug this year. Haggerty said Sharapova's case "will continue to be heard."

"For her, given her levels (of meldonium), it is not even a question," incoming WADA director general Olivier Niggli told The Associated Press this week. Elected as ITF president last year, Haggerty said the governing body and its integrity unit will be more transparent in communicating about cases. On Tuesday, the ITF announced a 10-year ban for a Croatian umpire who continued to work, including at the 2015 U.S. Open, while he was serving a one-year suspension which was never publicly disclosed.

"We don't always get things 100 percent but you learn through this," Haggerty said in a briefing on the sidelines of the SportAccord conference. On potential match-fixing cases, the TIU received more than 40 alerts of suspicious betting patterns in matches played in the first three months this year, Haggerty said.

Haggerty is due in Rio on May 4 to assess Olympic preparations which are "in progress, but not finished," including court surfaces and lighting at the Olympic Park venue. "If you have a night session and you don't have lights, you have a problem," the American official said. "They are being installed." — AFP

BECKER HITS OUT AT MURRAY OVER DOPING COMMENTS

LONDON: Boris Becker has criticised world number two Andy Murray after the British tennis star voiced suspicions some of his opponents may have been taking performance-enhancing drugs. Murray has been vocal in condemning the use of drugs in sport and enthusiastically backed the suspension imposed on leading female player Maria Sharapova following her failed test for the banned substance meldonium at this year's Australian Open.

More controversially Murray, beaten by Rafael Nadal in Monte Carlo on Saturday, has also spoken about being suspicious of opponents who he thought were not tiring as they ought to in matches. But six-times Grand Slam winner Becker, now the coach of world number one Novak Djokovic, said Murray was "out of order" in making his feelings known without proof. Becker, speaking at the Laureus World Sport Awards in Berlin, told Britain's Daily Mail newspaper: "We have random drug-testing and unless it's

proven, they are 100 percent innocent.

"So to assume something because somebody has won a Grand Slam or is fitter is totally out of order. "Andy is one of the fittest players on the tour—he often outlasts players and nobody is questioning his ethics," the German added. "I believe 100 percent Andy is clean. Roger (Federer) is clean, Rafa is clean, all these guys are clean.

"Novak gets tested a lot. That can mean twice in a Grand Slam." Murray had told the Mail on Sunday, the Daily Mail's sister paper: "I have played against players and thought, 'They won't go away' or 'They don't seem to be getting tired'."

"Have I ever been suspicious of someone? Yeah. You hear things. "It's harder to tell in our sport as people can make big improvements to a stroke or start serving better because they have made technical changes. "If it's purely physical and you're watching someone playing six-hour matches over and over and showing no signs of being tired, you'd look at that." — AFP



LAS VEGAS: In this Saturday, March 5, 2016 file photo, Conor McGregor, right, trades punches with Nate Diaz during their UFC 196 welterweight mixed martial arts match in Las Vegas. Conor McGregor has packed a punch on social media rather than inside a UFC cage. One of the UFC's top draws, McGregor created a stir Tuesday when he tweeted that retirement was on the horizon. — AP

MCGREGOR PULLED FROM UFC 200, TWEETS RETIREMENT TALK

WASHINGTON: Conor McGregor is officially out of UFC 200. His fighting future remained unclear. McGregor, one of the biggest draws in UFC, created a stir Tuesday when he tweeted that retirement was on the horizon and the UFC later tweeted that McGregor had been pulled from its marquee show on July 9.

The 27-year-old McGregor tweeted, "I have decided to retire young. Thanks for the cheese. Catch ya's later." But is it truly exit cage left for the Irish star? McGregor was scheduled for a rematch against Nate Diaz in the main event of UFC 200. UFC President Dana White told ESPN that he pulled McGregor from the card after he decided not to attend pre-fight promotional appearances in Las Vegas.

"Is Conor McGregor retiring? Only he can answer that question," White told ESPN. "I don't know. But he will not be a part of UFC 200." White added he was working on a new main event and could keep Diaz on the card. The stacked card already included an interim featherweight championship bout between Jose Aldo and Frankie Edgar and Miesha Tate defends her bantamweight title against Amanda Nunes.

Diaz beat McGregor by submission in the second round of a welterweight bout March 5 at

UFC 196, ending one of the most lucrative pay-per-view shows in mixed martial arts history with a remarkable upset.

McGregor's 15-fight winning streak ended in the bout, which was fought 25 pounds above his usual 145-pound fighting weight. The rematch was set to be contested at 170 pounds, the UFC said. The loss punctured the intimidating aura gathered by McGregor, the loquacious Irish star who sits alongside Ronda Rousey as the UFC's biggest pay-per-view stars. McGregor had stopped his previous five opponents, and he landed numerous big shots on Diaz before tiring and losing the fight on the ground to Diaz's superior jiu-jitsu.

INTERIM BELT

Although McGregor said immediately after the loss that he would probably return to featherweight, he decided instead to take a rematch with Diaz, the entertaining veteran. Diaz accepted the first fight less than two weeks beforehand after lightweight champ Rafael Dos Anjos dropped out with an injury.

McGregor is still the UFC's featherweight champion, but Aldo and Edgar will meet for the interim belt. The winner was scheduled to get

the first shot at a unification fight against McGregor. All of those dream bouts are suddenly uncertain. Diaz playfully replied to McGregor's tweet with his own "retirement" announcement. He tweeted, "I guess my work here is done I'm retiring too."

McGregor's coach, John Kavanagh, added fuel to the retirement speculation with his own tweet that said, "Well was fun while it lasted." Kavanagh later posted an Instagram photo of WWE Hall of Fame manager Jimmy Hart with the caption, "New job uniform." It could be a playful photo - or a cryptic hint - that McGregor could follow former UFC star Brock Lesnar from the octagon to the WWE squared circle.

Other UFC fighters later joked on Twitter that they also would retire. McGregor would stun the MMA world if he retired in the prime of his career - and surrendered a seven-figure payday for what's sure to be the biggest box office card in UFC history. Odds are, McGregor could just want more money and stir retirement speculation as an MMA version of a contract holdout.

McGregor's showmanship has earned him both huge attention - he was a Sports Illustrated cover boy - and revenue, and fans and cameras flock to the fighter. — AP



BARCELONA: Rafael Nadal makes a return to Marcel Granollers during the Barcelona open tennis tournament in Barcelona, Spain, yesterday. — AP

NADAL, NISHIKORI EASE THROUGH IN BARCELONA

BARCELONA: Fresh from winning the Monte Carlo Masters Rafael Nadal continued his fine form with a 6-3, 6-2 win over fellow Spaniard Marcel Granollers to reach the third round of the Barcelona Open yesterday. Nadal is looking to equal Argentine legend Guillermo Vilas's record of 49 clay-court tournament wins and capture a ninth title in the Catalan capital this week after suffering shock defeats in the past two years.

The 14-time Grand Slam champion was rarely troubled despite losing his serve in the opening game as he fought back to move into a 4-1 lead and sealed victory after just over 90 minutes on court to improve his head-to-head record over Granollers to 4-0. "The start was very difficult because it was very windy," said Nadal. "I started with less depth than I wanted, but it was very important to break back straight away and from that point on it was more straightfor-

ward." Nadal will face another Spaniard in Albert Montanes in the last 16 on Thursday. "I have been

playing very well in Monte Carlo, but this is a new tournament and every day there is a difficult opponent."



BARCELONA: Kei Nishikori of Japan looks at the ball against Thiemo De Bakker of The Netherlands during their Barcelona open tennis tournament in Barcelona, Spain, yesterday. — AP

Defending champion Kei Nishikori is likely to be Nadal's biggest threat and the Japanese extended his unbeaten run in Barcelona to 11 matches with a comfortable 6-4, 6-2 win over the Netherlands' Thiemo de Bakker.

Nishikori needed just over an hour to dispose of the world number 102 as he broke in the first game of each set and held serve throughout to win his first match of the season on clay.

The world number six, who also won in the title in 2014, will face French 13th seed Jeremy Chardy in the next round.

Nadal could face his conqueror from last year's US Open, Italian Fabio Fognini, in the quarter-finals after he won just his fourth match of the season 3-6, 6-0, 6-1 against Russia's Mikhail Youzhny. German teenage sensation Alexander Zverev is also into the third round after edging past 15th seed Thomaz Bellucci 6-3, 6-7 (3/7), 7-5. — AFP

HK PLAYER BANNED FOR ANTI-CORRUPTION CODE BREACH

HONG KONG: Hong Kong all-rounder Irfan Ahmed has been banned for 2-1/2 years for failing to disclose approaches made to him to engage in corruption, the International Cricket Council (ICC) said yesterday.

The 26-year-old Pakistan-born cricketer was provisionally suspended in November by the ICC's anti-corruption unit (ACU) investigating his role in relation to the activities of another suspected offender.

"Whilst Mr Ahmed was not charged with any offence involving corruption, the ACU established that he had failed to disclose to full details of approaches or invitations to engage in corrupt conduct that had been made to him between January 2012 and January 2014," the ICC said in a statement.

Ahmed, who had played in six one-day internationals and eight Twenty20 matches for Hong Kong, accepted the sanction and

waived his right to appeal, the ICC added.

Cricket has been plagued by a number of corruption issues and a 2010 spot-fixing scandal resulted in bans and jail terms for Pakistan fast bowlers Mohammad Asif and Mohammad Amir, and former test captain Salman Butt.

ACU chairman Ronnie Flanagan said corrupt individuals had increased the targeting of players from ICC Associate Member nations,

where cricket is firmly established and organised, and the game's stakeholders needed to stave them off. "This penalty (imposed on Ahmed) should act as a reminder to all participants of the need to comply with their obligations under the (anti-corruption) code at all times and, in particular, the requirement to report corrupt approaches to the ACU without any delay," Flanagan said. "It is pleasing to note that the investigation upon which these

charges were founded originated from information that had been disclosed to the ACU.

"This is a clear and welcome demonstration that participants now more and more fully realise their own responsibilities in combating this scourge on the game through prompt and diligent reporting as required by the Code," Ahmed's ban is backdated to when he was provisionally suspended and will expire on May 4, 2018. — Reuters

SOUTH AFRICA BALK AT AUSSIE PINK-BALL TEST

SYDNEY: Cricket Australia unveiled plans yesterday for day-night Tests against South Africa and Pakistan, but admitted player concerns about the experimental format meant the Proteas' fixture was not locked in. The day-night Tests using a pink ball are a central part of Australia's home international schedule for 2016-17, which also features limited over matches against three nations. Administrators regard the inaugural day-night Test against New Zealand in Adelaide last season as an outstanding success, attracting 123,000 spectators and an average television audience of two million.

However, players from both sides complained about the pink ball's movement and durability, as well as the difficulty batsmen faced seeing it under lights.

CA chief executive James Sutherland said Pakistan had agreed to play a day-night Test in Brisbane, but that South Africa's players had refused to commit to a similar fixture in Adelaide.

"Understandably, there is some concern from the South African players," Sutherland said, underlining CA's argument that innovation was needed to reinvigorate Test cricket.

"Day-night Test cricket is all about the fans and a day-night match in Adelaide will be a bigger Test match crowd than the South African players will have ever experienced."

South African players association chief Tony Irish said this week that the Proteas, unlike their Australian rivals, had no experience with the pink ball and did not want to be disadvantaged in the Test series.

"The reluctance to play is a sign of how much importance the South African players place on the series against Australia," he told The Australian newspaper.

South Africa, currently rated third in the world, will be aiming to replace Australia as the top-ranked Test team in the series, with the planned day-nighter in Adelaide looming as a potential decider.

The CA schedule also breaks with tradition by stripping Brisbane's Gabba of its customary hosting rights to the first Test of the season.

Instead the first Test against South Africa will be held in Perth from November 3-7, with Brisbane hosting the opening Test against Pakistan from December 15-19.

Sutherland said holding a day-night Test in Brisbane during the school holiday would draw big crowds, while opening the Test season against the Proteas in Perth would attract the city's large South African community.

In addition to three-Test series against South Africa and Pakistan, the schedule also includes five one-dayers against Pakistan, three against New Zealand and three Twenty20 internationals against Sri Lanka.



BOSTON: Tampa Bay Rays starting pitcher Drew Smyly, right, hangs on to the ball after colliding with first baseman Logan Morrison while catching a foul ball by Boston Red Sox's Chris Young during the eighth inning of a baseball game Tuesday, in Boston. — AP

SMYLY, RAYS HOLD RED SOX TO 1 HIT KIERMAIER HOMERS IN 10TH

BOSTON: Drew Smyly and the Rays bullpen held the Red Sox to one hit and Kevin Kiermaier hit a solo home run in the 10th as Tampa Bay beat Boston 3-0 on Tuesday night for its third straight win. Smyly allowed one hit over eight innings and struck out 11 for the second straight start. Smyly was in a pitching duel with Boston's bullpen after starter Joe Kelly left in the first inning with stiffness in his right shoulder. The Red Sox used six relievers, and the first four preserved the shutout until Matt Barnes (1-1) faced Kiermaier to lead off the 10th. Jackie Bradley Jr. had Boston's hit, a single to center in the third. Erasmo Ramirez (3-0) threw a hitless ninth for Tampa Bay, and Alex Colome pitched the 10th for his second save.

REDS 4, ROCKIES 3

Jay Bruce had two of the Reds' five steals in the second inning off Jorge De La Rosa - their biggest inning on the bases in roughly a century - as Cincinnati held on to beat Colorado. Brandon Phillips had four hits, and Billy Hamilton doubled home a pair of runs during Cincinnati's four-run second inning off De La Rosa (1-2). The inning included those record five steals off the left-hander's slow move to the plate. The Reds hadn't stolen so many bases during an inning since at least the 1920s, per information provided by the teams from the Elias Sports Bureau. It was the most steals that the Rockies had ever allowed in an inning. Rookie Robert Stephenson (2-0) got his second win as an injury fill-in, called up from Triple-A earlier in the day because scheduled starter Alfredo Simon has a strained biceps.

BREWERS 6, TWINS 5

Scooter Gennett hit a tiebreaking single in the ninth inning as Milwaukee ended Minnesota's four-game winning streak. Moments after the Brewers gave up a three-run lead in the eighth, Yadier Rivera led off the ninth with a double against Kevin Jepsen (0-3) and got to third on an error by center fielder Byron Buxton. Gennett followed with his second hit of the game to help the Brewers snap a three-game skid. Jeremy Jefferson picked up his fifth save in five tries. Byung Ho Park and Eddie Rosario hit home runs in the Twins' eighth off Tyler Thornburg (2-0) to tie it at 5.

CUBS 2, CARDINALS 1

Jason Hammel worked six sharp innings and had both RBIs for Chicago in a victory over St. Louis. The Cardinals stranded two runners against the Cubs bullpen in the seventh and eighth. Yadier Molina was at second base when Hector Rondon struck out pinch hitter Jedd Gyorko to earn his third save in three chances. Chicago leads the majors at 11-3 and goes for a three-game sweep Wednesday over the defending NL Central champions. They last swept St. Louis in three games on the road Sept. 13-15, 2010.

PADRES 5, PIRATES 4

With Mark McGwire managing for the first time in place of ejected Andy Green, Wil Myers and Derek Norris hit two-run homers and Adam Rosales added a solo shot for the San Diego Padres, who rallied to beat the Pittsburgh Pirates. Green was tossed for arguing after a sequence in which Andrew McCutchen was awarded home on a balk by Colin Rea, and then the umpires twice reversed their call, eventually giving the Pirates the run. McGwire came out to lead Green off the field. McGwire, baseball's one-time single-season home run king, was hired as Green's bench coach in December. McGwire went 1 for 2 on challenges. In the fourth, McGwire challenged a call that Gregory Polanco was safe at home on a single by Jordy Mercer, and the call was overturned. Replays showed that Matt Kemp's throw was in time.

NATIONALS 7, MARLINS 0

Bryce Harper hit a grand slam, one of four home runs in a seven-run seventh inning, as Washington beat Miami. The four homers in an inning was a Nationals record, and a record for Marlins pitchers. Stephen Strasburg (3-0) allowed three hits in eight scoreless innings. He was locked in a scoreless duel with Adam Conley until Jayson Werth hit his 200th career homer with one out in the seventh. Wilson Ramos homered on the next pitch, and after Washington loaded the bases, Harper hit his seventh homer off left-hander Chris Narveson. Ryan Zimmerman followed with a solo homer, his first. Harper has homered in five of the past six games, and he has 20 RBIs. The grand slam was his second in five days, and the second of his career.

ATHLETICS 3, YANKEES 2, 11 INNINGS

Jed Lowrie tied his career high with four hits, doubling in the 11th inning and scoring the go-ahead run on Mark Canha's single to lead Oakland over New York. After two more scoreless innings from the Yankees' dynamic duo of Dellin Betances and Andrew Miller, rookie Johnny Barbatto (1-1) pitched a perfect 10th. Lowrie doubled into the right-field corner against Barbatto with one out in the 11th, then took third on a groundout by Kris Davis, who had struck out in his previous three at-bats.

Canha singled off the glove of a diving Didi Gregorius at shortstop and into left field for his second RBI this season. Fernando Rodriguez (1-0) pitched two scoreless innings, and Ryan Madson got three straight outs for his fifth save in five chances. Oakland has won three straight wins following a four-game losing streak.

ROYALS 8, TIGERS 6

Salvador Perez hit a three-run homer and had a career-high five RBIs and Yordano Ventura twice escaped bases-loaded jams as Kansas City held on to beat Detroit.

The Tigers cut a six-run deficit in half when Jarrod Saltalamacchia homered for the third straight game in the seventh inning. Then they loaded the bases with one out against Joakim Soria in the eighth, but Kelvin Herrera retired Miguel Cabrera and J.D. Martinez around a hit batter to limit the damage. Wade Davis breezed through the ninth inning for his sixth save. Ventura (1-0) allowed two runs on six hits in five innings. Shane Greene (1-1) was tagged for seven runs in 4 1/3 innings.

METS 11, PHILLIES 1

Neil Walker hit two of the Mets' six home runs and Logan Verrett pitched six scoreless innings to help New York beat Philadelphia. Michael Conforto, Yoenis Cespedes, Lucas Duda and Curtis Granderson also went deep to lead the Mets to their third straight win. Verrett (1-0) allowed six hits, striking out four in his second start in place of Jacob deGrom. Coming off a dazzling, three-hitter in which he struck out 16 Padres, Vince Velasquez (2-1) got roughed up by the Mets. He allowed five runs - two earned - and five hits in 4 1-3 innings.

RANGERS 7, ASTROS 5

Prince Fielder hit a towering home run and Ian Desmond had his first two-hit game with Texas as the Rangers beat Houston in the first meeting of 2016 between the AL West playoff teams from last season. Fielder pulled a ball deep into the right-field seats for a two-run homer in the first, and Desmond had an RBI single later in the inning for a 3-0 lead as the Rangers went ahead to stay against Scott Feldman (0-2). Jose Altuve and George Springer homered for the Astros, going back-to-back in the seventh to get within 6-4. Derek Holland (2-0), the first left-handed starter Houston faced this season, allowed two runs while throwing 105 pitches in five innings.

BLUE JAYS 4, ORIOLES 3

Marcus Stroman allowed three runs in seven innings and Troy Tulowitzki drove in two runs as Toronto beat Baltimore. Jose Bautista had two hits and an RBI for the Blue Jays, who have won three straight to move over .500 (8-7) for the first time since April 5. Manny Machado and Matt Wieters homered for the Orioles, now 5-1 at home. Baltimore has lost four of five following a 7-0 start. Stroman (3-0) gave up six hits, struck out three and walked one. The right-hander has won eight straight decisions and 11 of 12 dating to 2014. Roberto Osuna got four straight outs for his fifth save. Orioles starter Mike Wright (1-1) gave up three runs over six innings. Half of his six career losses have come against Toronto.

WHITE SOX 5, ANGELS 0

Mat Latos didn't allow a hit until the fifth inning while Todd Frazier and Jose Abreu hit solo home runs to help Chicago beat Los Angeles and snap a three-game losing streak. Latos (3-0) allowed two hits over 6 1/3 innings and lowered his ERA to 0.49 through three starts. Frazier went deep to left in the second and Abreu homered to center in the fifth off fastballs by Matt Shoemaker (1-2) in the Angels' fourth loss in five games. Andrelton Simmons doubled to extend his hitting streak to a career-high 12 games and end Latos' night after 101 pitches. Adam Eaton then threw out Simmons at the plate when he tried to score off C.J. Cron's one-out single to right.

INDIANS 3, MARINERS 2

Carlos Carrasco allowed a run in 6 1/3 innings and Francisco Lindor had three hits as Cleveland beat Seattle. Carrasco (2-0) came up limping after covering first base during the third inning but powered through 103 pitches. He allowed four hits and three walks while striking out five. Mike Napoli scored Lindor with a go-ahead double in the third inning, and the Indians took advantage of starter Wade Miley's wildness to score twice in the fourth. Kyle Seager hit a solo homer in the sixth for Seattle. Cody Allen allowed a run in the ninth but recorded his fourth save.

BRAVES 8, DODGERS 1

Tyler Flowers went 4 for 4 and drove in three runs and Mallex Smith had three RBIs as Atlanta beat Los Angeles. The Braves have won four straight after beginning the season 0-9. Sloppy defense and a poor start by Alex Wood (1-2) doomed Los Angeles, which had three fielding errors, two hit batters, a wild pitch and a passed ball. Williams Perez, starting on three days' rest, held the Dodgers hitless before Adrian Gonzalez singled with one out in the fourth, but Atlanta manager Fredi Gonzalez pulled him after the next batter, Yasiel Puig, singled hard to left. Ryan Weber took Perez's place and struck out Howie Kendrick to end a threat with runners on third and first. Weber (1-0) gave up three hits, one run and struck out four in 3 2/3 innings. He was recalled from Triple-A Gwinnett on Monday. — AP

Fixtures	
Nov 3-7:	Australia v South Africa 1st Test in Perth
Nov 12-16:	Australia v South Africa 2nd Test in Hobart
Nov 24-28:	Australia v South Africa 3rd Test in Adelaide (proposed day-night)
Dec 4:	Australia v New Zealand 1st ODI in Sydney
Dec 6:	Australia v New Zealand 2nd ODI in Canberra
Dec 9:	Australia v New Zealand 3rd ODI in Melbourne
Dec 15-19:	Australia v Pakistan 1st Test in Brisbane (day-night)
Dec 26-30:	Australia v Pakistan 2nd Test in Melbourne
Jan 3-7:	Australia v Pakistan 3rd Test in Sydney
Jan 13:	Australia v Pakistan 1st ODI in Brisbane
Jan 15:	Australia v Pakistan 2nd ODI in Melbourne
Jan 19:	Australia v Pakistan 3rd ODI in Perth
Jan 22:	Australia v Pakistan 4th ODI in Sydney
Jan 26:	Australia v Pakistan 5th ODI in Adelaide
Feb 17:	Australia v Sri Lanka 1st T20 venue TBC
Feb 19:	Australia v Sri Lanka 2nd T20 venue TBC
Feb 22:	Australia v Sri Lanka 3rd T20 venue TBC. — AFP



MUMBAI: Mumbai Indians batsman Ambati Rayudu (L) plays a shot during the 2016 Indian Premier League (IPL) Twenty20 cricket match between Mumbai Indians and Royal Challengers Bangalore at The Wankhede Cricket Stadium in Mumbai yesterday. — AFP

WILSHERE NOT READY FOR WEST BROM, COULD FACE SUNDERLAND

LONDON: Arsenal's Jack Wilshere will not be ready for today's Premier League clash against West Bromwich Albion but will be available for selection against Sunderland on Sunday, manager Arsene Wenger said.

The midfielder, who has not featured since fracturing his leg in the close season, scored while playing for the under-21s on Monday night. "He has had no setbacks and is getting better. He will be available after West Brom," Wenger told a news conference yesterday.

"Overall the progression now should be normal. He's available for selection-I don't think for tomorrow-but from the next game on it's a question of do I select him or not?" Wenger said Wilshire would be fully fit for the June 10-July 10 European Championship in France, and England manager Roy Hodgson would not be taking a risk if he included the player in the squad.

England face Russia, Slovakia and Wales in Group B of the 24-team tournament and Hodgson will name his squad on May 12. "The European Championship starts on June 10 and there's still nearly two months," Wenger added. "If you look at his fitness at

the moment I think in two months he should be perfectly fit. If he has no setbacks it would not be a gamble," Wenger confirmed that Arsenal were in contract talks with playmaker Mesut Ozil and forward Alexis Sanchez and that midfielder Santi Cazorla, who has not played since the end of November, had returned to training.

The Frenchman hoped there was still a late twist in the battle for the league title left, with Arsenal trailing leaders Leicester City by 13 points, with both teams left with four games to play after the Gunners face West Brom.

"The season is far from over," Wenger said. "It depends on who you play and the commitment you face." Wenger took responsibility for Arsenal's last two league games against West Ham United and Crystal Palace, which ended in draws that all but ended their title hopes. "Against West Ham and Crystal Palace we were not efficient enough. That is a regret. It's my job to get the team 100 percent ready," he added. "Every time it doesn't work you question yourself, it is part of the job. In the end it is always down to me and I stand up to that." — Reuters

MLB results/standings

Milwaukee 6, Minnesota 5; Cleveland 3, Seattle 2; NY Mets 11, Philadelphia 1; Oakland 3, NY Yankees 2 (11 innings); Toronto 4, Baltimore 3; Cincinnati 4, Colorado 3; Atlanta 8, LA Dodgers 1; Tampa Bay 3, Boston 0 (10 innings); Washington 7, Miami 0; Kansas City 8, Detroit 6; Texas 7, Houston 5; Chicago White Sox 5, LA Angels 0; Chicago Cubs 2, St. Louis 1; San Diego 5, Pittsburgh 4; Arizona 3, San Francisco 0.

American League Eastern Division				National League Eastern Division				
	W	L	PCT	GB				
Baltimore	8	4	.667	-	Washington	10	3	.769
Toronto	8	7	.533	1.5	NY Mets	7	6	.538
Boston	6	7	.462	2.5	Philadelphia	6	9	.400
Tampa Bay	6	7	.462	2.5	Miami	4	8	.333
NY Yankees	5	7	.417	3	Atlanta	4	9	.308
Central Division				Central Division				
Kansas City	9	4	.692	-	Chicago Cubs	11	3	.786
Chicago White Sox	9	5	.643	0.5	Cincinnati	7	7	.500
Detroit	7	5	.583	1.5	Pittsburgh	7	7	.500
Cleveland	6	5	.545	2	St. Louis	7	7	.500
Minnesota	4	10	.286	5.5	Milwaukee	6	8	.429
Western Division				Western Division				
Texas	8	6	.571	-	Colorado	8	6	.571
Oakland	7	7	.500	1	LA Dodgers	8	6	.571
LA Angels	6	8	.429	2	Arizona	7	8	.467
Seattle	5	8	.385	2.5	San Francisco	7	8	.467
Houston	5	9	.357	3	San Diego	5	9	.357

WENGER WARNS AGAINST 'NEGATIVE ENVIRONMENT' AT EMIRATES

LONDON: Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger says The Emirates stadium is in danger of becoming a "negative environment" with swathes of season ticket holders expected to miss today's Premier League clash with West Bromwich Albion.

Wenger's side were booed off after a 1-1 draw with Crystal Palace on Sunday left the Gunners fourth in the table, 13 points adrift of leaders Leicester City.

With their title hopes all but over for another season, Arsenal's priority is now Champions League qualification via a top-four finish which they should manage, although failure to beat West Brom could threaten even that limited ambition. With north London rivals Tottenham Hotspur in second place and still in with a chance of winning the title, Arsenal fans have become increasingly disenchanted

with the team and Wenger has called on them to stand behind the players.

"I want our fans to be happy and when they are not, it affects me," Wenger told a news conference yesterday. "You do not want to play in a negative environment..."

"We are responsible for the performance of the team and it is true that, at the moment, it is not a highlight. "I hope in the next years, Arsenal will always play in

the top three and, hopefully, people won't get disenchanted."

Tickets have been put on general sale for the West Brom match, a rarity for Arsenal home games, and Wenger accepts the fans' patience has been severely tested after his team's a run of only four wins in their last 13 league matches.

"Everybody is free to do what he

wants with his season ticket," Wenger said. "We have to live with that. "It's a Thursday night, it's unusual. We just had a disappointing result at home, maybe that plays a part as well. Is the disillusionment more pronounced? Yeah, maybe."

Arsenal won the FA Cup for the last two seasons but have finished in the Premier League top two just once since their last title success in 2004. — Reuters

BENITEZ BUOYANT AFTER CITY POINT

NEWCASTLE: Newcastle manager Rafael Benitez insists his side has the momentum going into the final four games in the fight for Premier League survival.

Despite missing a chance to climb out of the bottom three following a 1-1 draw with Champions League semi-finalists Manchester City, Benitez claims Newcastle have put themselves in with a good chance of staying-off a second relegation in seven seasons, after taking four points from their last two matches.

They remain second-bottom, two points from safety going into the final month of the campaign as they bid to finish above Norwich and Sunderland to avoid the two remaining relegation places to accompany Aston Villa in the Championship next season. Benitez insists his side will fight to the end after predicting the battle to avoid the drop will go right down to the wire. "Everyone is doing everything they can to try to stay up," he said. "Hopefully we have the momentum and we have to keep believing."

"We have more belief now and you could see that the players will fight to the end. I've told the players not to look at the league table too much, and just to concentrate on the next game. If they are concentrating too much on doing the numbers, they're wasting their time."

"That's two games in a row where we've had a great performance and had a great connection with the fans. To see the players perform like that with passion and commitment, hopefully we can keep that level in the final four games. We'll keep going and see where we are going into the last game, but with this kind of fight you have to be optimistic for the remaining matches."

Newcastle travel to one of the Spaniard's former clubs Liverpool at the weekend bidding to post a third game unbeaten.

Benitez has won one of his six games in

charge since replacing former England manager Steve McClaren last month, and he added: "Liverpool are doing well in the Europa League and I wish them well in that, but hopefully we can go there and come away with three points."

'PLAYING FOR THEIR LIVES'

Sergio Aguero's 100th Premier League goal put City ahead early on, but it was cancelled out as Vurnon Anita grabbed his first goal for more than two years before half-time.

Argentinian international Aguero became the second fastest player after the watching Alan Shearer to reach a century of Premier League goals-in just 147 appearances-and manager Manuel Pellegrini said: "I'm happy for him because it's not easy to score that amount of goals in such a short space of time. Hopefully he can keep scoring like that for the rest of the season."

"We did well because it was difficult with the great atmosphere provided by the Newcastle fans and their players were playing for their lives because of their place in the table."

City remain third, a point ahead of Arsenal and five better off than Manchester United. Pellegrini made only three changes, but hinted at more sweeping alterations to his side for Saturday's Premier League visit by Stoke City, which comes just three days before the last four Champions League clash with his former side Real Madrid.

Pellegrini added: "It's very important now that we make some rotations as we play this weekend and then against Real next Tuesday. We didn't play as well as we did in the victory at Chelsea, and that's maybe because we couldn't recover after playing so well at Stamford Bridge. "Newcastle provided us with a tough test but we had chances to score a second goal to win the game." — AFP



LORIENT: Lorient's French defender Victor Mouangué Kingue (L) vies with Paris Saint-Germain's French midfielder Benjamin Stambouli during the French Cup semi-final football match between Lorient (FCL) and Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) at Moustoir stadium in Lorient, western France, on Tuesday. — AFP

IBRAHIMOVIC FIRES PSG INTO FRENCH CUP FINAL

PARIS: Zlatan Ibrahimovic scored a typically brilliant goal as Paris Saint-Germain beat Lorient 1-0 away in a French Cup semi-final on Tuesday.

The Cup holders and Ligue 1 champions will now face either second tier Sochaux or arch rivals Marseille in the final.

The Parisians are bidding for a second successive clean sweep of the domestic honours in France and face Lille in the League Cup final this weekend. Ibrahimovic picked up the ball from a Di Maria pass and ran straight at goal from 40 yards out before curling a shot with the outside of his right boot around Lorient goalkeeper Benjamin Lecomte from the edge of the area. Everyone had been expecting the Swede to pass but instead he racked up a 43rd goal in all competitions this season.

Ligue 1's 11th placed side Lorient had put up little to worry the Parisians until then but second string keeper Salvatore Sirigu made a crucial late save when called upon. Both Ibrahimovic and strike partner Edinson Cavani went close as PSG peppered the Lorient goal in the first half after coach Laurent Blanc had put out a strong side.

PSG midfielder Blaise Matuidi deflected suggestions it had been a close game saying his side had always been comfortable. "We're in the final for the second year running, two finals for the second year running in fact. That was the objective and we did it. We were not great and neither was the pitch but we did the necessary," he told French television. PSG became the first team to bow out of the Champions League at the quarter-final stage for four years in a row

when they were beaten 3-2 on aggregate by Manchester City last week.

Marseille, who fired coach Michel on Tuesday, have the chance to put a silver lining on an otherwise woeful campaign when they go to second-tier Sochaux in the second semi-final on Wednesday. OM slipped to a 2-1 defeat at Monaco on Sunday night as their winless run in the league extended to 10 matches.

Michel has been replaced until the end of the season by his assistant Franck Passi, who will be helped by club legend Basile Boli, recently working as an ambassador for the club.

Sochaux have picked up some big scalps this season though in their run to the last four, having seen off Nantes in the quarter-finals and Monaco in the last 16. — AFP



MEDELLIN: Goalkeeper Marcos Diaz (C) of Argentina's team Huracan pulls off a save during the Libertadores Cup Group 4 football match against Colombia's Atletico Nacional at the Atanasio Girardot stadium in Medellin, Antioquia department, Colombia, on Tuesday. — AFP

DEILA TO STEP DOWN AS CELTIC MANAGER

GLASGOW: Ronny Deila will step down as manager of Scottish giants Celtic at the end of the season, the Norwegian announced yesterday.

Celtic are currently eight points clear of Aberdeen in the Scottish Premiership and on course for a fifth successive title, but Deila's position has been under scrutiny for some time.

Celtic have made little progress in Europe under the 40-year-old and were knocked out of the Scottish Cup by Old Firm rivals Rangers following a semi-final penalty shootout defeat on Sunday.

"It is vital that the club comes first, instead of me being the focus," Deila said in a statement on the Celtic website. "Hopefully now the team and the club can be the focus as we enter this final important period of the season."

"It was an absolute privilege to be named manager of Celtic, such a wonderful football club, and I have enjoyed my time here immensely."

Former Celtic manager Neil Lennon, who left the club in 2014, and former Everton and Manchester United manager David Moyes, who previously played for Celtic, are among the contenders touted to succeed Deila.

On the possibility of succeeding Deila, the Northern Irishman told Britain's Press Association: "I would definitely be interested." He added: "I was associated with the club for 15 years, I missed it when I left as a player and there are aspects that you miss even now at 44 years of age."

Deila, who was on a one-year rolling

contract, was appointed as manager in 2014 following success in his homeland with Stromsgodet.

He led Celtic to a league and League Cup double in his first campaign, but has twice failed to steer the club through the Champions League qualifying play-offs.

Celtic reached the Europa League last 32 in 2014-15, losing to Inter Milan, but finished bottom of their Europa League group this season. They were also eliminated from the League Cup in the third round by Ross County.

"There have been some disappointments and times when we have not achieved what we had hoped for, and I'm realistic and honest enough to admit that," Deila added.

"But I know that the players, myself and my back-room team have always given everything we had to bring success to our supporters."

"I will never forget the welcome I received almost two years ago at Celtic Park from so many fans. When I joined Celtic I knew I was coming to one of the world's great football clubs."

Celtic chairman Ian Bankier said: "I would like to thank Ronny for his contribution to the club and, on behalf of the Celtic Board, give him our best wishes for the future in everything he does. "Ronny is a fine man with strong values of honesty and integrity. He has had some success, which we have enjoyed, and I know all our fans will back Ronny and the players as he looks to bring us more success in the shape of a second league title." — AFP

BLUES RALLY TO DEFEAT BLACKHAWKS, LEAD SERIES

CHICAGO: Vladimir Tarasenko scored on a pair of impressive wrist shots, Brian Elliott made 39 saves and the St. Louis Blues beat the Chicago Blackhawks 4-3 on Tuesday night to open a commanding 3-1 lead in their first-round playoff series. Jaden Schwartz scored a tiebreaking power-play goal in the third period for the second straight game as St. Louis moved to the brink of its first appearance in the Western Conference semifinals since 2012. The Blues were eliminated in the opening round in each of the past three years. Duncan Keith had two goals for Chicago, which dropped consecutive home playoff games for the first time since 2012. Andrew Shaw had a goal and two assists, and Corey Crawford finished with 16 saves after getting into a fight with Blues rookie Robby Fabbri during a wild second period. Game 5 is tonight in St. Louis.

PENGUINS 3, RANGERS 1

Matt Cullen beat Henrik Lundqvist on a semi-breakaway after beating two defensemen early in the third period as Pittsburgh spoiled the return of Rangers captain Ryan McDonagh with a win in Game 3 of their first-round series. Sidney Crosby also scored and Matt Murray made 16 saves in his return to action in helping the Penguins take a 2-1 lead in the best-of-7 series. Game 4 is Thursday night in New York. The Rangers have lost four consecutive playoff games at Madison Square Garden going back to last season's Eastern Conference final against Tampa Bay. Kris Letang iced the game with an empty-net goal. Rick Nash scored for the Rangers, who played without an injured McDonagh (upper body, hand) in the first two games in Pittsburgh. Lundqvist made 28 saves, giving up a power-play goal to Crosby and a one-on-one chance to Cullen.

LIGHTNING 3, RED WINGS 2

Ondrej Palat scored with 2:59 left in the third period, lifting Tampa Bay over Detroit for a 3-1 lead in the first-round series. Ben Bishop stopped 26 shots for the Lightning and Petr Mrazek made 30 saves for the Red Wings.

Palat was in a perfect position right in front of the net to make the most of Jonathan Drouin's pass on the game-winning goal. Drouin had three assists. Nikita Kucherov had power-play



CHICAGO: Vladimir Tarasenko #91 of the St. Louis Blues goes airborne trying to get off a shot between Corey Crawford #50 and Niklas Hjalmarsson #4 of the Chicago Blackhawks in Game Four of the Western Conference First Round during the 2016 NHL Stanley Cup Playoffs at the United Center on Tuesday in Chicago, Illinois. — AFP

goals in the first and second period to give Tampa Bay a 2-0 lead late in the second, but Detroit's Darren Helm and Gustav Nyquist scored late in the period to tie the game. Game 5 is tonight at Tampa Bay.

DUCKS 3, PREDATORS 0

NASHVILLE, Tennessee (AP) - Frederik Andersen made 27 saves as Anaheim shut out Nashville to take a 2-1 lead in the first-round playoff series. The Ducks have not lost three

straight to open a postseason series since the 2006 Western Conference finals, and they didn't come close to dropping a third straight this year. Andersen, who started in net after John Gibson took the first two losses in Anaheim, posted his second postseason shutout despite taking Shea Weber's slap shot off his head. He has 15 postseason wins since 2014. Chris Stewart had a goal and an assist, and Jamie McGinn and Rickard Rakell each scored their first goals of the series. Game 4 is tonight in Nashville. — AP

Sports

Al-Nasser defeat
Al-Wahda in target
ball competition

15

McGregor pulled
from UFC 200,
tweets retirement
talk



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IBRAHIMOVIC FIRES PSG INTO FRENCH CUP FINAL Page 19



LA CORUNA, Galicia, Spain: Barcelona's Uruguayan forward Luis Suarez (R) controls the ball next to Deportivo La Coruna's defender Fernando Navarro during the Spanish league football match RC Deportivo de la Coruna vs FC Barcelona at the Municipal de Riazor stadium in La Coruna yesterday. — AFP

BARCA BOUNCE BACK WITH 8-0 ROUT

MADRID: Barcelona bounced back from their worst run of La Liga defeats for 13 years in emphatic fashion as Luis Suarez scored four in an 8-0 thrashing of Deportivo La Coruna yesterday.

Ivan Rakitic, Lionel Messi, Marc Bartra and Neymar were also on target as Barca reasserted their control on the Spanish title race. Victory moved Barca back three points ahead of Atletico Madrid and four clear of third-placed Real Madrid with both sides from the capital in action later yesterday against Athletic Bilbao and Villarreal respectively.

Barca had taken just one point from their last possible 12 in the league and been dumped out of the Champions League amidst a run of just one win in six games that threatened to derail their season.

However, they remain in control of their own fate and few would bet against them winning their last four games and claiming a 24th Liga title after a performance as good as any in the 39-game unbeaten run they enjoyed prior to losing at home to Real Madrid earlier this month.

Suarez settled the visitors' nerves after just 11 minutes when he outmuscled Sidnei to volley home the opener despite the hosts' desperate appeals for a foul.

Deportivo should have hit back immediately as Celso Borges shot meekly at Claudio Bravo with just the Chilean international to beat.

Borges then had an even better opportunity as he rounded Bravo, but Bartra got back to block his effort from point-blank range before Oriol Riera fired the fol-

low-up over. Suarez gave Barca the cushion they desired when he latched onto Messi's sumptuous through ball to slot low past Manu.

The Uruguayan should have had a first-half hat-trick but he failed to turn home Alves's fine cross from two yards out moments later.

Suarez made amends as he turned provider for Barca's third just after the break when his cross to the back post was volleyed home emphatically by Rakitic.

Messi created the fourth with another defence-splitting pass and Suarez kept his composure to seal his sixth hat-trick of a prolific season.

The relief amongst the Barca players was palpable as they seemed to click back into the form that had them set for a second consecutive treble before their sudden

collapse in the previous six games.

Suarez was gifted his fourth of the night from Neymar's unselfish cross despite Laure blocking his initial attempt on the line for his 49th goal of the season.

The former Liverpool striker then added a second assist to his four-goal haul as Barca again tore the Deportivo defence apart and his cut-back was gratefully tapped home by Messi.

Bartra joined the party as he galloped forward from his own half without facing a single strong Deportivo challenge before firing into the far corner.

And Neymar completed a perfect night for the Spanish champions when he tapped home at the far post from Suarez's third assist of a spectacular display for his first goal in six games. — AFP



ATLANTA: Isaiah Thomas #4 of the Boston Celtics drives to pass against Kyle Korver #26 and Jeff Teague #0 of the Atlanta Hawks in Game Two of the Eastern Conference Quarterfinals during the 2016 NBA Playoffs at Philips Arena on Tuesday in Atlanta, Georgia. — AFP

HAWKS BEAT CELTICS, SPURS CRUSH GRIZZLIES

ATLANTA: Atlanta and San Antonio took imposing 2-0 leads in their opening-round play-off series with emphatic victories over Boston and Memphis on Tuesday. The Hawks held the Celtics to the lowest-scoring first quarter in the playoffs since the NBA went to the shot clock, building a 21-point lead and holding on despite an ugly shooting performance of their own for an 89-72 victory and a strong hold on their Eastern Conference series.

Al Horford and Kyle Korver led Atlanta with 17 points apiece, but this game was essentially decided in the first 12 minutes. The Hawks started 9 of 13 from the field, knocking down six from beyond the 3-point arc. Korver made four from long range, a big turnaround from a 1-of-10 performance in Game 1 that didn't include any 3s. Atlanta led 24-3 just 6 1-2 minutes into the game.

Even after failing to score the rest of the period, the Hawks still led 24-7 heading to the second. Shaking off a dismal performance in the playoff opener, Korver swished four 3-pointers in the opening minutes to propel Atlanta to a stunning 21-point lead before many fans had settled into their seats Tuesday night. There wasn't much doubt after that. "We all have pride, right?" said Korver, who went 1 of 10 on Saturday and missed all seven of his 3-point attempts. "I wanted to come out and play better the second game." As good as Korver and the Hawks were in the early going, this one will be remembered more for the Celtics' grisly start.

"I don't know what it is," said Boston's Jae Crowder, looking a bit shell-shocked after scoring just two points on 1-of-9 shooting, "but we've got to change something."

Crowder had plenty of company in his shooting misery. Boston star Isaiah Thomas was held to 16 points on 4-of-15 shooting, going 1 of 6 beyond the arc. Marcus Smart stepped in for the injured Avery Bradley and went 1 of 11, also making just 1 of 6 from 3-point range. The Celtics finished at 32 percent overall (28 of 88), 5 of 28 from long range. Game 3 is tomorrow night in Boston.

San Antonio were even more impressive than the Hawks in beating the Grizzlies 94-68. Patty Mills had 16 points, Kawhi Leonard added 13 and San Antonio never trailed in sweeping the first two games.

LaMarcus Aldridge had 10 points and eight rebounds in 26 minutes. Aldridge sat out the entire fourth quarter along with Leonard and Tony Parker while Tim Duncan and Danny Green made brief appearances. — AP

REFEREES ON EURO 2016 PENALTY AREA CLEAN-UP MISSION

ENGHEN-LES-BAINS: Putting attacking players between the defensive wall and the keeper at free kicks will lead to any resulting goal being disallowed during Euro 2016 as referees aim to clamp down on penalty area infringements.

Speaking at a referees workshop before the finals in France starting in June, UEFA's chief refereeing officer Pierluigi Collina said goal line technology would allow the additional assistant referee (AAR) to focus on what happens in the box. Collina explained the reasons behind the decision at a news conference on Wednesday after meeting all the 24 national team coaches whose teams will play at the June 10-July 10 tournament to discuss the interpretation of the game's rules. "All of them 100 percent agreed with this interpretation (of the offside rule)," the Italian said. "Putting an attacking wall (between the defensive wall and the keeper) influences the goalkeeper's ability to do his job."

"Normally they (the attacking players) try to go back to an inside position before the kick is taken but often they can't manage it. "What we agreed with all 24 coaches in Paris (last month) is that if a team uses these tactics and the ball goes into the net the 'goal' will be disallowed because the goalkeeper's vision is obstructed."

Collina added that the referees, who have gathered on the outskirts of Paris for a four-day workshop ending today, had been instructed to be "proactive" in warning the players.

TECHNOLOGICAL HELP

Referees will be greatly helped by goal line technology. "Before the goal line technology) they would miss something in the penalty area because they were not watching the penalty area but had already an eye on the goal line," said Collina. "With the goal line technology the additional assistant referee can really be focused on the rest of the area", where shirt pulling and holding can be a problem. "I have to say that in UEFA competitions the problem of holding and pulling has already been reduced, greatly diminished in the last seasons," said Collina. English referee Mark Clattenburg told Reuters: "Now with the goal line technology... to clear up the goal, the additional referee can concentrate more on the penalty area decisions, which are just as crucial as the ball crossing the line. "They both complement each other. With the instructions we've had we'll be successful."

Last weekend, holding and pulling in the area were a concern in Premier League leaders' Leicester City's 2-2 home draw against West Ham United and Clattenburg said the problem could be reduced if additional assistant referees were used. "In our federation we don't have the additional referees we have in UEFA competitions (where) it (holding and pulling) has been heavily reduced. It's a deterrent the players can see," he said. — Reuters

Kuwait Times BUSINESS

THURSDAY, APRIL 21, 2016

**KFH profits hits KD 34.1 m;
total assets - KD 16.77 bn**

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**Burgan Bank holds Annual
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WHO SPEAKS FOR SAUDI ON OIL? RIVALS AND ALLIES WONDER

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GUANGDONG: Photo shows a Commercial Aircraft Corp of China (COMAC) ARJ 21-700 regional jet at the Airshow China 2014 in Zhuhai, southern China's Guangdong province. China's homegrown regional jet should have made its first commercial flight weeks ago, but the ARJ21 has still not flown any fare-paying passengers, dealing yet another setback to the country's ambitious plans for domestically-produced planes.— AFP

DELAYED TAKE-OFF FOR CHINA'S OWN REGIONAL JET AMBITIOUS PLANS FOR DOMESTICALLY PRODUCED PLANES

SHANGHAI: China's homegrown regional jet should have made its first commercial flight weeks ago, but the ARJ21 has still not flown any fare-paying passengers, dealing yet another setback to the country's ambitious plans for domestically produced planes. Chengdu Airlines received the aircraft from manufacturer the Commercial Aircraft Corp of China (COMAC) in November, already years behind schedule, and it made several "demonstration" flights without passengers in January.

It was scheduled to ferry passengers from its home base in southwest China to commercial hub Shanghai on February 28, according to media reports, but has yet to do so. Neither the jet's maker nor the airline were willing to say why. "The Civil Aviation Administration of China is still doing preparation work for the first flight, so maybe it hasn't finished," a COMAC spokesman said, referring to the government regulator. "The airline and CAAC have the final say." A CAAC spokeswoman referred questions about the issue to the airline.

Chengdu Airlines, whose fleet consists of 21 A320 aircraft made by European consortium Airbus and the single ARJ21, declined to give a date. "There is no exact time," a spokesman said. When the ARJ21 - which stands for Advanced Regional Jet for the 21st century - finally takes to the skies for commercial flights, it will be the culmination of a program that has so far taken 14 years. First formally approved by the government in 2002, journalists were shown the body of the plane five years later, when officials confidently pre-

dicted deliveries in late 2009.

Some Chinese see it as their patriotic duty to fly on the homegrown aircraft. "Support the domestically made plane! I would take it!" said an online posting. But first COMAC must win over customers and passengers about the ARJ21's quality and reliability. The aircraft still lacks the crucial US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) certification that would allow it to fly in US skies. Some potential passengers expressed worries. "It's not that I am unpatriotic. To be honest, I don't dare take the plane. It's still Boeing and Airbus (for me)," said an online post by Tang Kanyang, who identified himself as a lawyer.

A competitive threat?

The plane can seat 78-90 passengers and has a range of 2,225-3,700 kilometers. State-owned COMAC has claimed more than 270 orders for the ARJ21, mainly from domestic customers, and has bigger plans too. In November, it rolled out the C919, China's first domestically developed narrow-body passenger plane, the next step up in size. Officials said at the time that it would make its first test flight this year, though reports say it might also be delayed.

The Shanghai-based company will partner with US aircraft maker Boeing to set up an interior completion centre in China, and aims to produce an even larger wide-body jet in cooperation with Russia's United Aircraft Corp. whose products include the Sukhoi Superjet 100. The ARJ21 was also a no-show at China's major show for corporate jets in Shanghai last

week, though it does have a business version and could potentially compete against some of the foreign brands that were displayed on the Hongqiao Airport runway.

COMAC restricted itself to display miniatures of the ARJ21 at Asia's premier air show in Singapore in February. "They (Chinese officials) are looking at these market segments thinking: How can we do what Boeing and Airbus have done?" said Jeff Lowe, managing director of aviation services provider Asian Sky Group. But most manufacturers do not view the COMAC plane as a competitive threat yet, even though the Chinese commercial aircraft market is already Asia's largest and crucial to their plans over the next decades. "They have a product. We have ours," said Fernando Grau, director of marketing and product strategy for executive jets of Brazil's Embraer in China.

The ARJ21 is comparable in seating capacity to Embraer's E170 and E175, parts of a family of aircraft with more than 1,100 deliveries. Foreign jet makers can offer a far more extensive product line and industry executives said COMAC was seeking to develop what took other manufacturers decades to do. "Currently, we don't see anything that competes with us in terms of a traditional business jet," said Scott Neal, senior vice president for worldwide sales and marketing for Gulfstream of the United States. "It's taken us 60 years to gain the position we have and the expertise in designing and building high-technology, high-performance corporate aircraft." — AFP

UNCERTAINTY, SANCTIONS DETER INVESTORS TO IRAN

PARIS: Iran may technically be open to foreign investors after a nuclear deal with Western powers, but many sanctions remain, deterring potential business partners who fear the US could hit them again with punishing fines. In January, the United States and other Western powers lifted sanctions related to Tehran's nuclear program, mostly on oil exports and financial transactions. But it remains on Washington's sanctions list in other areas, notably for allegedly supporting terrorism and its human rights record.

"Iran sanctions are still very much alive," Farhad Alavi, a US-based lawyer specializing in sanctions application said. This echoes remarks by John Smith, acting director of the US Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC), to a congressional panel in February that "broadly, the US primary embargo on Iran is still in place". Most importantly, the Islamic Republic remains on an international blacklist owing to its alleged sponsoring of what Washington and its allies regard as terror groups. This means that US banks, or major foreign banks with US-based operations, are fighting shy of handling Iranian funds, fearful they could suffer a repeat dose of fines totaling some \$15 billion (13.2 billion euros) over the past five years handed down by US regulators.

Gorilla in the room

"As we offer banking services through our US operations we are required to continue to restrict business activity with Iran," Barclays chief executive Jes Staley said. The biggest fine for sanctions violations, at \$8.9 billion, was slapped on BNP Paribas but the likes of HSBC and Commerzbank also suffered. Still, since an agreement nine months ago limiting Tehran's nuclear programme to "exclusively peaceful" purposes, followed by "Implementation Day" in January, both sides have been exploring a revival of business links.

President Hassan Rouhani's visit to France in January was followed by trips of the Greek and Italian leaders to Tehran. More recently EU foreign affairs chief Federica Mogherini headed a high-level delegation to Iran to discuss energy, trade, investment and also the Syrian migration crisis. Progress is real and tangible, said Sanam Vakil, Middle East specialist and lecturer at Johns Hopkins University. "Technically, Iran is open for business without a doubt," Vakil said. "An overall thaw and loosening is evident," added Alavi, but "the 800-pound gorilla in the room is that the US and Iran have still not reconciled" politically, he said.

'Willingness to start cooperating'

The Financial Action Task Force (FATF), which sets international standards to combat money laundering and terrorism finance, said after its recent annual meeting in Paris it remains "exceptionally concerned about Iran's failure to address the risk of terrorist financing and the serious threat this poses to the integrity of the international financial system". The FATF therefore continues to bracket Iran with North Korea as a non-cooperative jurisdiction with "strategic deficiencies (which) pose a risk to the international financial system". That means Washington will not be throwing out its 2012 Iran Threat Reduction and Syria Human Rights Act just yet. Even so, FATF executive secretary David Lewis told AFP that Tehran does want to engage. "They have approached us. They have shown a willingness to start cooperating with us (and) we will be engaging with them in the near future on that," said Lewis. Nigel Coulthard, former president of Alstom in Iran and chairman of the Paris-based Cercle Iran Economie association, said political change is tangible, even if "the regime still has a firm grip on things". For Alavi, "economic globalization has forced a sea change in thinking on both sides, especially in Tehran. The necessities of pragmatism dictate" a lasting improvement. But Coulthard also cited ongoing frustration in Europe over "American pressure" to force European firms "to be over-compliant in even the most legitimate business" inside Iran. — AFP

SAUDI CLOSE TO SECURING A \$10 BILLION BANK LOAN

DUBAI: Saudi Arabia is close to securing a \$10 billion, five-year bank loan, the government's first significant foreign borrowing for over a decade, as the world's top oil exporter seeks to fill a record budget gap caused by low crude prices. The kingdom had initially aimed to raise between \$6 billion and \$8 billion, but the Ministry of Finance increased the amount after drawing substantial demand, sources said yesterday. They said the loan was expected to be signed before the end of April with lenders including US, European and Japanese banks. Two sources said the pricing was around 120 basis points above the London interbank offered rate (Libor).

The size of the loan and its pricing reflect

improved investor sentiment towards Saudi Arabia since January, when its currency came under pressure because of concern about the ability of its economy to survive an era of cheap oil. Since January, oil prices have rebounded to around \$40 a barrel from under \$30, while Saudi officials have been putting together a complex plan to raise more non-oil revenues and diversify the economy. Bankers said institutions also wanted to take part in the loan because that would help them bid to arrange an international bond issue that Saudi Arabia is expected to conduct after the loan, perhaps later this year.

Governments and companies around the Gulf Arab region are scrambling to raise

funds abroad as low oil prices cut flows of new petrodollars into their economies. In January, Qatar obtained a \$5.5 billion loan at 110 bps over Libor, while Oman secured a \$1 billion loan at 120 bps above that benchmark. A banking source said lead arrangers of the Saudi loan included JP Morgan, HSBC and Bank of Tokyo-Mitsubishi. Each was contributing around \$1.3 billion, with the remainder coming from other lenders, the source said. JP Morgan and HSBC declined to comment and nobody was immediately available to comment from Bank of Tokyo-Mitsubishi. Nobody was available to comment from the Saudi central bank or the finance ministry. — Reuters

ETHIOPIA BANKS ON MOBILE MONEY FOR FINANCIAL GROWTH

DONI: Outside a small store on a dirt track in the remote Ethiopian town of Doni, long queues wait for government cash handouts by the most modern of methods: mobile phone.

Ethiopia, Africa's second most populous country and one of its fastest growing economies, is pushing a new electronic payment service by phone-called M-Birr, or "mobile-money"-in a bid to bring millions into the banking system and financial services. Here in Doni, a remote town of some 5,000 people, 130 kilometers southeast of the capital Addis Ababa, signs displayed for M-Birr testify to the popularity of this new service.

Government "safety net" social security payments to some of the poorest people are now transferred with a few key strokes. The service cuts out cumbersome bureaucracy, that previously forced customers to travel long distances and spend time waiting for requests to be processed, sometimes having to return the following day to collect the cash. "M-Birr is more convenient for beneficiaries," said the system's local manager in Doni, Adane Hirpho. "We have five agents in the city. People come into one of these stores and get their money immediately." Created by Irish company MOSS ICT, the service was launched in Ethiopia early 2015, in collaboration with several banks and five Ethiopian micro-finance institutions.

'No risk of fraud'

Authorities have quickly realized the potential of the technology to simplify the distribution of social benefits. More effective and less restrictive, operators say the mobile payment system is also safer than old payment systems. "People



Photo shows a group of herders assisting a malnourished camel carrying a load in Sitti Zone, in the Somali Region of Ethiopia. Sitti Zone is one of the most affected by the drought caused by the El Nino climate phenomenon. Ethiopia struggles to combat its worst drought for 30 years, with at least 10.2 million people needing food aid. — AFP

have a PIN number, and they must show their beneficiary card, so there is no risk of fraud," said Yves Dublin, from the UN children's fund Unicef, which provides technical support. "This technology avoids cases of 'ghost' beneficiaries that we see with other programs."

It follows in the footsteps of neighboring Kenya, whose M-Pesa service run by British telecom giant Vodafone's subsidiary Safaricom has become a leading force in the sector. Users are encouraged to create a bank account to avoid losing up to a fifth of the monthly allowance

offered—an average of 137 birr (\$6) a month—in transport costs to collect the cash. In Ethiopia, M-Birr has some 150,000 users, with 2,000 of those in Doni. The innovation therefore not only improves the distribution of social security benefits, but also paves the way to

opening up a potential market of tens of millions. "Working in social projects also helps us to develop our network of agents," said Thierry Artaud, the M-Birr manager. "It's a way to get people to use bank accounts, to understand what are savings, what are interest rates."

Stability

That's key for the country's economy, for the banking system is as yet hugely underdeveloped. Less than a fifth of Ethiopians had a bank account in 2014, against three-quarters in neighboring Kenya, according to the World Bank. But Ethiopia is experiencing strong economic growth, estimated by the IMF and the World Bank at nearly 10 percent annually over the past decade.

Since the overthrow of a Marxist junta in 1991, Ethiopia's political and economic situation has stabilized, although rights groups have criticized the government for suppressing opposition.

The economy is still heavily dependent on agriculture, especially coffee, with the vast majority of the country's workers involved in the sector.

But the government has set a target of increasing the number of bank account holders to 80 percent by 2020 and to double the number of bank branches in the country. Officials look south to Kenya for an example of the potential—the mobile money system there has nearly 18 million users. But the development of the banking sector still faces challenges with Ethiopia's tightly controlled economy. "Ethiopia is a highly regulated country. The two most controlled sectors are telecommunications and financial services, exactly the two sectors we touch," said Artaud. "It's very sensitive." — AFP



FUJAIRAH: An Emirati fisherman walks on a beach as fellow fishermen pull their nets out of the water along the coast of the Gulf of Oman. — AFP

OMAN BUILDING INDUSTRIAL OUTPOST TO ESCAPE OIL TRAP

DUQM, Oman: On a stretch of barren coast 550 km south of the capital Muscat, workers at a ship repair yard swarm over cargo vessels from around the world, labor that will help to determine Oman's fate in an era of cheap oil. The yard, owned by the government's Oman Drydock Co and operated by South Korea's Daewoo Shipbuilding & Marine Engineering Co, is far from the country's industrial areas in the north.

But it's at the centre of the biggest single economic project in the history of Oman, part of efforts to wean the country off exports of crude oil and gas and diversify into downstream industries before the country's limited financial and oil reserves begin to run out. The government is spending billions of dollars to develop the area around the remote fishing village of Duqm into a sprawling business zone, aiming to attract companies that will create tens of thousands of jobs.

In addition to the ship repair yard and its adjacent port, the Duqm Special Economic Zone will include an oil refinery, a petrochemical complex, manufacturing operations and warehousing and logistics facilities. A fish processing district will become the focus of Oman's fishing industry. A tourism area aims to bring in hard currency from foreign visitors. The strategy - spend lavishly on infrastructure, jumpstart key industries with state funds and lobby the private sector to participate - carries substantial financial risks.

But it is a key plank of economic policy in Oman, a thinly populated country of just 4.4 million people that lacks the deep pockets of neighboring oil exporters such as Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. "We are diversifying beyond hydrocarbons," said Saleh Hamood Ali al-Hasni, the executive in charge of handling investment applications at Duqm. "We have to create jobs for the people and attract foreign direct investment."

Other Gulf Arab oil exporting states have cut spending on infrastructure and development projects in the past 18 months as low oil prices have strained their finances. Oman's finances have also been hit hard, but it does not have as much time as its neighbors. Its financial reserves are estimated in the tens of billions of dollars rather than hundreds, and its proven oil reserves will last only 15 years at the current rate of production, oil company BP estimates.

So the government is continuing to spend heavily on Duqm and other, smaller projects to move the economy beyond crude oil. Total state investment spending rose 5.5 percent from a year earlier to 2.81 billion rials (\$7.3 billion) in the first 11 months of 2015, even as the government ran a budget deficit of 4.07 billion rials, the latest official data shows. "Oman's infrastructure and industrial investment drive remain near the top of the government's agenda and key strategic projects, such as the vast Duqm port and economic zone, will go ahead," analysts at Eurasia Group said in a report.

Spending

Five years ago, Duqm had a population of about 3,000 villagers and no commercial air links to the rest of the world; workers coming from outside were housed in tents, portacabins or a retired cruise ship moored at the port. Now, four-lane highways - still almost empty of vehicles - snake across the desert while power and water lines have been laid across scores of square kilometres. Housing complexes and commercial buildings are rising from the sand. An airport opened in 2014, but the passenger terminal is still under construction. The area's population has risen to about 13,000, including workers, and is set to hit 67,000 in 2020, officials say. In the longer term, authorities talk of a city of 100,000 or more. — Reuters

AUSTRALIA BOOSTS REGULATOR FUNDING AFTER BANK SCANDALS

SYDNEY: Australia yesterday boosted funding to the corporate regulator by Aus\$127.2 million (US\$99 million) and appointed a special prosecutor to investigate financial crime, in sweeping reforms prompted by public outrage over numerous bank scandals. The nation's major banks—which regularly rake in multi-billion-dollar profits—have been under scrutiny following a series of consumer fraud allegations involving financial planning as well as claims of interbank lending interest rate rigging.

The announcement by the conservative administration also came ahead of impending national elections, tipped to be held on July 2, that are expected to be hotly contested by the Labor opposition that is calling for a royal commission into banking misconduct. Treasurer Scott Morrison said the government recognized that "our banks have not always lived up to the standards we expect".

"That's why we are continuing to act to ensure our regulators are tough cops on the beat with the resources and powers they need to respond to misconduct and prosecute those who seek to take advantage of consumers," he said in a statement.

Morrison told reporters in Canberra that Aus\$121 million of the additional funding would be footed by the banks. The sweeping reforms include switching to an industry-funded model for Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC) from mid-2017 instead of taxpayer funding. A special prosecutor would also be appointed to look into alleged criminal activity in the financial services industry. Leading financial institutions, including the nation's largest lender the Commonwealth Bank, have hit the headlines in recent years with some of them facing allegations of dodgy financial advice and life insurance, and mortgage fraud. — AFP

EU OPENS A NEW FRONT AGAINST GOOGLE WITH ANTI-TRUST CHARGES

GOOGLE CHARGED WITH ABUSING ANDROID MARKET DOMINANCE

BRUSSELS: The EU opened a new front against Google yesterday, slapping the US giant with anti-trust charges alleging it had abused the dominance of its Android mobile phone operating system. The charges are a massive blow to one of Google's most strategic businesses and could alter a global smartphone sector that is fast taking over traditional PCs as the biggest segment in the world of computing. Competition Commissioner Margrethe Vestager said Silicon Valley giant Google had used practices such as making manufacturers pre-install its market-leading search engine as the default in phones.

"The preliminary conclusions from our investigations is that these practices breach EU competition law," Vestager, a former Danish economy minister, told a press conference. She said Brussels believed that "Google has abused its dominant position", adding: "We have found that Google pursues an overall strategy on mobile devices to protect and expand its dominant position in Internet search." The case is the second attack by the EU against Google after Vestager last year formally charged the company for abusing its dominance of the search engine market in Europe.

Taking both EU cases against Google together, the company risks a fine of 10 percent of worldwide global sales for one year, which would amount to a \$7.4 billion fine on the basis of 2015 revenues. In its latest charge sheet, the EU accused Google of obstructing innovation by giving unfair prominence to its own apps, especially its search engine, in deals with mobile manufacturers such as Samsung or Huawei. The company is also accused of restricting manufacturers from installing rival operating systems based on Android on their phones.

Difference with US?

Google now has a chance to answer the charges, either by fighting them comprehensively and risking a huge fine or proposing remedies to



BRUSSELS: A woman uses an Android smartphone in Brussels yesterday. The European Union is broadening its battle with Google, alleging that the technology giant rigs the global market for mobile apps by making its Android operating system give preferential treatment to its own products. — AP

satisfy Brussels. Google said it would work with the EU to show that consumers benefitted from Android. "Android has helped foster a remarkable and, importantly, sustainable ecosystem, based on open-source software and open innovation," Kent Walker, Senior Vice President and General Counsel of Google, said in a statement.

"We look forward to working with the European Commission to demonstrate that Android is good for competition and good for consumers." The case against Android resembles one against Microsoft in which the EU in 2013 fined the software giant 561 million euros (\$634 million) for failing to offer users a choice of web browser on its Windows operating system. The Android operating system captures about 80

percent of the world market for mobile phones, far ahead of its closest rival Apple.

The EU's tough line comes despite the fact that Canada on Tuesday closed its own investigation into allegations Google abused its dominance in online search advertising, following in the tracks of the US. Vestager rejected suggestions questions that Brussels was unfairly targeting US companies in her competition cases, with Apple, Amazon and McDonald's also in the EU's crosshairs. "If dominance is abuse then we have an issue... that has been the task no matter the flag of the company or the ownership," Vestager said. US-based INTEL, the world's biggest chipmaker, was in May 2009 fined 1.06 billion euros, the EU's biggest fine ever. — AFP

US TECH GIANTS UNDER EU COSH

PARIS: US technology giants Google, Amazon, Apple, Intel and Microsoft have all come under the often costly scrutiny of European Union (EU) authorities in Brussels:

GOOGLE

A European Commission anti-trust probe was opened in April 2015 into whether Google gives unfair prominence to its own Android apps such as maps or music streaming in deals with mobile manufacturers such as Samsung or Huawei. The Android operating system captures over 80 percent of the world market for mobile phones, far ahead of its closest rival Apple. The EU a year ago formally charged Google with abusing its dominance in Europe and a decision could come later this year. In both cases, Google risks a fine of 10 percent of worldwide global sales for one year.

AMAZON

In June 2015 the EU's anti-trust watchdog opened a formal investigation into the Seattle-based online retail titan's e-book distribution. The European Commission is probing clauses Amazon has with publishers which may shield the company from competitors, including an obligation to be informed of more favorable terms being offered by rivals. Brussels is already conducting a separate investigation into Amazon's tax arrangements over its tax deals in Luxembourg, one of a series of such probes targeting major global firms, including Apple, Starbucks and Fiat.

MICROSOFT

In a historic case in March 2013, the

European Commission fined US giant Microsoft 561 million euros (\$638 million) for failing to provide clients with a choice of Internet browser for Windows 7, as it had promised to do. In 2009, the Commission required Microsoft to offer clients a choice of web browser through to 2014 after complaints that it was restricting them to its own product, Internet Explorer.

The EU has had several disputes with Microsoft, fining the company 899 million euros in 2008, subsequently reduced to 860 million euros, for failing to comply with an order to share product information with rivals so that their software could work with Windows. That came on top of a then-record fine of 497 million euros in 2004 for violating EU competition rules.

APPLE

In September 2014, the European Union said that Apple's sweetheart tax deals with Ireland breached rules on receiving state aid, in a case which could cost the US tech giant billions if it is found to be at fault.

INTEL

INTEL, the world's biggest chipmaker, was in May 2009 fined a record 1.06 billion euros. The EU says it abused its stranglehold on the semiconductor market to crush its main rival, AMD. The European Commission accused Intel of using illegal loyalty rebates to squeeze rivals out of the market for central processing units (CPUs) — the brains inside personal computers. INTEL held a 70-percent share of the 22-billion-euro market during the more than five years it was accused of the breaches. — AFP

SAUDI FOOD GROUP SAVOLA CUTS DIVIDEND; PROFIT FALLS

DUBAI: Saudi food producer Savola Group, the country's largest food products company, slashed its dividend after reporting a 80.3 percent fall in first-quarter net profits, missing analysts' forecasts. It is the latest Saudi retailer to report poor earnings for the period as the local economy has been hit by lower oil revenues. Savola's net profit in the three months to March 31 was 92.9 million riyals (\$24.8 million), compared with 470.5 million riyals in the same period a year earlier, Savola said in a bourse statement.

That was below an average forecast of three analysts polled by Reuters of 268.1 million riyals. While the profit drop was mainly due to an exceptional gain made in the same period last year, the company's shares still slumped as much as 9.2 percent after the company said it was halving the dividend for the quarter to 0.25 riyals a share. Saudi retailers have felt the fallout from a prolonged lull in oil prices that is weighing on government and consumer spending. Almarai, the Gulf's largest dairy company, warned of challenging market conditions after reporting a marginal rise in first-quarter net profit.

Jarir Marketing, one of the kingdom's largest retailers by market value, posted a 29.5 percent drop in net profit over the same period on falling sales, particularly for smartphones and other electronics. However, Jarir noted results a year ago were also boosted by Saudi King Salman's payment of two months' extra salary and pensions to government employees and retirees. Savola attributed the fall in profit mainly to the fact its earnings were boosted in the same period last year by a 265.2 million riyal capital gain from the sale of its packaging unit to Takween Advanced Industries. — Reuters

MOOD SOURS AS OIL SKIDS, CHINA STOCKS SLIP

SHANGHAI SHARES DOWN - ALMOST 4 PERCENT

SYDNEY: All the air was sucked out of Asian shares yesterday as oil prices took a fresh spill on news Kuwaiti oil workers ended a three-day strike, leaving markets suddenly directionless.

red. Some cited comments from an influential central bank economist that future monetary policy would avoid encouraging companies to take on more debt and consider the impact of leverage on asset prices.

at its highest level since early November. Japan's Nikkei clung to a 0.2 percent gain thanks to the recent pullback in the yen, but was running into profit taking above the 17,000 barrier.

Looking ahead to ECB

On Wall Street the Dow Jones Industrial Index had ended Tuesday with gains of 0.27 percent, while the S&P 500 rose 0.31 percent to close above 2100 for the first time in 2016.

The chipmaker lowered its revenue forecast and said on Tuesday it would cut 12,000 jobs globally. Currencies were mixed with the US dollar regaining some ground against commodity currencies such as the Australian dollar as oil fell away.

(ECB) policy meeting today. In March, ECB chief Mario Draghi unleashed an aggressive package but muted its impact by suggesting there would be no further cuts, giving the euro an unwelcome boost.

"In the near term we are going to see more downward pressure than upward," said IHS analyst Victor Shum. China concerns also resurfaced as Shanghai stocks slid 3.8 percent, with every sector from financials to telecoms in the

Daily Kuwait Stock Exchange Report. Table with columns: Index, Change, Closing, Last Closing, High, Low, Volume, Value (KWD), Number of Trades, and individual stock listings with their respective prices and changes.



FUYANG: An investor sits in front of a screen showing stock market movements at a securities firm in Fuyang, in eastern China's Anhui province yesterday. — AFP

GOLD RETREATS; SILVER HITS 11-MONTH HIGH

LONDON: The price of gold eased yesterday as a firmer dollar halted the previous day's rally while silver held near an 11-month peak, boosted by technical momentum and perceptions it is undervalued versus gold.

rates in Japan and the euro zone. That should stimulate demand for gold." The dollar rose 0.1 percent against a currency basket yesterday, weighing on gold, while a 2 percent drop in oil prices fed into a softer tone across commodities.

The spot gold price was down 0.1 percent at \$1,248.53 an ounce at 0928 GMT, off a one-week high of \$1,258.00 touched overnight, while US gold futures for April delivery were down \$3.60 an ounce at \$1,250.70.

The gold/silver ratio, which measures the number of silver ounces needed to buy an ounce of gold, hit its lowest in nearly six months at 73.7. Silver exchange-traded funds tracked by Reuters, which have seen inflows of more than 1,200 tons since early March, rose another 38 tons on Tuesday.

HEDGE FUNDS BET ON TIGHTENING OIL MARKET DESPITE THE 'DOHA DEBACLE'

LONDON: Brent futures prices are signalling the market expects a rapid tightening of the supply-demand balance in the second half of 2016. The spread between futures prices for oil delivered in June and July has moved into a backwardation of 17 cents per barrel from a contango of almost 50 cents at the end of last month.

tion in the spot price, are favored by more sophisticated speculators. Spread positions eliminate much of the short-term noise and cross-market contamination which influences spot prices, at least in theory. Hedge fund long positions in the timespreads are not easy to identify in the published data, though they are likely to be substantial.

Beyond July, the futures price curve remains in contango, but there too the market shows signs of tightening, with the contango narrowing sharply in recent weeks and months. The spread between July and August Brent has shrunk to just 23 cents contango, from 84 cents in early February.

The enormous concentration of hedge fund positions in WTI and especially Brent suggests the market could be ripe for a pull back in the short term. Some analysts predicted that the failure to reach agreement on a production freeze at the oil ministers' meeting in Doha on Sunday would provide the trigger for a correction.

The shrinking contango has coincided with a rush of commentaries from oil analysts predicting the crude oil market is now well on the way to rebalancing. Non-OPEC oil production is declining rapidly while consumption, especially gasoline, continues to grow strongly, particularly in the United States, India and China.

and accelerating in 2017. — Reuters

For more information, call Global Investment House on 1 80 42 42, www.globalinv.net

WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR IN ECB MEETING

FRANKFURT: Europe's big dose of economic stimulus medicine is working - and if somehow it isn't, there's more available. That's the message European Central Bank President Mario Draghi will deliver today at his news conference after the bank's governing council meets, analysts say. With economic growth still relatively weak and inflation nonexistent, Draghi will be keen to convince investors that the ECB has not run out of ammunition to support the 19-country euro-zone. Here are key themes to watch for.

Hit pause

The central bank for the 19-country euro-zone is likely to hold back on more stimulus after delivering a range of measures at the March 10 meeting of its 25-member council. Back then, the ECB scaled up its monthly bond-buying program, which is meant to boost lending and inflation, and cut its benchmark interest rate to zero. It also increased the

penalty rate banks must pay on money they leave unused at the ECB instead of lending. The ECB will likely want to see how that additional dose of stimulus works before committing to more, even though indicators of economic growth remain relatively subdued.

Where that came from

Analysts say Draghi will keep the door open to doing even more of the extraordinary monetary stimulus the bank has deployed to try to raise inflation and boost growth. The question is what that stimulus might look like. The ECB is already injecting 80 billion euros (\$91 billion) a month in newly printed money into the banking system by purchasing bonds from banks. The hope is, banks flush with cash will lend at lower rates, leading to more borrowing and higher inflation and growth.

The ECB policies have helped drive many market interest rates to freakishly

low levels. German two-year bonds, for instance, yield minus 0.5 percent, meaning anyone who buys one pays the German government to lend it money. So far, however, success in raising inflation toward the bank's goal of just under 2 percent is slow in coming.

Inflation remains at zero. One possibility is that the ECB could decide later this year to extend those bond purchases beyond the current duration of at least until September 2017. Economists have raised the idea of so-called "helicopter money" - printing money and distributing it to consumers, instead of channeling it through banks using bond purchases. But that would be an extreme step and could face legal obstacles for the ECB.

The economy

In the absence of any policy promises, Draghi's views of the economy will be a focus for investors. The euro-zone economy, by some measures the world's sec-

ond-biggest after the US, is enjoying a modest upswing. And the ECB is probably pleased with figures last week showing credit conditions loosening for businesses - a key goal of its efforts. But don't be surprised if Draghi is a little downbeat, emphasizing that the current recovery could easily go off the rails due to global risks such as a downturn in China. Being a little gloomy is one way to reassure investors that the ECB could still provide more stimulus.

Banks

Draghi may also address worries about the ability of banks to handle the sub-zero interest rates. Banks have to pay 0.4 percent on excess cash they deposit at the central bank.

The measure is meant to spur them to lend but squeezes earnings. To help offset the penalty rate, the ECB is planning to offer more cheap loans to banks, under which it would pay them to take the

money. Italy has been a recent focus of worries about banks after it set up a private investment fund to try to help troubled banks raise more capital and sell off bad loans.

German criticism

Draghi may take the opportunity to stress the ECB's legal independence to German officials, who have recently been critical of the ECB's stimulus measures. The EU treaty forbids the bank from taking advice from politicians, and underlines that governments agree to respect that principle.

That hasn't stopped conservative German politicians from complaining that the ECB's low interest rate policy is hurting savers and making it harder to invest for retirement.

Finance Minister Wolfgang Schäuble even blamed ECB policies for fueling the rise of the right-wing, anti-euro Alternative for Germany party. — AP

News

in brief

Britain's unemployment languishes at 10-year low

LONDON: Britain's unemployment rate stands at its lowest level in more than a decade, but the jobless total has risen for the first time in almost a year, data showed yesterday. Unemployment stood at 5.1 percent in the three months to February, unchanged from the three months to January, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) said in a statement. That was the lowest rate-or proportion of the workforce that are unemployed-since 2005. The ONS added that the unemployment total climbed by 21,000 to 1.7 million people in the three months to February compared with the previous three months.

Japanese exports drop as strong yen clouds trade

TOKYO: Japanese exports to key market China fell back in March after a brief holiday-linked boost, official data showed yesterday, as a stronger yen clouds the country's trade picture. The figures also showed Japan's trade surplus hit 755 billion yen, (\$6.9 billion), more than tripling from a year ago and its highest level in five-and-a-half years, largely thanks to a fall in oil prices. The drop in Japan's shipments to China, down 7.1 percent from the same month last year, came after a rise in February, the first gain in seven months, the Finance Ministry reported. Analysts said the expansion was distorted by the timing of China's Lunar New Year holiday. Japan's overall exports fell nearly seven percent in March, largely owing to a pickup in the yen, while imports were down about 15 percent.



Thai Airways revenue 1% lower than target

BANGKOK: Thai Airways International Plc's Q1 revenue came in 1 percent below its 49 billion baht (\$1.4 billion) target, the company's President Charumporn Jotikasthira said yesterday. Thailand's national carrier is working through a restructuring plan and aims to return to annual profit this year. "We aim to be one of the top five airlines in the world this year," Charumporn told reporters in Bangkok, without giving further details. The flag carrier is among a number of state-controlled companies undergoing reform since the military seized power in May 2014. It posted a smaller annual loss in 2015, mainly due to decline in operating expenses and fuel oil costs.

British lender Metro PLC Bank's Q1 loss narrows

LONDON: British lender Metro Bank Plc's first-quarter underlying loss after tax narrowed, driven by strong growth in residential mortgages and commercial lending. The company, which listed on the London Stock Exchange in March, said underlying loss after tax was 7.9 million pounds (\$11.3 million) in the quarter ended March 31, compared with 8.5 million pounds a year earlier.

Dubai property developer Nakheel's Q1 profit up 8%

DUBAI: Dubai property developer Nakheel reported an 8 percent rise in its first-quarter profit yesterday. Nakheel made a profit of 1.47 billion dirham (\$400.26 million) in the three months to March 31, up from 1.35 billion dirhams a year earlier, it said in a statement. The company did not state its revenue or reveal other financial details but said the profit rise was mainly due to it handing over 536 completed units and its "retail, residential leasing and hospitality" businesses all showing a strong performance. The Dubai real estate market has softened since late 2014 after a three-year boom fed by an influx of cash from politically unstable Arab nations. Residential prices were down 10 percent in the first three months of 2016 compared with the same period last year, consultants JLL said.

Turkish exports to Iran rising by 30% per month

ANKARA: Turkish exports to Iran are expected to rise about 30 percent a month for the rest of the year as the end of sanctions on Tehran clears the way for a business boom, the head of the Turkish Exporters' Assembly (TIM) said. Turkey is on track to meet its overall export target this year of \$155.5 billion, up from \$144 billion in 2015, thanks also to a recovery in European markets, TIM chairman Mehmet Buyukseki said in an interview late on Tuesday. Turkey imports large amounts of natural gas from Iran and the two countries are looking to boost banking and trade ties, with the goal of tripling bilateral trade in coming years. "Our work to strengthen economic relations with Iran continues. The target is \$30 billion trade volume, but we can't reach this amount in one go," Buyukseki said in an interview.



CALIFORNIA: An electric bus produced by China's BYD Co, is parked at the announcement of the opening of an electric bus manufacturing plant in Lancaster, Calif. — AP photos



BEIJING: Michael Austin, BYD Co's vice president for the United States, looks at the interior of the latest plug-in mini-SUV during the BYD Dreams Conference in Beijing, China.

CHINESE ELECTRIC CAR MAKER CRUISES INTO US MARKET AUTOMAKER TAKING A BACK ROAD ON A BATTERY-POWERED BUS

SHENZHEN: The Chinese automaker that sold more electric cars last year than Tesla, Nissan or GM is taking a back road into the American market on a battery-powered bus. Detouring around the cost and risk of consumer sales, BYD Co has quietly built a US business supplying rechargeable buses to environmentally-minded transit agencies. Its factory north of Los Angeles, opened in 2013, is on track to deliver 300 this year. The company has dipped its toe into the US auto market by launching test fleets of plug-in electric taxis in Chicago and New York City.

Consumer sales are coming but BYD has yet to decide when, said Michael Austin, its vice president for the United States. He said it might start developing a sales network in the next two years. "We have the manufacturing scale that can drive the cost to a point where we can bring vehicles to export markets including the United States, Latin America and Europe that will be game-changing," said Austin at BYD's headquarters in this southern city adjacent to Hong Kong.

Once that comes, "we get brand recognition because people already are riding our buses," said Austin. BYD - the name stands for "Build Your Dreams" - is part of an emerging

wave of Chinese companies that stand to profit from global demand for solar and wind power, electric cars and other clean and renewable energy. They benefit from rising consumer interest abroad and heavy spending at home by the ruling Communist Party. Chinese leaders see what they call "new energy" as a field where China still can win a profitable leading role.

'Equal footing'

"I have no doubt BYD eventually can crack the market in Europe or the US," said Cosmin Laslau, who follows the electric vehicle market for Lux Research in Boston. It might take five to 10 years to achieve an "equal footing" with GM, Nissan or Tesla, "but it's surely doable if we look sufficiently far out," Laslau said. "By deploying these buses first (in the United States), BYD can get an early lesson in how its batteries fare," he said.

"And if they are successful, they can point to that and say the battery you are going to get in your electric vehicle has already done a half-million miles in buses."

In 2014, China spent \$83.3 billion in renewables, nearly one-third of the global total. That includes construction of hydro

dams and wind farms, research grants to manufacturers and subsidies to customers. China surpassed the United States last year as the biggest market for electric vehicles by number of units sold, boosted by government subsidies of up to 60,000 yuan (\$9,500) per vehicle. BYD's sales rose to 61,722 autos, beating Tesla Motors Inc's sales of 50,580 plug-in vehicles and more than triple the 15,393 Volts sold by General Motors Co Nissan Motor Co says sales of its Leaf over the past five years total 211,000, which based on previous data suggests about 56,000 were sold last year.

'Dual mode' hybrids

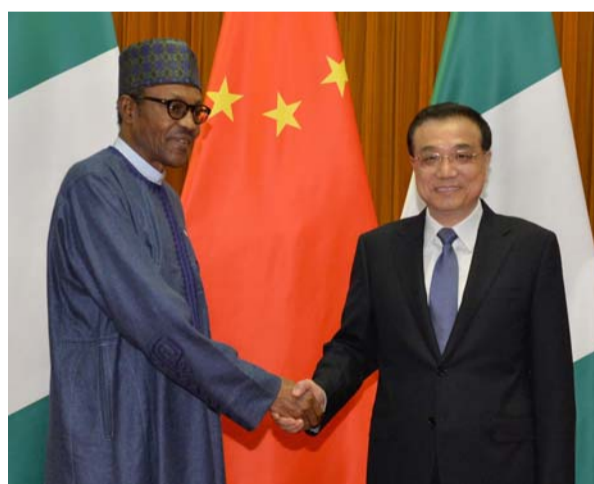
Unlike startups that are burning cash, BYD is profitable. The company, in which Warren Buffett's Berkshire Hathaway Corp. owns a 10 percent stake, has yet to release 2015 results but said in January profit rose about 500 percent from a year earlier. BYD's consumer models are, like the Volt, "dual mode" hybrids - plug-in electrics with a small gasoline generator to extend the range beyond one charge's 150 to 200 miles. The company started out as a battery developer, founded in 1995 by engineer Wang Chuanfu and 20 co-workers from a state-owned company.

It grew to supply about half the global market for mobile phone batteries before expanding into electric vehicles with the 2002 purchase of a small producer of gasoline cars that became BYD Auto Ltd. Last year marked the first time BYD Auto supplied more than half of BYD's revenue. The rest comes from sales of batteries, solar panels, mobile phone components and power-management technology.

BYD's workforce of 180,000 includes 15,000 engineers in battery development. At its Shenzhen headquarters, a spiral parking structure has 400 spaces to charge taxis and employee cars.

The company has its own test track for buses, modeled on the US Department of Transportation's bus testing site in Altoona, Pennsylvania. The first two buses out of the BYD factory in Lancaster, California, went to the nearby Antelope Valley Transit Authority, which plans to become the first all-electric US fleet.

The agency is buying 85 BYD buses for a total of \$72 million. They include 14 60-foot-long (18-meter-long) articulated buses that can carry 120 people with a range of up to 200 miles on one charge, 30 commuter coaches and 41 40-foot standard buses. — AP



BEIJING: Nigeria's President Muhammadu Buhari (left) shakes hands with Chinese Premier Li Keqiang before their meeting at Great Hall of the People in Beijing. — AFP

NIGERIA'S BUHARI SECURES CHINA DEALS BUT CURRENCY WOES LINGER

LAGOS: Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari last week assembled one of the biggest ministerial delegations of his presidency and boarded a plane to China. Welcomed by President Xi Jinping with a 21-gun salute, Buhari embarked on a five-day tour that saw him return to Nigeria smiling after securing a \$6 billion (5.3 billion euro) loan and a currency swap deal. Buhari has been to more than 20 countries since taking office in May last year, when he embarked on a mission to secure funds for an expansionary budget to kick-start the flagging economy. His frequent trips abroad and more than 200 hours in the air have earned him a nickname - "Waka Waka Buhari", Nigerian pidgin for "always away".

Chinese financing may have secured a temporary economic salve for a country hit hard by the global fall in oil prices since mid-2014. But analysts say they would have instead favored a deal with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) that could have seen a controversial currency peg abandoned and the foreign exchange market liberalized. "Depending on how much Nigeria can raise from panda bonds-yuan-dominated debt-and other multilateral organizations, the need for an IMF bailout may decline," Cobus de Hart, economist at NKC African Economics in South Africa, told AFP.

"That said, we would have preferred the IMF's involvement." In January, IMF managing director Christine Lagarde visited Nigeria and maintained neither she nor her team had come "to negotiate a loan". — AFP

KFH NET PROFITS HITS KD 34.1 M

KUWAIT: Chairman of Kuwait Finance House (KFH) Hamad Abdulmohsen Al-Marzouq said that "KFH has, by the grace of Allah, realized a KD 34.1 million net profits for the first quarter of 2016 for KFH shareholders compared to KD 29.9 million for the same period last year ie an increase of 14.1%. Net finance revenues for Q1 this year reached KD 96 Million i.e. a growth increase by 7% compared to the same period last year after eliminating the impacts of stopping the consolidation of ALAFCO.

Earnings per share for the first quarter of 2016 reached 6.61 fils, compared to 5.80 fils for the same period last year i.e. an increase by 14%. Total assets reached KD 16.77 billion i.e. an increase by KD 251 Million or 1.5% compared to year ending 2015. Finance portfolio reached KD 8.36 billion i.e. an increase by KD 234 million or 2.8% compared to year ended 2015. Total deposits reached KD 14.02 billion i.e. an increase by KD 264 million or 1.9% over the same period last year. Shareholders' equity reached KD 1.73 billion for Q1 this year. KFH's capital adequacy ratio (CAR) reached 17.04%, higher than the required limit of 13%, thus reiterating the strength of KFH financial position.

Al-Marzouq said that the realized profits are in line with the ambitious strategy to lead the international development of Islamic financial services and adjust to the market developments. This reflects the balanced performance and robust financial position of the bank. He reiterated that KFH is working on a comprehensive vision to ensure maintaining a sustainable and stable growth rate, yet to offer diversified development opportunities through the integration of its businesses at the level of the Group.

Al-Marzouq added that KFH continued to manage risk efficiently and set aside the required provisions in accordance with best practices. This reflects its strong financial position and high liquidity levels. The bank has taken several measures to reduce the NPLs ahead of debt settlement with a number of companies, which affirms the bank's keenness to recover debts for its shareholders and preserve their rights. The branch network at KFH-Group has expanded locally and globally. It comprises 450 branches, which reinforces the Group's position and presence in the local, regional and global markets. Also, KFH-Turkey has achieved positive results. KT Bank Ag in Germany has achieved geographical expansion, while profits have been bolstered in KFH-Bahrain and KFH-Saudi.

Al-Marzouq stressed the continuing efforts of development and boosting the economy through issuing more sukuk for governments and companies around the world, while contributing in funding infrastructure and develop-

ment projects. This plays a significant role in creating a stable environment for investment, yet offering promising development opportunities. He affirmed KFH's efforts to continuously offer credit facilities for SMEs in an attempt to encourage the youth's initiative as well as to diversify income resources.

He continued "KFH won several awards from international intuitions and financial bodies in recognition of its excellence and outstanding results in different fields. KFH won three awards from Islamic Finance News Magazine (IFN), which are "Best Islamic Bank in Kuwait 2015", "Kuwait Deal of the Year" and Turkey Deal of the Year. In addition, Emea Finance named KFH as "Best Bank in Kuwait" and "Best Islamic Bank in Kuwait".

He added that the positive ratings from major international rating agencies contribute in increasing customers' confidence whilst consolidating KFH's prestigious status locally and globally, indicating that Fitch Ratings affirmed the long-term IDRs of (KFH) at "A+" with a stable outlook. Further, Standard & Poor's affirmed KFH's long term ratings at "A-" and the short term ratings at "A-2". He said that during the first quarter 2016 KFH has launched a wide range of Marketing initiatives, new products and services, such as Al-Rabeh account that offers clients the opportunity to win two 2016 Range Rover's and 3 KG of gold every 3 months. Also, KFH offered Gold Account online for clients. The bank offered quarterly profit on KFH's savings and investment account, in addition to a variety of advanced and improvements on the banking cards, customer service, procedures, speed and availing technology stemming from KFH's endeavors to render customers high-end products and services that meet their aspirations and strengthen the bank's pioneering status. Al-Marzouq added that KFH continued assuming its corporate social responsibility by focusing on the fields of health, education, sport and the youth in a manner that reflects the bank's keenness on reinforcing communication with all segments of the society, yet sponsoring events and activities, organizing purposeful visits and increasing awareness in many fields.

KFH focuses on improving interaction with the United Nations International Days, mainly those of social nature, through the contribution in increasing awareness, fostering volunteerism and philanthropy at many occasions. Al-Marzouq expressed his thanks and appreciation to all shareholders and clients for their support and confidence. He praised the efforts of KFH's executive management and employees for their outstanding performance that yielded positive results, stressing the importance of maintaining the leadership position at all levels.



Hamad Abdulmohsen Al-Marzouq

WHO SPEAKS FOR SAUDI ON OIL? RIVALS AND ALLIES WONDER

OIL POLICIES APPEAR MORE POLITICISED THAN EVER BEFORE

MOSCOW: As far as Venezuelan oil minister Eulogio Del Pino is concerned, his counterpart Ali Al-Naimi, the world's most influential oil official for the past two decades, is no longer the voice of authority for Saudi Arabia. Del Pino is still trying to find who is. As prospects for the first deal between OPEC and non-OPEC in 15 years faded on Sunday due to last-minute demands from Saudi Arabia, ministers gathered in Qatar appealed to Naimi to save the agreement, Del Pino said. "Unfortunately, the people representing the Saudis at the meeting didn't have any authority at all," Del Pino told reporters in Moscow on Monday, a day after Saudi Arabia's demand that arch-rival Iran sign on ruined a widely expected

agreement to freeze output.

"Even Naimi didn't have the authority to change anything. The Saudis said, 'we have new papers and either you approve them or we don't agree,'" Del Pino said. "It was a purely political decision... Oman, Iraq, every one was disappointed and one minister told me it was his worst-ever meeting." OPEC member Venezuela, one of the hardest hit by the latest oil price collapse, has had a tense relationship with the cartel's de facto leader Riyadh for decades. But Del Pino's frustration is being echoed inside and outside the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries since Deputy Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman became the kingdom's top oil official last year.

Few Saudi or OPEC watchers have doubts that the 31-year-old Prince Mohammed is ultimately in charge of oil policy at the world's largest oil exporter. He is also in charge of defense and economic reform. But after decades of hearing mostly one technocrat reliably articulate that policy to the outside world-Naimi-a proliferation of voices is causing more confusion than clarity, they say. Besides Prince Mohammed, the second in line to the throne, those voices also include Naimi's deputy and an older half-brother of the deputy crown prince, Prince Abdulaziz, as well as state oil giant Saudi Aramco's chairman Khalid Al-Falih. Added to those is the persistent presence of Naimi himself,

despite rumours that the 81-year-old would soon be allowed to retire.

U-Turn

Saudi policies have never been easy to read, but the unpredictability has risen steeply in recent months, Saudi watchers said. That is particularly unwelcome given the worsening relations between Riyadh and Tehran, which are fighting proxy wars in Syria and Yemen. Gulf OPEC sources said that although the Saudis' Gulf allies quickly came into line behind Naimi during the meeting on Sunday, his decision came as a complete surprise to them. The kingdom usually consults with Kuwait, the UAE and Qatar.

A senior source familiar with discus-

sions said he thought Naimi himself was not aware of the change in plan until late in the game. "I think it was a last-minute decision, otherwise Naimi would not have come," the source said. "Naimi flew to Doha with an intention to close a deal and when he arrived in Doha, he got another instruction not to do it." Up until Saturday, Prince Abdulaziz was assuring everyone privately that there would be a deal, sources close to the discussions said. Qatari officials were also telling participants that the Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al-Thani, had clinched Prince Mohammed's agreement that there would be a deal no matter whether Iran took part or not, the sources said. — Reuters



TOKYO: A businessman walks past the Mitsubishi Motors headquarters in Tokyo yesterday. Japanese automaker Mitsubishi admitted it manipulated pollution data in more than 600,000 vehicles, after reports of misconduct sent its Tokyo-listed shares plummeting earlier in the day. — AFP

AUTOMAKER MITSUBISHI ADMITS FALSIFYING FUEL-EFFICIENCY TESTS

AN EMBARRASSING REVELATION

TOKYO: Japanese automaker Mitsubishi yesterday admitted it falsified fuel-efficiency tests in more than 600,000 vehicles, after reports of misconduct sent its Tokyo-listed shares crashing. The embarrassing revelation comes in the wake of a massive pollution-cheating scandal at Volkswagen that erupted in September and which the German giant is still struggling to overcome. It also marks the latest blow for Japan Inc after auto parts giant Takata was hammered by an exploding air bag defect blamed for at least 11 deaths, and as Toshiba tries to recover from a huge accounting scandal.

Mitsubishi said it would halt production and sales of the affected vehicle models-mini-cars sold in Japan-and warned that the number of affected vehicles would likely rise. The maker of the Outlander sport utility vehicle also said it would investigate cars it sold overseas. "(The company) conducted testing improperly to present better fuel consumption rates than the actual rates," Mitsubishi president Tetsuro Aikawa told a Tokyo news briefing. He added that the test was "different" from one required by Japanese law, and warned that the automaker's bottom line would take a hit.

"This is not a simple problem and we need time (to assess the impact)," Mitsubishi's top executive said. "But I'm sure there will be an impact. The damage will be big." The problem

affected about 625,000 vehicles, including minicars "eK Wagon" and "eK Space", and the "Dayz" and "Dayz Roox", which Mitsubishi produces for rival Nissan. "We've always thought that the VW (Volkswagen) emissions scandal would rumble on and now it looks like the dodginess is not confined to the German carmaker," said Joe Rundell, head of trading at London-based ETX Capital. "Mitsubishi's bombshell that it's been falsifying...tests calls into question whether we have a much larger industry-wide scandal on our hands."

'Intentionally manipulated'

The rigged figures were discovered after Nissan found inconsistencies in fuel-economy data and reported it. A Nissan spokesman declined to comment on the future of the automaker's business relationship with its smaller rival, saying "our focus is on our customers". Minicars, or kei-cars, are small vehicles with 660cc gasoline engines that are hugely popular in the Japanese market, but have found little success abroad. Mitsubishi sold more than a million vehicles at home and overseas in its latest fiscal year.

"Taking into account the seriousness of these issues, we will also conduct an investigation into products manufactured for overseas markets," the carmaker said in a statement. "In order to conduct an investigation into these issues objec-

tively and thoroughly, we plan to set up a committee consisting of only external experts. We will publish the results of our investigation as soon as it is complete." Earlier yesterday, Mitsubishi shares plunged 15.16 percent to 733 yen (\$6.73) after local media reported the faulty emissions tests.

"This may be different from Volkswagen's issue, but the market has become very sensitive to such kind of news," Seiji Sugiura, an analyst at Tokai Tokyo Research Center, told Bloomberg News. "It may have a similar impact in terms of sales and the company's reputation." The fall in Mitsubishi's stock was its biggest one-day plunge since 2004. At that time, Mitsubishi was struggling to launch a turnaround as it teetered on the edge of bankruptcy, hit by a lack of cash and a series of huge recalls linked to serious defects.

Volkswagen has been hammered by a global scandal that erupted when it emerged that it had installed emissions-cheating software in 11 million diesel engines worldwide. The costs of the scandal are still incalculable but are expected to run into several billions of dollars as a result of fines and lawsuits. South Korean automakers Hyundai and Kia in 2014 agreed to pay \$100 million to settle a US government investigation into exaggerated fuel efficiency on 2012 and 2013 car models sold in the United States. — AFP

BURGAN BANK HOLDS ANNUAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY MEETING, SHAFAFIYA FORUM

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank held its Ordinary and Extraordinary General Assembly meeting and Al Shafafiya Investors forum yesterday at the KIPCO Tower, wherein the Board of Directors presented the bank's financial earnings report for the year ended December 31, 2015 and agreed to a pay of 18 Fils cash dividends. The bank closed the financial year 2015 with strong results and realized a solid operating & financial performance which continued reflecting a faster than market growth almost in all indicators, mirroring the soundness of Borgan Bank's resilient business model and its strategy execution.

General Assembly

Subsequently the following were elected as board members of Borgan Bank for the next three-year term. - Masaud M J Hayat; AbdulSalam M Al Bahar; HE Abdul Kareem A Al Kabariti; Pinak P Maitra; Ahmad Al Sumait; Samer S Khanachet; Faisal M Al Radwan; Sadoun Abdulla Ali and Mazen Isam Hawa. The Board of Directors consequently elected Majed E Al Ajeel Chairman of Borgan Bank Group and Mohammed A Al Bisher as Vice Chairman.

Shafafiya forum

Following the Annual General Assembly Meetings, Borgan Bank held its annual Shafafiya forum which serves as a platform for the bank's management to present the main events for 2015 as well as its outlook for 2016 to shareholders. Compared to the same period last year, Operating income grew by 12% from KD222



Borgan Bank Chairman

million to KD 248 million while Operating Profit before provisions soared to register KD 133 million reflecting a growth of 9%. Profit before tax from continuing operations soared by 12% reaching KD 74 million.

As a result of this solid performance, Borgan Bank Group's net profit for the year 2015 is up by 23% reaching KD 76 million while earning per share (EPS) is reported at 32.1 Fils. Highlighting the many achievements Borgan Bank Group accomplished in 2015, Borgan Bank's Chairman, Majed Essa Al-Ajeel said: "During 2015, the Group proved the strength of its operating module and the resilience of its strategy by launching innovative and first-of-its-kind products, advocated best practices & excellence as well as participating in many corporate social responsibility activities."

ARGENTINA GETS A WARM WELCOME ON RETURN TO THE CREDIT MARKETS

BUENOS AIRES: Global investors gave Argentina's return to the sovereign debt market a warm welcome with demand for its first bond offer in 15 years vastly outstripping supply, a source close to the matter said yesterday. Argentina aims to raise at least \$12.5 billion from the bond sale, with the operation expected to be completed by the end of the day. Demand for the bonds is "close to \$70 billion" (62 billion euros), the source said, which would make the issue nearly five times over-subscribed.

Latin America's third-biggest economy is seeking to end its financial isolation by borrowing cash on world credit markets for the first time since a 2001 default. Argentine newspaper La Nacion cited sources involved in organizing the debt auction as saying that the government had received offers worth \$67 billion. The country is looking to boost its struggling economy and settle a 15-year lawsuit by US investment funds that its ex-president Cristina Kirchner branded as "vultures."

Some reports said the government planned to issue as much as \$15 billion in medium- and long-term bonds, after a US court cleared the way for Argentina to start borrowing again. This would give the government some financial leeway even after the international funds, known as "hold-outs," have been paid off. "Argentina is back," said Finance Minister Alfonso Prat-Gay in Washington ahead of the sale. Maturities on the various bond tranches are for 3, 5, 10 and

30 years. The issue is the biggest Argentinian cash call on markets in two decades.

'Major step forward'

Argentina's new conservative president Mauricio Macri has claimed the return to the international financial fold as a victory. His opponents said poor families would bear the cost of his borrowing since public spending cuts would be imposed to pay off the debts eventually. Macri has been scrapping Kirchner's protectionist policies and opening up Argentina's diplomatic and financial ties. He has removed currency controls and raised utility prices, triggering angry protests from Argentines who say their spending power is declining.

The bond sale "is a major step forward," Agustin Carstens, head of the IMF world lender's Monetary and Financial Committee, said Saturday. "It is very good to have a country as important as Argentina putting the house in order." He warned, however, that Argentines would have to endure tough economic cutbacks to stabilize the economy and public finances. "Needless to say in the short term some measures may be difficult to digest," Carstens said in Washington. The IMF forecasts that Argentina's economy will contract by one percent this year and grow 2.8 percent in 2017. Prat-Gay has given a stronger forecast of around zero growth this year and growth of up to four percent next year. — AFP

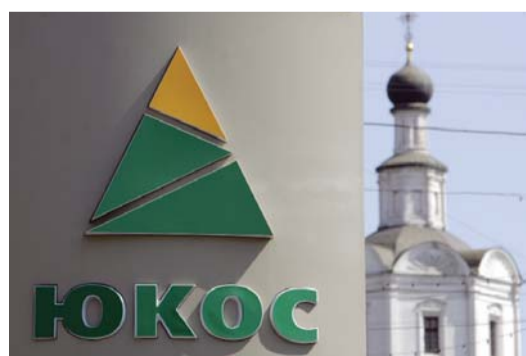
COURT QUASHES \$50BN AWARD BY RUSSIA TO YUKOS CLAIMANTS

THE HAGUE: A Dutch court yesterday dealt a heavy blow to former shareholders of the dismantled Russian oil giant Yukos, throwing out a \$50 billion compensation award by an international tribunal in a decision hailed by Moscow. In the latest step in a complex, multi-country legal saga, the district court in The Hague ruled the international Permanent Court of Arbitration, also based in the Dutch city, was "not competent" to rule in the matter. Therefore "the Russian Federation is no longer liable for paying compensation to these parties" which had been awarded in 2014.

Moscow swiftly welcomed the ruling, while the disappointed shareholders told reporters they had been surprised and would appeal a decision which they believed "incorrectly applies the law". Yukos was once Russia's biggest oil company but was broken up after its former owner Kremlin critic and ex-tycoon Mikhail Khodorkovsky was arrested in 2003. His arrest had come shortly after President Vladimir Putin warned Russia's growing class of oligarchs against meddling in politics.

Yukos was sold off in opaque auctions to state companies led by Rosneft between 2004 and 2006. State-owned Rosneft was then small, but has become a leading global player among the world's biggest listed oil companies by production volume. The claimants, led by the former main shareholder GML, have sought since 2005 to win compensation for what they say are their losses caused by the break-up of Yukos.

In a major coup for the claimants, the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) ruled in 2014 that Russia had forced Yukos into bankruptcy with excessive tax claims and sold off its assets to state-owned companies. It based its ruling on the provisions of a multilateral 1994 accord,



MOSCOW: Photo shows the logo of Russian oil giant Yukos displayed at a petrol station in Moscow. — AFP

the Energy Charter Treaty, which aims to promote energy security, and ordered Moscow to pay in "excess of \$50 billion" to the former shareholders.

'Surprise decision'

In a legal game of cat-and-mouse, the claimants have lodged cases in various European courts seeking the seizure of Russian assets abroad after Moscow refused to pay out. But Moscow has long fought the award, and the district Dutch court on Wednesday ruled in its favor. "The Hague District Court has reversed the awards of the international arbitrators on the grounds that they lacked jurisdiction to arbitrate the cases," the tribunal said in its written decision. The Hague Court found that since Russia has signed but not ratified the energy treaty, the PCA could not rule in the case. — AFP

SERBIA STRUGGLES TO SELL OFF COMMUNIST-ERA COMPANIES

PRIBOJ: Deep in a western Serbian valley, the town of Priboj despairs at the decline of a truck factory that was once its lifeblood-and is now symbolic of the country's failing state-owned companies. A thriving manufacturer employing thousands under communist Yugoslavia, Fabrika automobila Priboj (FAP) is today one of Serbia's loss-making enterprises whose future hangs in the balance as the Balkan nation holds parliamentary elections Sunday. "For us, FAP is everything," said Njegos Kokovic, 61, the director of a barely operating production line in Priboj, where even the town square and the football team are named after his employer.

As part of a loan agreement with the International Monetary Fund, and to keep Serbia on the path towards European Union membership, Prime Minister Aleksandar Vucic has pledged to sell off or close hundreds of inefficient state-run companies. FAP is among 17 "strategic" yet hard-to-sell enterprises, between them employing more than 20,000 people, that were temporarily ring-fenced for protection as the government bought more time to find solutions other than bankruptcy.

That costly protection is due to be lifted at the end of May, intensifying fears among the companies' employees in a country where unemployment is already at around 20 percent. After four unsuccessful approaches from potential buyers, including Finland's Sisu Auto,

a happy outcome seems elusive for FAP, which once employed 7,000 local people. Facing fierce competition from foreign manufacturers, Priboj's production of trucks, buses and military vehicles has dropped off dramatically since the former Yugoslavia began to fall apart in the early 1990s. Staff numbers are now down to just 650, and FAP suffers from "a lack of modern technical solutions", said Milorad Dragas, a FAP employee and local trade union representative.

'Little too late'

A worried group of the remaining work-



PRIBOJ, Serbia: Mechanics work on their machines at a truck factory in western Serbian town of Priboj. — AFP

ers are standing in local elections, also being held on Sunday, hoping to boost FAP's chances of survival with a plan to revive the plant-but without the 25 million euros (\$28.4 million) required to do so. Fewer than one hundred people attended a recent rally they held on the square in Priboj. "We might have reacted a little too late," said Miroslav Mrsevic, 54, leading their campaign. Vucic, who is widely expected to strengthen his power in the national polls, promised late last year to help the dying truck maker, insisting: "We will not leave Priboj without FAP and without jobs." — AFP



DEWA MD&CEO H.E. Saeed Al Tayer at the Inauguration (Center), with Frederic Abbal (Left) and Benoit Dubarle (Right)



H.E. Saeed Mohammed Al Tayer MD & CEO - Dubai Water & Electricity Authority (DEWA) Makes Speech at PTTC 2016

SCHNEIDER ELECTRIC PROMOTES IOT, SMART CITIES AT TECH EVENT

COMPANY BRINGS SUSTAINABILITY MESSAGE TO FOREFRONT

By Islam Al-Sharaa

DUBAI: IoT-powered smart cities that converge operational technology (OT) with information technology (IT) can provide energy optimization and improve citizen services through analytics, real-time data management and intelligence capabilities. Built around this concept, Schneider Electric's fourth 'Power to the Cloud' was held recently at the Dubai Convention and Exhibition Centre as the largest regional event of its kind focused on smart cities. The latest edition has convened more than 2,000 industry visitors and around 200 VIPs from across the Middle East, Europe and Africa region.

Schneider Electric spotlighted its latest IoT-powered smart solutions through engaging simulations at a dedicated 5,000 square meter experiential zone. Among the solutions showcased include various elements of a smart city for homes, hotels, hospitals, educational institutions and utilities. As an additional highlight this year, senior company experts also discussed the strategic importance of Schneider Electric's new 'Life is ON' brand strategy and its approach toward energy management through four pillars, namely connectivity, sustainability, efficiency and reliability and safety.

Kuwait Times spoke to Schneider Electric officials to learn more. Some excerpts:

Kuwait Times: What kind of businesses/sectors is SE involved in the Gulf?

Schneider Electric has been serving the Gulf region for over 35 years by providing integrated solutions in energy management making energy safe, reliable, efficient, productive and green. In the Gulf, Schneider Electric is mainly focused on six key market segments, which are utilities, oil and gas, water, healthcare, hotels datacenters and networks and ultimately smart cities. We have seen a 12 percent growth over the last three years, owing to the region's move to increase energy efficiency.

Kuwait Times: What is SE's 2016 outlook - is the market going to be challenging? How do you things will pan out? What are the key growth sectors for SE in 2016?

Our outlook for 2016 is positive, based on the previous years' performance and our strong pipeline of projects. Schneider Electric is actively involved in supporting the region's shift to smart energy solutions. Since the launch of our 'Life is On' strategy last year, Schneider Electric has adopted a new and unique approach to deliver energy management solutions. Our aim is to bring about a convergence of Information technology and operational technology, or in other words, the integration of energy, automation and software, in order to bring about energy efficiency. This applies across all sectors, and essentially guarantees that information is no longer compartmentalized, it is more transparent, and available for greater collaboration and optimum results.

In the Gulf, we see the opportunity to apply IT and OT integration in areas including solar, energy storage, micro-grids and smart grids, which are all very immediate growth sectors in the region.

Kuwait Times: Can you speak about the company's regional outlook?

There is an urgent need for change in the way we perceive and understand energy needs in the region. As a company involved in enabling this transition, Schneider Electric is well-positioned to address the GCC's unique energy challenges through our tried and tested innovative solutions for energy management. Schneider Electric is poised to continue the same growth momentum as we identify new regional opportunities in the coming years. As we remain aligned with the Dubai's government's vision to become a smart city, we see the 'Life is ON' approach as a positive step towards creating an infrastructure which is greener, smarter and better connected.

Kuwait Times: What is the motivation behind Schneider Electric's Power to the Cloud (PTTC) event?

Schneider Electric's Power to the Cloud is built around the concept that IoT-powered smart cities that converge operational technology (OT) with information technology (IT) can provide energy optimization and improve citizen services through analytics, real-time data management and intelligence capabilities. The company's flagship event now in its fourth year, PTTC is a smart-solutions-focused event which is the largest of its kind in the Middle East and Africa region. The event is an opportunity for Schneider Electric to display its latest IoT-powered smart solutions through engaging simulations that will be on display across a 5,000 square meter experiential zone.

Kuwait Times: How are governments in the GCC responding to the demands to become more energy efficient?

As the region pushes to diversify and reduce dependence on oil revenues, its governments are increasingly turning to technology to efficiently boost industrial capacities. According to the 2016 GCC Market Analysis Report by IRENA, regional energy consumption in the 2000s grew at an average of 5 percent per annum, faster than India, China and Brazil. As a result of this energy squeeze in the region, GCC nations are increasingly devising strategies to conserve natural resources, reduce energy consumption and diversify the energy mix to include renewables. This ties in with the innovation that drives Schneider Electric's commitment in the region to help create greener, safer and interconnected spaces for local communities through our trusted solutions for energy management.



(From left) Benoit Dubarle, Country President - Gulf Countries - Schneider Electric, Dave Johnson, CEO - IT Business, Schneider Electric, Philippe Arsonneau, Senior VP - Commercial, IT Business, Schneider Electric and Thierry Chamayou Regional Vice President - EMEA South - Schneider Electric.

Kuwait Times: How are large corporations in the Middle East stepping up to the challenges of a resource-constrained 21st century?

Corporations in the Middle East, and globally, are being more proactive in dialogue related to energy challenges and sustainability. One of the main approaches to the challenges is education and awareness building. These platforms, supported by local governments, are welcoming millions of visitors who share invaluable know-how about making cities more efficient and friendly. Enterprises have always shown keen interest in powering more economic activity with lesser or inexpensive resources. They are increasingly engaging in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) which commits to addressing key issues on non-renewable resources and their utilization.

Collaborations between all sectors are helping corporations respond to the world's challenges. For instance, Schneider Electric played a key role in Abu Dhabi Municipality's Energy Efficiency Programme which began in 2011 as a sector level pilot project. In 2014, the initiative entered its second phase under 'City-wide Level Scale Up Deployment'.

Kuwait Times: How can smart solutions help save energy?

Schneider Electric has many smart solutions that help create the cities of the future. Its integrated 'Smart City' solutions from Smart Energy, Smart Mobility, Smart Water, Smart Public Services, and Smart Integration help in various aspects of traffic and parking, safety, lighting, waste management, and energy management. These solutions no longer operate in silos, instead integrate seamlessly and run cohesively enabling clients to save up to 30 per cent in energy consumption, including a 15 per cent reduction in water use. It is easier for governments to pass on its energy savings to its citizens so the end benefit is always for individuals and residents.

Kuwait Times: What are the opportunities and challenges for smarter energy systems in the GCC region?

Cities in the GCC region are on the fast-track to becoming smart cities. These developments will be largely based on efficient building systems, infrastructure networks and ICT solutions; this is where Schneider Electric, a global leader in energy management and a pioneer in 'smart city' solutions-comes in.

In Doha, Qatar- there are a number of mega projects in the pipeline - in line with the country's National Vision 2030. The value of such infrastructure projects is expected to reach around \$205 billion between 2013 and 2018. The GCC pres-



Power to the Cloud Inauguration tour

ents Schneider Electric with an abundance of growing opportunities to reiterate their market leadership in smart infrastructure, energy efficiency, datacenter technology and mobility solutions. Governments and private sector enterprises are welcoming Schneider Electric's global expertise, highly valued R&D and decades of experience in order to achieve the next step of development and urban efficiency across the GCC.

Kuwait Times: How are cities in this region in an advantageous position to become smart cities?

The cities successfully making the transition to 'smart' will be those who improve their critical systems by combining a bottom-up, systems-centric approach with a top-down, data-centric one. These cities are focusing on six key pillars; transport, communications, infrastructure, electricity, economic services and urban planning. The vision of the leader-

ship in these cities has been crucial to the success of these initiatives along with the support garnered from the business community, citizens and residents.

Power to the Cloud

In his inaugural address, Saeed Al-Tayer, Managing Director and CEO, Dubai Electricity and Water Authority (DEWA) said: "This year's Power to the Cloud comes at a time of rapid infrastructure transformation and economic change. As we strive to become smarter and more connected than ever before, we need to learn to leverage technologies that are eco-friendly. Today, the convergence of Information Technology (IT) and Operational Technology (OT) makes it possible to increase process efficiency and optimise scarce resources. This ties in with the UAE Government's Vision 2021 launched by His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, which emphasises the importance of sustainable development and the preservation of the environment."

The event was also attended by Dr Rashid Al-Leem, Chairman of Sharjah Electricity and Water Authority (SEWA) and Matar Al-Neyadi, Undersecretary of the UAE Ministry of Energy. Over the course of the two-day event, senior Schneider Electric experts headlined thought sessions on energy efficiency and highlighted the latest in technology trends. In addition, key industry experts and customers including Etisalat, DEWA, Al Futtaim, Movenpick Group, Starwood Hotels and Resorts and Abu Dhabi Airports led panel discussions and shed light on Schneider Electric's value-add to their respective businesses.

Frederic Abbal, Executive Vice-President of Energy Business, Schneider Electric, said: "It is important to create enriching community spaces for inhabitants through digital connection, technologies to simplify life and automation to streamline the businesses. These communities, which collectively form cities, need to be tied together with infrastructure that can accommodate the massively growing populations and their evolving expectations. Power to the Cloud, now in its fourth year, has greatly developed since its inception in 2012 and illustrates the progress Dubai is making on its evolution into a smart city. Through this educational platform, we hope to bring to light the technologies that will positively impact our living spaces and their environment."

From downtown to suburb, we deliver urban efficiency today

Smart Integration

- Energy and Sustainability Management
- City-wide Infrastructure Automation
- Weather Forecasts

Smart Energy

- Ports
- Electric Utilities
- Gas Utilities
- Prosumers

Smart Water

- Water Utilities
- Parks and Gardens

Smart Built Environment

- Tech Parks
- Offices
- Data Centers
- Homes
- Hospitals
- Schools
- Airports
- Hotels
- Shopping Malls
- Stadiums
- Railway Stations
- Tunnels



FDA CAMPAIGN TAKES AIM AT CHEWING TOBACCO USE BY RURAL TEENS

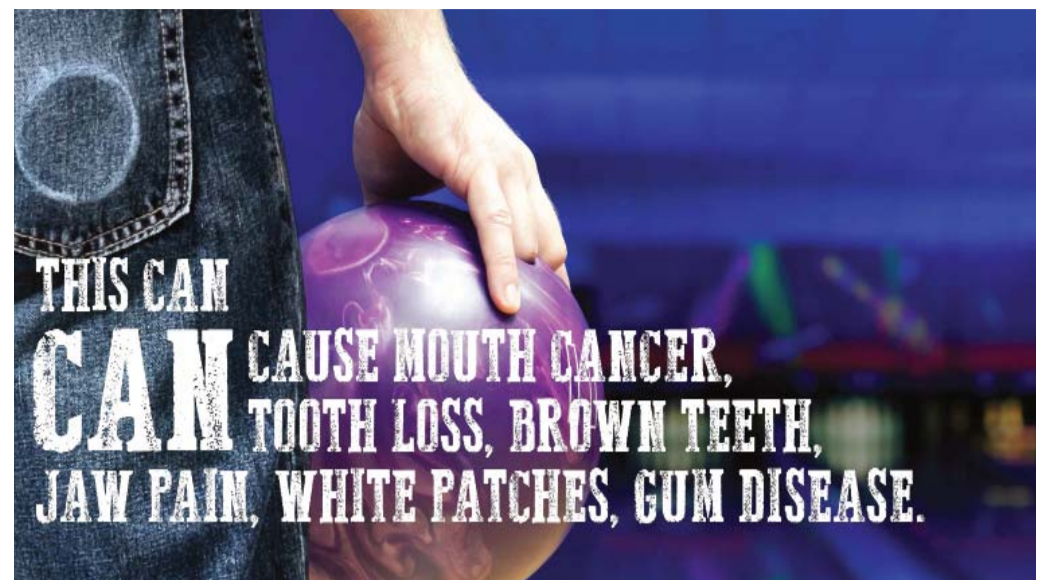
WASHINGTON: Government health officials will team up with minor league baseball as part of a new \$36 million campaign to discourage rural teenagers from using chewing tobacco. Baseball stadiums this summer - "smokeless doesn't mean harmless" - via advertising and promotions with players. Ads will also run on local television, radio and online in 35 markets across the US, including cities in Michigan, Montana, South Carolina and Tennessee.

The Food and Drug Administration says its latest effort targets white, rural males who are more likely to use dip, chew and other smokeless tobacco products. Roughly 32 percent of rural males ages 12 to 17, or roughly 629,000 Americans, are at-risk for using chewing tobacco, according to the agency. FDA's Mitch Zeller, director of the agency's tobacco program, said smokeless tobacco is culturally ingrained in many rural communities as a "rite of passage".

"Often male teenagers in rural communities are accustomed to seeing smokeless tobacco use among role models, such as their fathers and grandfathers, older brothers and community leaders," he told reporters. Zeller, who oversaw the anti-tobacco "Truth"

campaign while working at the nonprofit American Legacy Foundation in the early 2000s, said many young people don't understand the health effects of smokeless tobacco. The new campaign is the first FDA effort to focus on those risks, including gum disease, tooth loss and multiple forms of cancer. The FDA is reaching out to Major League Baseball on similar collaborations, agency officials said.

The government effort comes as leading tobacco companies increase their focus on snuff, chewing tobacco and electronic cigarettes amid tax hikes, smoking bans, health concerns and social stigma that continue to erode cigarette sales. Last October the FDA launched a \$128 million campaign using hip-hop music and culture to try and educate African American and other urban minority youth groups about smoking risks. Tobacco companies are footing the bill for the campaigns through fees charged by the FDA under a 2009 law that created the agency's tobacco center. Among other powers, the FDA can restrict marketing of tobacco products to young people and gives the agency authority to evaluate the health risks of new tobacco products before they launch. — AP



WASHINGTON: This photo provided by the Food and Drug Administration shows an ad that is part of a new campaign warning about the effects of smokeless tobacco. — AP

TERROR OR TOBACCO? FRENCH SCHOOL SMOKING LIGHTS UP DEBATE

'IN FRANCE ADDICTION IS REALLY UNDER-ESTIMATED, WHETHER TO TOBACCO OR ALCOHOL'

PARIS: What poses a greater risk to French school children: A potential terror attack, or smoking cigarettes? This is the unusual question gripping France as a result of the jihadist attacks on Paris last November—and a court ruling later this week may point to the answer. Many high schools began letting pupils smoke on school premises as part of security measures introduced after the gun-and-bomb assaults which killed 130 people and left 350 injured. To education officials, having dozens of teenagers crowd the pavement outside their schools to grab a quick smoke during breaks was simply too much of a risk.

"But this doesn't mean you have to let them smoke inside," complains Corinne Depagne, the mother of a 16-year-old boy, who has filed a criminal complaint against his school in the southeastern city of Lyon. An administrative court outside Paris is set to rule by the end of this week in a separate complaint against a school in Courbevoie, a northwestern suburb of the capital. Depagne, a pneumologist, told AFP she was "stupefied" that teens at her son's school were being allowed to smoke in the courtyard between classes.

The official rules are clouded by confusion, and parents, activists and teachers are split between those who think tobacco is the lesser evil, and those who wonder why pupils are allowed to smoke during school hours at all. Shortly after the November 13 attacks on Paris nightspots and the national stadium, the Islamic State group issued threats against French schools. Under the state of emergency imposed after the attacks, a circular signed by both the education ministry and interior ministry was sent to schools urging them to avoid having

pupils gather outside their premises. Some schools then sent out letters to parents about new dedicated smoking areas, even specifying that ashtrays would be provided.

Smoking 'normal' again

The move outraged anti-tobacco activists such as the group Non-Smokers' Rights (DNF) which argues it is a massive step backwards a decade after smoking was banned in public spaces under the "Evin law," a hard-won piece of legislation named after a former minister of health. "It is disastrous for public health because we are exposing very young people to tobacco. Many of these establishments are both high schools and secondary schools, with children as young as 11," said Stephen Lequet of the DNF.

"Above all we are making the act of smoking seem normal again." A study in June 2015 showed that one in three 17-year-olds smoke daily in France. Lequet said the argument put forward by those in favor of the move—that it keeps children safe and out of harm's way—was "false." "The virtual terrorist risk exists, but luckily it will never leave as many people dead as tobacco," he said. He pointed out that in other parts of the world, smoking during school hours is completely forbidden, and that as it is even illegal in France to buy cigarettes if you are under 18, the entire situation was "completely absurd." Lequet said the DNF and other anti-tobacco groups decided to file administrative complaints against three schools in and around Paris, to force them to stop pupils smoking on their premises.

'We must remain pragmatic'

Five months after the circular was issued, the

education ministry appears to be struggling to formulate a coherent response to the debate. Education Minister Najat Vallaud-Belkacem sowed further confusion last week when she said that "during this period of heightened security, high school students must simply be asked not to smoke". Asked to elaborate on the minister's words, her ministry veered between insisting the measure was "exceptional" but at the same time saying "the ban on smoking must remain the rule."

"According to the minister it is a difficult balance and we must remain pragmatic," a spokeswoman at the education ministry told AFP.

Vallaud-Belkacem's comments outraged the main school principals' union SNPEN, which said it felt "abandoned" by the education ministry. "In any case, it is unrealistic," said SNPEN national secretary Joel Lamois. "The terrorist risk is much greater right now than the health risk. Between two diseases we are trying to deal with the worst."

'Kill themselves smoking'

But for Depagne that is an outrageous view in a country where 200 people die a day from smoking-related disorders. "Other parents tell me: 'Why are you pursuing this, Corinne? I don't want them to get killed in front of the school.' I say, 'How can you let them smoke and kill themselves that way?'" Depagne said the fact that no-one blinks an eye at high school students puffing away outside schools in normal times was a sign of "laxism." "I think in France addiction is really under-estimated, whether to tobacco or alcohol. It is so normal to smoke that even when children smoke, it doesn't bother anyone." — AFP

MOSQUITOES - CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT THEM

PARIS: Muzzies. Skeeters. Stingers. Whatever you call them, mosquitoes don't get much love from our species. And why should they? The buzzing bloodsuckers make us miserable and sick, and would appear to be devoid of any redeeming qualities. But they are pretty amazing. Mosquitoes, let it be said, are...

Primeval and deadly

Mosquitoes were annoying velociraptors and stegosaurus long before a giant meteor wiped out the dinosaurs at the end of the Cretaceous period. The oldest confirmed mosquito fossil is nearly 100 million years old. Our nagging nemesis is also the most lethal creature in the world, responsible for more than a million human deaths every year, mostly children. The Anopheles genus carries malaria, which killed some 600,000 people in 2015, according to the World Health Organization. It also causes painful and sometimes deadly ringworm in dogs, and gathers in swarms thick enough to choke a caribou. Members of the Aedes genus, meanwhile, spread yellow fever, West Nile virus, dengue, chikungunya, and the Zika virus, which scientists recently confirmed causes severe malformations of foetus brains. Others provoke various strains of encephalitis. There are some 3,500 species in all.

Invasive and nomadic

They are everywhere except Antarctica. With a little help from us, mosquitoes are also highly mobile. Hitching rides in luggage, cars, cargo ships and planes, many species have spread across the planet thanks to globalization. Old tyres and "lucky bamboo" plants are two of their favorite modes of transportation. One species, Aedes albopictus, has colonized 20 countries in Europe in just the last 25 years, an expansion said to have been helped by

global warming. But skeeters don't move unless they have to. "If you live next to a place where you are breeding mosquitoes, then they will not go two kilometers to find a blood meal, they will go 10 meters from the breeding place to you," explains Eskild Petersen, a professor of tropical diseases at Aarhus University in Denmark. They have a short travel span of a few hundred meters, and a lifespan of about two weeks. And while their wings beat up to 500 times per second, mosquitoes only fly at speeds of about two kilometers per hour. Salt marsh mosquitoes, however, can voyage up to 170 kilometers from their larval breeding ground in search of a meal.

Sexually dimorphous

Which means that males and females are different. Very different. Only the female-in search of protein for her eggs-consumes blood. Her sometimes virus-infected saliva contains an anti-coagulant to keep things flowing in both directions through her needle-like proboscis. Males, meanwhile, are vegans, and only sip flower nectar. Whether that is why they only live half as long is unclear.

Useful

"Whatever else they are, mosquitoes have their place in ecosystems," Fabrice Chandre, an expert on insect vectors at the Research Institute for Development in Montpellier, says somewhat grudgingly. As waterbound larvae, mosquitoes are filter feeders that consume single-cell algae, and are in turn a favoured food for fish. As adults, they are tasty snacks for birds, bats and spiders. Weighing in at two to 10 milligrams it takes a lot to make a meal. But then again, there are a lot of mosquitoes in the world. Male mosquitoes are important plant pollinators. — AFP

BETTER PREEMIE PAIN RELIEF SOUGHT AMID NEW CALL FOR ACTION

OAK LAWN, Illinois: It happens every day to the most vulnerable infants in hospital intensive care units: Fragile babies born way too soon are poked, prodded and jabbed as part of medical care meant to help them survive - and it can be heart-wrenching to watch. Heel sticks for blood tests, inserting IV tubes, adjusting breathing machines - even the gentlest jostling to remove a bandage from translucent skin can cause kittenlike whimpers and tiny arms and legs to suddenly jerk. Sometimes there's no sound at all - just a dip on the heart rate monitor.

It used to be thought that these infants were too young to feel pain. But even now, experts say, pain relief for newborns and especially preemies is often inadequate, despite evidence that low-tech comforting methods and medication can both be effective. The American Academy of Pediatrics has new advice - and an admonishment. Pain in newborns "continues to be inconsistently assessed and inadequately managed," the academy says. Remedies "are currently underused for routine minor yet painful procedures."

Brain development

Preventing and reducing pain, particularly in preemies, is important because of the potential consequences for infant development, the academy said in a policy issued in February. Research suggests repeated bouts of pain leave infants prone to potential long-term ill effects including changes in nerve structures and brain development, and hypersensitivity to touch and stress - and it's the smallest and sickest babies who experience the greatest number of painful procedures.

Pain assessment can be a significant challenge in preemies, said newborn specialist Erin Keels, the policy's lead author and a nurse at Nationwide Children's



CHICAGO: In this photo parents Bryan Niedermeyer and Angelica Juarez, left, visit with their preemie daughter Evelyn after she and twin sister Olivia underwent eye exams at Advocate Children's Hospital in Chicago. — AP photos

Hospital Columbus, Ohio. Preemie's pain cues aren't always obvious. They often have multiple health problems that need attention, and in busy intensive care units, pain relief for every day minor procedures can sometimes get overlooked, she said.

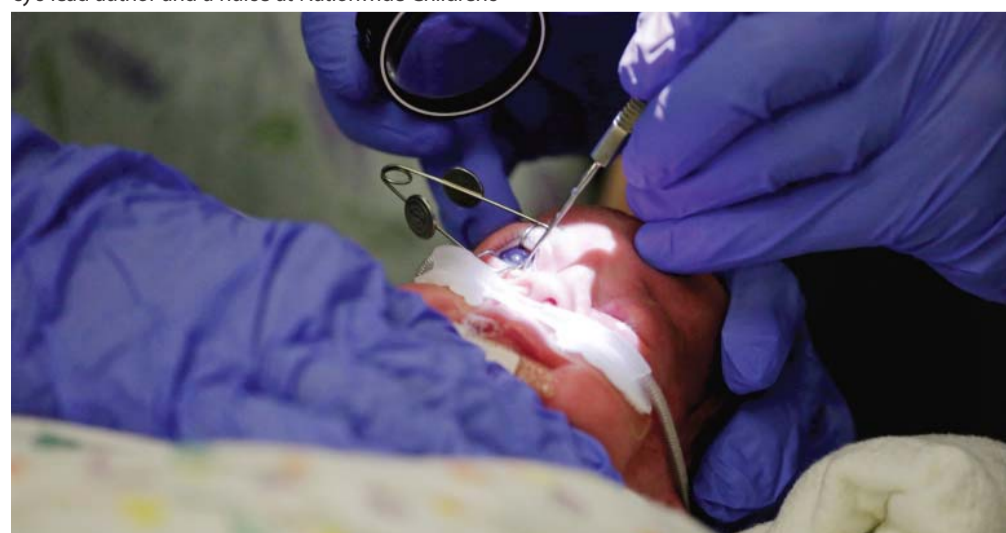
The new guidance was prompted in part by

recent research showing benefits from alternatives to medication, Keels said. These include sugar-dipped pacifiers, tight swaddling and skin-to-skin contact with moms and dads. Newer ways to measure infant pain also are being tested, including measuring brain waves and electrical impulses in the skin.

Pain management during surgery and other major procedures typically requires medication, often opioids including morphine. Short-term side effects of these drugs may include a slowed heart rate, low blood pressure, and drug dependence. Some small studies have linked use of these drugs in extremely premature babies with slowed weight gain, smaller head size and behavior troubles later in childhood, but research on appropriate doses and potential long-term effects "is woefully lacking," the academy says. It urges more research on using these drugs and other medications in infants.

Premature babies

"While we want to manage pain appropriately, we also have to pay attention to not going too far in the other extreme," said Dr William MacKendrick, medical director of the infant special care unit at Evanston Hospital in Evanston, Illinois. He was not involved in the policy. US hospitals are required to assess patients' pain in order to be accredited, and it's an issue newborn specialists are increasingly paying attention to. — AP



CHICAGO: Dr Ben Ticho performs an eye exam on preemie Evelyn Niedermeyer at Advocate Children's Hospital in Chicago.



NEW YORK: This undated file image provided by Amgen Inc shows the cholesterol-lowering drug Repatha. Breakthrough cholesterol drugs Repatha and Praluent have barely sold since being approved by US regulators in the summer of 2015. — AP

BREAKTHROUGH CHOLESTEROL DRUGS FIZZLE AMID PRICE PUSHBACK

WASHINGTON: When a powerful pair of cholesterol-lowering drugs first hit the market last summer, initial excitement in the medical community quickly turned to panic. The new drugs promised to reduce artery-clogging cholesterol by nearly twice as much as older ones. But they came at an eye-popping price: More than \$14,000 per year, compared with roughly \$150 for the standard drugs. Some experts predicted a doomsday scenario in which the two injectable drugs, Repatha and Praluent, would add a staggering \$100 billion to the US drug bill as doctors signed up millions of patients with elevated cholesterol. But then something unexpected happened: not much.

Caught between skeptical doctors and cost-conscious insurers, the drugs have barely sold. Sanofi reported a meager \$10 million from Praluent in the last quarter, which it co-markets with Regeneron Pharmaceuticals. Amgen Inc. declined to break out Repatha sales. Spending on pricey specialty drugs has doubled over the last five years to \$150 billion, contributing 70 percent of the growth in US medication spending since 2010, according to IMS Health. But the startlingly slow launch of Praluent and Repatha suggests insurers may have found their own formula for fighting back: proof-of-effectiveness requirements and rigorous paperwork that limits how many patients ultimately receive high-cost drugs. Experts see an escalating feud between drugmakers and insurers with little relief in sight.

Heart problems

"The companies think that their drug is

going to save a lot of lives and payers tend to be skeptical of those claims - somewhere in the middle is the truth" says Professor Darius Lakdawalla of the University of Southern California. Generally speaking, insurers only cover the costs of the new drugs for patients with extremely-high cholesterol caused by genetic disorders, or those with a history of heart problems and elevated cholesterol. The insurance paperwork can run several pages and often requires a detailed history of past treatments. Caught in the middle of the coverage fight are patients who say they desperately need more options to control bad cholesterol, or LDL.

Christian Jacobs, 24, takes eight medications to manage his cholesterol and related complications, including blood thinners for the seven artery-opening stents he's received since 2011. He has a rare form of inheritable cholesterol that occurs in roughly one in a million people. So he was shocked when his insurance provider, UnitedHealth, rejected his doctors' prescription for Repatha. "I was floored," he said. "How in the world can we be rejected for a medication that I meet every single standard for?"

Jacobs said UnitedHealth recommended he continue his current drug regimen to see if it lowers his cholesterol. He is appealing the decision. UnitedHealth, which declined to comment on Jacobs' situation due to patient privacy laws, said in a statement it uses "clinical guidelines and scientific evidence" when making coverage decisions. "These new therapies offer additional LDL cholesterol lowering and outcomes studies are still pending," said the firm. — AP

LIFE EXPECTANCY DIPPED A BIT FOR WHITE WOMEN IN US

NEW YORK: Life expectancy for white women has fallen a little, according to a new government report. White women lost about five weeks from their predicted lifespan in 2014, compared to 2013, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported yesterday. Life expectancy held steady for black women and white men, and increased for black men, Hispanic men and Hispanic women. The CDC previously reported that the life expectancy for all Americans born in 2014 was 78 years and 91/2 months- the same prediction made for the previous two years.

Yesterday's report gives a breakdown by race or gender. It predicts that a white girl born in 2014 could expect to live about 81 years and 1 month, about five weeks fewer than the previous year's prediction. The last time there was a one-year drop for white women was in 2008. That was considered a statistical blip, said Robert Anderson of the CDC's National Center for Health Statistics. That could also

be the case for the 2014 decline "or it could be a harbinger of things to come," Anderson said. That won't be known until data from more years come in, he added.

Some recent reports have shown rising suicide and drug overdose death rates for white women - particularly middle-aged ones. US health officials come up with life expectancy figures each year by looking at how old people were when they died and the cause of death. They use statistical modeling to predict how long people born today will live if current trends continue. Hispanics had the highest life expectancy in 2014 - at 84 for Hispanic women and more than 79 for men. Black Americans were lowest, at about 78 for women and 72 for men. For white men, it was 76 1/2 years. Life expectancies generally have been climbing, but they do sometimes dip. The estimates for white men and Hispanic women dropped slightly in 2013. — AP



SAN DIEGO: File photo shows women run as the sun sets in San Diego. — AP

EL HIERRO, THE SPANISH ISLAND VYING FOR 100% CLEAN ENERGY

VALVERDE, Spain: Pines and pineapples vie for space on El Hierro, a tiny rugged Canary island that has gone all out to produce all its electricity from renewables, attracting global attention in the process. On February 15, this remote Spanish island nestled deep in the Atlantic off the coast of Africa managed just that-for the first time, its hydro-wind plant produced enough electricity for the 7,000 inhabitants for more than 24 hours. With its rugged coastline of great black volcanic cliffs, badland moonscapes and ancient forests, the island, which is slightly smaller than Malta, is a UNESCO biosphere reserve, an area designated to promote its biodiversity and sustainable use.

It has long dreamt of ending its reliance on diesel fuel, which is transported by boat from its bigger sister island of Tenerife to produce energy after having been shipped in from further afield. "To have total energy sovereignty... in an isolated territory is important," says Tomas Padron, the former chief of El Hierro and instigator of the project. So it was that in June 2014, authorities inaugurated the Gorona del Viento plant which combines five wind turbines planted on a hill with one water retention basin further up, and another further down.

When the wind falls, water in the upper basin is released into the lower basin, passing through turbines which generate hydro power. This unique combination "is very promising" as it solves the problem that renewable energy production is intermittent, said Joelle Noailly, head of research at Switzerland's Centre for International Environmental Studies. Other European islands like Denmark's Samsø and Egge off the coast of Scotland are also trying to generate all of its energy needs through



FRONTERA, Spain: A group of cows graze in Valverde, on the Spanish Canary island of El Hierro. — AFP photos

renewables, but their plants do not combine wind and hydraulic power. And while Samsø could be hooked up to the Danish electricity grid via an underground cable, the topography of El Hierro's seabed makes it impossible to connect to the Spanish grid.

Interest from Japan, Indonesia

El Hierro's aim initially was to cover 100 percent of its electricity needs within a few months-an objective that has still not been achieved nearly two years on. Juan Pedro Sanchez, head of the Gorona del Viento plant, admits that the average is closer to 50 percent. "It takes time to get this type of plant going, it's never been done before," he says. Electricity grid operator REE, he says, still needs to be convinced that it can rely 100 percent on renewable energy for long periods of time. Wary of power outages, the company still prefers to produce electricity from fuel, according to Sanchez.

And then the two water reservoirs are not big enough to produce "clean" electricity all year round, and there are no plans to build another. But despite these setbacks, the project has generated huge interest, particularly from fellow islands that are directly threatened by global warming. Representatives from the Seychelles, Indonesia, Japan, and Aruba in the Caribbean Sea have already come for a visit. "It is a workable model that can be replicated," says Emanuele Taibi, an analyst at the International Renewable Energy Agency.

And apart from the thousands of tons of CO2 that have been prevented from weaving their way

into the atmosphere thanks to Gorona del Viento, nearly 3,000 tons of fuel oil have been saved according to utility giant Endesa, which owns 23 percent of the plant. That represents 1.2 million euros (\$1.4 million)... although residents have yet to feel the benefits. "The electricity bill has remained the same," says Claudia Barrera, an unemployed, 32-year-old secretary, as she eats breakfast in a cafe in Valverde, the island's diminutive capital which has no traffic lights.

Belen Allende, the current chief of El Hierro's so-called "cabildo" or local administration, says this is down to Spanish legislation that does not allow its 17 semi-autonomous regions to fix their own electricity prices. She promises though that the money saved will go towards other projects.

Attracting tourists

Apart from the obvious environmental benefits, the island wants to use its green image to attract tourists and scientists. A few thousand visitors tread El Hierro's shores every year-many of them nature-loving hikers or divers-compared to the five million or so who visit the better-known Tenerife annually. The plant itself has already attracted several thousand visitors-people who "eat, rent a car, a flat or a room," says Amos Lutzardo, head of the tourism center of the island, where unemployment stands at around 27 percent. Xavier Verdager, a Spanish entrepreneur who lives in San Francisco, was part of a small group of 10 people who recently visited the site, snapping up pictures of the turbines and water reservoir. "We can see how an innovative project works," he said. — AFP

NEW INDONESIA MILL RAISES DOUBTS ABOUT APP'S FORESTS PLEDGE

JAKARTA: A landmark commitment by one of the world's largest producers of tissue and paper to stop cutting down Indonesia's prized tropical forests is under renewed scrutiny as the company prepares to open a giant pulp mill in South Sumatra. To fanfare more than three years ago, Asia Pulp and Paper promised to use only plantation woods after an investigation by one of its strongest critics, Greenpeace, showed its products were partly made from the pulp of endangered trees.

Greenpeace welcomed the announcement as a breakthrough and the company, long reviled by activists as a villain, rebranded itself as a defender of the environment, helping it to win back customers that had severed ties. At the same time, it was pressing ahead behind the scenes with plans to build a third pulp mill in Indonesia. When it went public with its plans for the OKI mill in 2013, APP announced it would produce 2 million tons a year and then earlier this year acknowledged the mill's capacity could in the future increase to 2.8 million tons.

Zero deforestation

New research released yesterday by a dozen international and Indonesian environmental groups estimates that APP will face a significant shortfall in its supply of plantation-grown wood after the new mill begins operating, even at a 2.0 million ton capacity. The company could then face a choice between using higher-cost imported wood or looking the other way as its suppliers encroach upon virgin forests. "APP, while it has been presenting itself as a champion of zero deforestation, is building one of the world's biggest pulp mills," said Christopher Barr of Woods & Wayside International, one of the organizations involved with the report.

"There will be a great deal of pressure to ensure it receives adequate supplies of wood to keep it operating at full capacity," he said. "Our analysis shows the group's existing planted area in South Sumatra is unlikely to produce the volumes of wood the mill is expected to consume at projected capacity levels." How the mill, which could operate for more than half a century, is fed will be a factor in the survival of Indonesia's tropical forests and the endangered wildlife they shelter. More generally, the draining and destruction of peatlands for forestry or agriculture will over decades release vast amounts of carbon that could jeopardize Indonesia's ability to meet its emission reduction targets under an international agreement due to be signed within days.

The report estimates that APP's planta-

tions in South Sumatra have never produced half of the wood needed to feed a 2.0 million ton a year pulp operation. That shortfall is compounded by devastating forest and peatland fires across Indonesia last year that destroyed more than a quarter of APP's planted trees in South Sumatra, according to an on-the-ground survey by Hutan Kita Institute and other civil society groups. The company said it would respond to concerns about the mill.

APP is the crown jewel of the Sinar Mas conglomerate, one of Southeast Asia's largest companies. For a time it was a pariah in financial markets after defaulting in 2001 on \$13.9 billion of debt, which still ranks as the biggest default by a company from a developing nation. It has secured Chinese funding for the OKI mill. The draining of peatlands, which make up the bulk of the concession land in South Sumatra that supplies APP, is a fraught issue for Indonesia's neighbors. Record fires on peatlands and forests last year caused \$16 billion of losses for Indonesia, according to the World Bank, and sent a smoky, health-damaging haze across the country and into Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand.

Acacia plantations

The mill and its plantations, meanwhile, affect the livelihoods of thousands of people who have lived for decades on land used by APP. The company is embroiled in hundreds of land use conflicts across Indonesia and has yet to reach an agreement with any community after vowing to settle such disputes in 2013. Once the new mill begins operating, "I think it will be even more difficult for communities to get their land back" said Aidil Fitri, of Hutan Kita Institute, which is advocating for two communities in conflict with APP in South Sumatra.

"Now they have OKI mill and we believe they need more lands for their plantations," he said. "On the other side, the communities who have conflicts with APP need their lands back for their livelihood, to do agriculture, not for acacia plantations." Greenpeace forests campaigner Andy Tait said APP has maintained it will only supply the mill with plantation or imported wood. But he acknowledged that APP's assessment that its plantation wood supply is adequate pre-dates last year's "horrendous" fires, which heavily affected the company. "We don't see any sign of APP pulling back from its commitments on no deforestation at this stage and it would obviously be commercial suicide for them to do so," he said. "But this mill construction raises a number of critical questions that need to be addressed." — AP



FRONTERA, Spain: Amos Lutzardo, president of CIT (Centre for Initiatives and Tourism Bimbache) speaks during an interview in Valverde.

CLINIC PAGE



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248 33 199

Dr. Fahad Al-Mukhaizeem / **د. فهد علي المخيزيم**
 استشاري أطفال / **Consultant Pediatrician**
M.B. Bch. FRCPC. FACP. PEM

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



It was a rosy and glorious moment at the Family House in Fintas as the Life Abundant International Fountain Church held its Revival Services 'Awake', featuring praise worship, bible ministrations, anointing service among others. The Guest Speaker was Rev John Thomas of the International Revival Church Toronto Canada. The program ended with a grand birthday celebration of Bishop (Prof) Jonathan.



GULF BANK SPONSORS BAYAN BILINGUAL SCHOOL ART SHOW

Gulf Bank concluded its silver sponsorship of Bayan Bilingual School (BBS) Art Show 2016-2015, which took place at the school's campus from 10-12 April. Students, their families and members of the school's faculty attended the opening ceremony on 10 April. The Annual K-12 Art Show showcases art by students from all grades which are selected by BBS's art teachers who judge the art according to certain criteria depending on the grade level of the submitted art.

Gulf Bank continues to be strongly committed to supporting youth and educational initiatives, and doing its part to help empower the next generation. To learn more about Gulf Bank's sponsorships and activities, please see the bank's bilingual website at www.e-gulfbank.com, call the Customer Contact Center on 1805805, visit one of Gulf Bank's 56 branches in Kuwait, or see its social media channel on Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube.

WIN YOUR TROLLEY WITH TSC!!

THE SULTAN CENTER CELEBRATES ITS 34TH ANNIVERSARY WITH CUSTOMERS

As part of its 34th Anniversary activities, The Sultan Center celebrates the occasion with its customers and launches an exciting promotion across all locations. From April 17th to April 23rd, customers who shop any TSC Sultan Center store during this period will have an opportunity to win their shopping trolley for free which they can redeem immediately, or receive vouchers which can be used on their next shopping trip.

Commenting on TSC initiative, Lisa Al Gharib/Marketing Manager at TSC said: "Hundreds of trolleys can be won during this event; the more customers

shop the more they could be rewarded, it's our utmost pleasure to share TSC anniversary festivities with our customers in a fun and engaging atmosphere. We seize the occasion to express our deep gratitude to our customers for being loyal to TSC since its inception and we look forward to awarding them during this anniversary celebration."

TSC 34th Anniversary's festivities include a range of tailor-made promotions and activities being designed to cater to customers' needs. Customers, who shop during the promotion al period, will have a chance to sample a range of products across the stores, while their

children can enjoy a variety of fun filled activities, from face painting and balloon making to arts and crafts and so much more.

Al Gharib confirmed that any of TSC customers could be the winner at any time during the day!

The 34th Anniversary promotion is taking place in TSC Salmiyah, Sharq, Shaab, Hawally, Promenade, Jabriya, Salwa, Fahaheel, Al-Kout & Ahmadi locations.

TSC is committed to celebrating this occasion with its customers while offering unparalleled promotions and unique opportunities to win valuable prizes.



GUST ORGANIZES ENGLISH LANGUAGE, LITERATURE WORKSHOPS



Gulf University for Science and Technology (GUST) launched its three day Annual GUST English Language and Literature (GELL) program, sponsored by the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Science (KFAS). Carrying the theme "Language at the Crossroads of Bilingualism, Translation, and Culture", the workshops are taking place on GUST's campus led by internationally renowned academics Professor Michelle Hartman, Professor Jason Rothman, and Alice Guthrie.

The event aims to provide GUST students, staff, and faculty greater exposure to global influences, new academic trends, and major developments in the industry, which will allow them to stay current and ahead of their peers. GUST President, Professor Donald Bates, said, "GUST continuously supports events that provide knowledge and skill to our staff, faculty, students, and community. It is important for an institution like ours to be up-to-date with the latest developments in order to remain current and competitive to bring about

Kuwait's future generation."

The first two days of the conference will consist of workshops and seminars by Professor Michelle Hartman of McGill University, Canada, and Alice Guthrie, Translator in Residence at London's Free Word Centre in the UK. The last day will be dedicated to Professor Jason Rothman of Reading University, UK. Attendees will gain intensive theoretical knowledge about the most recent developments in the techniques, as well as ethical and cultural considerations in the field of translation. They will also learn the advantages of multilingualism. The workshops will give participants the opportunity to implement theories in a practical way.

More importantly, participants will have the chance to experience how native English speakers approach the Arabic language and literature for translation, and the advantages of being bilingual or multilingual in today's global culture and economy. The panel will also dedicate time to talk about the work of renowned Kuwaiti novelist, Saud Al-

Sanousi, known for his most recent novel "The Bamboo Stalk", who was also in attendance. GELL Committee Chair, Ikram El-Sherif, said, "This event provides a venue for researchers and practitioners to gather and share research, and with this year's theme we are focusing on bilingualism, translation and culture."

In today's global world, bilingualism is seen as an asset to those who seek to become global citizens. Translating and interpreting are now not only desirable, but vital skills in an ever-expanding world where opportunities are limited and boundaries dissolve. GELL workshops and seminars aim to contribute to the enhancement of the university's academic environment, along with the development of its faculty, staff, students and the community as a whole. The event is free for the GUST community, but for external participants, a registration fee of KD20 per workshop applies. Each participant will receive a certificate upon the completion of any workshop.



MAIS ALGHANIM LAUNCHES THE 'CHEF SPECIALS' MENU

Mais Alghanim has launched its latest offers, the "Chef Specials" menu, with a selection of distinctive delicacies and delicious assortments, in Mais Alghanim restaurant in Sharq and Mahboula, giving its customers an all-new and unique experience. The menu includes a number of hot and cold appetizers and salads in addition to a range of main dishes, topped with the Chef's special touch. The dishes have been carefully chosen by Mais Alghanim's chefs to suit all tastes.

For example, the Halloumi Salad with Watermelon mixed with various ingredients to give an exquisite taste, the Rocket Salad with Majdoulah cheese and fresh pomegranates, the Warbat Shawarma wrapped in Saj bread and the Oriental Makanek with sweet pepper and special tomato

sauce. As for the main dishes, the "Chef Specials" menu includes the delicious Spicy Tawouk, made with chicken cubes marinated in a secret spice blend and grilled on charcoal, served with a delightful side of Biryani rice, the Chef's Chicken Fatteh, made with chicken slices and the Chef's special ingredients, the Lamb Shank Biryani, prepared with an oven baked lamb shank marinated in Mais Alghanim's special sauce, and the Seafood Mix, a delicious mix of grilled Hammour Fillet and shrimps, marinated in Mais Alghanim's special spices served on a bed of spiced tomato sauce.

In addition to this distinctive menu, Mais Alghanim offers a selection of the best desserts including, the Lotus Banoffee Trifle with Mascarpone cheese mixed with Lotus biscuits and fresh bananas and the Sticky Date Pudding served with ice

cream. Mais Alghanim is a pioneer in hospitality and offers the finest cuisine with great competitiveness and an unforgettable taste. Mais Alghanim has always provided a range of innovative offers and the "Chef Specials" menu is part of these surprises that will soon be revealed in a series of original offers which Mais Alghanim's professional chefs are keen on preparing in hopes of guaranteeing customer satisfaction.

Please note that this selection is available at Mais Alghanim's first branch in Sharq, Gulf Road, and in the second branch in Mahboula, Coastal Road, Spoons Complex, but is unavailable for takeaway and delivery services. For more information, please call 22251155 or visit www.maisalghanim.com.



FIRST FISHACKATHON IN THE MIDDLE EAST

The Center for Research in Informatics, Sciences, and Engineering (RISE) at the American University of Kuwait (AUK); the US Embassy in Kuwait; and Kuwait Institute of Scientific Research (KISR) co-organize the 3rd Annual Fishackathon in April 2016 at the American University of Kuwait (AUK). The Annual Fishackathon (Fish Hackathon) is an international environmental initiative by the US Department of State to conserve marine life and sustainable fishery practices through technology solutions.

The event calls on coders, designers, and science enthusiasts from all around the world to come together over a weekend to create new applications and tools to address issues in sustainable fishing. The inaugural Fishackathon took place in 2014 in the United States. Last year, the second annual Fishackathon took place in 12 cities around the world. This year, the event has expanded to 43 cities on six continents, as well as a virtual hackathon.

Kuwait has been added to the list this year to be the first country in Middle East to join the Fishackathon. This year the event is planned on April 21-23 in conjunction with Earth Day. The Kuwait local event will be hosted at AUK through RISE Center, under the sponsorship of Gulf Telecom, and in collaboration with Engineers Without Borders. Participants from different institutions in Kuwait - including AUK and Kuwait University - will be competing in this two-day event in developing computer solu-

tions that promote marine conservation practices. The teams will be supported by experienced mentors from both industry and academia, along with marine scientists from KISR. The winner of the Kuwait Fishackathon will advance to compete with 42 winners from around the world. A global judging panel composed of busi-



ness, technical, and fisheries experts will review the submitted solutions from each site and select the grand prize winners, to be announced on World Oceans Day on June 8. One team will receive a \$10,000 cash prize, and another team's project will be further developed through a US government contractor.

In preparation for the weekend Fishackathon, the organizing partners held a series of training workshops for participants at AUK and KISR premises, through which participants received information and training sessions in marine biology and technology. Dr Amir Zeid, Director of RISE Center at the American University of Kuwait, said "We are delighted to partner with the US Embassy and KISR on this prestigious event. Utilizing technology to solve environmental marine biology issues aligns with the RISE Center mission to serve multidisciplinary research and development, as well as to contribute to the local community."

We would like to thank our sponsors and collaborators and we look forward to seeing the outcome of this event, which I am sure, will produce innovative ideas to support the local environmental efforts." The event kick-off will take place at KISR premises on Thursday 21st of April at 5 PM. The Fishackathon activities, along with results announcement will be held on April 22nd and 23rd at the AUK campus in Salmiya. This will be followed by an awards ceremony at AUK on Wednesday May 4th.



Palestinian Cultural Exhibition

Under the auspices of HE
Eng. Ali Al Youha

Secretary General of National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters

The Palestinian Culture Center in cooperation with the Embassy of the State of Palestine in Kuwait, invite you to its 44th exhibition, at the Kuwaiti women's Cultural and Social society in Khaldiyyeh, starting from Monday at 10:00am, April 25th to Thursday, April 28th, 2016.

Classic designs intertwined with modern usage, motifs and color will be exhibited. Items on sale include: handmade cushions, scarves, shawls, traditional dresses, ceramics and other items. Books, music and movies will also be available.

A bake sale of traditional foods will take place on Thursday. Food products imported from Palestine are available every day. A dabkha folkdance will be performed on Thursday at 6:30 pm.

Venue
The Kuwaiti Women Cultural Society,
Khaldiya, Block 2, Al-Orouba Street

Dates
Monday April 25th to Thursday April 28th, 2016

Hours
Mornings 10:00am to 1:30pm
Evenings 4:30pm to 8:30pm

Tel.
2484 3397 - 2484 3667 - 9937 6608



PARENTS ORIENTATION PROGRAM FOR LKG HELD IN ICSK-AMMAN



The Indian Community School Kuwait, Amman, welcomed the new batch of LKG students for the academic year 2016-17 on 10th April, 2016. All the parents were invited to attend the orientation program for a positive start to their school journey. Rajesh Nair C, Principal of the school, warmly greeted the parents and the students and advised them to encourage their child to actively participate in all the activities conducted by the school. He also informed the parents that the school would be an exciting, successful and happy experience for the little ones.

The students of UKG entertained the gathering with a stunning and mind blowing folk dance. Supervisor Julie Anthony illustrated the rules and regulations of the school. She also highlighted the importance of the parents' contri-

tribution towards early learning and the programs that will be conducted in the current year. During the interactive session with the parents, all the doubts and queries were clarified.

The school Vice-Principal Dr Mary Isaac proposed the vote of thanks and conveyed a message to the parents to spend more time and listen to their children about the day today activities. All the parents along with their children were guided to their respective classrooms, to collect the ID Cards and books. Students entered their new colorful and bright classrooms for the first time. Children wore a beautiful smile on their faces as they received a colorful balloon and chocolates from their respective teachers. We aspire to continue making the first day in the classroom a happy experience for all pre-primary children.



AMC TV schedule listing shows like Big Screen, Fatal Pulse, Behind Enemy Lines, etc.

ANIMAL PLANET HD TV schedule listing shows like Mountain Monsters, Australia Doesn't Just Want To Kill You, etc.

BBC FIRST TV schedule listing shows like Eastenders, New Tricks, Silent Witness, etc.

Bloomberg TELEVISION TV schedule listing shows like Charlie Rose, Bloomberg West, etc.

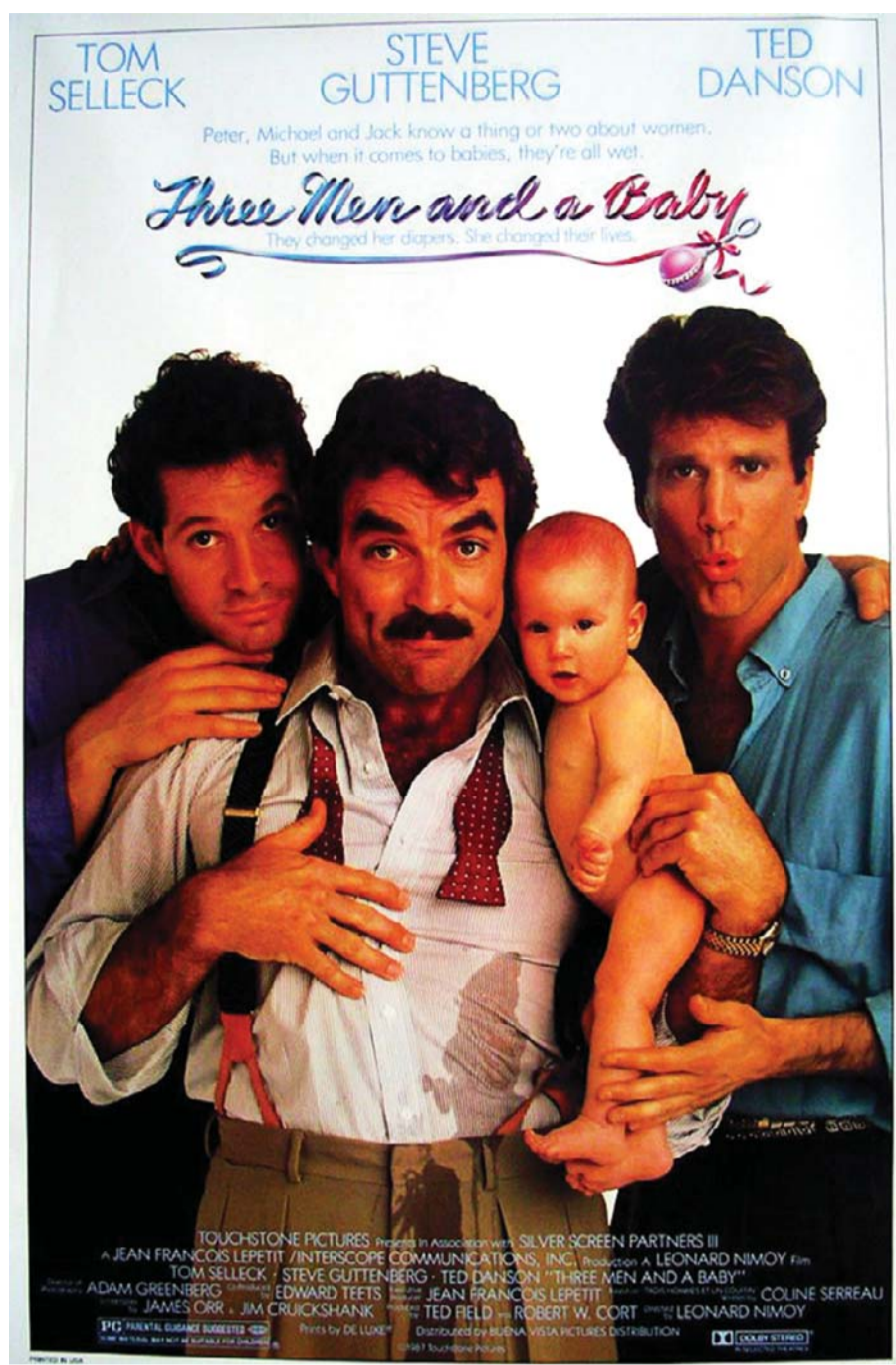


TOXIN ON OSN MOVIES HD ACTION

Discovery Channel TV schedule listing shows like Fast N' Loud, Troy, Superhuman Science, etc.

CCTV NEWS TV schedule listing shows like News Update, Dialogue, etc.

Discovery Science TV schedule listing shows like Through The Wormhole, Morgan Freeman, etc.



THREE MEN AND A BABY ON OSN MOVIES HD COMEDY

Food Network TV schedule listing shows like Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives, Chopped, etc.

History Channel TV schedule listing shows like The Kitchen, Trisha's Southern Kitchen, etc.

EHD TV schedule listing shows like Keeping Up With The Kardashians, The Grace Helbig Show, etc.

ITV HD CHOICE TV schedule listing shows like The Chase: Celebrity Specials, Emmerdale, etc.

NAT GEO WILD HD TV schedule listing shows like Deadly Instincts, Man And The Wild, etc.

NAT GEO WILD HD TV schedule listing shows like America's National Parks, Animals Gone Wild, etc.

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC CHANNEL HD TV schedule listing shows like Brain Games, Cesar To The Rescue, etc.

NAT GEO people HD TV schedule listing shows like Dream Cruises, George Clarke's Amazing Spaces, etc.



GONE GIRL ON OSN MOVIES HD

OSN FIRST HD TV schedule listing shows like Once Upon A Time, Marvel's Agents Of S.H.I.E.L.D., etc.

OSN MOVIES HD ACTION TV schedule listing shows like Predator, Battleship, Battle Of The Damned, etc.

OSN MOVIES HD COMEDY TV schedule listing shows like Down And Out In Beverly Hills, Orange County, etc.

OSN MOVIES HD DRAMA TV schedule listing shows like Escape, The Trials Of Cate McCall, etc.

OSN MOVIES HD FAMILY TV schedule listing shows like Pirates Of The Caribbean: Curse Of The Black Pearl, etc.

OSN MOVIES HD FESTIVAL TV schedule listing shows like Diana, At Any Price, etc.

OSN MOVIES HD KIDS TV schedule listing shows like Blue Elephant 2, The Olsen Gang In Deep, etc.

OSN SPORTS 2 HD TV schedule listing shows like The PGA Tour Champions Highlights, NFL Full Time, etc.

CLASSIFIEDS



KNCC PROGRAMME FROM THURSDAY TO WEDNESDAY (21/04/2016 TO 27/04/2016)

SHARQIA-1 THE HUNTSMAN WINTER'S WAR CRISTIANO RONALDO: WORLD AT HIS FEET THE HUNTSMAN WINTER'S WAR THE ONES BELOW CRISTIANO RONALDO: WORLD AT HIS FEET THE HUNTSMAN WINTER'S WAR THE ONES BELOW	12:30 PM 2:45 PM 4:15 PM 6:30 PM 8:30 PM 10:00 PM 12:15 AM	SARRAINODU - Telugu THE JUNGLE BOOK THE JUNGLE BOOK THE JUNGLE BOOK THE JUNGLE BOOK THE HUNTSMAN WINTER'S WAR	1:30 PM 3:30 PM 5:45 PM 8:00 PM 10:15 PM 12:30 AM	CHOCOLAT THE ONES BELOW CHOCOLAT THE ONES BELOW	5:15 PM 7:45 PM 9:30 PM 12:05 AM
SHARQIA-2 THE JUNGLE BOOK SARRAINODU - Telugu THE JUNGLE BOOK THE JUNGLE BOOK THE JUNGLE BOOK THE HUNTSMAN WINTER'S WAR	12:45 PM 2:00 PM 3:00 PM 5:15 PM 7:30 PM 10:00 PM 12:15 AM	FANAR-1 THE HUNTSMAN WINTER'S WAR THE HUNTSMAN WINTER'S WAR CRISTIANO RONALDO: WORLD AT HIS FEET THE HUNTSMAN WINTER'S WAR CRISTIANO RONALDO: WORLD AT HIS FEET THE HUNTSMAN WINTER'S WAR THE HUNTSMAN WINTER'S WAR	12:30 PM 2:45 PM 5:00 PM 6:45 PM 9:00 PM 10:30 PM 12:45 AM	MARINA-2 THE JUNGLE BOOK THE JUNGLE BOOK THE JUNGLE BOOK THE JUNGLE BOOK THE HUNTSMAN WINTER'S WAR	11:30 AM 1:45 PM 4:00 PM 6:15 PM 8:30 PM 10:45 PM 1:00 AM
SHARQIA-3 CRISTIANO RONALDO: WORLD AT HIS FEET CRISTIANO RONALDO: WORLD AT HIS FEET CRIMINAL CRISTIANO RONALDO: WORLD AT HIS FEET FAN- Hindi FAN- Hindi SARRAINODU - Telugu SARRAINODU - Telugu SARRAINODU - Telugu CRIMINAL	12:00 PM 1:30 PM 3:00 PM 5:15 PM 6:45 PM 9:45 PM 3:30 PM 6:45 PM 9:45 PM 12:45 AM	FANAR-2 FAN- Hindi FAN- Hindi FAN- Hindi SARRAINODU - Telugu SARRAINODU - Telugu SARRAINODU - Telugu CRIMINAL	12:30 PM 3:30 PM 6:30 PM 9:30 PM 3:30 PM 6:30 PM 9:30 PM 12:30 AM	MARINA-3 THE HUNTSMAN WINTER'S WAR THE HUNTSMAN WINTER'S WAR CRISTIANO RONALDO: WORLD AT HIS FEET THE HUNTSMAN WINTER'S WAR CRISTIANO RONALDO: WORLD AT HIS FEET THE HUNTSMAN WINTER'S WAR THE HUNTSMAN WINTER'S WAR	12:00 PM 2:15 PM 4:30 PM 6:00 PM 8:15 PM 9:45 PM 12:05 AM
MUHALAB-1 THE HUNTSMAN WINTER'S WAR THE HUNTSMAN WINTER'S WAR THE HUNTSMAN WINTER'S WAR CRISTIANO RONALDO: WORLD AT HIS FEET CRISTIANO RONALDO: WORLD AT HIS FEET THE HUNTSMAN WINTER'S WAR NO FRI-MON SARRAINODU - Telugu	12:30 PM 2:45 PM 5:00 PM 7:15 PM 8:45 PM 10:30 PM 10:30 PM	FANAR-3 DEMOLITION THE ONES BELOW DEMOLITION THE ONES BELOW DEMOLITION THE ONES BELOW DEMOLITION	12:00 PM 2:15 PM 4:00 PM 6:15 PM 8:00 PM 10:15 PM 12:15 AM	AVENUES-1 THE JUNGLE BOOK THE JUNGLE BOOK THE JUNGLE BOOK MA3 AL KHATAR (Kuwaiti Film) MA3 AL KHATAR (Kuwaiti Film) MA3 AL KHATAR (Kuwaiti Film)	1:15 PM 3:30 PM 5:45 PM 8:00 PM 10:15 PM 12:30 AM
MUHALAB-2 FAN- Hindi KUNG FU PANDA 3 FAN- Hindi FAN- Hindi FAN- Hindi SARRAINODU - Telugu SARRAINODU - Telugu SARRAINODU - Telugu FAN- Hindi	12:30 PM 1:30 PM 3:30 PM 6:30 PM 9:30 PM 3:30 PM 6:30 PM 9:30 PM 12:30 AM	FANAR-4 THE JUNGLE BOOK THE JUNGLE BOOK THE JUNGLE BOOK - 3D THE JUNGLE BOOK THE JUNGLE BOOK	12:15 PM 2:30 PM 4:45 PM 7:00 PM 9:15 PM 11:30 PM	AVENUES-3 DEMOLITION CHOCOLAT DEMOLITION CHOCOLAT DEMOLITION CHOCOLAT SARRAINODU - Telugu SARRAINODU - Telugu SARRAINODU - Telugu	11:45 AM 2:00 PM 4:30 PM 6:45 PM 9:15 PM 11:30 PM 2:00 PM 5:00 PM 8:00 PM 11:00 PM
MUHALAB-3 THE JUNGLE BOOK	1:00 PM	FANAR-5 THE JUNGLE BOOK THE JUNGLE BOOK CRIMINAL FAN- Hindi FAN- Hindi	1:30 PM 3:45 PM 6:00 PM 8:15 PM 11:15 PM	AVENUES-4 FAN- Hindi FAN- Hindi FAN- Hindi FAN- Hindi FAN- Hindi	12:30 PM 3:30 PM 6:30 PM 9:30 PM 12:30 AM
		MARINA-1 THE ONES BELOW FAN- Hindi	12:30 PM 2:30 PM	AVENUES-5 THE HUNTSMAN WINTER'S WAR THE JUNGLE BOOK - 3D	1:00 PM 3:15 PM

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CHANGE OF NAME

I, Ali Akbar Husaini
Bangaliwala, holder of
Indian Passport No.
M3187871, address:
Temba,
Mohammediyapura,
Sagwara, Durgarpur
314025, Rajasthan, hereby
change my name to Ali
Akbar Husain Housami.
(C 5165)

I, Nilofer, holder of Indian
Passport No. N5195350.
address: Temba,
Mohammediyapura,
Sagwara, Durgarpur,
Rajasthan, hereby change
my name to Nilofer Husain
Housami. **(C 5165)**
19-4-2016



PRAYER TIMINGS

Fajr:	03:53
Shorook	05:16
Duhr:	11:47
Asr:	15:22
Maghrib:	18:18
Isha:	19:39



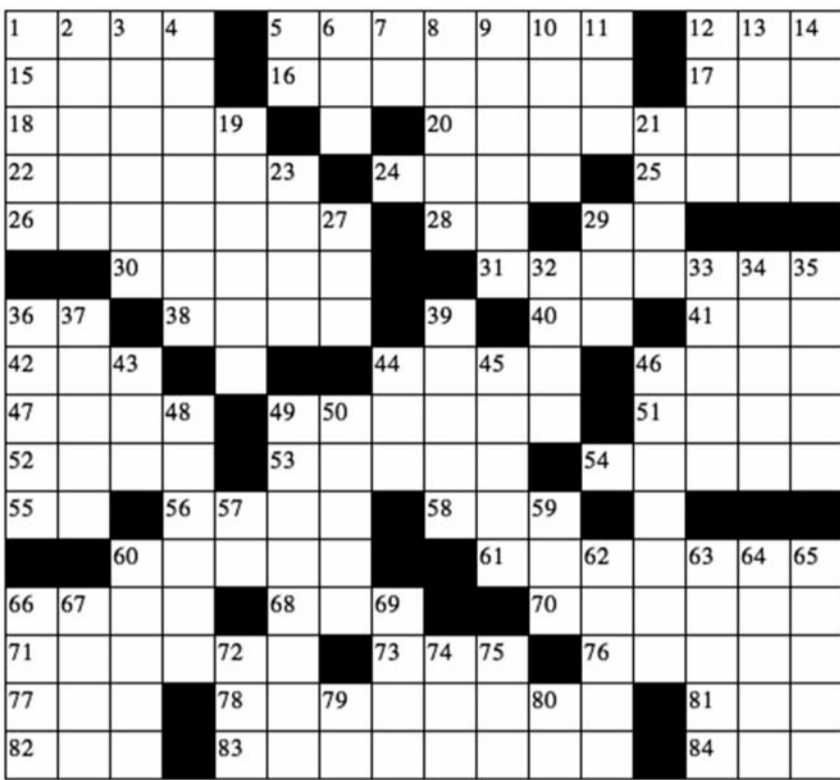
Directorate General of Civil Aviation Home Page (www.kuwait-airport.com.kw)

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

Arrival Flights on Thursday 21/4/2016				Departure Flights on Thursday 21/4/2016			
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	Airlines	Flt	Route	Time
THY	772	Istanbul	00:10	AIC	976	Goa/Chennai	00:05
MSC	415	Sohag	00:10	BBC	044	Dhaka	00:10
JZR	267	Beirut	00:30	JAI	574	Mumbai	00:25
FDB	069	Dubai	00:55	MSR	615	Cairo	00:30
KKK	6506	Istanbul	00:55	FDB	072	Dubai	00:30
DLH	635	Doha	01:00	MSC	404	Asyut	00:55
QTR	1086	Doha	01:15	KLM	411	Amsterdam	00:55
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	THY	765	Istanbul	02:45
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:15	ETH	621	Addis Ababa	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
MSR	612	Cairo	03:15	KKK	6505	Istanbul	04:05
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:15	FDB	058	Dubai	04:05
QTR	1076	Doha	03:25	ETD	306	Abu Dhabi	04:10
KAC	544	Cairo	03:40	MSR	613	Cairo	04:15
LMU	510	Cairo	04:00	QTR	1077	Doha	04:35
QTR	8511	Doha	04:30	JZR	560	Sohag	05:00
DHX	170	Bahrain	05:10	LMU	511	Cairo	05:00
THY	770	Istanbul	05:15	QTR	8512	Doha	06:00
JZR	529	Asyut	06:00	RJA	643	Amman	06:25
KAC	412	Bangkok/Manila	06:15	QTR	1087	Doha	06:30
PAL	668	Manila/Dubai	06:25	THY	771	Istanbul	06:45
BAW	157	London	06:40	GFA	212	Bahrain	06:50
IRA	673	Ahwaz	07:15	JZR	240	Amman	06:55
FDB	5061	Dubai	07:15	FDB	070	Dubai	07:05
JZR	503	Luxor	07:25	JZR	164	Dubai	07:15
KAC	382	Delhi	07:30	FDB	5062	Dubai	07:55
KAC	346	Ahmedabad	07:35	IRA	672	Ahwaz	08:15
KAC	206	Islamabad	07:40	BAW	156	London	08:25
KAC	204	Lahore	07:40	JZR	778	Jeddah	08:30
KAC	302	Mumbai	07:50	FDB	054	Dubai	08:30
SVA	512	Riyadh	07:50	SVA	513	Riyadh	08:50
FDB	053	Dubai	07:50	JZR	534	Cairo	09:25
KAC	332	Trivandrum	08:15	KAC	787	Jeddah	09:30
KAC	344	Chennai	08:15	KAC	619	Doha	09:30
KAC	352	Kochi	08:20	KAC	671	Dubai	09:30
KAC	362	Colombo	08:20	JZR	482	Istanbul	09:45
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
IRA	667	Esfahan	09:05	IRA	668	Mashhad	10:05
QTR	1070	Doha	09:30	FDB	056	Dubai	10:40
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40	QTR	1071	Doha	10:45
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40	KAC	677	Muscat/Abu Dhabi	10:50
UAE	873	Dubai	10:40	KAC	501	Beirut	11:00
MEA	404	Beirut	11:00	KAC	153	Istanbul	11:00
JZR	561	Sohag	11:25	KAC	561	Amman	11:20
RBG	553	Alexandria	11:30	KAC	165	Rome/Paris	11:25
JZR	165	Dubai	11:50	KAC	741	Dammam	11:35
NIA	151	Cairo	12:20	GFA	214	Bahrain	11:35
FDB	075	Dubai	12:25	MEA	405	Beirut	12:00
JZR	241	Amman	12:30	KAC	541	Cairo	12:05
UAE	871	Dubai	12:45	UAE	874	Dubai	12:10
MSR	610	Cairo	13:00	RBG	554	Alexandria	12:10
KAC	620	Doha	13:10	JZR	776	Jeddah	12:15
QTR	1078	Doha	14:05	KAC	785	Jeddah	13:00
JZR	779	Jeddah	14:05	JZR	176	Dubai	13:10
KAC	672	Dubai	14:05	FDB	076	Dubai	13:10
KNE	231	Riyadh	14:10	JZR	786	Riyadh	13:20
AXB	393	Kozhikode	14:10	NIA	152	Cairo	13:20
FDB	057	Dubai	14:20	PIA	205	Lahore	14:00

DIAL161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

CROSSWORD 1233

**ACROSS**

- (Sumerian) Sun god.
- (Judaism) An eight-day Jewish holiday commemorating the rededication of the Temple of Jerusalem.
- A hormone produced by the anterior pituitary gland.
- The capital and largest city of Yemen.
- A foreboding about what is about to happen.
- A tool with a flat blade attached at right angles to a long handle.
- Hilly land.
- The capital and largest city of Burundi.
- New World chameleons.
- A small cake leavened with yeast.
- An association of people to promote the welfare of senior citizens.
- Marked or dyed or discolored with foreign matter.
- A white soft metallic element that tarnishes readily.
- Port city in the United Arab Emirates on the Persian Gulf.
- A form of benzodiazepine (trade name Halcion) frequently prescribed as a sleeping pill.
- A state in north central United States.
- Female equine animal.
- A rare silvery (usually trivalent) metallic element.
- A health resort near a spring or at the sea-side.
- Aromatic bulb used as seasoning.
- Any of numerous local fertility and nature deities worshipped by ancient Semitic peoples.
- A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
- A former copper coin of Pakistan.
- A facial expression characterized by turning up the corners of the mouth.
- Any tropical gymnosperm of the order Cycadales.
- (astronomy) The angular distance of a celestial point measured westward along the celestial equator from the zenith crossing.
- A Chad language spoken south of Lake Chad.
- Resinlike substance secreted by certain lac insects.
- A Powhatan Indian woman (the daughter of Powhatan) who befriended the English at Jamestown and is said to have saved Captain John Smith's life (1595-1617).
- Type genus of the family Arcidae.
- Tag the base runner to get him out.
- Formed or united into a whole.
- African tree having an exceedingly thick trunk and fruit that resembles a gourd and has an edible pulp called monkey bread.
- The airforce of Great Britain.
- Jordan's port.
- An inflammatory complication of leprosy that results in painful skin lesions on the arms and legs and face.
- A nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug (trade name Clinoril).
- An adult male person (as opposed to a woman).
- An informal term for a father.
- The Greek biographer who wrote Parallel Lives (a collection of biographies of famous Greeks and Romans that Shakespeare used in writing his plays).
- A loose sleeveless outer garment made from abba cloth.

DOWN

- Goddess of dawn.
- The state of being contaminated.
- Leave or unload, esp. of passengers or cargo.
- A rare silvery (usually trivalent) metallic element.
- A unit of power equal to 746 watts.
- A unit of surface area equal to 100 square meters.
- A colorless odorless gaseous element that give a red glow in a vacuum tube.
- Occurring or encountered or experienced or observed frequently or in accordance with regular practice or procedure.
- The quarter of many North African cities in which the citadel is located.
- Largest known toad species.
- Lap that forms a cloth border doubled back and stitched down v 1.
- Any branch of Shinto other than Kokka.
- A unit of pressure equal to 0.001316 atmosphere.
- A collection of objects laid on top of each other.
- In the Arabian Nights a hero who tells of the fantastic adventures he had in his voyages.
- The Tibeto-Burman language spoken in the Dali region of Yunnan.
- (used especially of vegetation) Having lost all moisture.
- Small cubes with 1 to 6 spots on the faces.
- A flat wing-shaped process or winglike part of an organism.
- American novelist (1909-1955).
- (Old Testament) The second patriarch.
- A drama set to music.
- Given or having a specified name.
- English aristocrat who was the first wife of Prince Charles.
- A fragment broken off from the edge or face of stone or ore and having at least one thin edge.
- A local computer network for communication between computers.
- Black tropical American cuckoo.
- Water at boiling temperature diffused in the atmosphere v 1.
- A long-handled fork for turning or lifting hay.
- 1 species.
- The largest city and former capital of Turkey.
- A member of the Siouan people formerly living in the Missouri river valley in NE Nebraska.
- A silvery ductile metallic element found primarily in bauxite.
- A rotating disk shaped to convert circular into linear motion.
- (archaic) Of persons.
- An English pirate who operated in the Caribbean and off the Atlantic coast of North America (died in 1718).
- Small terrestrial lizard of warm regions of the Old World.
- Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
- A city in southern Turkey on the Seyhan River.
- Type genus of the Ranidae.
- A native or inhabitant of Great Britain.
- Of southern Europe.
- (Irish) Mother of the ancient Irish gods.
- 32nd President of the United States.
- A trivalent metallic element of the rare earth group.
- A radioactive element of the actinoid series.

Yesterday's Solution



STAR TRACK

**Aries (March 21-April 19)**

Be careful of someone that expresses himself or herself through hidden messages. You can help by rephrasing the message and asking if that is what is meant. You are not the only one that has trouble understanding this person and you can be very helpful here. Practical, effective ideas are the ones that make the most sense now-putting them to good use is a focus for you. You may find yourself analyzing your life situation and surroundings. Conversations of an inspiring kind may be in order with young people or others around you. Financial matters may come to your attention today and well they should; this is a very lucky and profitable day for you. Everything points to your taking the initiative in your life.

**Taurus (April 20-May 20)**

It's a good time to hunt for bargains, store useful goods, pay debts and invest in your future. Use your money wisely; you are apt to spend more on speculation, hobbies, entertainment and children. You may wish to express more self-confidence that is intellectual; this is an active time. This may take the form of training or leading others, short trips and visits, or intellectual competition may be the highlight of the day. Develop your power of positive thinking and speech. You tend to be understanding toward those in need. You are sensitive to beauty and imagination and you may enjoy quiet meditation. Your activities this evening may involve art, music, hospitals, institutions and places of retreat.

**Gemini (May 21-June 20)**

Communication with neighbors or friends of friends may lead you to a teaching career in some way. This could be lecturing, part-time or full-time teaching, tutoring, career guidance, etc. Whatever the case, this new venture will keep you busy as well as satisfied intellectually and socially. There is some problem today with the swiftness of your work's progress. You may decide to leave well enough alone for the rest of the day until you understand the situation better. Practical, utilitarian ideas are the ones that make the most sense now-putting them to good use is a focus for you. There is a good feeling about the relationship you have with your loved ones and there are some wonderful opportunities for good communication.

**Cancer (June 21-July 22)**

You cannot put your finger on the answer to a particular problem just now, but you will understand in time. You sense what is needed and you have plenty of patience. You have a positive attitude and can usually spread joy wherever you go. There is nothing that pleases you quite so much as being useful in work or a volunteer service where you can make a difference in the lives of others. You may find yourself involved in some form of volunteer service this afternoon. A friend has your same point of view and later today, you could enjoy several hours of conversation concerning world affairs. You may feel that you are in harmony with your loved ones-the lines of communication are open. A show of appreciation is in order.

**Leo (July 23-August 22)**

Practical, workable ideas are the ones that make the most sense now-putting them to good use is a focus for you. There are optimism, faith and a tendency to take chances. Today you will be able to tackle tasks that require real discipline or organization. You are able to concentrate and complete your work as well as lend a helping hand to others that could be a little confused. You may have some serious or contemplative moments that will help you deal with higher-ups. There may be time to put your feet up and relax during the noon meal, but you might find a leisurely walk will be beneficial. This evening you could be feeling more like sharing some relaxation time with a loved one- or with close friends. Perhaps it would be best to ease into this evening.

**Virgo (August 23-September 22)**

You are likely to find yourself tuning in to some amazing things if you allow your visionary side to really get going. This is not a great time for career or vocational decisions but your creative ideas will bring about motivation for others. Some of your ideas will be beneficial to your own needs in a roundabout way. You seem to take the fluctuation of the day with an even flow and a bit of humor. Anyone around you for very long will find your company enjoyable. You are intuitively aware of any surrounding stress and can successfully maneuver around the pitfalls. The need to adapt to the game of work, politics, performing and balance on a personal level is beginning to get your attention and you are doing well with the balancing act.

**Libra (September 23-October 22)**

You can take action now to improve your finances. With the extra courage you have during this time, you can ask for a raise in pay. You can earn more or spend to improve your security. You will have to deal with accumulated bills. It's a poor time to buy on credit unless you have planned ahead. You can increase your insight into past and future trends and appreciate the beauty and evolutionary purpose of life. At times, you will be able to relax and grow through introspection and meditation. Association with hospitals, institutions or spiritual retreats can be beneficial. You teach others to be helpful, compassionate and generous toward those who suffer. You can receive sympathy, comfort and healing if you need it today.

**Scorpio (October 23-November 21)**

Organize your responsibilities and gain control of your objectives. This may mean that you will need to keep a low profile so as not to be encouraged to move in a different direction. Keep that positive outlook of yours and be a good example to others. There is something about your attitude that is catching. Even if you feel down-when you smile and look as if everything is working out the way you want it to, everything seems to fall right in line! You have the green light to proceed with a special project now and will gain the stamp of approval from onlookers. Happiness at home is from a good attitude. You look for ways to improve your surroundings. You enjoy gathering information and that is what you do tonight-share ideas and information!

**Sagittarius (November 22-December 19)**

At times, you can be uncertain over the simplest of decisions. The reason for this is often very simple. Knowing more facts relating to an issue will help you feel more confident. Material things are foremost on your mind just now. There is an emphasis on the real rather than the ideal. Some particular thing that has been holding you back is completely within your control to change. You have a natural detective type of personality that can solve problems and size up personalities quickly. Although you are very fair, you are also good at deciding how to use your authority to hand out responsibilities. As a result, people are capable and proud of working for or with you as much as can be accomplished. There is a feeling that anything is possible.

**Capricorn (December 22-January 19)**

You show a very determined and practical frame of mind. You rarely reach conclusions without a great deal of cautious deliberation. Today calls for cautious deliberation. You may have a fixed opinion about a sensitive matter based on some strong likes and dislikes. Give yourself time to think things through before responding to touchy situations so that you can take on a larger view from all angles. You are extremely hard working and ambitious on the professional level. A pioneering instinct may take hold this afternoon as you begin working with some new technology. On the home front, you need to be willing to clean out or get rid of anything that does not fit or serve you well. It may be your turn to cook tonight.

**Aquarius (January 20- February 18)**

There may be a great deal of financial panic with your monetary situation. You must be cautious in personal decisions about finances. A part-time job may be necessary and if anybody can pull it off, you can. Real progress can be realized soon, have confidence in your abilities and be patient. Review your debts and know what you owe so that you will know how to pace yourself with all that extra work. You may not have to push as hard as you think. If you have not been in an exercise program recently, you might enjoy attending some exercise class with a friend. You will encourage each other. Be sure to eat plenty of foods that are high in b complex vitamins to build your strength. Find a creative outlet for your ideas.

**Pisces (February 19-March 20)**

This is an important day because it will open opportunities for you to make changes in the direction of your future. Be observant to the opportunities when they arise. Practical, effective ideas make the most sense now-putting them to good use is a focus for you. You have good communication with authority figures, and today brings with it, opportunities to sign contracts and confirm agreements. A social affair with your co-worker friends can be enjoyed after work. You will get to better know the people you work with and may come to find a common thread among many of them. Be wise in your relationship with friends and family. Your opinions are probably correct but others may not be ready for the complete truth at this time.

WORD SEARCH

Stephen King Movies

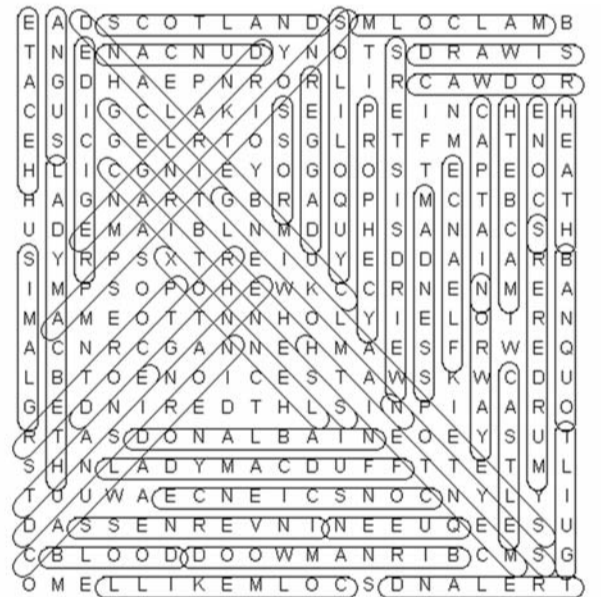
Find and circle all of the Stephen King Movies that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell a secret message.



- APT PUPIL
- CARRIE
- CAT'S EYE
- CHILDREN OF THE CORN
- CHRISTINE
- CREEPSHOW I
- CREEPSHOW II
- CUJO
- DARK HALF
- DEAD ZONE
- DOLORES CLAIRBORNE
- DREAMCATCHER
- FIRESTARTER
- GRAVEYARD SHIFT
- GREEN MILE
- HEARTS IN ATLANTIS
- LANGOLIERS
- MANGLER
- MAXIMUM OVERDRIVE
- MISERY
- NEEDFUL THINGS
- NIGHT FLIER
- PET SEMATARY
- QUICKSILVER HIGHWAY
- ROSE RED
- RUNNING MAN
- SALEM'S LOT
- SHAWSHANK REDEMPTION
- SHINING
- SILVER BULLET
- SLEEPWALKERS
- STAND BY ME
- THE STAND
- THINNER
- TOMMYKNOCKERS
- TRUCKS

Yesterday Solution

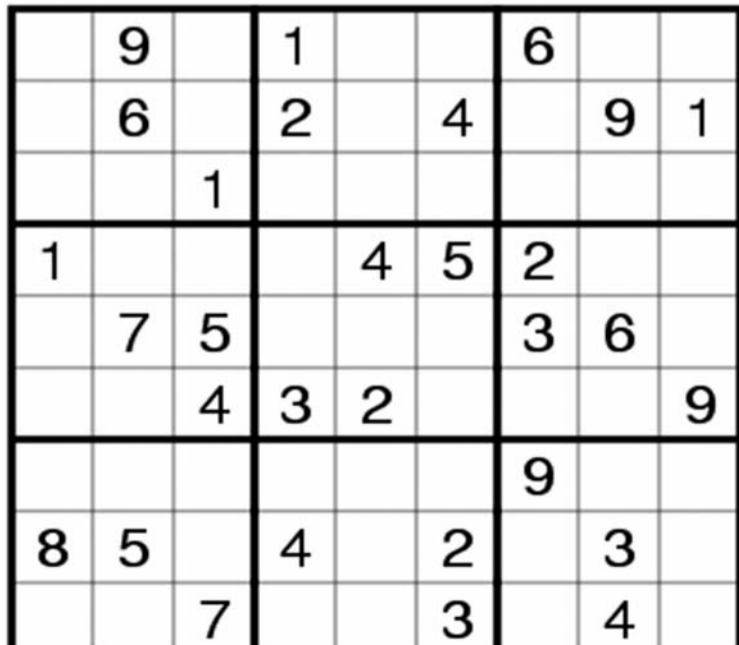
Shakespeare: Macbeth



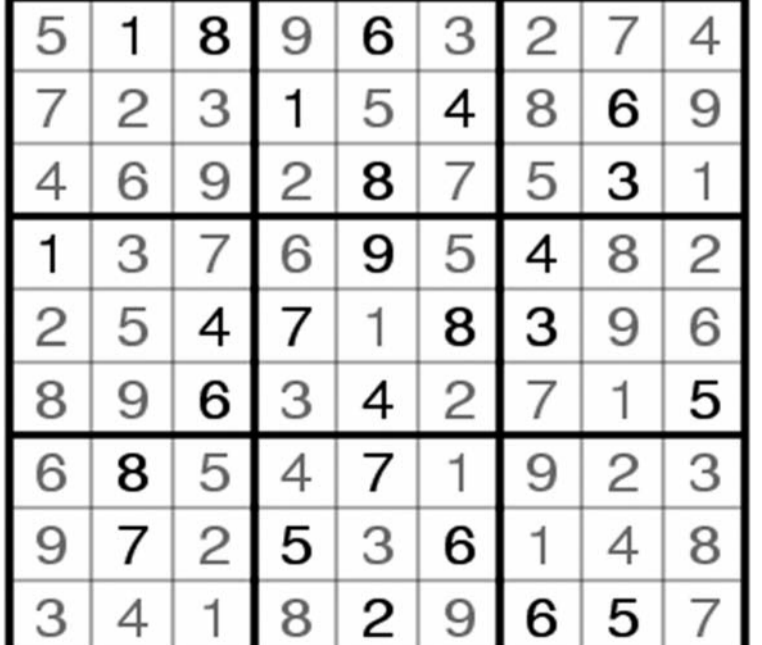
- ANGUS
- APPARTITIONS
- BANQUO
- BIRNAM WOOD
- BLOOD
- CAITHNESS
- CAPTAIN
- CASTLE
- CAULDRON
- CAWDOR
- COLMEKILL
- CONSCIENCE
- CUMBERLAND
- DAGGER
- DOCTOR
- DONALBAIN
- DUNCAN
- DUNSLINANE
- ENGLAND
- FLEANCE
- GENTLEWOMAN
- GLAMIS
- GUILT
- HEATH
- HECATE
- INVERNESS
- IRELAND
- LADY MACBETH
- LADY MACDOUFF
- LENNOX
- MACBETH
- MADNESS
- MALCOLM
- MENTETH
- MURDERERS
- NORWAY
- PORTER
- PROPHCY
- QUEEN
- REGICIDE
- ROSS
- SCONE
- SCOTLAND
- SEYTON
- SEWARD
- SLEEPWALKING
- SOLLOQUY
- THANE
- WEIRD SISTERS

Hidden sentence: BY THE PRICKING OF MY THUMBS, SOMETHING WICKED THIS WAY COMES

Daily SuDoku



Yesterday's Solution



'Hunger Games' memorabilia to go under the hammer

Collectors with a good arm and a few thousand dollars to burn are being invited to bid for Jennifer Lawrence's iconic hunting bow in an auction of memorabilia from blockbuster film franchise "The Hunger Games." The weapon-expected to fetch up to \$12,000 — is among almost 500 costumes, props and other items up for grabs from the original film and its sequels "Catching Fire" and the two-part "Mockingjay."

"Everyone will have a chance to acquire items from their favorite characters and moments of 'The Hunger Games' series," said Joe Maddalena, president of Los Angeles auction house Profiles in History. "We're extremely proud to offer a collection of this caliber for such a beloved studio franchise." The auction will be held on May 20. The dystopian "Hunger Games" series, which debuted in 2012, is among the highest grossing film franchises of all time, having taken in over \$2.9 billion worldwide.

The first three films set various records for biggest opening weekends and made a star of Lawrence as Katniss Everdeen, the plucky teenage heroine who becomes an iconic rebel

leader. "The Hunger Games' films have captured hearts and minds around the world," said Kerry Phelan, an executive vice president of Lionsgate, the studio behind the movies. "We are excited to bring fans the unique opportunity to own a piece of this global phenomenon."

The auction will feature costumes worn by Lawrence, Josh Hutcherson and other stars of the franchise, including Katniss's black, three-piece snakeskin-patterned leather and vinyl chariot costume, listed for up to \$50,000. The lots also include Hutcherson's tribute combat wetsuit from "Catching Fire" and Lawrence's hunting ensemble and stunt longbow from "Mockingjay, Part Two." — AFP

This file photo shows hair stylist Gemma Sim putting the finishing touches to a new wax figure of US actress Jennifer Lawrence dressed as the character Katniss Everdeen from the Hunger Games film franchise as it is unveiled at Madame Tussauds in central London. — AFP



Aniston

named People's 'most beautiful' woman

Jennifer Aniston was named People magazine's most beautiful woman of 2016 yesterday, 12 years after she first won the honor. Aniston, 47, said she was "very, very flattered" to be named again, telling the magazine she had a "sort of very excited, teenage-y kind of moment" when she heard the news. People also named the "Friends" star the most beautiful woman in 2004 when the TV comedy series was in its final season. Recent winners of the honor include Sandra Bullock, Jennifer Lopez and Lupita Nyong'o.

Aniston, who last year married her second husband, actor Justin Theroux, said she started paying attention to her looks and her body early in her career after an agent told her she failed to get a part because she was "too chubby." "I was like, 'What?!' But my diet was terrible," she said. "Milk shakes and French fries with gravy. It was a good thing to start paying attention." Aniston now works out at least six days a week but says she is not as strict as she once was when indulging in some of her favorite foods. — Reuters



In this file photo, Jennifer Aniston arrives at the 21st annual Critics' Choice Awards at the Barker Hangar in Santa Monica, Calif. — AP

Italian furniture makers strengthen brands through archives

Big Italian furniture brands turned out collections at the 55th Milan Furniture Fair that included forgotten or neglected treasures from their archives, along with fresh innovations by the "starchitects" who have infused design with glamour. A record 372,000 people attended the premier event for Italian design and furnishings that ended Sunday. It featured more than 2,400 exhibitors at the Rho fairgrounds and spilled out into eight design districts in Milan's city center. The annual gathering highlights the prowess of Italy's furniture manufacturing sector, which last year reported a 3 percent increase of revenues to nearly 25 billion euros (\$28 billion). Some highlights:

Gender bending

Patricia Urquiola, who was named Cassina's new art director in September, is doing it all: launching her own designs while curating new works from colleagues, and updating the Italian brand's iconic pieces ahead of its 90th anniversary next year. Urquiola said she has brought a more feminine influence to the Cassina DNA, which "has always been very masculine, very architectural."

She started with a new armchair called "Gender," which she described as her "manifesto piece." It combines two elements: a ridged, high-back form that embraces the occupant with a more cartilaginous, adjustable headrest and a fitted cushioned "dress." The chair can be paired with an inverted U-shaped ottoman. "I think it is time to stop the argument of gender. We need more blended gender," she said.

For her debut collection, Urquiola also revisited a steel-supported table designed by Carlo Scarpa in 1968, making it from anodized aluminum in strong shades including copper and matte red to lighten the impact. The table in the central Milan showroom featured a clear glass top, but it's also available in white or black marble. "Now the table is much lighter," she said. "Evolution means to take care of things and make them new." The energetic Spaniard's works also popped up at collateral design events, including a stained-glass credenza, cabinet and room divider trio commissioned by Spazio Pontaccio.

East meets west

Taiwan-based architect Shi-Chieh Lu adapted the traditional yoke-back Ming chair popular in China for Poltrona Frau, as the Italian brand infuses its collection with a taste of the Orient. While the Ming chair has traditionally been crafted from wood, the "Ming's Heart" design for Poltrona Frau takes its European cues from the leather styling. The distinctive geometric back and seat are suspended from the tubular frame, creating the sensation of a swing. "It gives the idea of floating in the air," Shi-Chieh said. The Ming chair is among a series of pieces commissioned by Asian designers this year that merge with Poltrona Frau's iconic pieces and contemporary design.

"I think that Frau is recognizable beyond the fact of whether a designer is from Taiwan or from Milan, because identity is something you create through the construction, the way of working the leather, and the stitching," said Marco Romanelli, who is in charge of reviving the brand's icons. "It is like saying the brand is strong enough to absorb the work of people who come from any part of the world."

The essential chair

Leave it to Knoll to provide the essential chair update. The US brand has made some of the world's most distinctive, enduring chair designs, including Ludwig Mies van der Rohe's Barcelona chair. "The chair is an intricate question," allowed Benjamin Pardo, Knoll's design director, recalling the 70 series executive seating collection that marked the brand's entry into

the European market in the mid-20th century.

Knoll's latest entry to the world of side dining seating, designed by Marc Krusin, arches comfortably around the occupant and features a functional horizontal aperture between the seat and the back that is both appealing to the eye and allows for easing lifting. Keeping the focus on seating, Piero Lissoni designed a new rail-based sofa system, a trend in the sector, allowing combinations of softer seating with tables on the same base. Dubbed "Avio," the Knoll system evokes a sense of floating, and has the interior-design advantage of not being either left- or right-handed. "It is intended to be a sofa that one can sit up and have a great conversation in, and also take a really great nap in," Pardo said.

Crystal works

One of architect Zaha Hadid's last design projects before her sudden death last month was a striking, curved, crystal statement piece for the Austrian crystal maker Swarovski. Titled "Crista," the massive crystal and metallic flutes splay out of a central point like arching reeds, utilizing for the first time Swarovski's new wave cut technology. The work anchored Swarovski's debut home collection, which also featured a collection of brightly reflecting trays, centerpieces and bowls by Spaniard Tomas Alonso, and candle holders with refracting crystal wax catchers by Kim Thome of Norway. Hadid's creativity lived on elsewhere at the Milan design fair, with a prototype cubed low-back armchair for Cassina and curving, black granite wall shelves for Italian brand Citco.

Heroic accents

As with his runway designs, Tomas Maier took inspiration from materials for Bottega Veneta's latest home collection, with heroic bronze accents. The bronze base of round, arched coffee tables provided a fitting thematic counterpoint to frescoes of fierce war scenes in the living room of the brand's 18th century palazzo showroom. They were harmonized with velvet seating.

Bottega Veneta launched its home line in 2006, and as with other design houses, it is a growing part of the portfolio. This year's collection featured updates on tableware, including porcelain dishes and flatware imprinted with Bottega's distinguishing weave pattern. "I think when one has an aesthetic point of view and a sensibility about materials and color and shape - and that can be in a handbag, that can be in a garment, that can be in a shoe, that can be in a lot of things - we also then have a sensibility for interiors and interior furnishings," Maier said. "So I am talking to a client that is already my client."

Maier also finds cross-overs from his ready-to-wear looks. A leopard pattern on a chair appeared on the runway last season, while platinum boxes with semi-precious stone was inspired by Bottega Veneta's stone-inlaid sterling silver jewelry. — AP



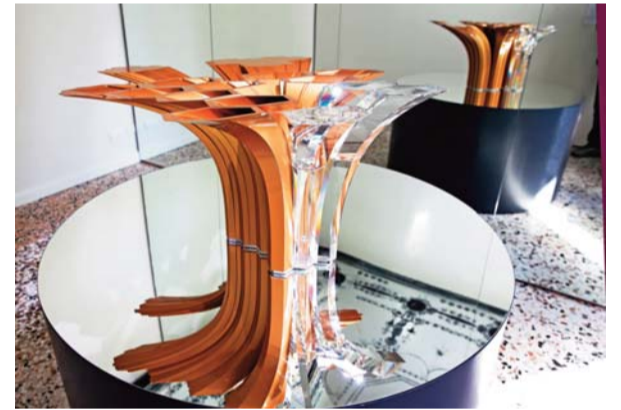
Two chairs by Spanish designer Patricia Urquiola for Cassina.



Visitors look at furniture in the Cassina space, part of the Design Fair exhibition, in Milan, Italy. — AP photos



Spanish designer Patricia Urquiola lying on a chair called 'Gender'.



In this photo 'Crista,' a centerpiece designed by architect Zaha Hadid, in metal and crystals is displayed at the Swarovski atelier.



A furniture exposition shown at the Bottega Veneta atelier.

The world's favorite jeweler ushers in good fortune this Akshaya Tritiya

Joyalukkas presents a dazzling new collection and special offers in honor of the auspicious festival Akshaya Tritiya is one of the four most important occasions of the year for Indian nationals all over the world. Joyalukkas helps them celebrate the day and welcome prosperity to their homes with a special collection and exciting offers, including gold rate protection for 25 days. "We at the Joyalukkas Group are very proud of our Indian heritage. And along with the majority of our over 10 million loyal patrons, we honor the traditional festivals and special occasions close to our hearts," says Joy

Alukkas, Chairman & MD, Joyalukkas Group.

Across over 120 showrooms in 11 countries, customers will be spoilt for choice in diamond, Polki and pearl jewelry specially created for the festivities. Patrons also enjoy a free diamond ring on purchase of diamond, polki and pearl jewelry, as well as a free limited edition silver pendant set on purchase of gold jewelry from 7th to 9th May.

"Akshaya Tritiya is even more important as it is a time for creating and strengthening relationships. It is also an auspicious day for new beginnings and new ventures. I am very

pleased to launch the new limited edition Akshaya Tritiya collection which embodies everything that makes this occasion extra special for all of us" says John Paul Alukkas, Executive Director, Joyalukkas Group. Even more exciting is the gold rate protection guarantee on offer for the duration of the promotion. At just 10% advance booking, customers are assured to get their gold at the lowest rate for 25 days. The celebration of prosperity for Akshaya Tritiya at Joyalukkas is happening from 21st April till 14th May 2016.



Disney hits jackpot with fairy tales in the flesh



This file photo shows Director/Producer Jon Favreau attending the Disney Premiere of 'The Jungle Book' at El Capitan Theater in Hollywood, California. — AFP

Disney's production line for the coming years will see the company doubling down on a strategy of dusting off animated classics for live-action remakes or reboots that has so far netted more than \$2 billion. The latest offering, "The Jungle Book," debuted on Friday and has extended Disney's winning streak, grossing more than \$300 million worldwide over the weekend and trouncing the competition in North America. Over the coming months, "Alice Through the Looking Glass" and "Beauty and the Beast" will fill theaters and the wallets of shrewd studio executives, with several more adaptations reportedly in the pipeline.

Even casual moviegoers will have spotted that Disney's back catalogue of fairy tales has been raided in recent years for money spinners like "Alice in Wonderland," "Cinderella" and "Maleficent," which made a combined \$2.5 billion. Shawn Robbins, a senior analyst at BoxOffice.com, said it was "not a stretch of the imagination" to envisage the company revisiting most of its classic animations. The Hollywood trade press has been buzzing with rumors and half-confirmed stories about "Dumbo," "Pinocchio," "Cruella," "Genies"—a riff on "Aladdin" and many other fairy tales which could make it once again to the big screen. Disney declined to comment on its long-term strategy, but analysts say the writing is on the wall for the future.

"In Disney's case, the appeal of remakes to moviegoers is still in its prime. Twenty years from now, that may not be the case. Twenty years after that, who knows?" Robbins told AFP. Producing a successful remake, according to Robbins, is a delicate balancing act between coming up with new and interesting ways to tell familiar stories, and honoring "the heart and spirit" of the original characters. "The general assumption is that Hollywood remakes things because it's an easy way to make money, but it's far from easy to be successful on both the artistic and commercial fronts," he said.

Old stories

Starring newcomer Neel Sethi as Mowgli, "The Jungle Book" employed the talents of Hollywood heavyweights Bill Murray, Ben Kingsley and Idris Elba for the voices of Baloo the bear, Bagheera the panther and Shere Khan the tiger. The film's director Jon Favreau, who was also at the helm for two of the "Iron Man" movies, told AFP that modern-day Disney was merely following what the likes of its co-founder Walt Disney and "Star Wars" director George Lucas had always done. "Take old myths, old stories, old archetypes, old characters and do it using cutting-edge technology," said Favreau, 49, who has producing credits for numerous blockbusters, including both "Avengers" films.

"Star Wars," he says, repackaged elements of Arthurian legend, westerns and the films of Japanese master Akira Kurosawa—"the princess being rescued and the loveable rogue, the father who's the king, the dark prince and the struggle between good and evil." "Walt Disney would do the same thing. He would find the old fairy tales like Snow White—these are old stories," he told AFP. Hollywood producer Suzanne Todd—who was behind 2010's "Alice in Wonderland" and has been producing its sequel—said there was "something lovely" about fairy tale adaptations, and particularly last year's "Cinderella." "There's a charm to the original movie and there's an inspirational quality that comes out of it," she told AFP at a recent event to publicize Disney's "Alice Through the Looking Glass," which comes out next month. "I just thought Kenneth Branagh made it lush and romantic and accessible."

Pleasing the 'Pixar generation'

Early sequences from the new "Beauty and the Beast"—due out in March 2017—also looked "amazing and incredible," she said. Advances in technology have allowed age-old and beloved stories to reach new audiences who might have been turned off by the dated originals, says Todd, whose body of more than 20 films includes the "Austin Powers" spy spoof trilogy. "I don't know that my three children would be as entertained sitting and watching the old animated

versions because they've grown up as a Pixar generation," she said. "Looking Glass" director James Bobin made two hit "Muppets" live-action movies for Disney and is the co-creator of spoof characters Ali G, Borat and Bruno with British comic Sacha Baron Cohen, who stars in the new "Alice" movie.

The film isn't strictly a remake as Disney never produced a standalone animated version of the second of Lewis Carroll's "Wonderland" books, "Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There." But the studio will be hoping to benefit both from the success of 2010's "Alice in Wonderland" and the cultural cachet of the source material.

"Lewis Carroll for me is a guy that was sort of a surrealist satirist in many ways. The books he wrote were often commentaries about people he knew and Victorian society as a whole," said Bobin. "I felt that you could almost trace a brand of English comedy—starting with him, going through Edward Lear and the goon show in the 50s and Monty Python in the 70s—which has never really gone away." — AFP

Feminism freezes over in 'Huntsman' sequel

"The Huntsman: Winter's War" is one of the more bizarre sequels in recent memory. If modern movies are going to strip every side story out of every superhero universe and beyond, fairy tales should be fair game too. But, it's more than a little odd that the filmmakers here decided to follow up their feminist reimagining of the Snow White story with one focused on Eric the Huntsman (Chris Hemsworth) and the jilted, hysterical woman (Emily Blunt's Freya) who is trying to keep him apart from his true love (Jessica Chastain's Sara). If this is progress, count me out.

Part prequel, part sequel to "Snow White and the Huntsman," this one plays musical chairs with focus and tone. One moment, it's a bawdy, slapstick comedy. The next, it's a deathly serious fantasy epic. Tonal shifts are fine, but this star-studded nonsense feels like it was put together by a committee of robots who were given copies of "Frozen," "Game of Thrones," "The Chronicles of Narnia," and five minutes of "Snow White and the Huntsman" as source material.

Icy powers

There are about a dozen competing story lines, the only point of which seems to be a futile effort to continually rein-

vent and justify its reason for being. This film starts before the events of the first. The evil Ravenna (a luminous Charlize Theron) is alive, glowing, glaring and still talking about taking down men and kingdoms. She wants her good-natured sister Freya (Blunt) to fall in line too, but that only happens when Freya's heart is broken and her icy powers are unleashed. So she retreats to a frozen enclave in the north (sound familiar?). If she can't raise children, she'll raise an army from childhood ... and also ban them from experiencing love.

But two of those child soldiers, Sara and Eric, grow into handsome adults and, well, fall in love or so we're told. Chastain and Hemsworth are fine on their own, but together their chemistry fizzles. Hemsworth, in particular, can't seem to get out of Thor mode. He can do the high-wattage smile and the goofy aside just fine. The gaze of desperate love and longing? Not in his arsenal. Freya is of course none too happy about Sara and Eric's romance and schemes to keep them apart. The story jumps ahead seven years, after Snow White (whose back is seen only briefly) has defeated Ravenna. The pesky golden mirror has driven Snow mad, and essentially becomes The One Ring that everyone wants. Eric, who has picked up some comic relief little people along the way, is out to get it before Freya does.

Glimmering gowns

Confused yet? There are so many twists and turns that it's hard to know what exactly is an actual spoiler and who exactly might care. In fact, it's hard to know who this movie is for at all. It's both too adult for kids and too cartoony for the "Game of Thrones" crowd. Colleen Atwood's costumes still look like a dream—especially Blunt's glimmering gowns—but gone are the sweeping landscapes and gothic beauty of Rupert Sanders' film. For such a bombastic title, "Winter's War," the feature debut of visual effects specialist Cedric Nicolas-Troyan, feels awfully small compared to its predecessor. The budget seems to have been wasted on its stars who aren't even together all that much. When they are, it's to execute action sequences.

There is a decent movie buried in here somewhere, but with such powerhouse actresses it's dismaying that it feels so regressive from the first. Snow White had some agency. Here the ladies are props and stereotypes and always one heartbeat away from madness. It makes you wonder why, in the name of the Brothers Grimm, anyone would have put this purportedly female-centric story in the hands of a co-screenwriter best known for "The Hangover" sequels. "The Huntsman: Winter's War," a Universal Pictures release, is rated PG-13 by the Motion Picture Association of America for "fantasy action violence and some sensuality." Running time: 113 minutes. One and a MPAA Definition of PG-13: Parents strongly cautioned. Some material may be inappropriate for children under 13. — AP

Jessica Chastain, from left, Charlize Theron, and Emily Blunt arrive at the LA Premiere of 'The Huntsman: Winter's War' at the Regency Village Theatre in Los Angeles. — AP



This file photo shows a woman walking past a poster advertising a diamond ring owned by child star turned diplomat Shirley Temple Black outside the Sotheby's in New York. — AFP photos

Shirley Temple blue diamond ring fails to sell at auction

A blue diamond ring given to child star Shirley Temple when she was 12 and estimated to be worth \$25-35 million failed to find a buyer at auction, Sotheby's said. The late American movie legend received the 9.54-carat jewel from her father, who bought it in 1940 for \$7,210. It was the standout piece in an auction Tuesday night of 319 jewels that brought in \$29.88 million.

"The Shirley Temple Blue Diamond is an exceptional stone in quality, rarity and provenance. It has been an honor to share its story with collectors, connoisseurs and Temple's loyal fans over the past few months," the auction house said. "Unfortunately, tonight wasn't its night in the salesroom, but we remain fully confident that it will find a buyer." Temple wore the diamond ring throughout her life, the auction house said.

Temple, who started acting at age three, delighted Depression-era movie-going audiences with her singing, dancing and simple innocence. In 1935, aged six, she became the youngest person to win an Oscar, receiving a special award for young performers that is no longer handed out. She went on to star in more than 40 feature films, most of them before the age of 12. Later in life, she served as a diplomat under four presidents, including as US envoy to the United Nations, and ambassador to Ghana and to what was then Czechoslovakia. Temple died in February 2014 at the age of 85. — AFP



A sparkling diamond ring owned by child star turned diplomat Shirley Temple Black at Sotheby's auction house.



In this image released by Universal Pictures, Emily Blunt, left, and Charlize Theron appear in a scene from 'Huntsman: Winter's War'. — AP

Spain's Almodovar delivers raw drama in Cannes-selected film

In his latest film to compete in the Cannes Film Festival, Spain's Pedro Almodovar has ditched the humor and quirkiness that marks much of his work to tell a dramatic mother-daughter story. One of 20 movies selected to compete for the prestigious Palme d'Or award in Cannes next month, "Julietta" recounts a mother's excruciating 10-year wait for a daughter who abandoned her when she turned 18. The film's release in Spain earlier this month had initially been clouded by the appearance of Almodovar and his brother in the global Panama Papers scandal over an offshore company they briefly controlled in 1991.

The 66-year-old canceled a press junket just days before the April 8 premiere due to scrutiny over the revelations, but the bad start soon wore away as "Julietta" climbed to fourth place in Spain's box office. Inspired by "Runaway," a book of short stories by Canada's Nobel laureate Alice Munro, the film is pure drama stripped of any hint of the laughs or idiosyncrasies that made films like "All About My Mother" or "Talk to Her" so popular. "No one sings, there is no humor," Almodovar told the El Mundo daily earlier this month. "It's possible that I may go down the road of austerity from now on."

How can we abandon loved ones?

A mix of romantic betrayal, bereavement, spiritual quest, escape and guilt, "Julietta" goes through three decades of the life of a Spanish woman and mother. Julieta is played by two actresses—Adriana Ugarte portraying the sensual, wistful woman in her earlier years and Emma Suarez in the role of the older, tormented mother abandoned by her daughter.

Almodovar told his actresses that they should read "The Year of Magical Thinking," a book on mourning by US author Joan Didion, as well as French writer Emmanuel Carrere's heart-wrenching "Other Lives but Mine" for inspiration.

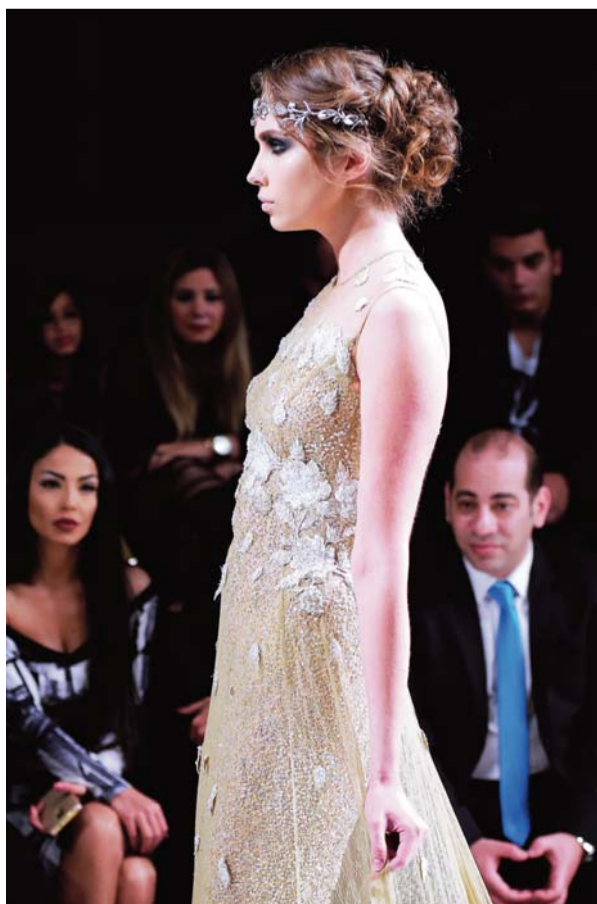
The film explores "the impenetrable mystery that makes us abandon the people we love, erasing them from our life as if they had never meant anything. And the pain that this desertion causes the victim," according to the official description. But despite the darkness of the subject matter, the film still oozes color—perhaps not as vivid as Almodovar's past work but bright all the same.

It is full of female characters that include actress Rossy de Palma, an Almodovar regular, as a dour housekeeper. Fans have lauded a story constructed along the lines of a Greek tragedy, but some have criticized the film as lacking in subtlety. Carlos Boyero, who writes for the El Pais daily and is a staunch Almodovar critic, wrote of his indifference when he watched a film he felt did not "transmit anything emotionally or artistically." Spanish media said it had scored the worst performance for an Almodovar film in 20 years in its opening weekend—making just 585,000 euros (\$665,000) with 79,000 tickets sold. But on Tuesday, it was in fourth place in the Spanish box office, perhaps boosted by its Cannes nomination. Almodovar is a regular at the prestigious film festival. — AFP

'La Mode a Beyrouth'



Lebanese designer Shady Zeinedine acknowledges the crowd after the show for his 'A Beryth 2016' collection.



Models display creations by Lebanese designer Shady Zeinedine from his 'A Beryth 2016' collection during 'La Mode a Beyrouth' fashion week in Beirut on April 19, 2016. — AFP photos

Fashion



Models display creations by Abed Mahfouz haute couture collection.



Lebanese designer Abed Mahfouz acknowledges the audience after the show for his haute couture collection during 'La Mode a Beyrouth' fashion week in Beirut.

In style and politics, Kosovo women see Clinton as role model

Aboutique in Kosovo's capital leaves no doubt about its favored candidate in the US presidential race—the clues are right in its name and on the racks of smart trouser suits. Pristina's Hillary boutique and its sister shop, Hillary 2, are a testament to Kosovo's enduring love not only for the United States but particularly for the Clinton couple.

"We wanted to honor the Clinton family in our business," said owner Elda Morina-Ymeraga, 33. Her family's first store is on Bill Clinton Boulevard near a huge statue of the former US president, both commemorating his support during the Kosovan struggle for independence from Serbia. And Hillary, 68, offers a strong role model for women in Muslim-majority Kosovo, which can already claim the Balkans' first elected female president and upholds gender balance-in law if not in practice.

"She is not only a person who, with her family, has helped Kosovo enormously but she also has unique taste in clothing," Morina-Ymeraga told AFP in the Hillary 2 store, set in a shabby communist-era block from the former Yugoslavia that jars with its sharp suits, bright blouses and elegant dresses. "This was why we started to promote Hillary's style in Kosovo, offering clothes to women that are identical to those worn by Hillary."

In 2010, Morina-Ymeraga had the surprise-and publicity boost-of a lifetime when the then US secre-

tary of state paid her main store an unexpected visit during a trip to Pristina. Framed photos hang proudly on the shop walls, recalling the meeting that gave the retailer a "simply incredible feeling." "Every local customer first comes out of curiosity to ask what I discussed with Hillary. And that curiosity continues after all these years," she said.

'Need for change'

Morina-Ymeraga's father set up the first Hillary store in 2002, a few years after the 1998-1999 war between Serbia's armed forces and the separatist ethnic Albanian rebels in its southern province. Serbia withdrew from Kosovo after an 11-week bombing campaign by NATO, backed by then president Bill Clinton. He later gave strong support to Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence in 2008 — a move still unrecognized by Belgrade. Bill Clinton was "the first who emphasized the need for change in Kosovo and the need to ban Serbia's rule over Albanians", said Morina-Ymeraga, who imports most garments from Turkey but hopes to create her own "Hillary" label.

Promoting the former First Lady as fashion icon notably her beloved trouser suits—caught on with Kosovo's female civil servants, politicians and other professionals who make up the store's main clientele. Choosing a red mix-and-match outfit—jacket, skirt and

trousers for 50 euros (\$56) a piece—financial consultant Miradije Salihu, 46, said she wanted clothes that would double as work and evening wear. "If (Clinton) can successfully run all of her campaign wearing the same style of outfit throughout, why would I not do the same while running my business?"

Women at the top

If Clinton wins the November race she will be the first woman in charge of the White House, whereas Kosovo chose its first female president, 41-year-old Atifete Jahjaga, five years ago. Her term ended this month. The top diplomatic job, ambassador to the United States, is currently held by a woman and the secular constitution sets a 30 percent quota for female MPs putting Kosovo ahead of even Britain and France in parliamentary gender balance. But gender equality is still a far-off goal: a labor force survey conducted in 2014 showed that only 21.4 percent of Kosovo's working age women held jobs, compared with 61.8 percent of men.

Ulpiana Neziri-Lama, a sociologist, foreign ministry official and former TV news anchor, said the problem was greater in rural parts of Kosovo. But even in cities women faced discrimination. "The public space is contaminated by sexist comments," she told AFP, stressing that "this is very widespread." As Kosovan women strive for more openings, Clinton's determined bid for



the White House has struck a chord. "All women of Kosovo should take her as an example," said 22-year-old student Mimoza Nishori outside the Hillary store. "She is a woman with a lot of energy and does her work with competence." — AFP

Elda Morina-Ymeraga adjusts a dress at her clothing store 'Hillary 2'.



Trouser suits on display at the clothing store 'Hillary' in Pristina.



An employee arranges clothes at the clothing store 'Hillary 2'.



A woman walks past the clothing store 'Hillary' in Pristina.— AFP photos



Camels are seen during an off-road mapping recognition exercise ahead of the Silk Way Rally 2016 in the Gobi desert, some 2,000kms (1,100 Miles) northwest of Beijing yesterday. The 2016 Silk Way Rally takes place in July and will see competitors race from Moscow's Red Square to the Chinese capital Beijing. — AFP



Crafts: Tailoring can bring out the best in clothes

"It's all about the fit." That unspoken motto has been passed down in my family for generations, from my late grandfather, a tailor, to me. So through weight gain, weight loss and style changes - no more polyester thrift shop dresses! - I've gone to tailors to make sure my clothes fit and flatter my body. Velvet formal gowns and discounted jeans have all been cinched in and hemmed. Tailoring, an old-school craft with roots going back at least to the Renaissance, can range from pricey alterations at a swanky department store to less-expensive tweaking at a dry cleaning or tailoring business. Attention to detail is essential for the desired result: impeccably fitted skirts, suits, dresses, jackets and pants for customers of all shapes, sizes and ages.

"I like the feeling customers get from the right fit. When I'm happy sewing, my customers are happy," said tailor Grace Myung Lee, 61, who co-owns Grace Cleaners in Pasadena with her husband. Lee learned to sew when she was 10, in South Korea. On a recent day, sitting in a corner of her shop, she stitched the sleeve of a cream-colored men's shirt using an electric sewing machine. Colorful spools of thread hung on the wall.

For a streamlined look, Lee recommends first changing the hemline of pants so they're not too long or too short, and the hemline of dresses to a flattering length. Many customers, she said, come in to have the hems of their pants raised. She charges \$9 for regular pants and \$7 for jeans. Natural materials such as cotton are easier to work with than stretchy, thin fabric, she said. Altering luxury dresses costs about \$25, and requires two to three days' work.

Multi-colored patch

"Sometimes, customers buy used, cheap clothes and want many alterations. It's not a good idea," Lee added. "I suggest returning the clothes because there's too much to change." For simple fixes, you can try doing them yourself with a needle and thread. Easy DIY alterations range from



Tailor Grace Myung Lee, 61, working in her dry cleaning and alterations shop.

sewing on a button to darn socks and mending a slight rip along a seam. If a hole is big, stitch on a fun, multi-colored patch - unless you're going for a shredded, 1990s grunge look. Plenty of books or YouTube videos give instructions.

Going to a tailor, though, is worth it for more complex adjustments, elevating an ill-fitting dress from frumpy to fashionable. Possible alterations include nipping in the waist and hips, bringing in the shoulders, lowering the arm holes and sewing in darts, said Maria Tesseris, 62, owner of Golden Needle Tailoring in Chicago. It's more difficult to let out or add fabric, she said.

Tesseris charges about \$60 to \$140 to alter bridesmaid dresses, which make up a chunk of her business and take up to two weeks to work on. "We as women have curves and a butt and busts! It's very rare for people to put on a piece of clothing and it perfectly fits," said Tesseris, who learned tailoring in high school in her native Greece.

Shortening too-long sleeves is a good way to make shirts and jackets look more polished on both men and

women. Tesseris has seen more men wanting their clothes tapered and their pants narrowed. An invisible seam? No problem. "If customers have pants at home they really like, I tell them to bring them over, and I'll copy them exactly the same," she said. "Other than that, I try to figure it out, pinning the pants. It's a very personal thing, working with a tailor, like going to a hairdresser."

Young clients

A master tailor for the past 16 years at the Philadelphia department store Boyds, Sergio Martins, 56, started altering clothes at age 14 in his native Portugal, where his father, now 85 and also a tailor, still lives. "I feel very lucky to have learned this from my parents. What I do, I do with patience," said Martins. Custom-made suits from Boyds take four to six weeks to make. Customers can pick the fabric and then Martins takes measurements, making sure there's enough room across the shoulders, back and arms. Pants can be flat-front or pleated.

The cost? A heap of money. Italian silk and cashmere suits run upward of \$10,000 to create, and a regular wool suit costs about \$695 to make, said Martins. "When I started work here, I saw clientele in their 50s. We now have a lot of young clients, new lawyers, new businessmen," Martins said. "Everyone wants to look good."

For longtime tailors such as Martins, Tesseris and Lee, an appreciation for customer satisfaction is mingled with an awareness that tailoring as a specialized craft is dwindling. "Growing up in Greece, there were so many schools on how to do a great job tailoring," Tesseris said. "Right now, in my hometown, in Sparta, no one does it. It's a dying art. But there's still very much a need for it. Some customers and friends tell me, 'You should never die, and never retire.'" — AP



In this photo, tailor Grace Myung Lee, 61, smiles holding up a tray of small spools of sewing machine thread in her dry cleaning and alterations shop Grace Cleaners in Pasadena, Calif. that she co-owns with her husband Sung Jae Lee. — AP photos



Tailor Grace Myung Lee, 61, holds up a tray of small spools of sewing machine thread in her dry cleaning and alterations shop Grace Cleaners.



Writer Solveg Schou, left, has her dress fitted by Grace Myung at Myung's shop in Pasadena, Calif.

Rodin lovers sculpture up for sale for \$8-12m



Jeremiah Evarts, Head of Evening Sales of Impressionist & Modern Art at Sotheby's New York speaks during an interview about the marble sculpture 'Eternal Printemps' by Auguste Rodin. — AFP

An exceptionally rare Rodin marble sculpture of embracing lovers goes on offer in New York next month valued at \$8 to \$12 million, a highlight in Sotheby's impressionist and modern art spring sale. The auction house said it was the first time that a sculpture in this medium and of this subject for which the French artist is perhaps most famous comes under the hammer in more than two decades.

Conceived in 1884 and carved in 1901-02 from one block, Sotheby's said it expected "Eternal Printemps" to set a new record for a Rodin sculpture in marble. "This is the highest quality marble sculpture by Rodin ever to appear at auction certainly in recent years," said Jeremiah Evarts, head of evening sales for the impressionist and modern art at Sotheby's.

Other marbles from this series are in institutions such as the Museum of Fine Arts in Budapest, the State Hermitage Museum in St Petersburg and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. The sculpture is 31.5 inches (80 centimeters) long, 17 inches wide and 26 inches tall, and weighs 339 pounds (154 kilograms). It was commissioned by German diplomat Hellmuth Baron Lucius von Stuedten who was a close friend of the poet Rainer Maria Rilke, who played a role in the commission of the piece from Auguste Rodin.

Rodin said later that he was listening to Beethoven's 2nd Symphony when he first conceived of "Eternal Printemps." Evarts told AFP that he thought the sculpture might reflect the passion and love Rodin felt for Camille Claudel, one of his great loves and apprentices whom he met in the mid-1880s. The marble is one of a limited edition of 10, each unique. Evarts said this one was distinguished by the quality of the carving of the hands, feet, faces and the tension between the supple female and more robust male figure.

Sotheby's said the price estimate of \$8 to \$12 million was based on demand for the artist's work. The sculpture will be sold on May 9, as part of the spring art season sales, and goes on public display in New York on April 29. "Rodin one of most important sculptors of the 19th century," Evarts said. The sensuality of this particular piece will attract modern and contemporary collectors as well, he added. Sotheby's sold a Rodin cast, "Iris, Messagere des dieux" once owned by Hollywood actor Sylvester Stallone, for \$16.7 million in London in February. — AFP