

SUBSCRIPTION

Kuwait Times



THE FIRST DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 3, 2016

SHAWWAL 29, 1437 AH

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THOUSANDS OF JOBLESS ASIANS STRANDED IN SAUDI ARABIA



Min 34°
Max 49°
High Tide 10:40
Low Tide 05:07 & 18:23

MPS SLAM PETROL HIKE, WARN GOVT

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Lawmakers yesterday strongly lashed out at the government for raising the prices of petrol, saying they will not accept the hike and vowed to take measures. The criticism came after an urgent meeting called by Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem held at his office to discuss what the lawmakers described as a surprising government decision. The meeting was attended by 14 MPs. MP Mohammad Tana called on all MPs to cut short their summer vacations in order to hold an emergency meeting of the National Assembly, which is now on a three-month summer recess.

A number of MPs blamed the government for violating promises not to raise petrol prices and criticized it for making the raise while the Assembly was on summer vacation. Deputy Speaker Mubarak Al-Khrajneij said MPs during the meeting reviewed steps that could be taken after the government decided to increase the prices of petrol in a surprising way and without consulting the Assembly.

Khrajneij said the majority of lawmakers underscored that the decision will negatively affect the lives of citizens and expected it could have a negative financial impact on low- and middle-income people. He said the government breached a pledge it made in the Assembly that it will not raise the price of petrol unilaterally and before consulting the Assembly. Khrajneij said the lawmakers will discuss at future meetings, which will be likely attended by the government, alternative measures to compensate citizens for the increase and alleviate its negative impact.

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KUWAIT: Young divers search for oysters containing pearls yesterday during the annual pearl diving season off the coast of Khairan, 100 km south of Kuwait City. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat (See Page 5)

KUWAIT/MANILA: Kuwait is keen on safeguarding foreign communities, namely Indian expatriates, who constitute the largest non-Kuwaiti community in the country, affirmed the minister of social affairs and labor. Hind Al-Sabeeh, also minister of state for planning affairs and development, said in a statement yesterday that the presence of a large number of Indians in the country indicates that their businesses are stable and their rights are safeguarded.

Kuwait, she added, has signed a protocol with the Indian labor ministry, stipulating that it approves the employment contract ahead of a worker's entry into Kuwait. She put the number of Indian workers in Kuwait's private sector at 549,196, adding that the number of them who had lodged complaints requesting attainment of their rights between July 31, 2015 and July 31, 2016 amounted to 4,223 only.

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MERCURY RISING

KUWAIT: Kuwait's temperature has reached an abnormal level of 50 degrees Celsius, according to meteorologist Essa Ramadan at the Directorate General of Civil Aviation. Ramadan told KUNA that the northwest wind speed will increase with a chance of dust in desert areas, adding that an increase in the height of waves yesterday was also expected. Also, humidity levels will decrease, and it is expected that temperatures will increase in desert areas, Jahra and the suburbs of Kuwait City. Ramadan added that humidity will return today

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Shrimpy

Grill Fiesta Combo
4 pos Grilled XL Shrimps, 3 pos Grilled Fish, Fries, Coleslaw, Tartar, Bread & Cola

KD 3.300

Family Summer Fiesta
20 pos Fried Shrimps, 10 pos Monster Shrimps, 8 pos Fried Fish, Family Fries, Family Coleslaw, 4 Tartar, 4 Bread & 2.25 Liter Cola

KD 9.750

Shrimps Fiesta Combo
45 pos Fried Shrimps, Fries, Tartar, Bread & Cola

KD 5.600

Shrimps & Calamari Fiesta Combo
30 pos Fried Shrimps, 10 pos Fried Calamari, Fries, Tartar, Bread & Cola

KD 4.950

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KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Ambassador of the United States of America to Kuwait Douglas Silliman.



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Chairman of the Board of Commissioners of Kuwait Capital Market Authority (CMA) Nayef Al-Hajraf and CMA board members. —Amiri Diwan and KUNA photos

CAPITAL MARKET AUTHORITY OFFICIALS PRESENT ANNUAL REPORT TO AMIR, CROWN PRINCE, PM

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah separately received Chairman of the Board of Commissioners of Kuwait Capital Market Authority (CMA) Nayef Al-Hajraf and board members.

The members presented to His Highness the Amir and His Highness the Crown Prince the fifth CMA annual report for the fiscal

year 2015-2016, while also providing details on the authority's plans for the future. The two meetings took place at Seif Palace yesterday. Hajraf and the CMA board members later met with His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, and presented to him the authority's report for the 2015-2016 fiscal year. His Highness the Prime Minister was briefed about the authority's tasks, namely the achievements that have been made since its

establishment, as well as broad-lines of future plans designed to promote the capital market, in line with CMA's bylaws.

His Highness the Amir and His Highness the Crown Prince also received Dr Mohammad Al-Hashel, Governor of the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK). Meanwhile, His Highness the Amir received Douglas Silliman, the outgoing Ambassador of the United States of America to Kuwait, on the occasion of the end of his tenure. In the

meantime, His Highness the Crown Prince received Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs Dr Ali Al-Omar, as well as Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education Dr Bader Al-Essa. His Highness the Crown also received Sheikh Salem Abdulaziz Al-Saud Al-Sabah, and Engineer Abdulaziz Abdullatif Al-Ibrahim.

Separately, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad

Al-Sabah hosted Director General of the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET) Dr Ahmad Saleh Al-Athari and his deputy for administrative and financial affairs Hajraf Al-Hajraf.

His Highness the Premier received Athari and Hajraf on the occasion of PAAET's winning the award as the top establishment that provides smart education in the Middle East, granted by the Dubai Distinctiveness Institute in the Middle East. —KUNA



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Sheikh Salem Abdulaziz Al-Saud Al-Sabah.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Engineer Abdulaziz Abdullatif Al-Ibrahim.



His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets with Director General of the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET) Dr Ahmad Saleh Al-Athari and his deputy for administrative and financial affairs Hajraf Al-Hajraf.

CAPITAL OF ISLAMIC CULTURE EVENTS TO PROMOTE STATE REPUTATION: MINISTER

KUWAIT: The events and activities of the 'Kuwait Capital of Islamic Culture 2016' are seeking to promote Kuwait's reputation, both at home and overseas, said Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Sheikh Salman Sabah Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah yesterday.

Sheikh Salman, who is also chairman of the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL), made the statement after he presided over the fifth meeting of the committee tasked with the planning, supervision and coordination of the 'Kuwait Capital of Islamic Culture 2016' celebrations.

The meeting reviewed a host of distinguished proposals and views for the concluding event of the celebrations, offered by the special consultation committee, Sheikh Salman said. He urged fast efforts for the implementation of the celebrations agenda till the end of the year.

The minister said that they had also followed up what was achieved of the recommendations of the fourth meeting, regarding the coordination among the state institutions, ministries and other bodies for the "Kuwait Capital of Islamic Culture 2016" events and activities.

Sheikh Salman pointed to a MoU between the NCCAL and the governorates for a host of activities, and cooperation with the Ministry of Information to produce a documentary

of the year-long celebrations. This also includes activities carried out in coordination with the Ministry of Justice and Awqaf and Islamic Affairs during the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan.

SMEs

In other news, Sheikh Salman said that small and medium enterprises constitute some of the main pillars for economies, namely that of the State of Kuwait, at the global level. The Ministry of Information said in a statement released yesterday that Sheikh Salman underlined the key role for such projects during a meeting with the Board Chairman of the National Fund for Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) Development, Dr Mohammad Al-Zuhair, the Acting Director General of the Kuwait Central Statistics Bureau Mona Al-Daas and the executive manager in the executive sector, Meshari Al-Mahmoud.

Minister Sheikh Salman, during the meeting, examined tasks that have been accomplished by a joint committee tasked with scanning all economic installations in the country as a prelude to devising plans for shoring up the national economy. The State of Kuwait devotes special attention to SMEs, and His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah has launched a special fund to finance such projects, with aim of encouraging the youth launch private businesses. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Information and Youth Affairs Minister Sheikh Salman Al-Humoud Al-Sabah meets with Board Chairman of the National Fund for Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) Development Dr Mohammad Al-Zuhair. — KUNA

AMBASSADORS MEET CHIEFS OF YEMENI OPPOSITION

SHEIKH SABAH AL-KHALED MEETS UN ENVOY

KUWAIT: Ambassadors of 18 states concerned with the aspired peace settlement for Yemen yesterday met delegations from Ansarullah and the People's Congress, on sideline of the Kuwait-hosted inter-Yemeni consultations that got underway on April 21st. During the meeting which was attended by the UN envoy Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, the two sides discussed latest development in the conciliation process namely a proposal by Cheikh Ahmed to work out a settlement.

Cheikh Ahmed was set later yesterday to meet with a delegation from the two opposition movements to follow up on the talks regarding the proposal, which had already been accepted by the Government delegation. The inter-Yemeni talks are scheduled to conclude by August 7th.

Developments

On Monday, First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah met with the Cheikh Ahmad at Bayan Palace to review the latest developments on the ongoing Yemeni peace talks in Kuwait. The meeting was attended by Deputy Foreign Minister Ambassador Khaled Al-Jarallah, Kuwait's Ambassador to Yemen Fahad Al-Mai, Assistant Foreign Minister for the Deputy Foreign Minister's Office Affairs Ambassador Ayham Al-Omar, Ambassador Salem Ghassab Al-Zamanan, Assistant Foreign Minister for the Arab World Affairs Ambassador Aziz Al-Daihani, Deputy Assistant Foreign Minister for the Foreign Minister's Bureau Affairs Ambassador Saleh Al-Loghani, and a number of senior officials at the foreign ministry.

Departure

The UN special envoy had stated earlier Monday that the Yemeni government delegation's departure from Kuwait after signing a UN draft peace agreement "is not a departure from the peace talks." Confirming that the delegation left Kuwait for Saudi Arabia after signing the agreement, Ahmad asserted that that "the departure of the Government of Yemen delegation from Kuwait is not a departure from the Peace Talks."

He said that "we agreed with the parties to keep the talks ongoing until we agree on next steps in the coming days which shall be dedicated to intensive meetings with the Ansarallah-General People's Congress delegation, as well as with concerned members of the international community."

Yemeni Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister Abdulmalek Al-Mekhlafi said earlier that the Kuwait-hosted inter-Yemeni consultations have neither been suspended or ended, affirming that they would conclude as scheduled, on August 7th.



KUWAIT: First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets with UN envoy for Yemen Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed in Kuwait on Monday. —KUNA

Blueprint

Speaking at a news conference at Kuwait International Airport, Mekhlafi called on Ansarullah and the People's Congress party to sign the blueprint to substantiate how much they are serious with respect of achieving peace and security in Yemen, as well as ending the war through arms handover, withdrawal from the cities and reinstating the State institutions. He further noted that the government's delegation's return to Kuwait to resume the peace consultations hinges on the

opposing party's signing of the concord.

"We are adamant about restoring peace to Yemen, which explains why we have agreed to this UN agreement," Al-Mekhlafi noted. He also added that the government's delegation encountered various difficulties due to the opposing sides' "capricious" nature. Speaking on the future of these talks, the Yemeni Deputy Prime Minister said "we have made progress towards finding a lasting solution to the conflict," he said. He also described the draft accord as encompassing all political issues. — KUNA

KUWAIT ADHERENT TO ISRAEL'S BOYCOTT

CAIRO: The State of Kuwait is among leading Arab States that abide by principles for boycotting Israel, said a visiting Kuwaiti official said yesterday. Waleed Al-Hammadi, the head of Israel's boycott bureau at Kuwait Finance Ministry's custom general directorate, stressed on necessity of maintaining support for the Arab boycott officers.

Speaking on sidelines of the 90th conference for officers of the Arab boycott offices, Hammadi said participants in the meeting discussed "status of some foreign companies that deal with Israel, or deal in products produced by the Israeli settlements."

Israel is seeking to infiltrate Arab markets with disguise of foreign companies, the

Kuwaiti official revealed. The conference supports foreign and Arab groups that advocate boycotting Israel, namely the international Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions Movement (BDS), which has played a key global role for encouraging the boycott.

Kuwait acts to implement the boycott seriously through coordination with the main Arab League Israel Boycott Bureau in Damascus. "We in Kuwait do not allow Israeli commodities enter the Kuwaiti market and the people of the country support the boycott," he affirmed, noting that concerned authorities often receive notifications about sneaking commodities. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Senior military and security chiefs are pictured ahead of their meeting yesterday. — KUNA

KUWAIT SENIOR SECURITY, MILITARY CHIEFS HOLD COORDINATION MEETING

KUWAIT: Senior military and security chiefs held a coordination meeting yesterday aimed at mapping out an integrated strategy to enhance performance of personnel in the key international security and defense sectors.

The Ministry of Interior (MoI) said in a statement that the joint meeting depicted the joint and ongoing cooperation between the security and military establishments for serving the homeland security and the ci-

zens. The ranking security and military officers examined common plans, missions and joint training programs as well as coordination mechanisms. Taking part in the coordination meeting were Kuwait Army Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Mohammad Khaled Al-Kheder, Interior Undersecretary Lieutenant General Suleiman Fahad Al-Fahad, Chief of Staff Deputy Lieutenant General Abdullah Al-Nawaf Al-Sabah and other commanders. — KUNA

MINISTRY PREPARES TO APPLY 4,000 PERSONS' NATURALIZATION LAW

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: The Interior Ministry has begun preparations to apply the naturalization law on more than 4,000 persons this year, as it began gathering the names of those who are eligible for it. Sources said the Interior Ministry is investigating the names of people who will probably be naturalized and check their security backgrounds. The list includes bedoons (stateless) who meet the required conditions for naturalization, though their numbers are not clear. The sources added that the list includes per-

sons of known nationalities, in addition to children of Kuwaiti women. There are also those whose fathers and brothers were naturalized but they were not included.

Meanwhile, the Interior Ministry committed Kuwaiti fathers to register their newborn children in the nationality file within six months after birth, adding that both the father and his child will be sent to the forensics department for DNA tests. The interior ministry wants to eradicate Kuwaiti parents' negligence towards the nationality files, and make sure about the status of newborns.



KUWAIT: This handout photo released by the Interior Ministry yesterday shows two people arrested on cable theft charges.



A firefighter participates in extinguishing a blaze reported in Salmiya.

DUO ARRESTED ON CABLE THEFT CHARGES

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Jahra detectives stopped a truck loaded with a large quantity of cables, and asked for the driver's ID. The driver, an Egyptian man called Emad Barakat, told them the cables belong to an Iranian man, who told him they are his and he has papers proving it. Later, the Iranian denied knowledge of the cables, adding that the Egyptian man offered to sell them to him. The cables belong to the Ministry of Communications, and officials there said

the cables were stolen from Abdallah Port warehouse that belongs to a contracted company. Both suspects were sent to concerned authorities.

Fire extinguished.

Firemen put out a fire that broke out in a building under construction in Salmiya before it spread. Salmiya fire center, backup and Qurain fire center responded, and on arrival, they found the fire was in wooden planks in the basement of a building. No injuries were reported.



KUWAIT: Parliament Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem visited injured fireman First Lieutenant Fahd Al-Mukaimi at Mubarak Hospital. Mukaimi was injured while fighting a fire. Ghanem was received by Kuwait Fire Service Directorate officials, including Acting Director General Major General Khalid Al-Mikrad and Acting Director of Public Relations and Information Major Salman Al-Juaidi. — By Hanan Al-Saadoun

NO COUNTRIES EXEMPTED FROM APPLYING FOR E-VISA

MINISTRY HAS RIGHT TO APPROVE, REJECT VISA: HASHASH

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: Director of Relations and Security Information at the Interior Ministry Brigadier Adel Al-Hashash told Kuwait Times that no countries are excluded from having their citizens apply through the electronic visa system, adding that the Interior Ministry has the right to approve or reject the visa. Hashash had said in a press conference this week that the e-visa system is functional at all land, sea and air outlets, adding that among the conditions applicants must meet

is that they should not be holders of temporary travel documents or laissez-passeurs of all types.

They also must not have any security restrictions, and there should be no variations between the data on the visa and passport, otherwise the visa will be cancelled and the holder will be denied entry. He said the ministry is keen on providing all modern equipment for this system as part of its strategy to develop its services. He said KD 3 will be collected as fees at the border outlets.

Hashash said the goal behind this new e-service is to benefit from the tremendous development in the technical field and simplify procedures to serve citizens and expats through the use of modern technology. He added that the visa holder must comply with the laws in Kuwait and not exceed the stay period given to him in the visa to avoid legal action. He said 52 nationalities can get an instant visa, in addition to residents of GCC countries. He said applications can be made through (www.moi.gov.kw), which is a safe and secure portal.



Adel Al-Hashah



KUWAIT: Kuwaitis donate blood, marking the Iraqi invasion's anniversary. — KUNA



KUWAIT MARKS 26TH ANNIVERSARY OF INVASION WITH BLOOD DONATION DRIVE

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Health's (MoH) blood bank launched yesterday a day-long blood donation campaign marking the 26th anniversary of the blatant Iraqi invasion on the State of Kuwait, in cooperation with the Ministry of Information.

Dr Hanan Al-Awadhi, the supervisor of medical services and guidance at the blood bank, said that the campaign aims at recalling the

martys' sacrifices and enhancing social solidarity among citizens and expatriates. The bank plans to increase number of donors' beds in each health district from 20 to 40, Dr Awadhi said, revealing that the donated blood bags, in 2015, reached 75,008. Yesterday marked the 26th anniversary of the Iraqi aggression that happened on August 2nd, 1990, when troops of

the executed Iraqi dictator, Saddam Hussein, invaded the country, wreaking havoc, inflicting casualties and causing miseries for scores of Kuwaiti families. The State of Kuwait marks the occasion each year, recalling the bitter hardships under occupation and the unified stances of the people of Kuwait in the face of the aggressors. —KUNA

'RAISING FUEL PRICES HAS GREAT IMPACT IN IMPROVING ECONOMY'

HELPS RATIONALIZE CONSUMPTION, DIVERSIFY ECONOMY: EXPERTS

KUWAIT: The Cabinet's recent decision to raise diverse types of fuel prices, particularly the gasoline, has the greatest significance in positively impacting the country's economy, experts said yesterday. The Government's economic reform plan will eventually help diversify the country's resources and release its reliance on a single source of income, they said. Head of Kuwait National Competitiveness Committee Dr Fahad Al-Rashid said that this decision is considered a step forward to improve the country's budget deficit and encourage austerity to face economic challenges. Raising gas prices will reduce individuals' high unconscious consumption of fuel; this consumption is rated the highest in the world, he pointed out.

Meanwhile, Kuwait Accountants and Auditors Association chairman Ahmad Faris described the raise in gas prices as 'acceptable' in comparison to that in the GCC and Arab countries. He added that the positive side of the Cabinet decision is that gas prices will be reviewed every three months, reassuring that this raise will not be "permanent but changeable" in accordance to the fluctuations of oil prices.

"It is a quick fix and a precautionary measure to improve the economy," Faris pointed out, hoping that the Government would not rely on short-term solutions but rather utilize other investment tools to strengthen the country's financial situation.

Rationalizing subsidies

On Monday, the Cabinet approved recommendations presented by the economic affairs committee with respect of a proposal by the committee charged with revising various kinds of State subsidies, on setting fuel prices.

It approved the commission recommendation and decided to begin "rationalizing subsidies for gasoline in the country, as part of the Government reform scheme where the fuel products' prices will be restructured to be in harmony with the average rates in the other GCC states." The new pricing policy will be in effect as of September 1, 2016 in line with the policies adopted in the GCC countries.

The new prices are as following: Octane-91: 85 fils per liter, Octane-95: 105 fpl, Ultra-Premium: 165 fpl. The new prices have been set after examining global rates. Kuwait is the last GCC State to embark on "restructuring the fuel prices," however the new ones remain the lowest among the Council countries, as well as globally. Moreover, the Cabinet has tasked a special commission to re-examine the State subsidies and the fuel prices every three months, to be in harmony with the global rates. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Vehicles line up to be refueled at a gas station in Kuwait City on Monday. — Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh

HOUSING TOP PRIORITY FOR GOVT: MINISTER ABUL

KUWAIT: The issue of housing is a top priority for the government with measures being devised to provide proper dwellings

to all citizens, said State Minister for Housing Affairs Yasser Abul yesterday. In a forum late Monday discussing the issue of housing, the minister said that solving the housing problems will have social and security benefits for citizens.

He stressed that the current housing plan, set in motion by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, will not be affected by the government's policies to rationalize spending. He added that requests submitted to the Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW) had reached citizens who applied on December 31, 2011.

Abul took the chance to thank the National Assembly for coming out with legislations that enabled PAHW to work more smoothly in addressing the citizens' needs for housing, affirming that the gov-

ernment will stick to the plan to provide some 120,000 housing units for citizens annually for the decade ahead. Recently, the Minister signed an agreement for the construction of the South Saad Al-Abdullah city, considered to be the first smart and environment-friendly city in Kuwait. The city will spread over 59 square kilometers to accommodate some 400,000 people. Regarding violations by some construction companies in previous projects, minister Abul affirmed that these companies were banned from carrying out construction on any new projects.

Meanwhile, the minister touched on Kuwait's major housing project of the city of South Mutla which will house a population of 400,000 citizens with some 30,000 housing units to be constructed. The contract to start building infrastructure and roads in South Mutla city costs around KD 288 million, said the minister. —KUNA



State Minister for Housing Affairs Yasser Abul

In Brief

SPEAKER RECEIVES TURKISH AMBASSADOR

KUWAIT: National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanim hosted on Tuesday Turkish Ambassador Murad Tamir. The meeting was attended by the deputy speaker, Mubarak Al-Khurainej. Ghanem also hosted Dr Nayef Falah Mubarak Al-Hajraf, Chairman of the Commissioners Board of the Capital Markets Authority (CMA), and board members. During the meeting, the speaker received a copy of the Authority's fifth annual report for the 2015-2016 fiscal year. — KUNA



KUWAIT OIL PRICE UP TO \$38.02 PB

KUWAIT: The price of Kuwaiti oil went up Monday by 61 cents to reach \$38.02 per barrel after being at \$37.41 pb the day before, said a statement by Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) yesterday. In the US, the price of the American crude was down Monday due to increasing fears over news regarding a surplus in US and OPEC production. Crude oil contracts retreated to \$40.57 per barrel last Friday at trading in New York Markets, settling on its lowest price since April 20th. — KUNA



US DOLLAR STABLE AGAINST DINAR

KUWAIT: The exchange rate of the US Dollar stabilized against the Kuwaiti Dinar at 0.301 yesterday, and the euro stabilized at KD 0. 337 compared to Monday's rates, said the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK). CBK added that the Sterling pound dropped to 0.398 KD, while the Swiss Franc stabilized at 0.311 and the Japanese Yen remained at KD 0.002. — KUNA



Photo

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KUWAIT: Date palm trees bear ripe fruits; a signal for the arrival of dates season in Kuwait. — KUNA photo

EGYPTIAN MINISTER WELCOMES RASHID, SABRY TO DISCUSS ARABIC CONNECTED GOVERNMENT CONFERENCE

CAIRO: Engineer Yasser Elkadi, the Egyptian Minister of Communications and Information Technology met with Adnan Al-Rashid, Deputy Chairman of Federation of Arab Journalists, and Magdy Sabry, Executive Manager of NoufEXPO Company of Kuwait. NoufEXPO and the Arab Administrative Development Organization (ARADO) have joined efforts to organize the Arabic Connected Government Conference - Road to Sustainable Modernization, due to be held at Sharm El Sheikh from 12 - 14 December 2016. Rashid hoped that the Conference will sup-

port Arab countries' efforts towards stability, modernization, and growth. Rashid believes that all means, including information technology and e-government programs, should be used to achieve those goals. He confirmed that we wanted to send a message of support and solidarity by choosing Sharm El Sheikh as the venue.

Meanwhile, Elkadi welcomed the convening of the event, especially in Sharm El Sheikh. He confirmed that all departments and resources of the Ministry of Communications will be available to ensure the success of the

Conference. Elkadi also prized the organizers' efforts and the topics that will be covered. Specifically, he welcomed the private and public sector collaboration during the event, represented by many Arab and global technology vendors and organizations.

Elkadi hoped that we benefit from the experiences of connected government implementations in Arab and non-Arab countries. Elkadi believes that digital media is, particularly, playing a significant role in spreading information swiftly and clearly, thus boosting a cultural exchange among nations.

The Arabic Connected Government Conference plans were thoroughly presented by Magdy Sabry. He expressed his gratitude for the support offered by Elkadi, confirming that the Ministry of Communications' teams are already working closely with the organizing committees.

Sabry highlighted the steps organizers are carrying out in preparation for the forthcoming press conference due to be held shortly at the Arab League premises to officially announce the Arabic Connected Government Conference.

The press conference will be led by His Excellency Eng. Elkadi; Dr Nasser Alqahtani, Director General of ARADO; Yousef Khaled Al-Marzouq, General Manager of NoufEXPO, as well as leaders of strategic supporting partners and media channels from Egypt, Kuwait, and other Arab countries.

By the end of the meeting, Rashid and Sabry thanked Elkadi for his hospitality and support. Reciprocally, Elkadi reaffirmed his support for the Conference, and sent his best wishes to Kuwait, which has always stood by Egypt and its people.



CAIRO: Engineer Yasser Elkadi, the Egyptian Minister of Communications and Information Technology meets with Adnan Al-Rashid, Deputy Chairman of Federation of Arab Journalists, and Magdy Sabry, Executive Manager of NoufEXPO Company of Kuwait.



AUB LAUNCHES INTERNAL TRAINING PROGRAM FOR UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH LOYAC KUWAIT

KUWAIT: Ahli United Bank (AUB) announced yesterday the launch of a new internal training program for university students in partnership with LoYAC Kuwait. The training program reflects the bank's intention to strengthen its social role across the educational sector and to develop professional skills of young people by encouraging the development of practical skill sets.

AUB welcomed seven university students as well as new graduates for a training course which is to run for six weeks. Students are to be exposed to a wide variety of topics that include an introduction to Islamic banking, AUB's different operating departments as well as developing students' skills in a number of banking specialties.

Apart from instruction in Islamic sharia principals the students will have the benefit of sessions covering their career opportunities developing their abilities in effective communications through customer service techniques and understanding the handling of customer issues. Furthermore, the course also includes training on various business IT platforms.



Throughout the duration of the program, students focus their training efforts across different departments within the Bank that include marketing, commercial services, quality

control as well as human resources. Moreover, trainees are also given hands-on training approach throughout AUB's network of branches across Kuwait to gain more practical experi-

ence. Naqib Amin, AUB's Human Resources General Manager said, "AUB aims to strengthen its social support and reinforce its position within the local community, in an effort to drive

young people's career development aspirations as they reflect the true backbone of the country's sustainable development future. AUB continues to roll out its social responsibility approach by participating in similar programs."

"We are pleased with the partnership that has developed between AUB and LoYAC Kuwait. Our collaborative efforts in a number of activities have resulted in a positive outcome. This particular training program is expected to drive stronger results on the young people's choice of professional background which will ultimately help to support the wider Kuwaiti society in various practical and specialized fields," added Amin.

LoYAC is a nonprofit organization and was established in 2002 as a proactive response amongst youth and to overcome violence by encouraging peace by providing them with opportunities for personal growth, experience of the joy of service and developing their overall professional skills to qualify and enable them to join the workforce.



KUWAIT: Kuwaitis sail on traditional dhows during the annual pearl diving season yesterday off the coast of the port city of Khairan, 100 kilometers (62 miles) south of Kuwait City. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

YOUNG DIVERS SEARCH FOR PEARLS IN KHAIRAN

28TH ANNUAL TRIP CONCLUDES TOMORROW

KUWAIT: Participants in the 28th annual expedition to commemorate the anniversary of diving continued to dive at Al-Khairan yesterday. Participants are committed to using the old traditional methods of diving, following specified timing schedules in areas that have good amount of pearls. On Monday, the organizing committee of the 28th Pearl Diving Trip held a ceremony where youth participants performed

traditional maritime arts. The youth then headed to diving locations at Al-Khairan yesterday. They were accompanied by media delegations from different newspapers and TV channels, as they closely followed the divers' activities. The annual expedition, set to conclude tomorrow, includes 193 captains and divers aboard 13 ships provided by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.



Kuwaiti men find pearls in shells that divers picked from the sea during the trip.



Kuwaiti divers search for shells containing pearls during the trip.



The pearls collected during the trip.



Divers perform traditional maritime arts during a ceremony held Monday evening.

Crime

Report

Man who caused fatal Hawally accident caught

KUWAIT: A person who caused the death of a Syrian woman and injured her two daughters in an accident reported last Friday was identified and arrested. The accident took place in Hawally, and when police and paramedics rushed to the site, they found the Syrian woman dead and her two daughters critically injured. The suspect who caused the accident had fled the scene at the time. Detectives were able to identify the Egyptian motorist, who is being questioned over running the red light.

Skin damage

A female citizen who bought face cream online suffered burns that damaged her skin. The citizen saw ads on Instagram, so she called and placed an order. A few days after using the creams, her face was burned. She went to Bayan police station to complain after the person who sold her the creams said "maybe they are not suitable for your skin."

Harasser in custody

Abu Halifa detectives arrested a Syrian man who slapped a female citizen after she admonished him for harassing her. The woman complained to police, telling them she was shopping when the young man harassed and beat her after she rejected his actions. Detectives who reviewed surveillance videos identified and arrested him. He said he beat her because she hit him on the face in front of other shoppers, and he could not stand the insult.

Police offender arrested

Criminal detectives summoned a female citizen who verbally abused a traffic policeman when he issued her a ticket for reckless driving. A video clip that circulated on social media of a woman using foul language prompted detectives to work on the case, and they were able to arrest the woman. She said her actions were because of the ticket. She was released after a complaint was lodged against her.

Food theft

A security source said that two restaurants in Ahmadi governorate filed two separate complaints about a person who called them and ordered food worth KD 25, but after he went to the restaurant to collect it, he escaped as soon as it was placed in his car trunk without paying. Police arrested him and he was identified by restaurant employees. He said he wanted to entertain his friends and thought that the restaurants would not complain.

Man hospitalized

A citizen in his twenties was found in a pool of blood in Mangaf. Police and paramedics rushed to the area and found the man unconscious with a severe wound to his head. Police are waiting for him to recover and tell them what happened.

Cafe fight

Five citizens engaged in a fight inside a cafe after one of them described the other as 'Abu Ras,' or one with a big head. Several patrons at the cafe called police, who arrived to the scene and only found the one who was taunted as "Abu Ras" there. The man was taken to hospital for treatment. The four others who escaped were charged with beating and insult and are summoned. — Al-Rai



CAPITAL GOVERNOR PRAISES KFH LEADING ROLE IN ASSUMING SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

KUWAIT: Governor of the Capital Governorate retired Lieutenant General Thabet Al-Muhanna praised the role shouldered by Kuwait Finance House (KFH) in assuming the social responsibility that serves in achieving the comprehensive development in the country.

In a special ceremony on the occasion of concluding the Ramadan program, the Governor had received at his office a delegation from KFH represented by the Public Relations team and honored the bank in recognition of its significant social responsibility role and remarkable initiatives, mainly the "Feeding a Fasting Person" campaign and iftar cannon program, not to mention the huge number of voluntary, humanitarian and social activities and events.

The Governor's recognition comprises an impetus for KFH to go extra miles in achieving the social responsibility, while reassuring the bank's leadership in this important field especially that KFH's strategy coincides with the efforts of boosting the economy, and achieving prosperity and development in the country.

It is worth noting that KFH's efforts in Ramadan reinforced its keenness to contribute in easing the suffering of low-income segments, while shouldering the social responsibility in all its categories, be it educational, environmental or health in an attempt to assure the importance of social responsibility commitment, yet to reinforce the bank's leadership position as a world leading Islamic financial institution.



Al-Anbaa

MINISTER OF SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND LABOR INAUGURATES 'ZAIN LAB'

AS PART OF STRATEGY TOWARDS PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading telecommunications company in Kuwait, announced the inauguration of 'Zain Lab' in the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor's Career Rehabilitation Department. The social initiative, sponsored by Zain, came as part of the company's CSSR strategy towards people with special needs.

The inauguration ceremony witnessed the attendance of HE the Minister of Social Affairs and Labor and Minister of State for Planning and Development Hind Al-Subaih, Director General of the Public Authority of the Disabled Dr Tareq Al-Shatti, Deputy General Director of the Rehabilitation Services Division Majed Al-Saleh, as well as a delegation of Zain officials. Zain's contribution came as part of the company's Corporate Sustainability and Social Responsibility strategy, especially towards the special needs sector. The company's solid CSSR umbrella primarily focuses on the wellbeing of the entire nation, and for this reason, Zain has maintained its support of numerous initiatives that help make a difference in people's everyday lives.

'Zain Lab', a fully equipped computer lab, offers people with special needs the needed equipment and necessary training for them to explore job opportunities that suit their specific needs in both the public and private sectors. The initiative also aims at



empowering people with special needs to be more productive and active members of the Kuwaiti society.

The company constantly finds ways to shoulder initiatives that work towards enhancing the society's welfare. Zain's long-term cooperation with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor as well as other public entities springs from its belief in the importance of having a positive print in the society by sponsoring and launching initiatives that cater to various inter-

ests of the community. It is worth noting that Zain recently provided the Ministry of Interior with over 40 wheelchairs to be distributed to the ministry's various departments that witness large numbers of visitors on a daily basis.

As a leading private sector company, Zain assures its commitment to contribute and support the various social and economic needs of the Kuwaiti society hand-in-hand with the public authorities.



OOREDOO KICKS OFF ITS 2016 SUMMER INTERNSHIP PROGRAM



KUWAIT: In collaboration with Manpower and Government Restructuring Program (MGRP), Ooredoo Kuwait, member of international Ooredoo group has recently announced the kickoff of its annual summer internship program 2016. The program has recently commenced and will last for one full month, where Ooredoo will be hosting and training nine students.

Students participating in the internship program will be visiting various departments within Ooredoo, get familiar with the different working environments at each one. Certain departments will be handling the training for a particular number of

students, Corporate Communications division is handling the training of one student, five students will get their training at Ooredoo branches, one student at B2B and two students at Human Resources and Administration Services department.

The internship program provides students with the different abilities and skills required in the world of business such as working within a team, ways to develop creative thinking, self-expression and best professional way to service customers.

Commenting on the annual summer internship program, Chief of Human Resources and Administration Services Saleh Al-Houti at Ooredoo

said: "As an organization we are keen to organize this summer training for the university students on annual basis as we strongly believe in the important role youth play to form a better future for our beloved country. We believe that the private sector has a huge responsibility towards this category, responsibility to train them and provide them with job opportunities in order to utilize their skills and knowledge."

This summer program comes in line with the company's corporate social responsibility strategy and considered to be one of multiple initiatives aiming at supporting youth generally and graduates particularly.

Al-Anbaa

THOSE WHO OFFEND KUWAITIS

By Madhi Al-Khamees

I do not know why some people use the provocative sentence 'May Allah bestow His mercy on Saddam' in front of Kuwaitis in case of any differences! Saddam did not commit criminal acts against Kuwaitis only, but also against Iraqis before the Kuwaitis. The entire Gulf was his target and no country was spared by him.

The Iraqi invasion's anniversary reminds us about the amount of crimes and sins Saddam committed during his life, and we do not exaggerate if we say that the plan to dismantle and destroy the Arab world began with the entry of the first Iraqi tank into Kuwait in an unprecedented historic event. Since then until now, we all are paying

The Iraqi invasion's anniversary reminds us about the amount of crimes and sins Saddam committed during his life.

dearly with all the repercussions and unhealed wounds over the years.

We should not be provoked by this remark, which its users aim at provoking us, because we know very well that Saddam Hussein is a criminal according to all rules and means, and history will not forget or forgive his acts. It is a history full of tragedy, sadness and painful memories. Let us while we remember, take the lesson from the past, and learn how to benefit from lessons. May Allah bestow His mercy on our martyrs and those who sacrificed their souls for the sake of this country.

— Translated by Kuwait Times

Crime

Report

Foreign companies to develop islands

KUWAIT: A special government committee is currently studying opening the door for foreign investors to invest in five Kuwaiti islands by 100 percent, said Dr Khalid Al-Mahdi, Secretary General of the Supreme Council of Planning and Development. The current plan is to carry out projects valued between \$120 billion and \$150 billion, with projected revenue reaching 10 to 20 percent according to preliminary studies, he added. — Al-Jarida

New remand regulations

KUWAIT: Attorney General Dherar Al-Asousi canceled a remand law passed by the parliament that was annulled in 2012, and order the Public Prosecution members to enforce the new amendments to the law. According to the new regulations, a suspect can be remanded for a maximum of three weeks in criminal cases, and ten days in felony cases. The judge can order the suspect to be remanded for an extra 15 days in criminal cases and 10 in felony cases, as long as the total remand time does not exceed 80 days in criminal cases and 40 in felony cases. — Al-Qabas

1980 census

KUWAIT: A decision was made this week to form a government team in order to summon stateless residents who possess documents of the 1980 census or beyond that year. The team would discuss the possibility of legalizing those residents' status according to the official documents they provide, said security sources familiar with the news. — Al-Anbaa

Shrimps at KD 90 per basket

KUWAIT: Shrimp sold for KD 90 per basket Monday on the first day after the Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources allowed fishing for shrimp in international waters, following a 7-month-long halt. Shrimp prices are expected to drop in the coming weeks, and especially after fishing in territorial waters is allowed on September 1. — Al-Jarida

Kuwait, Bahrain trade electricity

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Electricity and Water (MEW) plans this month to provide Bahrain's power grid with 100 megawatts for two weeks, as part of an agreement that stipulates that Kuwait receives back the same amount of power at the beginning of September. The goal behind this operation is to pave the way to apply commercial trade between countries connected through the GCC power grid network, MEW Undersecretary Mohammad Bushehri said. Kuwait's current excess of production, which reaches 15,500 megawatts a day compared to 13,310 megawatts that was the maximum daily consumption recorded this year, allows the state to go ahead with this agreement, Bushehri added. — Al-Rai

Clinical waste incinerator

KUWAIT: A Health Ministry insider said that building an incinerator for proper disposal of clinical waste in Kabad is expected to start this year, saying that work is currently ongoing to place and award the KD 3.2 million project's tender. — Al-Rai



KUWAIT: The Commercial Bank of Kuwait announced Nazeq Al-Shammas as the winner of the KD 150,000 Najma Account's Grand Prize 2nd Quarter Raffle Draw, which took place recently at the bank's head office under supervision of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.



Wildfires burn in 7 Western states, prompt evacuations

FRANCE LAYS TO REST SLAIN PRIEST



COLUMBUS, OHIO: Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump speaks during a town hall event on Monday. —AP

TRUMP SUGGESTS GENERAL ELECTION COULD BE 'RIGGED'
 NO IMMEDIATE EVIDENCE

COLUMBUS, OHIO: Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump has suggested that he fears the general election "is going to be rigged" - an unprecedented assertion by a modern presidential candidate.

Trump's extraordinary claim - one he did not back up with any immediate evidence - would, if it became more than just an off-hand comment, seem to threaten the tradition of peacefully contested elections and challenge the very essence of a fair democratic process.

"I'm afraid the election is going to be rigged, I have to be honest," the Republican nominee told a town hall crowd in Columbus, Ohio on Monday. He added that he has been hearing "more and more" that the election may not be contested fairly, though he did not elaborate further.

Trump made the claim after first suggesting that the Democrats had fixed their primary system so Hillary Clinton could defeat Bernie Sanders. Trump has previously backed up that thought by pointing to

hacked emails from the national party that appeared to indicate a preference for Clinton. Still, the former secretary of state received 3.7 million more votes than Sanders nationwide and had established a clear lead in delegates by March 1.

Conspiracy theories

The celebrity businessman - who has been known to dabble in conspiracy theories, including claims that President Barack Obama was not born in the United States and, more recently, that Sen. Ted Cruz's father was an associate of President John F. Kennedy's assassin - also claimed that the Republican nomination would have been stolen from him had he not won by significant margins.

He then asserted that November's general election may not be on the up-and-up. He repeated the charge Monday night on Fox News Channel's "Hannity," saying: "November 8th, we'd better be careful, because that election is going to be rigged. And I hope

the Republicans are watching closely or it's going to be taken away from us."

Requests to Trump's campaign for additional explanation were not returned. The statement could be an effort by Trump to lay the groundwork of an excuse if he goes on to lose the general election. But if he were to be defeated in November and then publicly declare that the election results were bogus, his claim could yield unpredictable reactions from his supporters and fellow Republicans.

Trump has not been shy about asserting that the electoral process has been "rigged." It became a frequent catchphrase of his during a low-water mark of his primary campaign this spring, when forces allied with Cruz managed to pack state delegations with supporters of the Texas senator. Trump also asserted that the Republican Party had changed the delegate allocation in the Florida primary to favor a native candidate, like Jeb Bush or Marco Rubio, at Trump's expense.

A deal with the devil

In recent weeks, in an effort to woo angry Sanders supporters to his campaign, Trump has made the claim that the Democrats' process was also rigged. Monday night, Trump said Sanders "made a deal with the devil," and said of Clinton, "She's the devil."

The Clinton campaign declined to comment about Trump's remarks.

The event in Ohio was Trump's first campaign appearance since the onset of his tussle with the parents of a slain Army veteran, but he did not address the flap. He spoke for nearly an hour Monday in Columbus, but did not mention his criticism of Khizr and Ghazala Khan, Muslims whose son was killed in Iraq in 2004.

The Khans spoke out against Trump and questioned his familiarity with the Constitution last week at the Democratic National Convention. Trump struck back by questioning whether Ghazala Khan

had been allowed to speak. She said she is still too grief-stricken by her son's death.

Trump criticized the family in an interview Sunday and again in a pair of tweets Monday morning. Asked on MSNBC Monday whether Trump should apologize, Ghazala Khan said, "I don't want to hear anything from him and I don't want to say anything to him." But his running mate, Mike Pence, quieted a campaign rally crowd Monday that booed a woman who said she had a son who serves in the U.S. Air Force and asked how he can tolerate what she called Trump's disrespect of American servicemen.

Pence asked the Nevada crowd to quiet down, then said about the questioner: "That's what freedom looks like. That's what freedom sounds like." He continued: "Capt. Kahn is an American hero. We honor him and his family ... we cherish his family." He added that Trump had great respect for veterans. —AP

TURKEY SENDS 2ND DOCUMENT TO US SEEKING CLERIC'S ARREST

ANKARA: Turkey's justice minister sent a document to the United States yesterday seeking the arrest of cleric Fethullah Gulen, who lives in self-imposed exile in Pennsylvania and whom Ankara accuses of instigating an attempted coup on July 15.

Bekir Bozdag sent a "second written document" requesting Gulen's arrest, the state-run Anadolu news agency said. The minister said the second letter explained why there was an urgent need for the arrest.

Ankara has demanded Gulen's extradition over the failed coup, which left 271 people dead. Washington has asked for evidence of the cleric's involvement, saying the extradition process must take its course.

The Turkish government launched a sweeping crackdown on Gulen's movement, which it characterizes as a terrorist

organization and which runs schools, charities and businesses internationally. In Turkey, nearly 70,000 people have been suspended from their jobs on suspicion of being involved in the movement. "They requested certain information following our first letter; we provided answers to the question 'why is it urgent,'" Anadolu quoted Bozdag as telling reporters in parliament.

"We wrote to them that there are serious claims and statements that Fethullah Gulen has a finger in the attempted coup. That is why he needs to be detained urgently. (We wrote) that we have intelligence that he can escape to third countries," Bozdag said.

"I hope that the United States decides in Turkey's favor, in line with democracy and the rule of law, and returns this leader of a terror organization to Turkey." The minister

said that if Gulen leaves the US for another country, it would be with the full knowledge of US authorities. "If he escapes then the US would either have turned a blind eye or approved of it," Bozdag said.

Reforming the military

Part of the crackdown against Gulen's network has focused on reforming the military, bringing it increasingly under civilian command. About 18,000 people have been detained or arrested, most of them from the military, while authorities have said the purge of those suspected of links to Gulen in the military will continue.

Prime Minister Binali Yildirim announced plans yesterday to shut down two military high courts - the administrative and appeals courts - and said military courts, which deal

with disciplinary issues, would be placed under the Defense Ministry's supervision.

The government has already issued a decree introducing sweeping changes to the military, including giving the president and prime minister the power to issue direct orders to the force commanders.

"These arrangements won't weaken the Turkish Armed Forces, on the contrary they will strengthen them and prepare them to face all kinds of threats," Yildirim said in an address to his ruling party legislators. "The Armed Forces will focus their energies on their fundamental duty."

Separately, authorities issued 98 new detention warrants, including for military doctors, a senior government official said, on condition of anonymity in line with regulations. —AP

ITALY WOULD CONSIDER US REQUEST TO USE THEIR BASE IN LIBYA STRIKES

ROME: Italy's foreign minister says his government will evaluate any US request to allow use of a Sicilian air base in the campaign of airstrikes against an Islamic State stronghold in Libya.

Paolo Gentiloni said in comments on state television yesterday that use of the Sigonella base would be considered "if requested" and Parliament informed of any decision. He described as "positive" the airstrikes against IS militants in the Libyan city of Sirte which began Monday.

In February, Italy agreed to let armed US drones take off from Sigonella but only to defend US forces targeting IS extremists. Italy has stressed it won't let Sigonella be used for offensive purposes. Italy has insisted Libya must request any anti-IS airstrikes, which Libya's UN-brokered unity government did in the case of Sirte. —AP

RUSSIAN STRIKES SLOW REBEL ASSAULT IN SYRIA'S ALEPPO

BEIRUT: The Syrian regime's key ally Russia launched heavy air strikes overnight on the outskirts of divided Aleppo city, slowing a "last-chance" assault by rebels seeking to break a government siege.

The assault began on Sunday and is intended to ease the encirclement of the opposition-held east of Aleppo city, where an estimated 250,000 residents have been under a regime siege since July 17. The British-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights described it as the largest rebel attack in Aleppo since 2012, when fighting reached the city and left it roughly divided between the opposition control in the east and regime forces in the west.

But government troops backed by Russia's air force have put up a fierce defense, the monitor said. "The Russian raids didn't stop all night on the front lines" there, said Observatory head Rami Abdel Rahman. "This has slowed the offensive and allowed regime troops to retake five of the eight positions that

rebels had taken since Sunday," he added. The strikes came despite an appeal by US Secretary of State John Kerry on Monday for Russia to "restrain" itself and its ally in Damascus from "offensive operations."

Kerry said regime attacks had prevented the warring parties from meeting for negotiations on Monday, the target date set for the regime and opposition forces to agree on the framework of a political transition.

The Aleppo offensive groups fighters from Fateh al-Sham Front, formerly Al-Qaeda affiliate Al-Nusra Front, as well as the powerful Islamist Ahrar al-Sham and other factions. The Observatory said 50 rebels and allied jihadists had been killed since the operation began on Sunday, as well as dozens of regime troops.

'Last chance for rebels'

Its main target is the government-held district of Ramussa, on the southwest outskirts of Aleppo. The route used

by regime forces and civilians living in government-controlled parts of Aleppo runs through Ramussa. Its capture would both cut off government forces and open a new route into the city for rebels. The Observatory said at least 30 civilians had also been killed since Sunday in opposition bombardment of government-held southwestern districts of Aleppo. "This battle is the last chance for rebels. If they lose, it will be difficult for them to launch a new assault to break the siege," Abdel Rahman said. "For the regime also, it's a question of life or death. They've been preparing for this battle for months and it'll be a tough blow for its troops if they lose," he added.

Elsewhere in Aleppo province, the Observatory said at least 11 people, including five children, were killed in air strikes believed to have been carried out by Russian warplanes on the rebel-held town of Atareb.

The town has been targeted multiple times in recent weeks. According to the Observatory, 76 people have been killed

in strikes there since July 16. Residents in east Aleppo have reported food shortages and rising prices since government troops seized the last remaining road into opposition-held districts on July 17.

NGOs slam Aleppo 'corridors'

Last week Russia announced the opening of "humanitarian corridors" to allow residents and surrendering fighters to flee the east for government-held territory. The announcement was met with skepticism by both residents and some in the international community, and 35 NGOs in a statement on yesterday called the initiative "deeply flawed."

The groups, including Save the Children and Oxfam, urged implementation of a UN call for a weekly 48-hour humanitarian pause in the city. But Damascus and Moscow say some residents and fighters have begun using the passages and Syrian state media reported yesterday that "dozens of families" had crossed from the east.

It reported similar crossings over the

weekends, though residents and rebels in east Aleppo dismissed those reports as "lies." Syria's conflict has killed more than 280,000 people and drawn in world powers on both sides since it erupted in March 2011.

Russia began an aerial campaign in support of Damascus last September. On Monday, Moscow announced one of its military helicopters had been shot down over Idlib province, killing the five people on board.

It was the single deadliest incident for Russia since its intervention began and brought its losses in the war to 18. There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the incident, which occurred in an area controlled by a rebel alliance dominated by the Fateh al-Sham Front.

Yesterday, an area near where the helicopter went down was hit with a barrel bomb attack that caused 24 people to suffer breathing problems, the Observatory said. Residents said the attack had used chlorine gas, but the monitor could not confirm. —AFP



CARME VALLEY, CALIFORNIA: A helicopter flies over a back burn on a ridge south west of Cachagua as firefighters battle a wildfire in east on Monday. —AP

WILDFIRES BURN IN 7 WESTERN STATES, PROMPT EVACUATIONS

LOS ANGELES: Wildfires are burning in seven Western US states, from California's famed Big Sur region to tribal towns and hamlets near Reno, Nevada. More than a dozen homes were destroyed in Montana, and evacuations were ordered in Nevada, Oregon and Wyoming. Firefighters were trying to stop a Washington blaze from reaching a thickly forested security zone at the Hanford Nuclear Reservation.

Here's a look at some of the fires: California

Higher humidity and lower temperatures on Monday helped firefighters battle a destructive wildfire that has scorched more than 63 square miles near the scenic Big Sur coast, while firefighters in Central California faced blistering heat as they worked to contain a blaze that burned rural homes and forced hundreds of evacuations near the small Fresno County town of Prather.

A layer of ocean air that arrived in the mountainous Big Sur region was credited for the better conditions in an area where a fire that started July 22 has destroyed 57 homes and is threatening 2,000 more structures. A bulldozer operator working for the firefighting operation died in an accident last week. It is 18 percent contained.

The blaze near Prather has damaged three homes just outside the Sierra National Forest, the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection said. About 300 people are under evacuation orders.

That fire started Saturday and by Monday had grown to over 3 square miles with just 20 percent of it surrounded by firefighters.

Just north of Los Angeles, a 65-square-mile wildfire in wilderness just north of Los Angeles was almost fully contained and only active with isolated pockets of vegetation burning within a fire lines. A man who refused to evacuate from a home was killed and the fire also prompted the evacuation of about 20,000 people.

Idaho

A southwest Idaho wildfire burning timber in rugged terrain and pushed by winds grew to 60 square miles Monday. Temperatures in the 90s, wind and low humidity caused significant expansion on Sunday. Firefighting aircraft were grounded for about 45 minutes because of people flying their drones in the area.

The fire closed a section of State Highway 21 between Idaho City and Lowman and destroyed two outbuildings. A firefighter suffered burns during the weekend when fuel spilled on his arm and it ignited.

Montana

At least 14 homes were destroyed by a fast-moving wildfire in the Bitterroot National Forest in western Montana, authorities said Monday.

Ravalli County authorities ordered residents of about 500 homes to leave the area after the fire began Sunday afternoon southwest of Hamilton. It had burned nearly 5.5 square miles by Monday night.

"I've talked to homeowners who said we had 200-foot flames coming off those trees. This thing really blew up, and I've never seen anything like it in the years that I've

been" with the Bitterroot National Forest, spokesman Tod McKay said. Ravalli County Sheriff Chris Hoffman said he could not immediately provide details about the number of homes or buildings destroyed.

Nevada

About 800 firefighters were battling a series of fires that had threatened a tribal town and hamlets near Pyramid Lake, north of Reno. The fire zone totaled about 78 square miles Monday, said fire spokeswoman Jesse Bender.

Residents of about 30 homes in Cottonwood Creek and Fish Springs Ranch were warned they would receive 30 minutes notice to evacuate if necessary. About 600 people were ordered out of the shoreline town of Sutcliffe over the weekend, and 200 were evacuated from beach areas.

Flames destroyed six houses and mobile homes, two vehicles and several out-buildings at historic Hardscrabble Ranch, according to Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribal officials.

Oregon

Eastern Oregon residents urged to evacuate over the weekend because of a wildfire were allowed to return home. About 20 structures remained threatened by the fire east of the town of Pendleton, the Oregon Department of Forestry said.

The East Oregonian reports that columns of smoke were rose Sunday after the blaze scorched about 500 acres of grass and timber along Interstate 84. It was 25 percent contained by Sunday evening.

Washington

A wildfire burning toward the Hanford nuclear reservation has scorched about 273 square miles of brush and grass as it spread from Yakima County into Benton County in south-central Washington.

The blaze, the largest of several wildfires in central and eastern Washington, began Saturday on the US Army's Yakima Training Center and quickly grew in size over the weekend.

But fire lines set overnight and low winds Monday are helping to slow the fire's progression, said Randall Rische, a spokesman with the US Bureau of Land Management. Officials said Monday night better mapping allowed them to determine the fire had burned significantly more acreage than previously thought. About 250 residences are at risk, officials also said Monday night and the fire is 10 percent contained. The cause is being investigated. The Department of Energy said Monday on its website that Hanford work schedules were not immediately affected by the fire.

Wyoming

Firefighters made progress in their effort to contain several fires burning in western part of the state. An approximately 2-square-mile blaze that destroyed eight homes and prompted the evacuation of about 140 others in southern Uinta County was 25 percent contained.

Northwest of Dubois, a 21-square-mile blaze was 40 percent surrounded and some residents who evacuated seasonal homes were allowed to return. In neighboring Bridger-Teton National Forest, a fire that has burned about 45 square miles was 81 percent contained. —AP

SENATE REPUBLICANS ON THE SPOT OVER TRUMP COMMENTS ON KHAN

JUST A TASTE OF TRIALS TO COME

WASHINGTON: The uproar over Donald Trump's criticism of a bereaved Army family put vulnerable GOP senators in a tight spot, underscoring anew the political challenges created for Republicans by their newly minted presidential nominee. And with the general election campaign now squarely underway, the firestorm over Trump's attacks on the Khan family is likely just a taste of trials to come as Republicans negotiate how closely to align with their volatile nominee.

Senate Republicans running for re-election weighed in one after another Monday to condemn Trump's repeated attacks on the parents of slain US Army Capt. Humayun Khan, with former prisoner of war Sen. John McCain of Arizona leading the charge. And in an op-ed Tuesday, a New York congressman became the first House Republican to announce that he would vote for Democrat Hillary Clinton.

McCain issued a lengthy statement insisting that Trump has no right "to defame those who are the best among us" and pleading: "I hope Americans understand that the remarks do not represent the views of our Republican Party, its officers, or candidates."

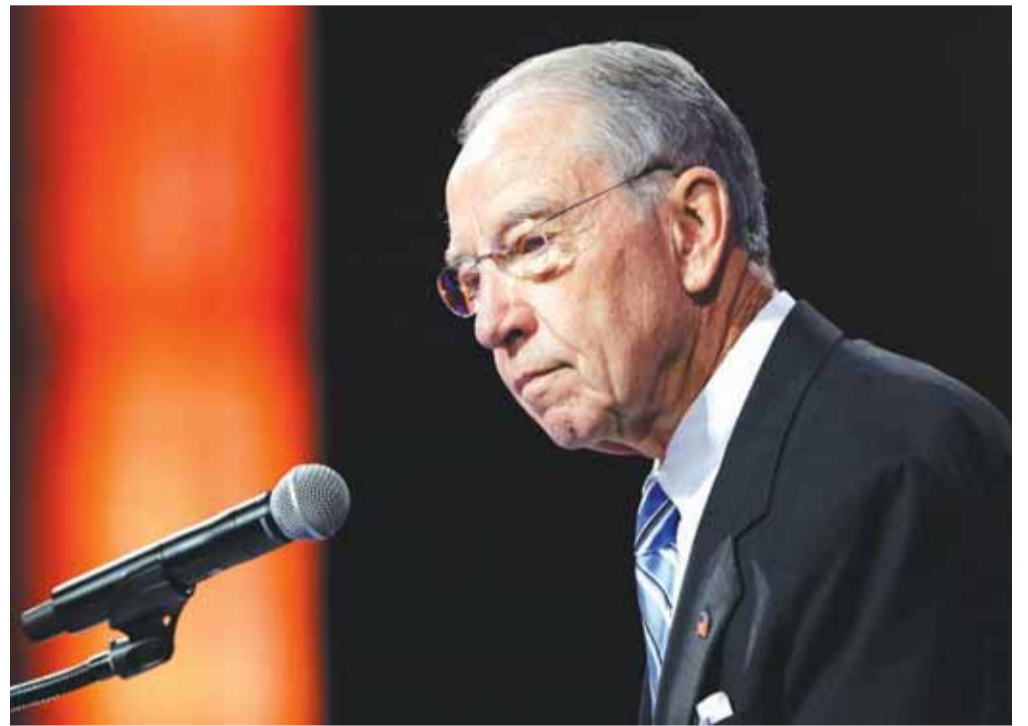
Hero in every sense of the word

Sen. Charles Grassley of Iowa said Trump's comments "are not in line with my own beliefs about how the members of the military and their families should be treated." Sen. Richard Burr of North Carolina said that "Captain Khan is an American hero in every sense of the term and the Khans deserve our sincerest gratitude."

Yet as Democrats were quick to point out, most of the Republicans criticizing Trump had already declared their plans to vote for him for president, and despite their collective outrage, none of them withdrew their support. Several, including House Speaker Paul Ryan and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, avoided mentioning the billionaire by name. "No matter what Trump has said or done - from shameful personal attacks to racist outbursts - John McCain has blindly pledged to 'support the nominee,'" said Max Croes, campaign manager for McCain's Democratic opponent, Rep. Ann Kirkpatrick, in one typical response from a Democratic Senate campaign. "McCain's window to take a principled stand and abandon Trump has closed. There is no post-primary redemption for John McCain." Croes added, in a reference to McCain's Aug. 30 primary face-off against a tea party-backed conservative.

"Viciously attacking"

The furor surrounds Trump's accusations



DES MOINES, IOWA: In this July 15, 2016, file photo, Sen. Chuck Grassley speaks during the National Governors Association meeting. —AP

against Khizr and Ghazala Khan, whose son was killed in Iraq in 2004. Trump complained that Khizr Khan was "viciously attacking" him by appearing on stage at last week's Democratic National Convention holding up a copy of the Constitution, questioning whether Trump had even read it and asserting the billionaire had sacrificed nothing. Trump has responded by insisting he had made sacrifices and questioning why Ghazala Khan did not speak on stage, which she later said was because she was too bereaved.

It's just the latest Trump-created conundrum for Republican senators who need support from Trump's enthusiastic backers to win re-election, but risk alienating moderate Republicans, independents, minorities and women if they embrace the GOP nominee too enthusiastically.

"There's no question that Donald Trump is making it very difficult for House and Senate candidates who are running on the ballot in November," said Brian Walsh, a GOP strategist and former spokesman for the National Republican Senatorial Committee. "In an ideal world we would have a candidate who would appropriately recognize his comments and apologize for them, but that's not the situation right

now." Writing in the Syracuse Post-Standard, GOP Rep. Richard Hanna said it's not enough to denounce Trump's comments. "He is unfit to serve our party and cannot lead this country." The lawmaker, who has announced his retirement, said that while he disagrees with Clinton on many issues, "I trust she can lead."

Candidates have also wrestled with whether to appear alongside Trump when he campaigns in their states. When Trump appeared Monday in Columbus, Ohio, vulnerable GOP Sen. Rob Portman was not on-hand; aides said he was doing previously scheduled events related to opioid legislation he has sponsored, although his schedule appeared to have him near-by. Grassley's aides also cited scheduling conflicts as the reason Grassley did not attend Trump events in Iowa last week. Burr, on the other hand, joined Trump on the campaign trail in Winston-Salem, North Carolina last week, and other campaigns, including Rubio's, have said they're open to joint appearances with Trump. Trump is backed by all but two vulnerable GOP senators - Pat Toomey of Pennsylvania, who is still in a "wait and see" mode, and Mark Kirk of Illinois, who withdrew his endorsement after Trump's attacks on a US judge of Mexican heritage. —AP

IRANIAN LINK IN ATTEMPT TO HACK SYRIAN DISSIDENT

PARIS: Syrian opposition activist Noura Al-Ameer was combed through her emails late one night when a message caught her eye. The sender was "Assadcrimes" and he promised information about Iranian meddling in the Middle East. But the email seemed odd.

Al-Ameer turned to her husband, cybersecurity trainer Bahr Abdul Razzak, in their small, book-cluttered home in the Turkish city of Gaziantep. "Have you heard of this group before?" Al-Ameer asked. "No," he said. "But let me check the email." Abdul Razzak, a fellow at internet watchdog group Citizen Lab, quickly determined that the group was bogus. The email, sent on Oct. 3 last year, was an electronic trap - one of hundreds of malicious messages that have flown back and forth as rebels grapple with the government of Bashar Assad in Syria. This one had been aimed at snaring Al-Ameer in particular; the website registered by the hacker was in her name, suggesting an attempt to steal her identity.

Jumping off point

Al-Ameer is a well-known opposition figure, and stealing her data or her identity could have been the jumping off point to attack other Syrians in and out of the country. As Abdul Razzak and his colleagues tried to trace the hackers, they found a trail of digital clues leading to Iran. Their story - detailed in a report issued Tuesday by Citizen

Lab, an interview with the couple and conversations with outside experts - raise the possibility that Iran has gone beyond sending men and materiel to tip the scale in Assad's favor.

The country's hackers may have joined the fray as well. "It's not a shock," said Al-Ameer, a 29-year-old who spent six months in Syrian government detention before moving to Turkey in 2013. "They're fighting our people on the ground. I think it's normal for any side that fights you on the ground to fight you on the internet."

Evidence of an Iranian link is outlined in a 56-page report by Citizen Lab, based at the Munk School of Global Affairs at the

University of Toronto. The group has made a specialty of tracking the hackers who've dogged Syria's opposition, which lead author John Scott-Railton said had turned into "something of a petri dish for threat actors in the Middle East."

The report says those behind the "Assadcrimes" website appear to have inadvertently exposed their site's logs, showing evidence that its creators accessed it in part from the Iranian internet space. The site itself briefly hosted a Farsi-language email service, and a string of data recovered from the malicious code used to target Al-Ameer appeared to refer to a developer who runs a malicious software site registered in the Iranian city of

Shiraz. The evidence isn't conclusive but it "lets us think that we're perhaps looking at a group that's operating from Iran," Scott-Railton said. He cautioned that it wasn't possible to say much about the group's potential sponsorship - government or otherwise.

An outside expert who evaluated Citizen Lab's report endorsed its work. The botched cyberespionage attempt "is consistent with Iranian activity we've previous observed, in terms of operational security, social engineering, and technical sophistication," said John Hultquist, a threat intelligence manager at network security company FireEye Inc., based in Milpitas, California.

No comment from Iran

Calls to Iran's Embassy in Paris were not answered yesterday. The hackers in Al-Ameer's case appear to have made some mistakes. But Scott-Railton said those who target Syria's scattered opposition activists are only as sophisticated as they need to be. Many groups operating in the area, including the pro-Assad Syrian Electronic Army, have used very simple tools and persistent trickery to repeatedly compromise savvy targets. "Not all hacking in a conflict looks like Stuxnet," said Scott-Railton, referring to the complex computer bug widely suspected of being unleashed by the United States to sabotage Iran's nuclear program. "What this shows is how powerful social engineering is." — AP



ISTANBUL: Bahr Abdul Razzak, 29, and his wife Noura Al-Ameer, 29, show a phone with the email on Monday. —AP

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S KOREA'S PARK GETS PERSONAL IN US MISSILE SYSTEM ROW

SEOUL: President Park Geun-Hye yesterday evoked memories of her parents' assassination as she hit back at opposition to the planned deployment of an advanced US anti-missile system in South Korea. The defence ministry announced last month that the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense system, or THAAD, will be installed in Seongju—a rural county about 200 kilometers southeast of Seoul by the end of next year.

The decision was predicated on the

growing threat posed by North Korea's advancing nuclear weapons and ballistic missile program. Protesting Seongju residents have alleged that the system's powerful radar poses health and environmental hazards, while opposition lawmakers have been less than supportive of the move.

At a cabinet meeting Park voiced frustration at the objections to what she insisted was an "unchangeable" decision to deploy the system. "If we cannot take

basic defensive steps like deploying THAAD, how can we protect the country and the people?" she said in remarks posted on her official website. "I have lost my parents in the most excruciatingly painful way. My only remaining calling is to safeguard the country and people from various threats," she added.

Park's father, the former president and military strongman Park Chung-Hee, was shot dead by his own intelligence chief in 1979. Her mother was killed in 1974 dur-

ing an earlier assassination attempt on her father by a North Korean sympathizer. Park Geun-Hye never married or had children and once proclaimed herself wedded to the nation and its welfare. While promising to listen to the complaints of the Seongju residents, the president warned against listening to "strange and groundless rumors rather than scientific evidence" about the THAAD deployment. "I ask the political circle to gather their wisdom and efforts

to prevent internal division and conflict," she added.

Tensions on the divided Korean peninsula have been running high since Pyongyang carried out its fourth nuclear test in January, followed by a series of ballistic missile tests. North Korea has threatened to take "physical action" against the THAAD deployment, saying any South Korean ports and airfields hosting US military "hardware" would become a target. — AFP

AUSTRALIANS IN SCOTTISH HIGHLANDS IN LIMBO AS VISA DEADLINE PASSES

EDINBURGH: An Australian family facing deportation from the Scottish Highlands after a change in visa rules are now in limbo, waiting to hear from the British government whether they will be given more time to meet visa requirements.

Gregg and Kathryn Brain, who moved to Scotland in 2011 with their son Lachlan, are hoping for a job offer or a new extension to their visa after the last one expired at midnight on Monday.

Their case has attracted a huge outpouring of sympathy in Scotland, where Kathryn Brain was previously given permission to study and then work as part of a now defunct British government-backed scheme to shore up the Highlands' ageing and shrinking population.

"They simply don't know if there will be a knock on the door at some point and they will be removed," Ian Blackford, the lawmaker for Dingwall where the Brains live, told Reuters.

"If that is the route they (Britain's interior ministry) want to go down, well, we just don't know, we're in their hands," he said, adding that he had yet to receive a reply to two letters sent to British Immigration Minister Robert Goodwill's office in the last 24 hours.

Lachlan Brain, 7, has learnt the ancient Scottish language Gaelic and Scotland's First Minister Nicola Sturgeon made a personal appeal to the interior ministry in London on the family's behalf in May. The Brains argue that their predicament is unfair because the rules were changed after their arrival. — Reuters

PNG COURT ORDERS AUSTRALIA TO PRESENT AN ASYLUM SEEKER RESETTLEMENT PLAN

SYDNEY: Papua New Guinea's Supreme Court yesterday ordered Australia to present a resettlement plan for nearly 900 asylum seekers held in what it says is an illegal detention centre on Manus island—a move detainees fear will further delay their release.

The Supreme Court ruled more than three months ago that the detention centre, used to house asylum seekers trying to reach Australia, was illegal. The centre was approved by the Papua New Guinea government and is funded by Australia.

The court order is the latest delay in determining the future of the detainees and human rights groups say tensions are rising in the detention centre, which has a history of violent protests and self-harm by detainees. "The level of frustration on Manus Island is as high as it has ever been," said Ian Rintoul, an Australian refugee advocate who was on Manus Island last week. "The court action, while a glimmer of hope, is frustrating them as there has been no action despite detention being found to be unlawful."

Under Australia's hard-line immigration policy, anyone intercepted trying to reach the country by boat is sent for pro-

cessing to camps on Manus Island in Papua New Guinea or on Nauru in the South Pacific. They are never eligible to be resettled in Australia.

The Papua New Guinea government has said it plans to close the Manus centre after the Supreme Court ruling, raising the question where will the detainees be resettled. Many in Papua New Guinea do not want the asylum seekers in their community. The asylum seekers come from across the Middle East and Asia predominantly, with Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan accounting for the bulk. Some have been held in detention for several years.

Lawyers for the 898 Manus island detainees have asked the Supreme Court for compensation of 1,500 kina (\$462.75) for every day they were held illegally.

The Supreme Court said it would call on Australia to provide a representative on Thursday to provide details on a resettlement plan.

"The court has embarked on this process on issue of resettlement. That is a matter for the two governments, what we want is for them to be released," said Ben Lomaj, a lawyer for some of the detainees, told Reuters yesterday. — Reuters



INDIA: In this Sunday, July 31, 2016, file photo, a flood affected family moves on a banana raft past a fishing net in Morigaon district, east of Gauhati, northeastern Assam state. — AP

INDIA MONSOON RAINS KILLS 96 GOVT PROVIDING RELIEF CAMPS

GAUHATI, INDIA: The death toll in flooding from heavy monsoon rains in India has climbed past 90, with about a million people taking shelter in government-run relief camps, officials said yesterday. Incessant downpours have damaged swaths of land, uprooted trees and snapped telephone cables in dozens of districts in the states of Bihar in the east, Assam in the remote northeast and Himachal Pradesh in the north.

A total of 96 people have been killed in the flooding in the three states over the past week, according to state officials. At least 17 rare one-horned rhinos have been killed due to the flooding of vast tracts of Assam's Kaziranga National

Park, said Pramilla Rani Brahma, the state's forest and environment minister. "Most of the rhinos killed are calves, separated from their mothers during the massive flooding," Brahma said.

The park had 1.5-meter-high (5-foot-high) floodwaters in some places, forcing many of the park's animals, also including wild elephants, wild buffaloes and bears, to cross a highway to move to higher ground.

The heavy monsoon rains have come after two straight years of drought in India. On Monday, landslides and heavy rains blocked highways leading to Tibet and Manali, a tourist resort in Himachal Pradesh state, with hundreds

of people stranded for several hours before rescuers cleared the way, the Press Trust of India news agency said.

In Bihar state, around 260,000 flood victims were taking shelter in more than 400 relief camps set up by the state government. At least 400 medical camps have been set up as well to aid people who have spent several nights outdoors after their homes were submerged by rain waters. In Assam, where floodwaters started receding on yesterday, some 3.8 million people have been affected by the floods, according to state authorities. More than 700,000 have taken shelter in 770 relief camps. — AP

BRITON IN GUN INCIDENT COULD DIE IN US PRISON

LONDON: A British man detained in the United States for allegedly trying to wrestle a gun from a police officer at a Donald Trump rally is suffering from severe mental illness and risks dying in prison, his mother said on yesterday.

Michael Sandford, 20, is due to face trial in Nevada on Aug. 22. He has pleaded not guilty to two felony counts of being an illegal alien in possession of a firearm and one felony count of impeding and disrupting the orderly conduct of government business.

His mother, Lynne Sandford, told a news conference in London that her son, who has been diagnosed in the past with autism, depression and other mental health conditions, had been on suicide watch in a Nevada prison for the past three weeks. She portrayed her son as a compassionate, child-like man who enjoyed watching "Peppa Pig", a British children's television program, and who was bewildered and frightened by his incarceration. She said her son had attempted to take his own life when he was 14 years old and was suffering from anorexia.

Michael Sandford was arrested after an incident at a Trump rally at the Treasure Island hotel in Las Vegas on June 18, and later told an investigator he wanted to kill the Republican presidential candidate, according to US court papers.

He has not been charged with attempted murder. "I accept that Michael has tried to do a bad thing but he is mentally ill and is not a bad or dangerous person," said his mother, adding that she had last spoken to him on the phone on Sunday. "He kept breaking down and sobbing on the phone, saying 'please, please, I just want to come home'. He's very remorseful ... He's just in a really bad way," she said. Sandford has launched a campaign to have her son repatriated to Britain so he could be treated in a secure medical facility. She has raised 19,600 pounds (\$25,950) through the crowd-funding website Crowd Justice to pay for legal and other expenses.

She said a British consular official who had visited her son in prison had reported that he was shackled and handcuffed. "It's not clear that Michael actually understands what he has done," said Saimo Chahal, the family's British lawyer, speaking alongside Lynne Sandford. "Because of his Asperger's, OCD (obsessive compulsive disorder) and other psychological conditions there is a question mark over whether he's fit to plead and to undergo the trial process in the States," she said. Chahal said she was working to provide the public defenders' office in Nevada with independent evidence of Michael Sandford's mental illness. She expected the trial to be postponed by at least 56 days initially to allow time for that. She hoped a trial would not happen and that Sandford would be repatriated to Britain as part of a plea bargain agreement. — Reuters



LONDON: Lynne Sandford, the mother of British man Michael Sandford who was arrested in Las Vegas after attempting to snatch a policeman's gun at a rally held by US Republican Presidential nominee Donald Trump, speaks at a press conference yesterday. — AFP



PARIS: This file photo taken on June 21, 2016 shows British Ambassador to France Julian King (R) holding, along with French deputies and government members, a moment of silence for slain British Labor party MP Joe Cox during the questions to the government session at the French National Assembly. — AFP

BRITISH EU COMMISSION NOMINEE TO HEAD RESPONSE TO TERRORISM

BRUSSELS: Britain's nominee for the European Commission will be put in charge of crafting a response to terrorism and promoting intelligence-sharing, Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker said, a tough role amid a spate of attacks in western Europe. Former British Prime Minister David Cameron nominated Julian King - Britain's ambassador to France - as the country's representative at the European Commission to replace Jonathan Hill, who resigned after Britons voted on June 23 to leave the bloc.

The Commission, the executive branch of the European Union, said King's Security Union portfolio would include setting up a European response to terrorism, organized crime and cybercrime.

In his appointment letter, Juncker said he would like King to improve information and intelligence sharing, "including through initiatives to upgrade Europol's European Counter-Terrorism Centre into a stronger structure and through the development of

efficient and interoperable information exchange systems."

London, which has in the past pushed for greater EU cooperation on security matters, welcomed the announcement. "Security is a vital issue for all Member States and cooperation across the EU can help to better protect us all from the range of threats we face," a spokeswoman for Prime Minister Theresa May said in a statement. King's appointment must now be endorsed by the European Parliament. Juncker interviewed King on July 11, and the British diplomat is expected to appear in front of the EU legislature in early autumn.

King has served in Brussels before, notably as chief-of-staff to two previous British commissioners, Peter Mandelson and Catherine Ashton in 2008-09. He has also been ambassador to Ireland, the EU state with possibly the most to lose from Brexit. He took up his post in Paris five months ago. — Reuters

SEXUAL ABUSE PLAGUES FEMALE WORKERS ON INDIA'S SUGARCANE FIELDS

MUMBAI: Every year after the monsoon, Gouri Bhiwde and her husband joined tens of thousands of workers migrating to the west of India's Maharashtra state to cut sugarcane. Every year, Bhiwde and other female laborers were sexually assaulted by supervisors and landowners, she said.

After one difficult pregnancy, Bhiwde's husband and his family took her to a doctor, who advised her to have a hysterectomy to prevent any further complications. "The doctor said, 'let's take it out,'" Bhiwde said by telephone from her village in Beed district. "He said, it'll only cause trouble." Female workers in western Maharashtra's sugarcane fields routinely face abuse and rape by landlords and middlemen who enslave them through debt bondage, activists say.

They said women are often forced by their families to undergo sterilization or a hysterectomy so they do not get pregnant from the repeated abuse, and can work without a break. "It is an unimaginable violation," said Nirja Bhatnagar, regional manager at ActionAid in Mumbai, which has surveyed dozens of female sugarcane cutters in Beed

district. "There is no human rights violation worse than having to remove your uterus so you can enter an informal economy that does not care for you," said Bhatnagar.

However, a spokesman for the sugar factories' cooperative denied that women are abused. "We have not heard of any such instances," said Sriramji Shete, a vice chairman of the Maharashtra State Co-operative Sugar Factories Federation. "If they are unhappy with the wages or the conditions, why would they keep coming back?" he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

India is the world's second-largest sugar producer. In Maharashtra, India's top producing state, about 500,000 rural poor migrate to Beed, Solapur, Kolhapur, Sangli and Satara districts every year to cut sugarcane. The workers are hired as couples. Most are in debt bondage, receiving about 50,000 to 60,000 rupees (\$745 to \$895) from a middleman as an advance against working for six to eight months. At the end of that period, the workers are often told they still owe money, and that they must return the next season, activists say. — Reuters

ATHEISTS URGE AUSTRALIANS 'DON'T BE JEDI' FOR CENSUS

SYDNEY: Atheists are urging Australians not to describe themselves as "Jedi" in the upcoming census, warning that doing so in homage to "Star Wars" makes the country appear more religious than it really is.

Ahead of the August 9 five-year census, the Atheist Foundation of Australia has requested citizens mark themselves down as having "no religion" if they do not consider themselves tied to a faith. "If old religious men in robes do not represent you... don't mark yourself as 'Jedi'," says a campaign poster featuring Yoda

and two other Jedi masters. "Jedi" and other joke religions are not placed in the 'No Religion' category but in 'Not Defined'. This makes Australia seem more religious than it really is."

Foundation president Kylie Sturgess said she was encouraging people "to be counted as what they are." "Our attitude is, well here's an opportunity to have a say on the census; pop down what you are," she told AFP. "Maybe 'no religion' suits you, maybe you are someone who has drifted away from the church. "But unfortunately 'Jedi' is just not an option

on the census."

The joke arose years ago when an email campaign wrongly claimed that if 8,000 people put themselves down as Jedi it would have to be officially recognized as a religion. At the 2001 Australian census, more than 70,500 people listed their faith as "Jedi knight" or something similar, which would indicate the country had nearly as many believers in the "Force" as it had members of the Salvation Army.

"Whether or not people took the claim seriously, it was the start of a

reporting phenomenon that gained speed internationally," the Australian Bureau of Statistics said in 2013, adding that New Zealand, Canada, England and Wales subsequently reported large Jedi contingents.

Jedi numbers dropped in the 2006 Australian census to 58,053 but bounced back five years later to 64,390. Sturgess admits that she has put down Jedi as a "bit of a laugh" in the past. "But the fact is that the ABS just doesn't count it, they consider it 'not defined'" she said, adding "the joke

is kinda getting a bit old". Australian statisticians could instead follow Britain's example. In the 2001 England and Wales census, 390,000 people, or 0.7 percent of the population, entered their religion as "Jedi" but they were included among the atheists. Or they could embrace non-traditional movements as New Zealand did in 2015 when it recognized pastafarians-who wear colanders on their heads, revere pirates and believe the world was created by a giant deity made of spaghetti. —AFP

CHINESE RIGHTS ACTIVIST GETS SUSPENDED SENTENCE

FIRST PUBLICLY ACKNOWLEDGED HEARING

TIANJIN, CHINA: A Chinese court issued a suspended three-year prison sentence to a human rights activist charged with subversion of state power after a brief trial yesterday, the first publicly acknowledged hearing in a secrecy-shrouded year-long case involving hundreds of rights activists.

The official Xinhua News Agency said a court in the northern city of Tianjin issued the sentence to Zhai Yanmin, who was arrested in July last year as part of a nationwide government campaign against legal activists. About 300 lawyers and activists were initially seized and questioned before most were released.

him as saying they organized popular rallies during controversial human rights cases to draw international attention and undermine the Chinese state - remarks that echoed previous government accusations toward the group.

Xinhua said the court was told that Zhai, 55, and the three others "conspired and plotted to subvert state power," and "established a systematic ideology, method and steps to achieve it."

In a video from the trial shown on state television and posted on government websites, Zhai read a statement saying he accepted all the charges against him, was "extremely regretful" of

denounced by the authorities as interference in the legal process.

Many wives of the detained activists say they and their retained lawyers have been denied access to the detainees for more than a year, receiving only occasional updates by word of mouth, while some family members seeking information have been briefly detained themselves.

"It's unfair, it's too unfair"

Zhai's wife, Liu Ermin, was taken into custody on Sunday night and returned late Monday to her Beijing home, where she said she is effectively held under house arrest by security agents outside her door. "It's unfair, it's too unfair," she said in a text message upon learning of Zhai's verdict.

She said she intends to appeal the verdict but does not know how to reach his government-appointed lawyer, whose identity has not been disclosed to relatives or in state media reports. Zhai's three-year sentence was suspended for four years, meaning he will not go to prison but will have to live under considerable restrictions and supervision. He also will lose all political rights for the same period, making him ineligible to run for local councils or other offices. He can be sent to prison to serve his sentence if he disobeys the rules set for his release during the four-year period.

A three-year sentence is the minimum for people convicted of subversion, which carries a maximum sentence of life in prison. "It is an unprecedentedly light sentence... almost a symbolic punishment," said Beijing political commentator Zhang Lifan.

That may be a deliberate move by the ruling Communist Party, which permits no political opposition, to demonstrate that those who cooperate can be treated leniently, while harsh penalties await those who refuse, Zhang said. "The point is not whether you committed any crime, but whether you obeyed or not," Zhang said.

The trial also fits a pattern established under the administration of President Xi Jinping to use more sophisticated legal means to attack perceived opponents as it maintains pressure on activists and non-governmental organizations.

Police cordoned off the Tianjin No. 2 Intermediate People's Court on yesterday, one day after protesters flanked by foreign diplomats demanded more information about the cases. The trial was attended by five foreign media outlets invited by the court and other observers, according to Xinhua, in an apparent attempt to address criticism from the activists' supporters about a near-total lack of transparency surrounding the cases.

It isn't clear whether Zhai will be allowed to immediately return home. A lawyer and legal assistant who were recently released have been videoed apparently recanting their actions, but their whereabouts remain unknown. —AP



TIANJIN, CHINA: In this image from video released yesterday by China's CCTV and made available via AP Video, Zhai Yanmin wears a white shirt is escorted by policemen as he arrives the Tianjin No. 2 Intermediate People's Court in northern China's Tianjin Municipality. —AP

Zhai's case is the first of four expected to be heard this week. Prosecutors announced in July they would try a lawyer, Zhou Shifeng of the Beijing law firm Fengrui that worked extensively on human rights cases, and three activists who worked with the firm, including Zhai. More than a dozen others remain jailed, their legal status uncertain.

Pushing the wall

Xinhua said Zhai confessed in court that the group of lawyers, citizens and petitioners who believed in "pushing the wall" - a Chinese expression for overthrowing the government - methodically hyped politically sensitive cases. It quoted

his actions and would not appeal his sentence.

Zhai said he would urge others not to be used by "hostile foreign forces" and domestic opportunists, or be blinded by "so-called democracy, human rights and justice." "I hope the court will give me an opportunity to correct my mistakes and start life anew," Zhai said, standing in the defendant's box and flanked by two bailiffs.

The court permitted Hong Kong journalists to attend the session, although foreign diplomats were barred. Zhai and his fellow activists worked alone or in affiliation with law firms to gather evidence of government abuses and lead clients and the disgruntled in protesting outside courts and government offices. Their actions were harshly



BANGKOK: Red Shirt leader Jatuporn Prompan (2nd R) stands with other movement leaders as he speaks to the press before reporting to police at the Crime Suppression Division yesterday. —AFP

CALL FOR UN TO CONDEMN PHILIPPINE DRUG KILLINGS

MANILA: Over 300 anti-narcotics and human rights groups from around the world yesterday called for the United Nations to condemn Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte's war on drugs that has already killed hundreds of people.

The appeal, directed to the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), came as an influential Philippine senator called for an investigation into the killings of suspected drug pushers that Duterte has endorsed.

Senator Leila de Lima and the foreign organizations cited reports of police killing hundreds of people since Duterte won May elections largely on a platform to wage a bloody war on drugs. "Instead of ensuring the protection and rights of people who use drugs... President Duterte has called for them to be killed," said the statement from groups such as the Australian Drug Foundation and Canadian Drug Policy Coalition. "Instead of ensuring the rights of people suspected of committing drug-related crimes... the President has called for them to be executed on the spot."

The statement called on the INCB and the UNODC to condemn the killings and "demand an end to the atrocities." De Lima, in a speech before Senate, also lashed out at the killings. "We cannot wage the war against drugs with blood.

We will only be trading drug addiction with another more malevolent kind of addiction. This is the compulsion for more killing," said the senator, a former justice minister who also headed the nation's human rights body.

De Lima said police were summarily killing even innocent people, using the anti-drug campaign as an excuse. Since assuming the presidency on June 30, Duterte has promised to protect police and soldiers from sanctions for killing criminals and even urged ordinary citizens and communist rebels to join in the bloodshed.

While his campaign has been widely popular in the impoverished Philippines, more groups have begun criticizing Duterte, with De Lima calling for a congressional probe into the killings. But the president has dismissed human rights concerns while police have insisted that they only acted in self-defense.

In June, even UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon condemned Duterte's apparent support of extra-judicial killings. Police figures showed that as of Tuesday, 402 drug suspects had been killed a month into Duterte's presidency.

The figure does not include those slain by suspected vigilantes. The country's top broadcaster, ABS-CBN, reported that 603 people had been killed since Duterte was elected, with 211 murdered by unidentified gunmen. —AFP



MANILA: 64-year-old Minifredo Lastrollo arranges flowers along a street in Manila, Philippines, yesterday. Lastrollo earns 300 pesos (about \$6) per arrangement. —AP

JAPAN WARNS CHINA OVER TERRITORIAL AGGRESSION

TOKYO: Beijing risks triggering unintended conflict with Asian rivals through its aggressive stance in maritime disputes, Japan warned yesterday in an annual security assessment.

China's sweeping claims over the strategic South China Sea, where it has built a series of artificial islands capable of supporting military operations despite overlapping claims from other nations, have stoked international alarm.

The region's superpower "continues to act in an assertive man-

ner" and its actions "include dangerous acts that could cause unintended consequences," Tokyo said in a defense white paper. Beijing is under pressure to respect a UN-backed tribunal's finding last month that there is no legal basis for its ambitions over the resource-rich South China Sea where the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia and others also lay claims.

The white paper said China was "poised to fulfill its unilateral demands without compromise" including efforts "to turn these

coercive changes to the status quo into a fait accompli". And it again called on Beijing to abide by the ruling of the tribunal, which China has denounced as a fraud.

Japan also expressed concern over increased activity in the East China Sea, where the two countries have competing claims over a group of small uninhabited islets called the Senkaku in Japan and the Diaoyu in China. "Recently, China has been intensifying activities near the Senkaku Islands, such as its military aircraft flying southward closer to the islands," it said.

In the year to March 2016, Japan's air force scrambled jets 571 times against Chinese planes flying near Japanese airspace, an increase of 107 from the previous year, it added.

'Irresponsible remarks'

China's official Xinhua news agency, in a report from Tokyo, blasted the white paper, accusing Japan of "making irresponsible remarks on China's national defense and China's normal and legal maritime activities in the East and South China Seas."

Last month the two countries were at loggerheads over accusations Japanese warplanes locked their fire control radar onto Chinese aircraft. Beijing sparked alarm after it unilaterally estab-

lished an air defense identification zone in the East China Sea in 2013, demanding all aircraft submit flight plans when traversing the zone which covers islands disputed with Tokyo and also claimed by Taipei.

US Defense Secretary Ashton Carter said in February that China's military presence in the South China Sea was increasing the risk of "miscalculation or conflict". Washington regularly sends warships into the area to assert the right to freedom of navigation. And in an emerging flashpoint, tensions have spiked over Indonesia's Natuna Islands in the South China Sea, where Chinese and Indonesian boats have clashed.

President Joko Widodo visited the Natunas on a warship in June with his cabinet to send a message that Jakarta is serious about defending the remote archipelago.

Japan's white paper also highlighted concerns over North Korea's nuclear program, saying it was possible it has "achieved the miniaturization of nuclear weapons and has developed nuclear warheads."

Since carrying out a fourth nuclear test in January, North Korea has claimed it miniaturized a nuclear warhead to fit on a missile and successfully tested an engine designed for an inter-continental ballistic missile that could reach the US mainland. —AFP



TOKYO: Tokyo's new governor Yuriko Koike gestures as she addresses staff of the Tokyo Metropolitan government yesterday. —AFP

US MAN ACQUITTED AFTER 5 YEARS IN PHILIPPINE JAIL

MANILA: An American man jailed in the Philippines for more than five years was freed yesterday after being acquitted of rape. A court in metropolitan Manila cleared Scott McMahon, of Seattle, after finding no clear evidence that he committed rape, as a Filipino woman alleged, a court official said on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to talk to reporters.

A jail officer, Omar Surigao, said that after the acquittal, McMahon was released from the Muntinlupa City jail in metropolitan Manila. He said McMahon's mother, Shelley Campanella, was among those present when McMahon was released.

McMahon, who has two children with his

Filipino fiancée, had been detained since April 7, 2011. Campanella has said that her son was wrongly accused of rape by the woman after he filed a case against her for allegedly traumatizing his young son.

The woman, the wife of McMahon's friend, had allegedly burst into McMahon's home with police, shouting as she looked for her estranged husband. The incident allegedly traumatized the son.

"We are so thrilled that this part of the nightmare is over and that Scott will not be spending another day in prison," McMahon's sister, Jennifer, said in a video posted on Facebook, calling the rape accusation "retaliation" by the woman for the case McMahon had filed against her. —AP



The pack rides during the first stage of the 38th edition of 'La Vuelta a Burgos' (Tour of Burgos), a 158 km ride from Sasamon to Melgar de Fernamental, in Burgos province of Spain yesterday. — AFP

MPS SLAM PETROL HIKE, WARN GOVT

Continued from Page 1

MP Saadoun Hammad criticized the government for rushing the decision and taking it without consulting the Assembly as it had pledged. He said that the decision is strange because the government is targeting people's pockets while forgetting other available sources like taxing state-owned plots in Shuwaikh. "The government also forgot to tax merchants and is taxing people," he charged.

MP Awdah Al-Awdah said lawmakers will not remain

silent and will press for alternatives to compensate them which are satisfactory to all parties. MP Khalil Abul said that the decision was supposed to have been part of a package of economic reforms, but it was issued as a standalone one. MP Ali Al-Khamees said the meeting sent a message to the government that the Assembly is against the hike, adding that more meetings will be held to find adequate solutions. The Cabinet on Monday decided to hike petrol prices by over 83 percent from the start of September.

RIGHTS OF INDIAN, OTHER EXPAT WORKERS...

Continued from Page 1

The ministry's public relations units, based in all of the country's governorates, are ready all the time to receive laborers' protests. Moreover, the local authorities have compelled employers to allocate financial guarantees for all employees, to be used for compensating an employee if he has not been paid. In line with the state policy of protecting expatriates, namely laborers, a shelter has been set up for those in need for help. A number of female Indian workers had taken refuge in the shelter, and departed the country after being paid all pending sums.

The assurance came after New Delhi said it was working to feed more than 10,000 Indian laborers stranded in the Saudi Arabia and Kuwait with no wages after losing their jobs, in what Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj called a "food crisis". "Large number of Indians have lost their jobs in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. The employers have not paid wages (and) closed down their factories," Swaraj said late on Saturday. "As a result our brothers and sisters in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait are facing extreme hardship. While the situation in Kuwait is manageable, matters are much worse in Saudi Arabia," she added.

Activists and officials yesterday said thousands of jobless Filipinos and Pakistanis are also stranded and destitute in Saudi Arabia after the plunge in oil prices sparked construction layoffs. Some Filipinos are forced to beg or sift through garbage to survive after going unpaid for months, said Garry Martinez, chairman of the Migrant group which works for the millions of Filipino overseas workers worldwide. "Some of them have nothing to eat and have to go through the garbage for food," said Martinez.

India said Monday it was negotiating with Saudi authorities to repatriate thousands of its own nationals after they lost their jobs, leaving them with no money to return home. Indians are among millions of poor Asians working in the Gulf states, where human rights groups say many suffer exploitation and abuses including non-

payment of wages.

In Manila, Migrant coordinator Gilbert Saludo - who returned from Saudi Arabia last month after two years working there - said as many as 20,000 Filipinos could be affected. Saludo said that while Manila had extended financial aid to them so far, it was not clear how long this could last. The labor problem appeared likely to worsen, he added. "It will get much worse because so much of the income of Saudi Arabia comes from oil... so their budget for infrastructure and other projects will not be met and more people will be affected," Saludo told AFP. The Philippine Labor Department said Labor Secretary Silvestre Bello had visited Saudi Arabia last month to address the problem but would not elaborate.

Pakistan said 8,520 of its nationals in Saudi Arabia had not been receiving their salaries for several months. A foreign ministry statement said that "most of the workers want to leave these companies but only after settling their dues". The Pakistan embassy had set up special centers and a fund to provide aid, food, medicine and shelter. "The (Pakistani) embassy has further informed that the Saudi King has issued a decree for urgent payment of dues to workers by the concerned companies," the office of the prime minister said. "We stand by our hardworking workers who are away from their homeland to earn a living for their families. They are our strength and pride. We will help them out in all possible ways," Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif said in a statement.

The Indian consulate in Jeddah has been providing free food for its nationals since their plight came to light last week but repatriation has been complicated by restrictive labor regulations. Swaraj cited a Saudi requirement that workers provide a no-objection certificate from their employers before they can leave the country. In Manila the Migrant officials also said Filipinos could not leave because they lacked proper permits or were still awaiting months of back pay. — Agencies

SAMSUNG ANNOUNCES GALAXY NOTE 7, NEW GEAR VR HEADSET

JUMBO PHONE UNLOCKS WITH IRIS SCANNER

NEW YORK: You'll be able to unlock Samsung's new phone by just looking at it. The Galaxy Note 7 will come with an iris scanner, which matches patterns in your eyes with what was detected by your phone during setup. It offers an alternative to fingerprint ID, which doesn't work well when fingers are wet. Of course, the four-digit passcode will still work. "We challenged our engineers to design a security system that's convenient and safe at the same time," said Justin Denison, a senior vice president for product strategy at Samsung. "It took five years to perfect, but it only takes a glance to unlock your phone."

Samsung isn't first, though. Microsoft's Lumia 950 phones had it. Beyond that, the updates in the Note 7 are mostly enhancements, such as a stronger glass screen and more storage - 64 gigabytes, or double what Samsung usually offers, plus a slot to add more. The Note 7 comes with a better camera - but it's the same one that the smaller Galaxy S7 phones got in March, save for interface enhancements to access settings and switch between the front and rear cameras more easily.

Samsung had lost its mojo after Apple matched the company on size with the iPhone 6 and 6 Plus in 2014, but thanks to the popularity of the S7, Samsung just reported its best quarterly financial results in two years. The new Note 7 phone comes weeks before Apple is expected to announce new models. Samsung typically releases its regular-size phones in the spring and jumbo phones in August. This time, Samsung has just one large model, which stays at 5.7 inches. It will have curved edges - a well-liked feature limited to a special "Edge" model before. The Note 7 will be available in the US starting Aug 19. Prices haven't been announced.

Samsung is also releasing an updated virtual-reality headset - with a dedicated home button, a wider field of view and a black interior to improve viewing. The new Gear VR will be available Aug 19 for \$100. A previously announced 360-degree camera called Gear 360 also

comes out that day, for \$350. As phones mature and innovation slows, VR has been one area in which gadget makers try to entice consumers.

As with past Note phones, the Note 7 comes with a stylus. It expands on a feature that lets you magnify text and images by hovering the pen over it. With the pen, people will have ways to easily create and share GIF animations. The Note 7 also expands on a feature to give sensitive files an additional layer of security. You'll be asked for an iris scan, fingerprint or passcode to access documents you place in a Secure Folder. This way, if you're handing the phone to friends to browse pictures, you're not inadvertently giving them access to confidential work documents. In previous phones, Samsung's Private Mode merely hid files and worked only with selected apps. Samsung says Secure Folder stores sensitive documents and even entire apps in a separate, secure location. — AP



NEW YORK: Justin Denison, senior vice president of product strategy at Samsung, speaks during a launch event for the Samsung Galaxy Note 7 at the Hammerstein Ballroom yesterday. — AFP

MERCURY RISING

Continued from Page 1

evening and will continue until the weekend, especially in the coastal suburbs and in marine areas. According to the

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) in the United States, some areas in Kuwait and Iraq reached the highest temperatures this area has witnessed in 137 years, in the months of June and July. — KUNA

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Kuwait Times

THE LEADING INDEPENDENT
DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF
ESTABLISHED 1961

Founder and Publisher
YOUSUF S. AL-ALYAN

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

EDITORIAL : 24833199-24833358-24833432
ADVERTISING : 24835616/7
FAX : 24835620/1
CIRCULATION : 24833199 Extn. 163
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Washington Watch

DIDI'S DOMINANCE OVER UBER OFFERS ROADMAP FOR RIVALS

By Brad Brooks

China ride-hailing service Didi Chuxing's dominance of Uber Technologies in the China market may provide a playbook for regional rivals to fend off the biggest US ride-hailing company, especially in Southeast Asia and India. The two companies on Monday confirmed the sale of Uber China to its bigger rival, ending a two-year, money-losing effort to break into one of the world's toughest markets. Uber leaves with around a one-fifth stake in Didi, but will give up control of its China operations. Didi had a head start and maintained the lead on Uber with a strategy that other rivals may emulate, analysts and investors said.

Didi counts two of the most powerful, best capitalized Chinese Internet companies as backers; has tight connections with local government; made an ally of local taxi drivers and expanded into services such as buses that Uber ignored; and exploited its knowledge of local culture and consumers. Uber and Didi declined to comment. Among those closely watching Didi's acquisition is Grab, the dominant Southeast Asia ride-hailing start-up that competes with Uber in countries including Singapore and Vietnam. Grab says it has 95 percent market share in third-party taxi-hailing services, while its private-car business has about half of the Southeast Asian market.

"Our investor and global partner Didi has effectively won the battle for market share dominance in China," Grab CEO Anthony Tan wrote in an Aug. 1 memo to staff seen by Reuters. "We have seen that when the local champion stays true to their beliefs and strengths they can prevail," he wrote. Grab and Didi formed an alliance with India ride-service start-up Ola and US operator Lyft last year, and the Asian companies operate in what could be the next battlegrounds for Uber, said Jeremy Carlson, principal analyst in autonomous driving and mobility at IHS Markit.

"Grab knows very well what Didi is doing in China and is replicating that," such as offering transit options beyond personal car services, said Hans Tung, managing partner at GGV Capital, which has invested in both Grab and Didi. Grab also has powerful regional backers that include Japan's SoftBank Corp, sovereign wealth fund China Investment Corp and an arm of Singapore state investor Temasek Holdings.

Didi's Road Map

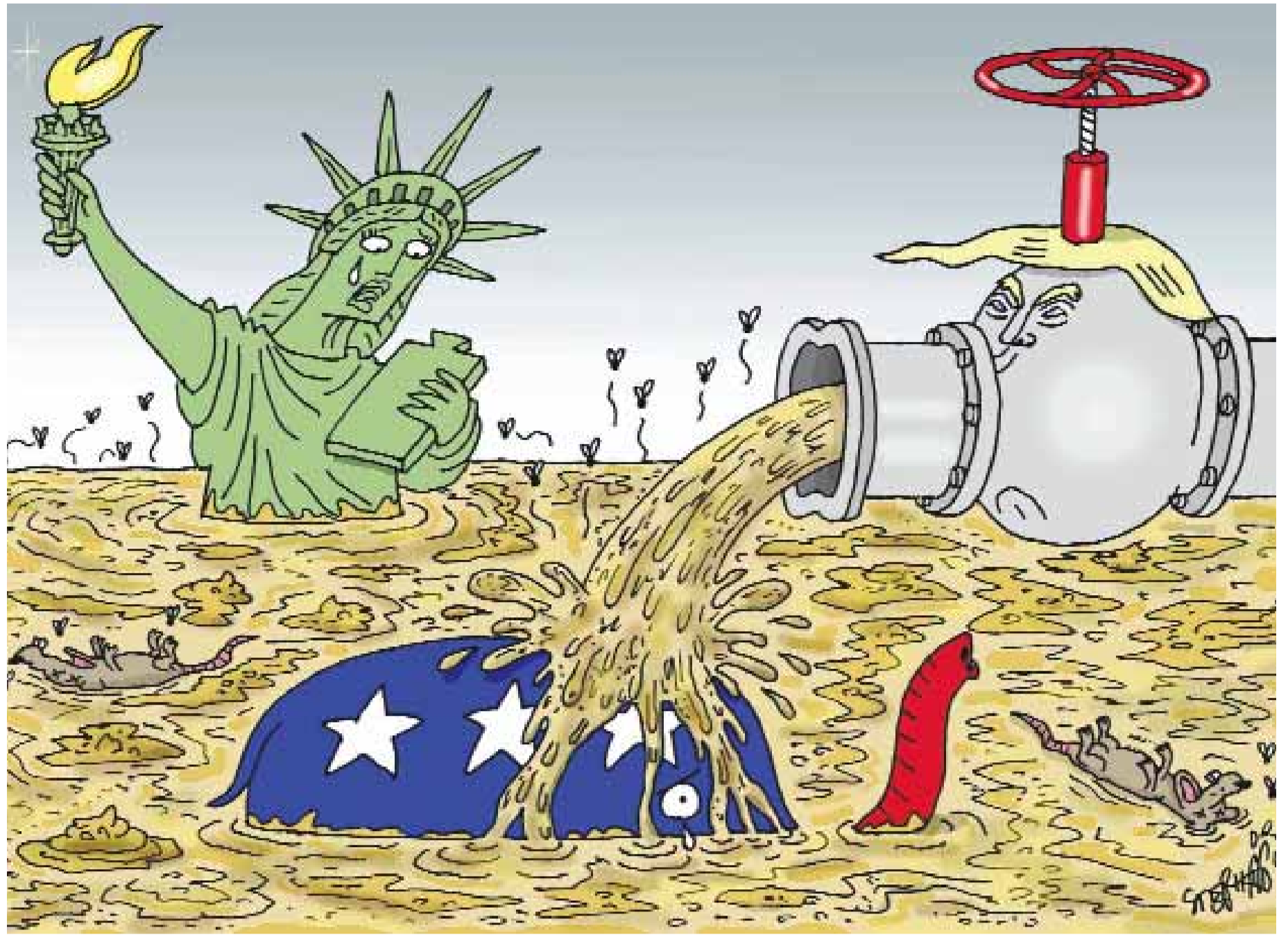
Because China is a unique market - in population, regulatory complexity and concerns about foreign ownership of big companies - some lessons learned there may not transfer to other regions. Still, Didi made moves that may serve as a guide for other Uber competitors on its way to building a juggernaut that gives customers more than 14 million rides each day. "It's an encouraging sign for local competitors that they can, in fact, compete and that local strategies are required for local markets," said Dane Anderson, a vice president at research firm Forrester. "For Southeast Asia, the key message they can take away is that they can compete with Uber and that Uber will have to prioritise as well."

Didi consolidated local competition, forming from a merger of China's top two ride-hailing firms, and it had the backing of Internet companies Alibaba and Tencent. Those connections enabled Didi customers to hail a ride and pay for it through Alipay, Alibaba's payment system, and social media platform WeChat, owned by Tencent. "Didi had a much bigger presence on China social media," said David Chao, general partner at DCM Ventures, which invests in China.

Uber eventually got backing from Chinese conglomerate Baidu, but by that time Didi had overtaken it. "Uber joined the party a little too late," Chao said. Didi also started its business focused on taxi-hailing, allowing it to overtake Uber China in its number of drivers, since Uber relied on privately owned cars in China, where vehicle ownership has historically been low. Didi has expanded to buses, chauffeurs and other services.

Other companies have played up their local knowledge. Ola recently acquired a local payments service Qarth, with connections to Indian banks, to expand the ways passengers can pay. Uber has been criticized for launching in China in early 2014 without fully understanding the local culture, business dynamics and consumers, such as its focus on private cars. "Uber was trying to import some of those ideas that might have worked well in other markets and adapt and move that stuff and apply it to China," said IHS Markit's Carlson. — Reuters

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TRUMP CAN'T LET GO OF PERCEIVED SLIGHTS

By Julie Pace

For Donald Trump, it's become a familiar pattern. The Republican nominee can't let go of a perceived slight, no matter the potential damage to his presidential campaign or political reputation. Trump spent the days after winning the Republican nomination criticizing a US district court judge's Mexican heritage. The morning after accepting the Republican nomination at the party's convention, Trump re-litigated months-old grievances with primary rival Ted Cruz. Now, he's sparring with an American Muslim family whose son was killed in Iraq.

Republican leaders have urged Trump to drop his attacks on Khizr and Ghazala Khan, who appeared at last week's Democratic convention and harshly criticized the GOP nominee. It's not just the optics of picking a fight with a military family that has GOP officials eager for Trump to move on, but the timing of his attacks: Election Day is just three months away.

Those who have worked with Trump say that in private meetings, he can often appear amenable to putting a controversy aside. But the businessman can quickly be drawn back in by an interview, especially if he believes he's already answered the question, or if he grows irritated by commentary on cable television. "It's just who he is," said Stuart Jolly, a former campaign staffer and current political director for the pro-Trump Great America PAC.

Others who have worked with Trump say the only way to ensure he moves on is to wait for him to tire of an issue or get drawn into another matter. Newt Gingrich, the former House speaker who has advised Trump, said the candidate's inability to back away from a political land mine "makes him vulnerable." "His whole experience up until running for office was in a very combative New York media market," Gingrich said. "He's been doing it now for over 30 years. It's a very deeply held habit."

Khizr Kahn delivered an emotional address at last week's Democratic convention, with his wife standing by his side. The Pakistan-born Khan told the story of his son, US Army Capt Humayun Khan, who was posthumously

awarded a Bronze Star and Purple Heart after his death in 2004. Khan said that if Trump were president and enacted his proposed temporary ban on foreign Muslims coming to the US, a position Trump has backed away from in recent weeks, his son would have never been allowed into the country. He also questioned whether Trump had ever read the constitution.

Trump responded by implying Ghazala Khan's religion preventing her from speaking at the convention, though she later said talking publicly about her late son was still too difficult. On Monday, Trump tweeted that he was being "viciously

attacked" by Khizr Khan. Trump's unwillingness to let the matter subside sparked outrage Monday from a chorus of Republicans. Arizona Sen John McCain, a former prisoner of war, said Trump did not have "unfettered license to defame those who are the best among us".

Rep Mike Coffman, a vulnerable Republican in a competitive Colorado district, said he was "deeply offended when Donald Trump fails to honor the sacrifices of all of our brave soldiers who were lost in that war". Missouri Sen Roy Blunt said the Khans "deserve to be heard and respected". "My advice to Donald Trump has been and will continue to be to focus on jobs and national security and stop responding to every criticism whether it's from a grieving family or Hillary Clinton," Blunt said in a statement.

However, none of the Republican lawmakers pulled back their support of Trump's White House campaign. In his first rally after a weekend of controversy, Trump spoke at length and took several questions at an event Monday in Columbus, Ohio - never once mentioning the Khans. But when asked about Khizr Khan on Fox News Channel's "Hannity", Trump responded, "I guess it's part of my life." "His son died 12 years ago," Trump added. "If I were president, his son wouldn't have died, because I wouldn't have been in the war, if I was president back then."

Trump backers attending the Ohio rally dismissed the issue, underscoring how the businessman was able to survive numerous such firestorms in the GOP primaries. "I think the Democrats laid a trap for him," said Tom McClanahan, a 54-year-old from Johnston, Ohio. "I think they knew what they were doing when they asked that family to speak at the convention. They knew he'd respond." Dale Brown, a maintenance supervisor from Grove City, Ohio, whose son is in the Navy, said Democrats were blowing Trump's comments out of proportion and had "politicized this by asking that family to speak." But the real test for Trump isn't the opinion of the loyal supporters who attend his rallies. It's the broader general election audience, a far more diverse group still weighing Trump's readiness for the White House. — AP

NEPALI WORKERS LEAVE VULNERABLE FAMILIES BEHIND

By Rina Chandran

For Nabin Lama, leaving Nepal after his annual home leave to return to his construction job in Saudi Arabia is not easy. What makes the journey bearable - even enjoyable - is the can of beer he can drink on the flight from Kathmandu. As soon as the seatbelt sign dinged off on a flight to Mumbai - from where he and a couple of hundred other Nepalis would take a connecting flight to Jeddah - Lama rose to look for the stewardess. "Beer," he bellowed, waving to her as she made her way down the aisle with a tray of fruit juice and water.

"It's a tough life there. But at least we can earn something and help our family," said Lama, 24, one hand on his passport, a white sticker across its green cover identifying a Nepali recruitment agency and his job. "But we can't drink there. So we have a beer on the flight. It feels good," he said with a grin. Lama comes from one of the world's poorest countries. Ongoing political instability since a decade-long civil conflict ended in 2006 has discouraged investment, hampered growth and curbed job creation in Nepal, forcing hundreds of thousands to migrate overseas for work.

Most go to the Middle East, Malaysia and India, from where they send remittances which make up almost 30 percent of Nepal's annual gross domestic product, according to the labor ministry. Most migrants are in low-paid, unskilled jobs in construction, or work as security guards and domestic helpers. Many face labor abuses including long hours, unsafe conditions and withholding of their wages and passports, say activists. Many are trafficked, tricked into doing jobs that they did not sign up for, or under conditions and wages far worse than they were promised.

Their families are not that much better off. Elderly parents, as well as young women and children left behind in remote villages are themselves vulnerable to traffickers and racketeers, and struggle with everyday hardship. "There are hardly any young men left behind in some districts," said Nandita Baruah, deputy country representative at Asia Foundation, an international development organization, in Kathmandu. Families left behind may be duped into sending their children with traffickers posing as aid workers, or even selling their kidneys in India for money,

she said. "Migration is increasing the economic and social vulnerability of the country: people left behind are exposed to the harsh economic realities, and it makes them take greater risks, like trusting a trafficker or a kidney tout," she said.

Zero Cost

More than 3.8 million permits to work abroad were issued in the decade to 2015, representing about 14 percent of the current population, according to Nepal's labor ministry. This does not include the hundreds of thousands crossing the border into India, where they do not require a permit. Nepal is forecast by the World Bank to have received about \$6.6 billion in remittances in 2015. But the journey to an overseas job is fraught with challenges and usually leaves workers deep in debt.

Recruitment agencies that facilitate procuring a job and a work permit often charge 200,000 to 500,000 rupees (\$1,860 to \$4,660) per worker. That is several times the average income of about \$730. Fear of losing their job and not being able to pay back the money - usually borrowed from moneylenders, often underwritten by the family home, or from selling land - forces workers to tolerate harsh working conditions and low wages.

"Migration is important - most workers do well, earn a living, support their families," Baruah told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. "But the very first journey of migration leads to indebtedness. And they are bonded to their employers because of the huge burden of debt," she said. The Nepali government introduced a "zero-cost" migration policy last year, which makes the employer and recruiter responsible for costs. But the law is applied unevenly.

After female domestic workers in the Gulf countries complained of abuse, Nepal in 2012 banned women below the age of 30 from going there as domestic helpers. But many women produced fake papers to say they were older than 30, or were hired for other jobs. Nepal has since lowered the age limit to 26 years. In June Nepal banned its nationals from working in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and Syria after 13 Nepali security guards were killed by a suicide bomber in Kabul. These measures to protect workers have had limited success. "We know that when labor-sending countries try to protect their citizens through such

bans, unscrupulous recruiters just use unregulated channels," said Meenakshi Ganguly, head of Human Rights Watch for South Asia. Instead, Nepal should monitor recruitment agencies, engage with host countries to enforce worker rights and ensure embassies provide emergency shelters and assistance, she said.

A spokesman for the labor ministry said Nepal aims to sign labor agreements with Saudi Arabia and Malaysia to improve workers' rights, similar to those already agreed with the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain and South Korea. "These agreements ensure the rights of our workers, minimum pay and other benefits and are effective to protect their interests," Shiva Raj Sedai said.

Quake Effect

The absence of working-age men was felt deeply in the days and weeks following twin earthquakes in Nepal last year which killed about 9,000 people, and damaged or destroyed more than 900,000 houses. Women tending to children and elderly relatives were often not in a position to go to relief camps, claim compensation, or rebuild their homes quickly, said Lily Thapa, founder of Women for Human Rights in Kathmandu. "Women whose husbands are working overseas are vulnerable and helpless, particularly during disasters," Thapa said. "There were many instances of sexual violence after the quakes directed at such women," she said.

Teaching skills and creating jobs at home will be key to keeping emigration in check, Baruah said. The government also needs to prepare for the return of these workers in the event of an economic downturn or anti-migrant laws in the host countries. There is already a slow trickle from the Middle East and Malaysia as jobs dry up because of lower oil prices. More than 10,000 Indians in Saudi Arabia who have been laid off are facing a "food crisis", Indian officials have said. "Imagine if the 1,500-1,700 men who leave each day from the Kathmandu airport start coming back," Baruah said. "Imagine what will happen when they come back to a country where there are no jobs." For Lama and his friends drinking beer on the flight, that is a distant prospect for now. "I have a contract for one year," he said. "After that, I will have to find another job somewhere." — Reuters

WALES REJECT HULL APPROACH FOR COLEMAN

LONDON: Hull's attempt to hire Chris Coleman as their new manager was scuppered yesterday when the Football Association of Wales rejected an approach from the Premier League club. Coleman has emerged as Hull's top choice to replace Steve Bruce, who surprisingly quit the KC Stadium last month despite leading the Tigers to promotion from the Championship last season. Wales boss Coleman bolstered his reputation by masterminding his country's surprise run to the Euro 2016 semi-finals. But Hull will have to look elsewhere for a new manager after the Welsh FA confirmed they wouldn't let Coleman leave prior to the start of the 2018 World Cup qualifying campaign. "The Football Association of Wales can confirm that it has received an official approach from Hull City FC for the services of manager Chris Coleman," said a statement on the official FAW website. "Following discussions amongst leading figures within the association the approach has been rejected." Hull have also been linked with former Watford and West Ham boss Gianfranco Zola, who was sacked by Qatari club Al-Arabi in June. Former Manchester United assistant manager Mike Phelan is currently in caretaker charge, with the Tigers' squad having headed to Austria on Tuesday for pre-season friendlies against Caykur Rizespor and Torino.



PREMIER LEAGUE CLUBS' TRANSFER SPENDING £500M

LONDON: Premier League clubs have already splashed out £475 million (\$631 million, 562 million euros) since the transfer window reopened in July, according to business analysts Deloitte. Bolstered by the increased revenue from the Premier League's new £5.1 billion television deals, the 20 top-flight teams have been throwing money at a host of new signings and Deloitte say the spending could shatter the £1 billion mark for the first time in the pre-season window. The current figure of £475 million is slightly less than the £515 million spent by Premier League teams at the same stage in 2015, which led to an eventual £870 million outlay in the whole window. Leroy Sane's £37 million move to Manchester City is not included in the figures as it was only confirmed yesterday. And the spending figure would rise significantly if Manchester United complete their reported world record £100 million move for Juventus midfielder Paul Pogba. Chelsea, linked with a £65 million deal for Everton striker Romelu Lukaku, could also add to the rising transfer total. —AFP

GUARDIOLA FACES BIGGEST CHALLENGE IN ENGLAND

LONDON: The Premier League will offer a tougher challenge to Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola despite his success in the La Liga and Bundesliga, Liverpool boss Jurgen Klopp said. Guardiola, who succeeded Manuel Pellegrini as City coach after spending three years as Bayern Munich boss, won 14 trophies at Barca before leading Bayern to three straight Bundesliga titles and two German Cups before his move to England. "The competition makes it really interesting. Winning the title in England is the biggest challenge of them all," Klopp told British media. "If you are three times in a row Spanish champions, three times in a row Bundesliga champions, then you think okay, let's try something else. If you are looking for the biggest challenge, then you need to go to England." City have boosted their squad by adding five players to their ranks, including wingers Leroy Sane and Nolito and German midfielder Ilkay Guendogan after the club stumbled to a fourth-place finish last season. "It's not easy in Germany. If you want to be in front of Bayern Munich, you have to win all the other games and then a minimum of one against Bayern. They don't lose," the former Borussia Dortmund boss added. —Reuters



PANJSHIR: In this Sunday, July 17, 2016 photo, three foreign tourists kayak along the Panjshir River in Panjshir province, north of capital Kabul, Afghanistan. In excited children and bemused police lined the banks of the fast-flowing river on a recent sunny morning to watch a group of Europeans in brightly colored kayaks navigate the white water as a drone-mounted camera followed their progress like a manic mosquito. — AP



PANJSHIR: In this Sunday, July 17, 2016 photo, three foreign tourists kayak along the Panjshir River in Panjshir province, north of capital Kabul, Afghanistan. — AP

AFGHAN'S EXTREME GEOGRAPHY ATTRACTS EXTREME SPORTS

PANJSHIR: On a recent sunny morning in northern Afghanistan, excited children and bemused policemen lined the banks of a fast-flowing river to watch a group of Europeans in multicolored kayaks navigate the white water. A drone-mounted camera also followed the kayakers' progress, buzzing and hovering above them like a mosquito.

The boys, who were on their way to school, squealed and raced along the rocks as they watched the unusual spectacle - no kayakers had ever come to the peaceful Panjshir Valley, some 140 kilometers (95 miles) north of the Afghan capital, Kabul.

But according to Callum Strong, a Scot who recently graduated with a geology degree from Edinburgh University, Panjshir River offers some of the best kayaking in the world. Together with three friends, he spends all his spare time and money travelling the globe in search of the best white water. Panjshir looked promising on the map - that Afghanistan is grappling with a 15-year insurgency was not going to deter them.

"It's extreme geography that attracts extreme sportsmen, not the fact that the place is at war," he told The Associated Press as he dragged his kayak out of the water following an invigorating three-hour paddle down the Panjshir River.

His three friends - Brit Joe Rea-Dickins, Scot James Smith and Austrian Kristof Stursa - are also recent graduates in their early 20s and amateur kayakers who met through their love of the sport. They funded the trip to Afghanistan themselves, flying to Kabul with their kayaks and then employing a local travel agent to help them transport their kit, organize permission from security services to travel and move safely through dangerous areas.

JOYS OF THE SPORT

Then they spent 10 days paddling the length of the Panjshir River and introducing the local community to the sport. "Before I came here, I was worried as the only news you hear from Afghanistan is bad news," Strong said. "But I believe most places you go in the world, most people are good - and

the river here looked very good, so we wanted to come."

His friend Rea-Dickins was similarly enthusiastic, comparing Panjshir to the best places he's kayaked in northern Europe, India and Pakistan. "In terms of white water, this is as good as anywhere in the world," he said. One of the joys of the sport, he said, is that "it takes you to pretty interesting places, it gives you purpose, you can be in a beautiful environment for weeks, you go off beaten tracks and stay where you end up and you meet with local people."

Panjshir is considered one of the safest regions of Afghanistan. The roads are closed to outsiders, who must register with security forces and explain the reason for their visit to gain access. Many people come to enjoy the peace, as well as the pristine environment and the famous produce, including yoghurt, honey and lamb kebabs. Panjshir is also famous for precious stones - especially rubies and emeralds - and as a smuggling route for millions of dollars' worth of lapis lazuli, a blue stone largely unique to Afghanistan, mostly destined for

Pakistan and China.

It is also the home of the so-called Lion of Panjshir, Ahmad Shah Massoud, a military leader who earned his moniker fighting Soviet forces and the Taliban and whose legendary status was cemented when he was killed by al-Qaeda sympathizers on September 9, 2001 - two days before the 9/11 attacks that sparked the US invasion and the Afghan war.

KAYAKING WORKSHOP

The country's chief executive, Abdullah Abdullah, is also from Panjshir. His face beams from massive billboards alongside the portraits of Massoud and local jihadi leaders. Panjshir is a province that takes its war heroes seriously.

It could soon take kayaking seriously, too, if the efforts of the four enthusiasts find traction here. After a week of paddling, the four set up a kayaking workshop to teach interested locals. The Panjshir football team showed up to give it a try, arriving straight from training in their bright green-and-white kit. "They are very good learners, a lot

of the guys we have seen are very fit and strong. And they are used to swimming in this river, which is very powerful," Strong said. Strength and comfort in the water are both good starting points for learning how to stay afloat, and have fun, in a kayak.

While it might be many years before the emergence of Afghan kayaking clubs, Strong and his group are hoping that their visit will lay the foundations for others to follow and discover the beauty and power of the Panjshir River.

"We have paddled the river so we can tell other people the river is good and that when we were here, the political situation and security was good," he said. "If that prevails, then kayaking can grow here, and you might see more international teams come here to do this river."

Mohammad Zahir, a member of the Panjshir football team, was most excited by the possibility that kayaking could take him abroad. "I would love to reach the level of our friends who are here from other countries, so I could travel to other places for kayaking," he said. —AP

FADING FERRARI FACE SUMMER OF INTROSPECTION

HOCKENHEIM: Ferrari head into Formula One's annual break facing a tall order to turn things around in time for the second half of a season that promised much but has so far delivered little.

Formula One's most successful team went into the season with ambitions of challenging dominant Mercedes for race wins and the championship, after rebounding from their first winless campaign in more than two decades with three wins last year. The Italian squad, revitalised by new management and the arrival of four-time champion Sebastian Vettel, was the only team to break Mercedes' stranglehold on the top of the podium in 2015.

But they head into the summer break, just past the halfway stage of a record 21-race season, still without a win and having dropped to third in the standings behind rivals Red Bull following Sunday's German Grand Prix.

"I have to say that they improved quite well," team principal Maurizio Arrivabene told reporters following the race in Hockenheim. "It doesn't mean we are going to surrender. During this peri-



Kimi Raikkonen

od we have to think and to react."

Ferrari started the year strongly, challenging for the win in the season-opener in Australia. But a serious title-tilt never materialised and as the season has worn on even the podiums, of which Ferrari scored eight in the first nine races, have dried up. The sudden departure of the team's highly regarded technical director James Allison in the build up to Sunday's race has only caused more upheaval and could deal their campaign a further blow.

Red Bull, meanwhile, have taken giant strides forward. The Milton Keynes-based outfit overturned what was a 37-point deficit into a 14-point advantage in the space of just four races with a double-podium on Sunday, when the best Ferrari could manage was a fifth and sixth.

"We were just not fast enough," said Kimi Raikkonen, who won Ferrari's last world championship in 2007. "Everybody can see where we finished and it's obviously a bit painful for all of us. But this is how it is right now and we just have to work hard and improve." Ferrari's hopes are now pinned on a return to form in the second half.

Arrivabene identified the team's struggle to add crucial aerodynamic downforce to their car since May's Spanish Grand Prix as the reason for their slide. But even though the team knows what to fix, according to the Italian, they face the challenge of balancing development of this year's car with shifting focus onto their challenger for 2017 when the sport is set for sweeping rule changes. "I think the last couple of races have been harsh and tough for us but very, very useful," Vettel said. "It's not that easy to change overnight but there is a plan and I think the second half should be stronger in that regard." — Reuters

GOLF AMATEUR TIFFANY HOPES TO SPARKLE

HONG KONG: Golf's Olympic return has been hit by a host of withdrawals but for Hong Kong amateur Tiffany Chan, reaching the Rio Games is a dream come true.

The 22-year-old booked her ticket by finishing 56th in the Olympic rankings, giving her the chance to compete against the leading lights of the women's game.

"I myself am really honoured to play in the Olympics as it is the highest stage any athletes could get to," Chan told AFP in Hong Kong. The university student is one of three amateurs to qualify for Rio, which will feature 60-strong men's and women's competitions as golf returns to the Games after a 112-year absence.

Top men's players like Jordan Spieth and Rory McIlroy have pulled out, with some citing concerns over the mosquito-borne Zika virus which can cause birth defects if it infects pregnant women. But few of the women golfers have voiced such concerns, and Chan said dropping out never even crossed her mind.

"I have no plans to set up a family now so I am not too worried, and I think it's a must to take part since I was given the chance," she said. Chan first encountered golf when her father, a building contractor, took her to a public range in a suburb of densely populated Hong Kong when she was six. Unlike many Asian families who spend big on their children's golf careers, Chan said her parents had no ambitions for her to become a top player. "It was more a family hang-out on weekends. We just paid HK\$6 dollars (\$0.77) per hour to play at a bay," she said.

Later, Chan was talent-spotted by officials of Hong Kong's junior golfer development programme, who sent her to compete in youth events overseas. With limited access to the financial hub's expensive golf clubs, she earned a scholarship to attend university in the United

States, where she trains. "When I was younger there was not much opportunity for me to practise in real ranges. This is my weakness so I need to work harder," she said. Chan will face the world's best in Rio, including Lydia Ko from New Zealand and South Korea's Park In-Bee. She hopes to finish in the top 40, but said her main aim was just to "learn" from the professionals around her. "There are 57 professionals. To enter

the Olympics as an amateur is already a difficult thing. I just want to learn through the Games," she said with a wide smile.

After university, Chan is planning to turn professional and embark on a career which she hopes will promote the sport in Hong Kong. "Not many people play golf in Hong Kong... (but) usually when there is an outstanding player then the sport could get a big boost," she said. — AFP



Tiffany Chan

SAUDI PRINCESS APPOINTED TO OVERSEE WOMEN'S SPORTS SECTOR

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia's Cabinet appointed a prominent princess to head a new department for women under the kingdom's General Authority for Sports in a move that could signal greater female access to sports.

The announcement, made after the weekly Cabinet session Monday evening, offered no details about Princess Reema bint Bandar's role. Physical education is not on the curriculum for Saudi girls in public schools and ultraconservative clerics shun women's exercise as "immodest." Women's teams are not part

of the kingdom's federation that oversees sports and stadiums are male-only.

Even so, the kingdom is sending four female athletes to the Olympic games in Rio, marking the second time that Saudi women will participate in the Olympics. The General Authority for Sports' website lists no details about its activities or mission. A separate government portal shows the agency is responsible for issuing licenses to establish new sports centers and handles youth registration in sports. The sports authority could not be immediately reached for comment.

In a decree in May, King Salman ordered the General Presidency for Youth Welfare to be renamed the General Authority for Sports. The former body had sponsored cultural and sports activities for youth.

In April last year, the king sacked the most senior woman in government, Nora al-Fayez, from her post as deputy education minister for girls. Shunned by religious ultraconservatives, she was strongly pushing to try to get physical education on the curriculum for girls in public schools.

Princess Reema, whose father Prince Bandar bin Sultan served as Saudi ambassador to Washington for more than two decades until 2005, is a graduate of George Washington University with a degree specializing in museum studies, Islamic art and architecture. In the kingdom, she is widely known for having served as chief executive officer of the upscale Harvey Nichols department store in the capital, Riyadh, which was among the first retailers to hire women as sales clerks.

Also this week, Saudi newspapers

reported that a court in the Eastern Province has approved the appointment of the country's first female commercial arbitrator. It marks the first time a woman has been appointed to such a post. There are no female judges in Saudi Arabia and only a handful of women have been granted licenses to practice law. Arab News reported that lawyer Shaimaa Sadeq al-Jibrani's appointment was challenged because she is a woman, but that the Administrative Appeals Court ultimately gave its approval. — AP



AB de Villiers

DE VILLIERS RULED OUT OF NEW ZEALAND TEST SERIES

CAPE TOWN: Skipper AB de Villiers has been ruled out of South Africa's two-test home series against New Zealand this month with an injured elbow and Faf du Plessis will take over the captaincy.

Fast bowler Morne Morkel has also been sidelined, with a bulging disc in his back. Cricket South Africa said in a statement yesterday, De Villiers will be out for six to eight weeks, it said.

"I'm naturally disappointed to miss the test series against New Zealand, particularly because I have not missed a test match through injury since my debut in 2004," De Villiers was quoted as saying.

"However, with an exciting summer of cricket ahead, it is obviously sensible to give my elbow time to heal properly."

Seamer Vernon Philander makes a return to the test squad for the first time in

10 months, while Dale Steyn has also been included after recovering from the shoulder and groin problems that plagued him in the Proteas' last two test series against India and England.

All-rounder Wayne Parnell is the only member of the 15-man squad who did not play in the most recent test series against the English at the start of the year.

The first test will be played in Durban from Aug. 19-23 and the second in Pretoria, starting just four days later.

Squad:

Faf du Plessis (captain), Kyle Abbott, Hashim Amla, Temba Bavuma, Stephen Cook, Quinton de Kock, JP Duminy, Dean Elgar, Chris Morris, Wayne Parnell, Vernon Philander, Dane Piedt, Kagiso Rabada, Dale Steyn, Stiaan van Zyl. — Reuters

FATHER MAY NOT GO WITH WOAKES

BIRMINGHAM: England all-rounder Chris Woakes hopes his current good form will last long enough to persuade his father to conquer his fear of flying.

The Warwickshire all-rounder heads into Wednesday's third Test at his Edgbaston home ground in arguably the best form of his career. His father, Roger, saw his son take 11 wickets in England's 75-run defeat in the first Test at Lord's and is set to be among the crowd when the hosts look to go 2-1 up in the four-match series at Edgbaston following their 330-run win in the second Test at Old Trafford.

But travelling overseas is a different story for Roger Woakes, although son Chris hopes that might change if he is selected for England's 2017/18 tour of Australia.

"They (my parents) follow me as much as possible, (but) not overseas-my dad has never flown at all," said Woakes at an event staged by series sponsors Investec.

"He's never left the country, but (my par-

ents) drive all over the UK. "He's a little bit claustrophobic, so flying has always been a no-no. He doesn't get in lifts and things like that (either)." Woakes would be delighted if his father saw him in action in Australia, but thinks it unlikely. "I don't think I would (be able to persuade him) — unless he went on a boat," Woakes added.

"I'm sure he'd love to, but don't think he'd be able to. I'm sure he'll be happy sat on his sofa watching it on TV with a cup of tea. "(But) don't get me wrong-I'll ask the question if I'm in the Ashes squad."

Woakes's Test debut at The Oval at the conclusion of the 2013 Ashes also presented his father with a problem.

"He always gets the stairs," Woakes explained. "I booked them a hotel by the river, and they put him on the 17th floor. "He was in his late 60s then, so he had to get moved-but they couldn't do it until the next day, so he was walking up and down 17 floors. He was knackered." — AFP

S LANKA'S PRADEEP DOUBTFUL FOR TEST

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka suffered another injury setback ahead of the second test against Australia in Galle with seamer Nuwan Pradeep suffering a hamstring strain during practice, a cricket board official said yesterday.

Angelo Mathews' side are reeling from injuries to their fast bowlers with Dhammika Prasad and Dushmantha Chameera ruled out of the three-match series, while Suranga Lakmal was also absent from the opening test at Pallekele due to an ankle complaint.

Another paceman, Shaminda Eranga, was recently suspended for an illegal action. The 29-year-old Pradeep, who has played 21 tests, was the lone frontline paceman at Pallekele, which the hosts won

by 106 runs to take a 1-0 lead against the world's top-ranked side in the longest format. The victory was a welcome one for Sri Lanka, who lost their two previous test series in New Zealand and England. The right-arm bowler, who took two wickets in the first innings of the series opener, suffered the injury during training on Monday. "He has a slight hamstring strain on his right leg. His fitness will be assessed tomorrow (Wednesday) morning," Sri Lanka team manager Charith Senanayake told Reuters. "He could be doubtful but we haven't taken a decision yet." Sri Lanka fielded three frontline spinners at Pallekele and were always likely to load their attack with slow bowlers for the second test. — Reuters

MISBAH WANTS PAKISTAN TO PULL DOWN ENGLAND 'PILLARS'

BIRMINGHAM: Pakistan captain Misbah-ul-Haq believes knocking down England "pillars" Alastair Cook and Joe Root holds the key to his side's hopes of winning the third Test at Edgbaston. England levelled the four-match series at 1-1 last time out at Old Trafford. Between them, England captain Cook and vice-captain Root made 506 runs for just twice out at Old Trafford in a second Test the hosts won by the huge margin of 330 runs.

But you have to go back to May 2015 for the last time another specialist England batsman made a Test hundred-discarded opener Adam Lyth's 107 against New Zealand at Headingley.

"In every team there are key players and at the moment those two are in really good form," said Misbah of Cook and Root at Edgbaston on Tuesday. "If you really have to put pressure on the opposition, it's important to get their main players out because those are the two pillars of their batting. "Psychologically, that can also give you an advantage and damage the opposition if you can get them early, because other (members of the England) batting line-up are struggling at the moment.

"That's really important for us to just get them (Cook and Root) early and put them (England) under pressure."

James Vince has yet to make a fifty in his seven career Test innings this season and left-hander Gary Ballance is also searching for a big score following his surprise recall for Pakistan's 75-run win in the series opener at Lord's.

"Throughout my time as captain there's always been something up for discussion and at the moment it's the middle order," said Cook. "Until the guys get good scores consistently that will be the case but they're very good players and they got picked because of outstanding form for their counties.

Turning to number four Vince, opening batsman Cook added: "I like the way he plays. He's got a couple of starts and the way he handled the whole situation in a different format in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) is a good indicator of how he can handle the pressure. He needs that score for his confidence and to get you guys (the press) off his back."



BIRMINGHAM: Pakistan's cricket captain Misbah ul-Haq speaks during a press conference at Edgbaston, Birmingham England yesterday. Pakistan will play England in their third test of their 4 match series starting today. — AP

Today's match will be the 500th Test played in England. By contrast, Pakistan have been unable to play international cricket at home since an armed attack on Sri Lanka's team bus in Lahore in 2009 made the country a 'no-go area' for major foreign sides.

Pakistan have since established a temporary 'home' in the UAE but Misbah said there was no substitute for playing in front of your own fans. "It can really hurt your overall development as a cricketing nation (not playing at home)", the 42-year-old veteran skipper explained. "Your youth can really be inspired if you are playing internationally back at home. Obviously, you can build more infrastructure. "It's one area where you can say we are really unlucky and we

want international cricket back in Pakistan, just to help our youngsters and just to help cricket in Pakistan.

"It's really difficult for the Pakistan Cricket Board and it can really hurt them financially also. "You can see wherever the World Cups are, or international events, the whole scenario changes, it's like a fever in that country for that sport. That's what we have been really missing."

Asked if he felt it was safe for rival Test teams to tour Pakistan now, Misbah replied: "That (the security situation) has been improving a lot. "The Pakistan government, the army, everybody is really working hard on that. Hopefully, it will be better in the coming future." — AFP



MANCHESTER: England's Ben Stokes, centre, holds his leg after a delivery and before going off injured during day four of the second test against Pakistan at Old Trafford, Manchester England. — AP

ENGLAND RECALL FINN FOR THIRD PAKISTAN TEST

BIRMINGHAM: England have recalled fast bowler Steven Finn for the third Test against Pakistan at Edgbaston, captain Alastair Cook said yesterday.

Finn, who has taken 120 wickets in 33 Tests at an average of under 30 apiece, is set to replace the injured Ben Stokes. All-rounder Stokes has been ruled out after damaging his calf in England's 330-run win in the second Test at Old Trafford that levelled the four-match series at 1-1. Cook said there was still a slim chance England could play two spinners, by giving a home debut to leg-break bowler Adil Rashid in support of off-spinner Moeen Ali, if there was a marked change in pitch conditions between Tuesday and Wednesday's toss at Edgbaston.

But with rain falling from grey skies above Edgbaston on Tuesday, Cook indicated that England would likely go in with an attack of four

seamers plus Ali.

England also had the option of selecting Nottinghamshire quick Jake Ball, who made his Test debut in Pakistan's 75-run win in the series opener at Lord's — Finn's first wicketless Test.

Finn and Ball made way for James Anderson, England's all-time leading wicket-taker, and Stokes at Old Trafford. "Finn is coming in for Ben Stokes, and as we were," Cook told reporters at Edgbaston yesterday.

"Unless the pitch changes a lot from what I saw yesterday (Monday) — we still have the right to change—we'll be going with the four seamers and one spinner," opening batsman Cook added.

"It was a tough call — as I found out at two o'clock (0100 GMT) this morning when I was wide awake thinking about it. "We've gone for a guy who's got a proven Test record, who's taken

120 wickets and has a knack of taking wickets," said Cook of Finn. Middlesex paceman Finn took a Test-best six for 79 against Australia at Edgbaston last year "He has good memories here of last year," said Cook. "He hasn't quite been at his best this year—there have been a few factors in that, (but) physically he's now better and has had a couple of things sorted out in the last week.

"We all saw the other day down at Middlesex, playing Essex, that his pace is back up again." Cook added: "You could have argued for Jake, and telling him was a tough call, but we've gone for a guy who has a very good Test record—giving him another go." England team: Alastair Cook (capt), Alex Hales, Joe Root, James Vince, Gary Ballance, Jonny Bairstow (wkt), Moeen Ali, Chris Woakes, Stuart Broad, Steven Finn, James Anderson. — AFP

SCHALKE SIGN CHELSEA'S BABA ON LOAN

BERLIN: Schalke 04 has signed Ghana international left-back Abdul Rahman Baba on loan from Chelsea for the coming season, both clubs confirmed yesterday. Last season, Baba made 23 appearances for Chelsea, 19 of them starts, including his debut in the Champions League, but has been sent on loan by new Blues boss Antonio Conte to Schalke, who finished fifth in Germany's top flight last season.

"I spoke with the new Chelsea head

coach and he told me that I would probably not to play very often in his system," explained Baba on the Schalke website.

"I want to be on the pitch, so I told the management in London that I wanted to transfer. "I found a very good club in the form of Schalke 04 and I'm sure that I have made the right decision."

The 22-year-old spent the 2014/15 season with Augsburg, knows his way around German football after a stint with Greuther Fuerth and has played 51

Bundesliga games, plus 24 matches in Germany's second tier. He worked with Schalke's head coach Markus Weinzierl while at Augsburg.

"Abdul is a strong attacking left back, one who I have a lot of faith in.

He will fit in well here, because of his excellent attitude," said Weinzierl. Baba signed a five-year contract with Chelsea in 2015 and has made a total of 15 Premier League appearances for the Blues, featuring four times in the

Champions League.

He was part of the Ghana side that reached the 2015 Africa Cup of Nations final, when his side lost to Ivory Coast on penalties. Having already trained with his new team-mates, Baba says he has quickly found his feet in Gelsenkirchen.

"The lads have warmly welcomed me. I have enjoyed my time with the squad so far. I noticed from the very first training session that Schalke have a strong team with a lot of quality," said Baba.

"I already know Markus from my time at Augsburg, we get along really well and he has a lot of confidence in me, which is an important thing for any player." The defender is relishing his return to Germany's top flight when Schalke play their first game of the season at Eintracht Frankfurt on Saturday August 27. "Long balls are used a lot more often in the Premier League," said Baba. "A lot more value is placed on the technical aspects of the game in Germany." — AFP

BAYERN OPEN DOOR TO SCHWEINSTEIGER RETURN

BERLIN: Bastian Schweinsteiger has been told there could be a place for him back at Bayern Munich in the wake of his fall from grace at Manchester United.

Schweinsteiger turned 32 on Monday, the same day his locker in United's first-team dressing room was cleared out and he was ordered to train with the reserves by new United boss Jose Mourinho.

He is one of nine players told they are free to go on loan by Mourinho and are not in the United boss' plans. Schweinsteiger announced his international retirement last week after 12 years, 24 goals and 120 appearances in the famous white shirt.

At the 2014 World Cup in Brazil, he enhanced his reputation as his battling display in Germany's midfield helped beat Argentina in the final.

After winning eight Bundesliga titles with Bayern, as well as the German Cup seven times and the 2013 Champions League, he moved to Old Trafford in 2015. But his star has fallen after an injury-ravaged season in Manchester which yielded only 31 appearances, and Bayern chairman Karl-Heinz Rummenigge says the door is open for him to return. "Should he speak at some point about a desire to return, then we will discuss it with him," Rummenigge told magazine Sport Bild.

The imminent return of France's Paul Pogba to Old Trafford, and his own demotion, means Schweinsteiger's days in Manchester look numbered with two

years left on his United contract.

"No respect!" tweeted his brother Tobias Schweinsteiger, a former second division player and youth team coach at Bayern. His reported annual wage bill of £7.5 million (\$9.9m, 8.8m euros) might put off any potential employer.

The defensive midfielder has been linked to AC Milan and Inter Milan, as well as Paris Saint-Germain, while any Major League Soccer club would be delighted by the profile boost his arrival in the USA would bring.

And Schweinsteiger is too young to retire, according to his ex-Germany and Bayern team-mate Oliver Kahn. "I'm sure that with all his experience, Basti can still be the leader of a top team. He is definitely too young and too strong to retire," Kahn wrote on his Facebook page.

Schweinsteiger, who married tennis player Ana Ivanovic last month, is weighing up his options. Rummenigge says he does not expect Schweinsteiger to struggle to find a new employer and it seems he has a future with Bayern when he hangs up his boots for good.

"It's important to bind players who deserve it to the club," Bayern captain Philipp Lahm told magazine Sport Bild. "Basti knows everyone and everything here, he would be predestined to work in the team."

Bayern have a history of finding jobs for their chosen sons and Rummenigge has already said they will "discuss the matter in due course". — AFP



WEST BANK: Players of Hebron's Ahly al-Khalil football club celebrate with the trophy after beating Gaza's Khan Yunis during the second leg of their Palestinian Cup final yesterday in the West Bank city of Hebron. The winner of the match between teams from the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, will be qualified for next season's AFC Cup, Asia's premier club football tournament. The match ended 1-1 and al-Ahli qualified for the Asian Cup. — AFP

COACH BAUZA PLANS TO WOO MESSI BACK FOR ARGENTINA

BUENOS AIRES: Argentina's new coach Edgardo Bauza has set his mind to wooing Lionel Messi back from international retirement as he ponders his squad for next month's South American 2018 World Cup qualifiers. Bauza was named on Monday to replace Gerardo Martino, who resigned a month ago after steering Messi's side to two successive Copa America finals which ended in penalty shootout defeats to Chile.

The more recent of those results in the Copa America Centenario in the United States in June led to Messi deciding to quit the team. It was his fourth defeat in a major final with Argentina.

"I'm optimistic about Messi," Bauza said. "I hope the chat with him will help for him to carry on in the national team."

"I want to explain to Messi what my (tactical) idea is. The least of my worries is his position on the pitch," Bauza was quoted as saying in the Argentine daily La Nacion on Tuesday. "There's no need to convince Messi of anything, the plan is to talk about football," said Bauza, speaking in Brazil where he has coached Sao Paulo for eight months.

Bauza, who quit his job with Sao Paulo to accept the Argentina vacancy and will sign his contract in Buenos Aires on Friday, has only a couple of weeks to decide on his squad for qualifiers at home to Uruguay and away to Venezuela

in the first week of September. "There isn't much time. My first squad won't have many changes but I want to talk with five or six of the leading players," Bauza said, no doubt referring to the likes of Javier Mascherano, Angel Di Maria and Gonzalo Higuain.

He also opened the door for Carlos Tevez, overlooked by Martino since a World Cup qualifier against Paraguay in Asuncion last October where he won his 76th cap. "I'm thinking of Tevez as I am about other players ... Tevez is a player good enough for the national team," Bauza said.

Bauza, a former central defender, rejected a tag as a defensive coach, saying: "I'm one of those who think that all (the team) have to defend. Football today is like that."

"You can defend in your opponents' half if the pressure is high (up the field) but it's easier when you have players of the quality of the Argentina team. The options they offer you are many."

Argentina are third in the 10-nation South American World Cup qualifying group with 11 points from six matches, two points behind leading pair Uruguay and Ecuador. The top four teams after 18 matches go through to the Russia finals while the fifth-placed team goes into an intercontinental playoff for one more berth. — Reuters



BUENOS AIRES: Argentina's Football Federation (AFA) acting president Armando Perez (2nd-R), speaks during a press conference at the AFA's headquarters in Buenos Aires. Argentina have named coach Edgardo Bauza to run the national team, media reports said Monday, as the nation seeks to regain its football prowess and convince superstar Lionel Messi to return. — AFP

BRAZIL HOPING TO END US WOMEN'S GOLD RUSH

RIO DE JANEIRO: A dominant United States team face stiff competition from hosts Brazil for a fifth Olympic gold medal in six games when the women's football tournament kicks off Rio 2016 today.

The States' quest for a fourth consecutive gold begins against New Zealand in Belo Horizonte with both men's and women's tournaments spread across six cities which hosted the 2014 World Cup.

The world champions are without all-time leading international goalscorer Abby Wambach at a major tournament for the first time in over a decade after she retired following the World Cup last year.

However, unlike the men's Olympic tournament, there are no age restrictions on the players that can be selected so the USA's English coach Jill Ellis can call upon World Player of the Year Carli Lloyd, as well as the experienced Megan Rapinoe and star striker Alex Morgan.

The USA are in need of a fast start as they face a huge clash with France on August 6 and end the opening stage of their campaign against Colombia in Manaus, nearly 3,000 kilometres

away from Rio in the Amazonian jungle.

Co-captain Becky Sauerbrunn admitted previous success makes the Americans heavy favourites to claim gold once more in the final at Rio's iconic Maracana stadium on August 19.

"We always look for that next challenge because we constantly want to achieve that next level of greatness," she told US Soccer's website. "People expect us to win, we know what it actually takes to win and that comes with a different level of accountability and sacrifice."

Brazil have never won a football gold medal at the Olympics and although the women's side won't have the same pressure and expectation as their male counterparts, there is belief they can go one better than extra-time defeats to the USA in the finals at the 2004 and 2008 games.

Five-time World Player of the Year Marta spearheads a Brazilian side that also contains veteran defender Formiga, who will compete in her sixth Olympics. "Although people say we don't have to go and win the gold, for me, as someone who has played at other Olympics, won two silvers and come close to the gold, I think we are obliged to win it," said striker

Cristiane. Brazil face a tough start at Rio's Olympic stadium on Wednesday against China, who qualified at the expense of 2012 silver medalists Japan and reached the World Cup quarter-finals in Canada last year.

Eccentric French coach Bruno Bini has aided the continued rise of women's football in China and caused a stir on the eve of the tournament by claiming that "Chinese women work harder and they complain much less," than the French side he led to the 2011 World Cup semi-finals.

Chinese hopes will depend much on star striker Wang Shanshan and she backed Bini's unconventional methods. "Each day, he tells us something new. He usually encourages us with a motto, a poem," Wang told FIFA.com.

"With his guidance the team unity is getting better and the spirit is going up." All 12 teams are in action yesterday as World Cup quarter-finalists Canada and Australia face off in Sao Paulo.

Two-time world champions Germany take on Zimbabwe in the other game in Group F. The top two sides and two best third-placed teams from the three groups will progress to the quarter-finals. — AFP

CITY CONFIRM SIGNING OF LEROY SANE FROM SCHALKE

LONDON: Germany winger Leroy Sane has signed a five-year deal for Manchester City, both the Premier League side and his now former Bundesliga club Schalke 04 confirmed yesterday. City tweeted a picture of Sane signing a contract, which is reportedly worth £37m (43m euros), plus add-ons, after he completed the medical examination in Manchester on Monday.

The 20-year-old said the prospect of playing under new City boss Pep Guardiola had helped persuade him to move to Eastlands. "One of the reasons I decided to join City was Pep Guardiola; he convinced me to come here and that I can continue to progress," Sane told City's website. "I know I will learn a lot under him and now I can take the next step in my career."

"I followed Pep at Barcelona and at Bayern where he achieved a lot and worked really well with young players. I think he can make me a more complete player. I think I will need a bit of time to start with because it's another league and there's a different style of play but I think I can adapt very quickly."

If the £37m fee is confirmed, it will make Sane the most expensive German signing of all time. "We have given the green light for the transfer. Those in charge of Manchester City behaved professionally at all times. There were difficult, but fair discussions," said Schalke's director of sport Christian Heidel. Sane is a rising star in the Germany squad and has already posed for pictures with City fans in Manchester.

The reported transfer figure seems astronomical given that Sane has made just 47 Bundesliga appearances, scoring 11 goals and creating seven more, since his debut in Germany's top flight in April 2014. The fleet-footed forward made the last of his four international appearances for the world champions as a late replacement in last month's 2-0 defeat to hosts France in the Euro

2016 semi-finals. Guardiola is confident his new recruit, who scored eight goals in 33 Bundesliga games last season, is tailor-made for the unique demands of the Premier League.

"He is a special talent, and an exciting player that I think our supporters will enjoy watching," Guardiola said. "He has great technical ability, is comfortable on the ball and there is much to admire about the way he plays football. "He is fast, enjoys creating chances for others, works

hard for the team and scores goals, too. He also has a very positive attitude and will fit in well with our squad. "At 20, he is still developing as a player but he is already a member of the German national side and I think he will be a fantastic asset to our club." Sane's arrival in Manchester continues former Bayern Munich boss Guardiola's rebuilding of the City squad following the signings of Nolito, Ilkay Gundogan and Aleksandr Zinchenko. — AFP



MAINZ: This is a Friday, Feb 12, 2016 file photo of Schalke's Leroy Sane during a German Bundesliga soccer match between FSV Mainz 05 and FC Schalke 04 in Mainz, Germany. Manchester City took its offseason spending close to \$100 million under new coach Pep Guardiola by signing Germany winger Leroy Sane from Schalke yesterday. — AFP



BENITEZ STAYS EN GARDE TO FIGHT FOR FAVELAS

CARACAS: Venezuelan fencer Alejandra Benitez balances the demands of her sport with her charity work in the favelas of Caracas and a career in politics, yet the 36-year-old has no intention of slowing down after this month's Rio Olympics.

The sabre specialist and former Venezuela sports minister is instead determined to inspire the next generation of fencers through her work with the underprivileged in the violent shanty towns of the country's capital.

"My first home was in Caracas's favelas," Benitez, who is making her fourth consecutive

appearance at an Olympics, told reporters in Rio. "My work in Venezuela is based right there. For me it's neither dangerous nor complicated, I work the whole time in Venezuelan favelas and there are no problems if I help people.

"My foundation promotes our sport as we organise fencing exhibitions for the kids of the favelas... We also bring clothes and food.

"The sport is always good for the kids and the people who live in those conditions. I want them to look at all the good life that fencing can bring them."

The 2015 Pan American championship silver

medallist, whose fencing career has spanned more than two decades, said she could not contemplate abandoning her sport, despite being urged to do so by the people around her. "Everyone tells me that I'm old, that I'm already 36 and I should retire from fencing, but I don't feel old and I want to go on competing," she added. "I've been 21 years in the world of fencing competitions but I haven't had enough yet." Benitez, who served as Venezuela's first-ever female sports minister under President Nicolas Maduro in 2013, indicated she would also like to stay involved in politics and keep

fighting for the less fortunate members of her community.

"I always liked politics because there is even more combat than fencing," she said.

"I had been for five years a deputy of the Venezuelan congress, the National Assembly, and I worked on changing the law of sports in Venezuela. After this, Maduro called me to be the minister of sport.

"Even before getting into politics I had always tried to help my community and the children of Caracas, and the persons who are detained in prison." —Reuters



STOCKHOLM: In this Aug 24, 2013, file photo, Gwen Jorgensen, of the United States, carries the American flag as she wins the ITU World Triathlon elite race for women in Stockholm, Sweden. —AP

AMERICAN GWEN JORGENSEN BIG FAVORITE IN WOMEN'S TRIATHLON

NEW YORK: Gwen Jorgensen, the first American to win back-to-back world triathlon titles, could have been an accountant. She gave up on her Olympic dream as a teenager when she realized she couldn't swim fast enough and decided she'd go to college.

She spent three years on the swim team at Wisconsin, where she was an All-American and Big Ten track champion, and would parlay her master's degree and CPA into a job at Ernst & Young upon graduation.

Then she got a call from Barb Lindquist, at one time the world's top-ranked triathlete and a former Olympian. She told Jorgensen that she, too, could be a world-class triathlete if she took up biking and dedicated herself to the sport. Jorgensen thought back to her childhood dreams of being the next Amy Van Dyken or Brooke Bennett. "I was glued to the TV when they had Olympic trials on like they have now. It was just something that I really loved," Jorgensen said.

"But I came to the realization at a relatively young age, in high school, that I would never go to the Olympics in swimming. I just wasn't good enough. I wasn't making any national teams. I wasn't even making junior national teams. "So, I just thought I would never be an Olympian. And then when the USA Triathlon approached me, one of the first things they said was, 'You could be an Olympian.' And I was shocked. I basically laughed at them. I said, 'No, I tried than when I was younger and I basically don't have what it takes.'"

She gave it a shot in 2010 and realized Lindquist was right, she was a natural and her Olympic dream was back - even if triathlon as a sport wasn't that familiar to her. But she was hooked in no time and a few years later qualified for the London Games, where she was a favorite. That's where the wheel came off.

A flat tire doomed her to a 38th-place finish and fed her fire to make amends in Rio de Janeiro. "Every race is completely different and

that's something that I like about the sport, you go into the triathlon and you have no idea what could happen on race day and you have to be prepared for anything, which I think really makes it a hard race," Jorgensen said.

Throw in the massive hype, crowds and logistics at the Olympics and it's even more unpredictable. "Every race is different and the Olympics are more different," said Jorgensen, who is a heavy favorite in the women's race Aug. 20 at Copa Cabana Beach, where the men's race will be held Aug. 18. Jorgensen, who's from Waukesha, Wisconsin, has 17 career wins and 21 medals on the ITU World Triathlon Series circuit. The sport's two-time defending world champion, she had an unprecedented unbeaten streak stretching from May 2014 to April 2016 that produced a dozen consecutive first-place finishes. To ensure maximum energy and optimal condition for Brazil, Jorgensen eased up on her competition schedule this year and participat-

ed in races that were closer to her training base in Victoria-Gasteiz, Spain. "I have one goal this year and that is the Rio Olympics on Aug. 20," Jorgensen declared. Other things to know about triathlon at the Rio Games.

SPEED BUMP

The 1,500-meter swim, a 24.9-mile bike ride and a 6.2-mile run on Copa Cabana Beach features a challenging hill that's sure to slow the competitors and could tucker them out.

"The course is really good. It's tough," said Jorgensen, who qualified for Rio by winning the triathlon test event on Aug. 2 on the course. "There's a big hill on the bike and I think that makes it an honest course and everyone is going to be tired. It's going to be interesting to see how quickly you run after ... that really hard bike ride."

ALL TIED UP

A photo finish at the London Games led

to Sweden's failed attempt to have the Court of Arbitration for Sport rule the women's triathlon a dead heat. CAS said the photo finish ruling was a "field of play" decision by the International Triathlon Union and couldn't be challenged.

That left Lisa Norden with a silver medal and Nicola Spirig of Switzerland with the gold. Spirig and Norden finished side by side and were given the same time at the end of the race, but officials ruled Spirig crossed the tape first.

THE REST

Sarah True and Katie Zaferes join Jorgensen on the US team, which is by far the best in the world. Americans Greg Billington, Ben Kanute and Joe Maloy are longshots in the men's race, where Spain sports the world's top triathletes in Mario Mola and Fernando Alarza, currently 1-2 in the ITU World Triathlon Series rankings. — AP



LONDON: This is a Sunday, July 29, 2012, file photo of Britain's Lizzie Armitstead holds the silver medal as she celebrates during the medal ceremony in the Women's Road Cycling race at the 2012 Summer Olympics in London. —AP

ARMITSTEAD WINS APPEAL AGAINST DOPING VIOLATIONS

LONDON: British cyclist Lizzie Armitstead won an appeal against an anti-doping violation, clearing the world road race champion to compete at the Olympics in Rio de Janeiro. Armitstead missed three doping tests in a 12-month period, triggering a charge by U.K. Anti-Doping, a provisional suspension and the possibility of a two-year ban. She appealed to the Court of Arbitration for Sport, and a statement released on Armitstead's behalf on Monday said the first missed test - from August 2015 - was declared void by CAS because UKAD's doping control officer had failed to follow procedure. On Tuesday, UKAD confirmed the ruling by CAS. "We respect the outcome of the CAS hearing," said UKAD chief executive Nicole Sapstead, who added that the body was awaiting the written decision on why the violation was not upheld.

Armitstead said she has "always been and will always be a clean athlete and have been vocal in my anti-doping stance throughout my career." "I am pleased that CAS has accepted my position, having provided detailed information demonstrating the situation around my strikes," she said in

her statement. The 27-year-old Armitstead won a silver medal in the road race at the London Games in 2012 and is one of the favorites in Rio. She won gold at the road world championships in the United States in September.

Armitstead's first missed test came at a World Cup event in Sweden. The second was an administrative failure on Oct. 5 and the third was a missed test on June 9 following "an emergency change of plans due to a serious illness within her family." She was charged by UKAD with three whereabouts failures on July 11.

Sapstead said Armitstead "chose not to challenge the first and second Whereabouts Failures at the time they were asserted against her." "At the CAS hearing, Ms. Armitstead raised a defense in relation to the first Whereabouts Failure, which was accepted by the Panel," Sapstead said.

Armitstead did not dispute the last two faults at CAS. UKAD has a policy of not publicly disclosing provisional suspensions, or details of cases, until an anti-doping rule violation has deemed to have been committed. —AP

IOC SLAMS ANTI-DOPING BODY AS GAMES LOOM

RIO DE JANEIRO: International Olympic Committee chief Thomas Bach yesterday demanded a sweeping overhaul of the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) yesterday as Russian appeals against bans mounted just three days from the opening of the Rio Games.

Bach rejected the "nuclear option" of ordering a complete ban on Russian athletes over accusations of widespread state-organized doping. Two swimmers could be told yesterday whether their demand to be allowed to compete has been successful.

In a strongly-worded speech to the IOC, Bach called for WADA to be subjected to a thorough review, laying bare a growing rift between Olympic chiefs and the body responsible for leading the global fight against doping.

"Recent developments have shown that we need a full review of the WADA anti-doping system," Bach said. "The IOC is calling for a more robust and efficient anti-doping system. This requires clear responsibilities, more transparency, more independence and better worldwide harmonisation." A bombshell report by Canadian lawyer Richard McLaren for WADA released last month accused Russia of organising state-backed doping with the sports ministry using secret services to evade drug testers and cover-up positive tests stretching back years.

NO 'NUCLEAR OPTION'

Bach and the IOC came under fire after resisting calls to ban Russia completely from Rio. The IOC ordered individual federations to decide which Russians should be banned.

At least 117 competitors on a 387 Russian Olympic Committee entry list have been excluded. Bach said the "nuclear option" of a blanket ban was unacceptable. "The result is death and devastation. This is not what the Olympic movement stands for," Bach told delegates who voted overwhelmingly.

Members voted overwhelmingly in favor of a resolution backing the IOC's decision not to impose a blanket ban on Russia's athletes. Several delegates blasted WADA. Argentine IOC member Gerardo Werthein accused WADA of "grandstanding." "At times WADA has seemed to be more interested in publicity and self-promotion rather than doing its job as a regulator, acting with transparency, and looking after the best interest of clean ath-

letes," Werthein told the meeting. Israeli member Alex Gilady meanwhile added: "I think it is not the reputation of the IOC which must be restored, but the reputation of WADA." WADA president Craig Reedie, who had called for a blanket ban on Russia, is to address the meeting today.

Russia's representative, Alexander Zhukov, suggested foreign governments had put pressure on the IOC to ban Russia. "We are witnessing direct interference of politics in sport; an attempt to influence decision making process for political means. The integrity of the Olympic family is all under attack," Zhukov said.

LEGAL IMBROGLIO

The feud between the IOC and WADA came as the legal imbroglio triggered by the Russian scandal continued to dog the build-up to the games. The Court of Arbitration for Sport was expected to issue a ruling later Tuesday over whether Russian swimmers Vladimir Morozov and Nikita Lobintsev would be able to compete.

Representatives for Morozov and Lobintsev told Russian news agencies that both had been informed they would be allowed to swim in Rio.

"I can confirm that Lobintsev and Morozov are being allowed to compete in the Games," Lobintsev's agent, Andrei Mitkov, told the Interfax news agency.

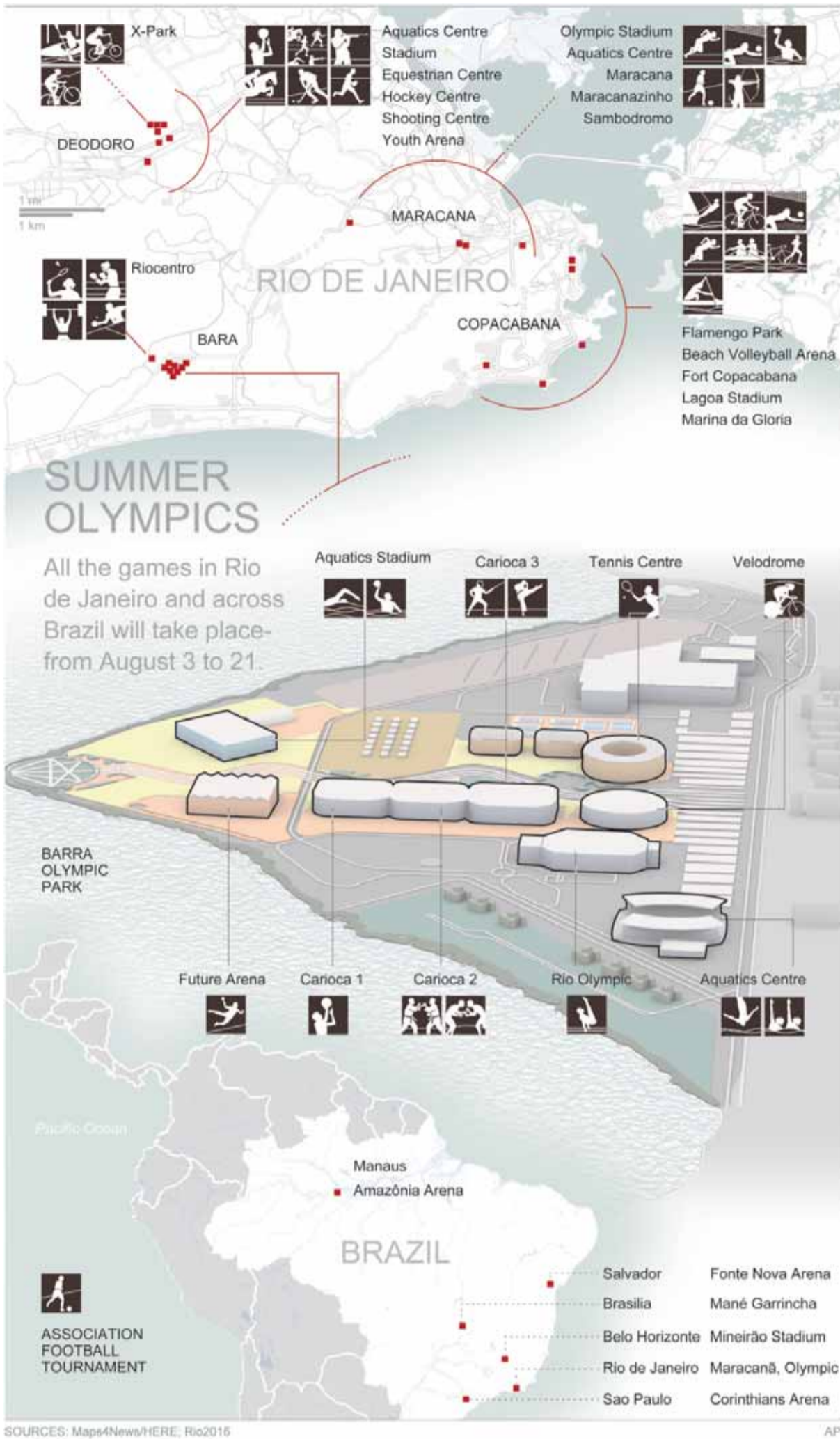
In a separate drugs controversy, British cyclist Lizzie Armitstead has been cleared to race in the Olympics after winning an appeal against an anti-doping rule violation.

Armitstead faced a four-year ban after UK Anti-Doping found she had missed three tests in a 12-month period. But CAS ruled the procedures surrounding her first whereabouts failure in 2015 had not been followed correctly.

Armitstead is seen as one of the favorites to win gold in Sunday's cycling race and is the reigning world champion. "I have always been and will always be a clean athlete and have been vocal in my anti-doping stance throughout my career," she said in a statement. — AFP



RIO DE JANEIRO: International Olympic Committee (IOC) executive member and current president of the World Anti-Doping Agency Britain's Sir Craig Reedie (R) watches the attendees as IOC executive member China's Yu Zaiqing raises his hand during a confidence vote during the 129th International Olympic Committee session, in Rio de Janeiro yesterday, ahead of the 2016 Olympic Games. —AFP



RIO 2016 SCHEDULE SNAPSHOT

Table with columns for SPORT and dates from August 3 to 21. Rows list various sports and their scheduled dates, indicated by red dots in the grid.

4 KENYAN-BORN RUNNERS JOIN ARMY, REPRESENT US AT RIO

FORT CARSON: Kenyan-born runner Hillary Bor won't be content with just wearing the red, white and blue at the Olympics. He's willing to protect his new country, too.

The sergeant in the US Army heads to Rio this month while his unit - which includes his older brother - is already deployed to Afghanistan. Bor stayed behind this time, but it could be his turn soon. That's the reality for Bor and three other runners of Kenyan descent who've taken a unique path to the Olympics through enlisting in the Army, earning U.S. citizenship, training with the military branch's World Class Athlete Program and making Team USA. They understand the risks. They've pledged allegiance to America - as soldiers to defend and now as runners hoping to bring home an Olympic medal. "I might be told tomorrow, 'Hey, pack your things, we're deploying.' I can't say, 'I have the Olympics coming up,' said Army specialist Paul Chelimo, who's from Iten, Kenya, and earned a spot in the 5,000 meters at US Trials in July. "Whatever happens from now to the Olympics, into the future, I'm here to follow the orders."

Simply the Army way of life for specialists Leonard Korir and Shadrack Kipchirchir, Chelimo and Bor. Korir hails from Iten, Kenya, and was a two-time NCAA champion at Iowa

College before joining the Army in May 2015 as a motor transportation operator. He qualified in the 10,000 meters at trials.

Kipchirchir is from Eldoret, Kenya, and was an All-American at Oklahoma State University. He enlisted in June 2014 as a financial management technician. He's going in the 10,000. Bor, a 3,000-meter steeplechase runner, arrived from Eldoret as a teenager, running for Iowa State and entering the military in July 2013. He's one of three Bor brothers in the Army - the other two following his lead.

Chelimo became a standout at University of North Carolina-Greensboro, before joining in May 2014. He balances his time between training and his duties as a water treatment specialist. "If you have a contract with a big shoe company, that's predictable - you know what's going to happen," Chelimo explained. "With the Army, you don't know."

WORLD CLASS

All four are part of the Army's World Class Athlete Program, which formally began in 1997 and is designed to give soldier-athletes the support necessary to compete at the highest levels. The program - headquartered in Fort Carson, Colorado - includes a variety of sports, with more than a dozen soldier-athletes and

three coaches making the trip for the Rio Olympics and Paralympics.

A number bolstered by the Kenyan-raised runners. "It's a pretty humbling moment to think that somebody would want to leave their country and come to yours and do so to the degree in which they would die for something they haven't even been a part of yet," said Army Capt. Matthew Hickey, who supervises the program. "WCAP provides a lot to the U.S. Army - we help train soldiers, help make more ready and resilient troops."

"However, if all hell broke loose, everybody in the US Army is a soldier first and expected to go deploy and defend the country." Bor was nearly sent to Afghanistan in February, when his unit needed either him or his brother to go.

His older brother, Julius, instantly volunteered. "It takes courage for someone to raise their hand and say, 'I'm going to fight for my country.' It's something I admire," Hillary Bor said. "He knew I had a chance to make the team." Growing up, Bor preferred soccer over running, which he didn't really even take seriously until after high school when his uncle, Barnaba Korir, a standout at Iowa State, enticed him to come to America and give college running a try.

Bor followed his uncle's lead to Ames, Iowa, and in no time unlocked a talent for the steeplechase, a 3,000-meter race around the track that includes jumping over barriers and into water. Bor became a four-time All-American at Iowa State. After graduation, his running career seemed to hit a road block. So he took an assistant teaching position in New Mexico before joining the Army not so much as a path to Olympics - he didn't know about WCAP - but simply because, "I wanted to be American," he said. Later, his two older brothers followed his lead - Julius joining him at Fort Carson and Emmanuel at Fort Bliss, Texas. Bor's running career was rekindled through a timed two-mile run that's required for soldiers.

He finished in roughly 10 minutes. "Everyone was like, 'You should compete for the Army team,'" Bor said. Not as simple as that, though. First, he had to earn his place in WCAP by running a qualifying time. It took him nearly three years - and stepping up his training largely on his own - to earn inclusion.

A typical day for him went like this: Rise at dawn for training runs with an off-base coach, return to perform his Army tasks and train again at night. In May, Bor ran the necessary time to earn a spot in WCAP. And in July, he finished second at trials to secure his place in Rio.

Fittingly, Bor's first message was to his brother in Afghanistan. "This is not only for my brother, but for my whole unit," Bor said. "It's for every soldier that's deployed now." —AP



BEIJING: This file picture taken on August 25, 2015 shows China's Wang Jianan celebrating after winning the bronze medal in the final of the men's long jump athletics event at the 2015 IAAF World Championships at the "Bird's Nest" National Stadium in Beijing. China are sending their largest team to an overseas Olympics, but forecasters predict the 416 athletes will fail to match the country's greatest medal haul. — AFP

CHINA SENDING BIGGEST TEAM BUT HOPES LIMITED

BEIJING: China are sending their largest team to an overseas Olympics, but forecasters predict the 416 athletes will fail to match the country's greatest medal haul.

Eight years after leading the world with 100 medals at Beijing 2008, China are expected to win 89 medals in Rio de Janeiro, according to a study from Dartmouth College.

Of those, 38 are predicted to be gold, behind an expected US tally of 48, said Camila Gonzales of Dartmouth's Tuck School of Business. In traditional strengths such as table tennis, badminton, weightlifting, shooting, gymnastics and diving, ageing or injured stars and fiercer competition have dampened expectations. Fans are pinning their hopes on figures such as Ma Long, the world's top-ranked table tennis player, and controversial star swimmer Sun Yang. The towering 1.98m Sun, 24, will be the most recognisable member of China's team after winning the 400m and 1500m freestyle at London 2012, but his current form is largely unknown after he missed the national championships in April with a foot injury. His biggest challenger could be Italy's Gregorio Paltrinieri, 21, who registered the second fastest swim in history-just three seconds behind Sun's 2012 world record — when winning the European Championship 1500m this year. Ma, who has dominated the ping-pong rankings, was controversially omitted by China's selectors for the 2012 Olympics singles. Ma finally won a global singles title at his fifth world championships last year, after a career that has raised questions about his mental resilience in showpiece finals.

GOLDEN HAT-TRICK BID

Lin Dan, the 32-year-old badminton gold medalist in 2008 and 2012, looks to complete a golden hat-trick in his fourth and almost certainly final Olympics.

He will probably have to defeat his eternal rival Lee Chong Wei of Malaysia, who is back atop the world rankings after returning from a doping ban last year.

Lin beat Lee in both the Beijing and London Olympic finals but is in Rio drawn to meet him in the semi-final, with world number two Chen Long seeded to face Lin in what would be an all-China final. China have won the men's gymnastics team golds at both the last two Games, but will face a Japan line-up who won the world championships last year. In golf, Feng Shanshan and Lin Xiyu have strong medal hopes for the women while Wu Ashun and Li Haotong, who have both won on the European Tour in 2016, will fancy their chances of getting on the men's podium. On the track, the men's 4x100m team, who won silver at the 2015 World Championships in Beijing, aim to become the first Chinese team to reach the Olympic sprint relay final.—AFP



COLORADO: In this July 19, 2016 photo, Kenyan-born U.S. Army Sgt. Hillary Bor sits in the gym inside the US Army's World Class Athlete Program, at Fort Carson Army Base, outside Colorado Springs, Colo. Bor and three other runners of Kenyan descent have taken a unique path to the Olympics through enlisting in the Army, earning US citizenship, training with the military branch's World Class Athlete Program and making Team USA. —AP

Sports

Afghan's extreme geography attracts extreme sports



American Gwen Jorgensen big favorite in women's triathlon



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ST PETERSBURG: Brad Miller #13 of the Tampa Bay Rays makes the throw to second base for the out on Cheslor Cuthbert of the Kansas City Royals to start off the double play by Lorenzo Cain to end the top of the sixth inning of a game on August 1, 2016 at Tropicana Field in St. Petersburg, Florida. — AFP

DUFFY HAS 16 KS IN 8 INNINGS, ROYALS BEAT RAYS

ST PETERSBURG: Danny Duffy pitched eight innings of one-hit ball and had a franchise-record 16 strikeouts to lead the Kansas City Royals to a 3-0 win over the Tampa Bay Rays on Monday night. Duffy (7-1) flirted with the Royals' first no-hitter in nearly 25 years before giving up a line-drive double to Desmond Jennings leading off the Tampa Bay eighth. Jennings came off the disabled list Monday after missing all of July with a strained hamstring, strained hamstring. Kendrys Morales' 18th home run, a towering shot over the center field wall off Rays starter Chris Archer (5-15), got the Royals on the scoreboard in the seventh. Kelvin Herrera pitched the ninth for his second save. Alcides Escobar and Lorenzo Cain drove in runs in the eighth for the Royals, who won for only the second time in 10 games.

TWINS 12, INDIANS 5

Rookie Max Kepler had three two-run homers and six RBIs, leading Minnesota over Cleveland. The German-born Kepler homered off All-Star Danny Salazar in the first and third innings and hit another off Cody Anderson in the sixth. Kepler became the first Twin to homer three times in a game since Justin Morneau in 2007. He also had a single. Joe Mauer was 4 for 4 and homered in the eighth off Andrew Miller, who was making his first appearance with Cleveland after being acquired Sunday from the Yankees.

Jose Berrios (2-1) retired 15 straight after a three-run first inning. The rookie right-hander, recalled from Triple-A Rochester before the game, allowed four hits in six innings. Salazar (11-4) lost for the first time since May 22.

CUBS 5, MARLINS 0

Kyle Hendricks allowed just seven hits in his second career shutout, providing Chicago's bullpen a needed breather. After a wild, 12-inning win a night earlier in which manager Joe Maddon used 22 players, Hendricks (10-7) threw 123 pitches and lowered his ERA to 2.22, third-best in the majors. He allowed three walks and struck out five. Anthony Rizzo finished a home run shy of the cycle and reached base five times, and Addison Russell had a two-run single in the first off wild Marlins starter Adam Conley (7-6).

ASTROS 2, BLUE JAYS 1, 14 INNINGS

Carlos Correa hit an RBI double in the 14th inning off Scott Feldman hours after Feldman was traded from Houston to Toronto. Jose Altuve, who homered earlier in the game, opened the 14th with a single to shallow left field off Feldman (5-4), and Correa followed with his hit off the fence in right-center field. It gave Houston its ninth walkoff win this season, and 14th with its last at-bat. Michael Feliz (7-1) pitched a perfect 14th inning after

Chris Devenski pitched 4 1/3 perfect innings after entering the game in the ninth.

YANKEES 6, METS 5, 10 INNINGS

Starlin Castro hit a sacrifice fly in the 10th inning and the Yankees hardly resembled a team resigned to fading away after selling off their stars at the trade deadline, rallying past the Mets in their Subway Series opener. Didi Gregorius hit a tying single with two outs in the eighth and new closer Dellin Betances worked out of a major jam for his first save this season. Hours after trading slugger Carlos Beltran and pitcher Ivan Nova before the non-waiver deadline, the Yankees snapped a four-game slide. Wilmer Flores and rookie Matt Reynolds homered for the skidding Mets, who lost their fifth in six games as fans in the sellout crowd of 42,125 traded chants throughout the night following a hectic afternoon at Citi Field. Castro's RBI came off Seth Lugo (0-1). Adam Warren (1-0) got his first win since returning to the Yankees. Earlier in the day, the defending NL champions completed deals to land All-Star outfielder Jay Bruce and reacquire lefty Jon Niese.

RED SOX 2, MARINERS 1

Mookie Betts homered to lead off the ninth inning, Craig Kimbrel got his 18th save in his return from knee

surgery and Boston beat James Paxton and Seattle. Paxton held Boston to a run and four hits over eight innings before Betts hit his 22nd homer off closer Steve Cishek (2-6), who blew a three-run lead in the ninth inning Sunday against Chicago. Kimbrel made his first appearance since having surgery to repair a medial meniscus tear in his left knee. Junichi Tazawa (2-1) got the win with a scoreless eighth after Eduardo Rodriguez held Seattle to a run and three hits over 6 1/3 innings.

NATIONALS 14, DIAMONDBACKS 1

Anthony Rendon drove in three runs, Daniel Murphy went 3 for 3 and Stephen Strasburg got his major league-leading 15th win. Strasburg (15-1) allowed a run and three hits in six innings, striking out six and walking two. He also had three hits and an RBI. Arizona starter Archie Bradley (4-7) gave up eight runs and 12 hits in 3 1/3 innings.

PADRES 7, BREWERS 3

Yangervis Solarte drove in two runs, Travis Jankowski had three hits and two walks and San Diego beat Milwaukee. Carlos Villanueva (2-2) pitched 2 2/3 innings in relief of starter Jarrod Cosart, allowing two runs and two hits. Villanueva was the first of four Padres relievers. Milwaukee's Jimmy Nelson (6-10) exited with four innings pitched and eight hits allowed. — AP

SAUDI FEMALE RUNNER BREAKS BARRIERS IN RIO MARATHON

RIO DE JANEIRO: Pioneer Saudi sportswoman Sarah Al-Attar has already raced at the Olympics, but now her campaign will become a marathon as she uses the Rio Games to break down barriers in the conservative kingdom.

Attar turned heads in the head-to-toe outfit she patched together with her mother to race in the 800 metres at the 2012 London Games, where she was one of the first Saudi women Olympians.

This time Attar, now 23, will take on the gruelling 42 kilometer (26 mile) marathon race in Rio, where four Saudi women will take part. The women and seven Saudi men arrived in Rio on Monday, but were kept away from prying media.

Gender divisions are so sensitive that the Saudi Olympic Committee website did not name the women who will represent the country. Along with Attar, they are judoka Wujud Fahmi, fencer Lubna al-Omar and 100m runner Cariman Abu al-Jadail.

None qualified directly for their competition, but will take part with special invitations from the International Olympic Committee. Attar has no regrets and no doubts about running in London and Rio. "I was going for the women in Saudi Arabia, for all the young girls to have someone in the Olympics representing them, giving them a picture of something they could one day strive for," she said in a recent article for the Like The Wind runners' magazine.

Attar finished last in her 800 metres heat in London, more than half a minute behind her nearest rival. She still got a standing ovation when she crossed the line.

The Californian with Saudi-US nationality has never run under three hours in four attempts on the Boston marathon, but can no doubt expect a similar acclaim in Rio.

CONSERVATIVE DRESS

Taking part in sport is not easy for Saudi women and finding women to go to the London Olympics was a challenge. Someone knew of the half-Saudi girl in California who liked running and so an invitation was made.

"My mom and I pieced together an outfit: a long-sleeve shirt, full-length running tights, and a head cover we found online," Attar told Marie-Claire magazine. "I was proud to wear the uniform and liked that wearing the appropriate dress connected me to Saudi girls who want to run and have to be covered while they do it."

Since London, Attar has become a sponsored athlete training with elite women runners in Mammoth Lakes, California. Attar and her family have also noticed change in Saudi Arabia since the London Games.

Her father, Amer Attar, told the Washington Post how on a 2011 visit, when his daughter wanted to go on a run, he gave her a boyish "cap and warmup pants" and drove beside her.

Last year, he saw men and women running together in Jeddah. "I even saw a guy with his, I think, looked like his wife, and they were holding hands and running together. And she was wearing the abaya, and she was covered up, but they were actually running."

Still, the IOC has rejected a suggestion by a Saudi



LONDON: This file photo taken on Aug 8, 2012 shows Saudi Arabia's Sarah Al-Attar (right) competing in the women's 800m heats at the athletics event of the London 2012 Olympic Games in the capital. — AFP

Arabian official the conservative kingdom could jointly host the Olympics with neighbouring Bahrain, holding men's and women's events in separate states.

President Thomas Bach said "a commitment to 'non-discrimination' will be mandatory for all countries hoping to bid for the Olympics in the future." — AFP

KUWAIT LOSES SWISS COURT CHALLENGE AGAINST IOC BAN

RIO DE JANEIRO: Kuwait has lost its Swiss court case against an International Olympic Committee (IOC) ban that will see the nation's athletes compete under the Olympic flag at the Rio Olympics, a source with direct knowledge of the decision said yesterday. The source told Reuters the Civil Court of the Canton of Vaud in Switzerland rejected Kuwait's case against the IOC, notifying the parties earlier yesterday.

Kuwait and the IOC have been at loggerheads over a new sports law that the Olympic body says will undermine the autonomy of sport in the country. Kuwait argues it will strengthen the independence of sports bodies. The court decision means Kuwait's nine athletes eligible to compete at the Rio Games in shooting, fencing and swimming, will do so as neutral athletes and will march into the Maracana stadium under the Olympic flag at Friday's opening ceremony.

The court also ordered Kuwait and its Public Authority for Sport (PAS) to pay the IOC about 10,000 euros (\$11,229.00) in fees and expenses. Kuwait has the right to appeal to the Swiss Federal court within 30 days of the decision. The ban, which was imposed in October, means the country's Olympic Committee, and consequently its athletes, are also not eligible for any funding from the IOC for the duration of the suspension and cannot take part in any IOC-linked event. — Reuters

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FRANKFURT: A pigeon flies away from a bridge in front of the towers of the banking district in Frankfurt, Germany. —AP

STRESSED TIMES FOR EUROPE'S BANKS

BANK STOCKS ACROSS EUROPE FAIL SHARPLY

LONDON: The results of recent stress tests of Europe's biggest banks should have reassured investors that the sector can withstand another crisis. A slump in share prices across the industry since the findings' publication on Friday suggests many have yet to be convinced. Yesterday, bank stocks across Europe - even those that were effectively given a clean bill of health by the European Banking Authority's tests - fell sharply for the second day running and weighed heavily on the wider market indexes.

The falls aren't just confined to Italy, where concerns over the health of the banking sector have been the most acute. Britain's Barclays PLC was down 3 percent while Germany's Commerzbank slid 6.4 percent and Italy's UniCredit fell another 5.1 percent. As a result, the main indexes in Europe were sharply lower, with Germany's DAX down 1.4 percent and France's CAC-40 falling 1.6 percent.

It's difficult to pin down a single reason why European banking stocks have taken such a battering this week. After all, Friday's stress tests into Europe's 51 biggest banks showed that only Italian bank Monte dei Paschi di Siena, or MPS, was severely underfunded. Michael Hewson, chief market analyst at CMC Markets in London, says the tests' findings failed to address many of the concerns investors have about the state of Europe's banks, including the rising costs they face for park-

ing their cash at the European Central Bank.

The ECB has in recent months been reducing its so-called deposit rate further below zero in the hope that banks opt to lend money rather than place it at the ECB. That rate is now minus 0.4 percent and many economists think it could be cut further in coming months as the ECB tries to encourage lending. "Skepticism that the EBA bank stress tests painted a far too rosy picture of the health of Europe's banks while paying no account of the current negative rate environment nor for that matter the fiscal health of Portuguese and Greek banks," Hewson said.

No banks from Portugal or Greece were assessed in the stress tests. And they are two countries still struggling with high debts and low growth, a backdrop that makes their banks susceptible to a new financial or economic crisis. Throughout Europe's debt crisis, it was clear that problems in one country can easily spill over to another. One country that saw a number of its banks assessed Friday was Italy. Italian banks have been worn down by some 360 billion euros (\$400 billion) in loans that won't be paid back in full as a result of years of crisis and subdued growth that's made it difficult for firms and households to service their debts.

The scale of the non-performing loans stands a little below 20 percent of the banks' total loan stock, a level that weighs on

their propensity and ability to lend. Given Italy's position as the euro-zone's third-largest economy, any major financial problems that put in doubt the state's own finances would create a new crisis for the currency bloc that could outweigh those of the past few years, notably in Greece. MPS, Italy's third-biggest lender, sought to get ahead of its poor result in the stress tests with a plan to offload a large chunk of its soured loans at a certain discount and a 5 billion euro (\$5.6 billion) capital increase.

The money injection from private sources avoids a potentially painful bailout for the Italian bank that under new EU rules would have imposed losses on creditors like bondholders, many of which are small savers in Italy. Though welcome, MPS' cash call has stoked expectations that other banks may have to do something similar and that has contributed to the wave of selling in stock markets this year, notably of Italian banks. "It's likely that the weakness in Italian banks in particular may be down to renewed fears that more recaps are needed in the sector," said Jim Reid a senior analyst at Deutsche Bank.

A related concern is that Italy's banks won't address their problems, partly because of the country's legal system, which makes foreclosure agreements far lengthier than elsewhere in Europe. And though the Italian government has acknowl-

edged the fragility of the banking system and introduced some modest reforms and legal changes, it may find it difficult to push the banks to shore up their finances given the new EU rules and the potential impact on savers. That's even more unappetizing for the government as it prepares for a referendum on political reforms and a possible election soon after.

As a result, the banks could just continue to stumble on, further hobbling an economy that's barely grown in years. "The real turning point for Italian banks will be when markets acknowledge that the stock of bad debts, also helped by the recent government initiatives, is on a downward trend and the banking system back in supporting the real economy," said Nicola Nobile, senior euro-zone economist at Oxford Economics.

Bank stocks have been under pressure for months, some more so than others. That was evident in the news that Deutsche Bank and Credit Suisse have been dropped from the Stoxx 50 index of leading European shares after their free-float market capitalization - outstanding shares that are traded times price - fell below limits set by the index rules. The two stocks fell further yesterday as their departure from the index means that funds that track top indexes readjust their investments. Deutsche Bank was down a further 3.6 percent, while Credit Suisse slumped 5.6 percent. —AP

WEAK OIL AND GLOBAL BOURSES PULL DOWN GULF; EGYPT RISES

MIDEAST STOCK MARKETS

DUBAI: Weak oil prices and global equity markets pulled down stocks in the Gulf yesterday, with some Saudi Arabian petrochemical shares and banks falling sharply, but Egypt edged up on the back of its currency's firmness in the unofficial market. The Saudi index sank 1.2 percent as petrochemical giant Saudi Basic Industries fell 1.5 percent and Saudi British Bank lost 2.7 percent.

But major retailer Jarir Marketing, which had dropped 18 percent from its June peak because of Saudi Arabia's economic slowdown, rebounded 2.5 percent. Dubai's index dropped 1.3 percent as Emaar Properties lost 1.6 percent, almost erasing its gain of the previous day after posting strong second-quarter earnings. Strong earnings from Abu Dhabi's Aldar Properties failed to boost that market, where the main index dropped 1.6 percent.

Aldar fell 2.1 percent after reporting a 9.7 percent rise in second-quarter net profit to 657.4 million dirhams (\$179 million), beating SICO Bahrain's forecast of 384.1 million. Abu Dhabi banking shares

were also very weak. Qatar outperformed, falling only 0.3 percent because of a 1.3 percent rise by Qatar National Bank, the market's biggest lender, to 154.50 riyals, its highest close since last November. But Vodafone Qatar, the most heavily traded stock, dropped 1.6 percent to 11.32 riyals after QNB Financial cut the stock to an 'underperform' rating, lowering its target price to 8.10 riyals from 9.30.

Egypt's index rose 0.6 percent as the Egyptian pound continued strengthening on the black market, suggesting short-term capital outflows may have eased or even halted on a net basis. Sentiment towards the pound has improved somewhat since last week's news that Egypt is negotiating an International Monetary Fund loan, although a devaluation of the official exchange rate is still widely expected. Oriental Weavers Carpet Co jumped 8.0 percent after reporting a second-quarter net profit of 178 million Egyptian pounds (\$20.05 million), up from 124 million pounds a year earlier. —Reuters

LUFTHANSA WARNS EUROPEAN TERROR CREATING TURBULENCE

GERMAN NEW CAR SALES DROP

FRANKFURT: German flag carrier Lufthansa warned yesterday that "horrific" terror attacks in Europe were having a "tangible impact" on business, with second-quarter profits down 17 percent. Net profits between April and June came in at 437 million euros (\$488 million), the group said, slightly below analysts' expectations, who had forecast a figure of 443 million euros. "Horrific terror attacks are making people feel unsafe," chief executive Carsten Spohr said in a conference call with reporters yesterday.

"Because of repeated terror attacks in Europe and political and economic uncertainty, advance bookings, especially on long-haul flights to Europe, have fallen significantly," finance director Simone Menne said. The weak profits came despite the lower oil price, which resulted in a fuel cost boon of 597 million euros. For the full first half from January to June, Lufthansa's revenue slid 2.0 percent to 15 billion euros. Net profits took a 55 percent blow compared with the figure for the first half of

2015, falling to 429 million euros. Lufthansa said it expected full-year earnings stripping out costs for the year to come in below the previous year's.

Menne noted that the group had not benefited from the same one-off boosts

profits in 2016 after a compromise with cabin crew union UFO, which held the longest strike in the airline's history in November 2015, Menne said. Lufthansa had already said last month that the jittery atmosphere in Europe was hitting its



BARCELONA: Photo shows an airplane of the German airline Lufthansa landing at Barcelona's airport in El Prat de Llobregat. —AFP

in the second quarter this year as in 2015, when the group sold shares and enjoyed lower pension provisions due to changes in interest rates. But the group can look forward to a "positive effect" on operating

business and considered "a complete recovery as not likely anymore."

Meanwhile, new car registrations in Germany, a key indicator of consumer demand, suffered a sharp drop in July,

official data showed yesterday. Almost 279,000 new cars took to the road in July 2016, down 3.9 percent compared with the same month last year, the federal transport authority KBA said. It was the first drop in new registrations after several months of growth. Over the seven months to July as a whole, new car registrations increased 5.4 percent compared with 2015's figures at just over two million.

Most German carmakers - which accounted for 64 percent of all registrations - saw falling numbers of new registrations in July. Volkswagen, the biggest German brand, continues to feel the effects of a diesel emissions scandal with registrations down 12.6 percent. Diesel vehicles overall saw a drop of 7.3 percent in new registrations. Meanwhile just 785 fully electric cars were registered in July, almost 20 percent fewer than the same month last year - despite a recently-introduced government program of cash incentives for buyers. —Agencies

ENGLISH HOME OWNERSHIP FALLS TO 30-YEAR LOW

LONDON: The widely-held English dream of buying your own home is under threat as rising costs have pushed ownership to the lowest level for 30 years, a new study revealed yesterday. More and more people are now forced to rent in the private sector, which is more expensive than a mortgage and can often be insecure, the Resolution Foundation said.

Research by the think tank found home ownership in England fell to 63.8 percent in February, a level last seen in 1986 and down from a peak of 70.8 percent in 2003. It is now lower than any other country in western Europe barring Germany, foundation analyst Stephen Clarke said, with affordability cited as the biggest barrier. The average first-time buyer paid just under £30,000 for their new home in 1986, compared to £150,000 (\$198,500, 177,000 euros) now and earnings have failed to keep pace.

"This matters not just because of the frustration it brings for those unable to buy, but because of its impact on living standards too," Clarke wrote in a blog posting. "Housing costs have accounted for an increasing share of household income over recent

decades." Property ownership has become something of a British national obsession since the 1980s, when then prime minister Margaret Thatcher allowed social housing tenants to buy their homes from the state at a reduced rate. The government's English Housing Survey report last month found that only one in ten renters said they preferred their current situation to buying-most were simply priced out.

Ministers have sought to help first-time buyers with a scheme that effectively lends them money for a deposit. Interest rates are also at a record low. But the percentage of people renting in the private sector-as opposed to the low-cost social sector-is up from 11 percent in 2003 to 19 percent in 2015. Private rent accounts on average 30 percent of income, while mortgages account for 23 percent, the foundation says. A study last month by Deloitte found Britain has the least affordable housing in Europe. Britons need to save almost 11 years to buy a new apartment, compared to 3.3 years in Germany and six to eight years in Ireland, Italy, Hungary, France and Poland.— AFP



LONDON: To Let signs stand next to a properties in west London yesterday. A new study has found that the proportion of people owning their homes in England has fallen to its lowest level in thirty years and that soaring prices have forced millions to abandon the dream of home ownership, with parts of northern and central England becoming increasingly unaffordable.— AP

News

in brief

Nestle to invest \$43 million in Philippines

MANILA: Swiss food giant Nestle said yesterday it would spend two billion pesos (\$43 million) in the Philippines on a plant to produce a key ingredient for its Milo beverage. Nestle Philippines chairman Jacques Reber said the plant, due to be completed in October 2017, would produce a malt extract currently imported from Singapore. Eventually the new plant will provide the local supply, possibly using Philippine-grown cassava which in turn will help Filipino farmers, Nestle said in a statement. Nestle already has five plants in the Philippines and has invested almost 14 billion pesos in the country over the last five years, the company said.

UAE's Aldar Properties refinancing 1.8 bn dhs

ABU DHABI: Aldar Properties, the largest real estate firm in Abu Dhabi, has agreed with banks to refinance loans worth 1.8 billion dirhams (\$490.4 million) with longer maturities, its chief financial officer said yesterday. In February, Aldar said it planned to extend the lifespan of its 6 billion dirhams of total debt, which includes a \$750 million sukuk issue. Out of the 6 billion dirhams, bank loans constitute 3.2 billion dirhams, of which 1.8 billion dirhams is now being refinanced, Greg Fewer said. "This achieves a major objective for us this year to extend the duration of our loans and at attractive terms for five, seven and ten years on a bullet basis," he said. Under a bullet loan, the amount borrowed is repaid at the end of the term. The 1.8 billion dirhams of loans being refinanced were to mature at different points between December 2016 and 2018.

Pfizer beats Wall Street's forecasts despite big drop

NEW YORK: Higher expenses offset a big jump in sales from an acquisition, as Pfizer Inc's second-quarter profit plunged 23 percent. The biggest US drugmaker still beat Wall Street's expectations. Pfizer yesterday reported net income of \$2.02 billion, or 33 cents per share, down from \$2.63 billion, or 42 cents per share, in 2015's second quarter. The New York-based company said earnings, adjusted for non-recurring costs and costs related to mergers and acquisitions, came to 64 cents per share. The average estimate of nine analysts surveyed by Zacks Investment Research was for earnings of 62 cents per share. The maker of Viagra and the Pevnar 13 vaccine against pneumonia and other infections posted revenue of \$13.15 billion in the period, up 11 percent from a year earlier. Three analysts surveyed by Zacks expected \$13 billion. Sales were boosted by last year's acquisition of sterile injectable drugmaker Hospira, as well as rising sales in emerging markets such as China and India.

Egypt studies 8 state-owned companies for IPO or share

CAIRO: Egypt's Ministry of Investment will assess eight state-owned petroleum companies for their suitability for a possible listing on the Egyptian Stock Exchange or share issuances, Petroleum Minister Tarek El Molla said yesterday. The Egyptian presidency announced in January that Egypt would soon offer shares of "successful" state-owned companies and banks on the local bourse - its first public offering of government-owned firms since 2005, when it offered shares in Telecom Egypt, AMOC, and Sidi Kerir. "We sent the names of eight petroleum companies to the Ministry of Investment last week to be studied, paving the way to issuing some of their shares on the bourse or increasing their capital," El Molla said in a phone interview with Reuters. "Among the names we are studying are Middle East Oil Refinery (MIDOR) and the Egyptian Ethylene and Derivatives Company (ETHYDCO), and we are considering a capital increase for companies Alexandria Mineral Oils Co (AMOC), MIDOR, and Misr Fertilizers Production Company (MOPCO)."

EURO HITS 5-WEEK HIGH

BROADLY NEGATIVE TONE FOR DOLLAR CONTINUES

LONDON: The euro rose above \$1.12 for the first time in more than a month yesterday while a cut in Australian interest rates failed to weaken the Australian dollar as the fallout of poor GDP data continued to weigh on its US equivalent. The yen hit its strongest in three weeks, pushing past 102 yen per dollar for the first time since early July after Japan's cabinet approved a package of spending including 13.5 trillion yen in new fiscal measures.

The dollar has been sold steadily since surprisingly weak US second-quarter growth numbers last week, and dealers said even some improvement in US bond yields overnight had failed to turn that around. "Basically the dollar is just being sold," said Alvin Tan, a strategist with Societe Generale in London. "We have had a moderate dollar uptrend until the end of last week, but the combination of the dovish Fed (US Federal Reserve) and surprisingly weak second quarter numbers have caused some profit taking." The dollar index against a basket of six major currencies stood at 95.466, having fallen as low

as 95.384 last week when it posted its biggest fall in three months. Against the yen the dollar eased 0.6 percent to 101.76 yen. It was down 0.3 percent at \$1.1191 per euro, having traded as weak as \$1.1208 per euro. Weaker-than-expected US manufacturing data on Monday added to a new bout of gloom over global growth and nerves over the fate of banks in Europe were also high on the agenda as German banking shares fell.

Futures markets now price in less than a 40 percent chance of a rise in official US interest rates by December and the currency world's biggest banking player, Citi, said the largest flows in the past week had been into the euro and out of the dollar. In theory, worsened growth prospects should strengthen expectations of yet looser monetary policy in Europe and Japan and hence bode ill for the yen and the euro.

But while fiscal stimulus should also carry with it the risk of inflation and rising domestic share prices - factors that should weaken the yen - yesterday's moves look like an expression of doubts in markets that it will manage to

stimulate growth at all. Crucially, the Bank of Japan last week looked far from ready to weigh in and support the government program with a crushing new round of yen printing - reflected in a rise in Japanese bond yields in the past few days. "There's quite a lot of skepticism in the market as to whether this fiscal package can change anything," Tan said. "Japan has already tried this a number of times and everyone knows it's not really as big as the headline figure suggests."

If the Australian central bank had been looking for its own boost to exports by cutting interest rates and weakening the Aussie, it looked plain out of luck. After some initial losses after the Reserve Bank cut rates by a quarter point, the Australian currency was up 0.4 percent on the day at \$0.7561. "The market had already priced in the cut, so adverse moves against the pair were limited," said Tobias Davis, head of corporate treasury sales at Western Union in London. "I'm sure the RBA was hoping for a stronger reaction, aiming to keep the country's exports competitive."— Reuters



MUNICH: The logo of the German car manufacturer BMW is photographed at a BMW Vision Future Interaction concept car in Munich, Germany. German automaker BMW released its second-quarter earnings yesterday.— AP

BMW POWERS THROUGH SECOND QUARTER TOWARDS RECORD YEAR

FRANKFURT: A favorable world auto market helped German carmaker BMW to post profits 11 percent higher in the second quarter than the same period last year, results released yesterday showed. The Munich-based firm said that it had made 1.95 billion euros (\$2.2 billion) of profit on 25 billion euros of revenue.

Fueled by strong results, BMW has "the financial headroom we need to pursue our work on future technologies such as electric mobility and automated driving," chairman Harald Krueger said. "We forecast slight increases, and hence new record figures, for sales volume and profit before tax in 2016," Krueger went on. BMW outdid predictions from analysts surveyed by Factset, who had been expecting profits of 1.69 billion euros.

Welcoming the results as "solid", analysts at DZ bank pointed to BMW's higher-than-expected profitability on car sales as a key factor making it a "top pick" among German carmakers. But Deutsche Bank

analysts suggested that performance could fade in the second half of the year as the firm faces increased costs. Unit sales across BMW's three car brands-BMW, Mini, and Rolls Royce-hit 605,534 between April and June, a 5.7 percent increase on the same period in 2015. That brought underlying, or operating, profit to 2.7 billion euros-eight percent higher than the same period in 2015. Most of BMW's growth came from Europe and Asia, with unit sales up 11.2 percent and 7.3 percent. But unit sales in the Americas declined overall by 8 percent, with a double-digit drop of 10.2 percent in the important USA market. Growth was largely driven by increased orders for flagship models such as the BMW 7 series. The firm also said that electric models accounted for a larger proportion of vehicles sold. Customers in the Netherlands and Sweden were particularly keen, with electric cars accounting for double-digit proportions of BMW car sales in June in the two Western European nations.— AFP

GERMAN'S COMMERZBANK WARNS OF FALLING PROFITS

FRANKFURT: Germany's second largest bank Commerzbank warned yesterday that its profits in 2016 would be lower than the previous year. "The interest rate environment and persistent customer caution in view of the geopolitical uncertainties will continue to weigh on income despite growth," the bank said in its second-quarter report.

Commerzbank has also been forced to set aside more cash to cover non-repayment of loans, with "ongoing difficult shipping markets"-where it has many borrowers-an important factor as global trade slows. The warning comes a week after preliminary second-quarter results showed that the bank's profits had slumped by almost a third compared with a year ago. A reduction in profit forecasts was "no big surprise given the challenging market environment," analysts at Equinet wrote.

But while low profitability remains a problem, "Commerzbank has successfully restructured its business in recent years

and we see the bank well on its return to normality," they went on. Until now, the firm had set a target of a slight increase in profits over 2015's 1.05 billion euros (\$1.2 billion) - although it had been sending signals since early May that it might not achieve its ambition. Commerzbank's income last year allowed it to pay shareholders their first dividend since the 2008 financial crisis.

Shares in the bank plunged more than eight percent in early trading on the Frankfurt stock exchange, before recovering somewhat to post a 7.9 percent drop by mid-morning. Investors had already been wary of the stock on Monday after results from European Banking Authority stress tests released Friday evening showed it trailing among 51 of the euro-zone's largest financial institutions. Commerzbank emerged from the "adverse" 2018 scenario run by the regulator with a core capital ratio of 7.4 percent-well below the average of 9.4 percent across the banks tested.— AFP



FRANKFURT: Photo shows the logo of German bank Commerzbank in front of the company's headquarters in Frankfurt am Main, western Germany.— AFP



MUMBAI: Indian media representatives and railway workers gather near train coaches from Spanish manufacturer Talgo after their arrival at the Mumbai Central train terminal yesterday. The carriages arrived from country's capital New Delhi as a part of test run between the two cities.— AFP

UK'S DIRECT LINE PROFIT BEATS OWN CONSENSUS, SHARES JUMP

LONDON: Direct Line Insurance Group, Britain's largest motor insurer, said its first-half profit was hurt by lower investment gains and the new Flood Re levy, but beat its own consensus estimates. Shares in the company jumped 7.8 percent to their highest since May 10 and recorded the biggest daily percentage gain ever. Direct Line, whose brands include Churchill, Green Flag and Privilege, said operating profit fell 5 percent to 316.9 million pounds (\$418.2 million) for the six months ended June 30, but was well above a company supplied consensus estimate of 263 million pounds.

Direct Line also said it would pay a special dividend of 10 pence per share and an interim dividend of 4.9 pence per share. The company said its combined operating ratio - the

sum of the loss, commission and expense ratios - from continuing operations was 89.6 percent. A number below 100 percent indicates a profit. Direct Line retained its forecast to achieve a full-year combined operating ratio from continuing operations between 93 percent and 95 percent, adding that if current trends continued, the ratio reported would be towards the lower end of the guidance.

The company reported a levy of 24 million pounds from the Flood Re scheme, which was set up by the British government and industry to cut insurance costs for homes in flood-risk areas after severe flooding in recent years. On the new European capital rules for insurers that came in January 2016, Direct Line said its Solvency II capital ratio was 184 per-

cent after dividends. Solvency II dictates the amount of capital an EU insurer must hold to reduce the risk of insolvency. The lower the ratio, the greater the chances of a company defaulting on its obligations.

Direct Line said gross written premiums from ongoing operations rose 3.9 percent to 1.61 billion pounds in the period, with a 2.5 percent rise in motor in-force policies. It was "business as usual" for day-to-day operations after Brexit, the insurer said, as it was a UK-based business that underwrites risks within the country. Direct Line said, however, that it was too early to quantify the impact on the wider economy, including asset prices. Shares in the company were up 7.5 percent at 381.9 pence at 0849 GMT, making them the top gainers on the FTSE 100 Index.— Reuters

MITSUBISHI SCANDAL PROBE FINDS UNREALISTIC GOALS, CONFLICTS

TOKYO: A group of lawyers asked by Mitsubishi Motors Corp to investigate mileage cheating at the Japanese automaker found a divided company that had set unrealistic goals, to which employees simply couldn't say, "No." The Tokyo-based automaker acknowledged in April it had systematically falsified mileage data on its eK wagon and eK Space minicars, also produced for Nissan Motor Co.

The investigative panel said yesterday such data falsifying went on for 25 years, and the wrongdoing was systematic, extensive and escalated with time. The probe, which included interviews with more than 150 people, found the company lacked a system for checking on the team assigned to improve mileage. The company said employees did not feel compelled to respect the law or fix the wrongdoing and each department was

concerned only with its own performance.

"There was utterly no consciousness that the company must work as one to make and sell cars," the panel's 37-page report said.

The government earlier found Mitsubishi had overstated mileage on its vehicles by up to 16 percent. Mitsubishi Motors, which makes the Outlander sport-utility vehicle and the i-MiEV electric car, struggled for years to win back consumer trust after an auto defects scandal in the early 2000s over cover-ups of problems such as failing brakes, faulty clutches and fuel tanks prone to falling off dating back to the 1970s.

Panel members, speaking at a news conference at the company's Tokyo headquarters, acknowledged their recommendations might not be followed, just as with past scandals. Shortly after the prob-



TOKYO: Vehicles are reflected in the mirror of the headquarters of Japan's auto maker Mitsubishi Motors in Tokyo. — AFP

lems were made public, Nissan announced it was taking a 34 percent stake in Mitsubishi to help its turnaround. The scandal surfaced after Nissan, which sold Mitsubishi minicars under its own brand, did its own tests and pointed out inconsistencies in data.

Mitsubishi has said it didn't lie about mileage on models sold overseas. The company is offering a cash rebate to customers in Japan who bought the vehicles for which it had reported inflated mileage, to make up for the extra gas. Mitsubishi Chairman Osamu Masuko, who helped engineer the Nissan deal, reiterated an apology and promised the company will penalize managers found responsible for the cheating. "We hope this will mark a new beginning for us as a manufacturer," he told reporters after the panel's findings were released. — AP

AUSTRALIA CUTS INTEREST RATE TO A RECORD LOW 1.5 PERCENT

ECONOMISTS FORECAST FURTHER CUTS AHEAD

SYDNEY: Australia's central bank dropped interest rates to a new record low yesterday after a recent run of soft inflation readings, with some economists forecasting further cuts ahead. The 25 basis point cut to 1.5 percent means the Reserve Bank of Australia (RBA) has slashed rates by 300 basis points since November 2011 to support the economy as it transitions towards non-resources growth after a mining investment boom. "The board judged that prospects for sustainable growth in the economy, with inflation returning to target over time, would be improved by easing monetary policy at this meeting," bank governor Glenn Stevens said in a statement.

The decision follows official figures last month showing that consumer prices fell to a 17-year annual low of 1.0 percent in April-June, well off the RBA's inflation target of 2.0-3.0 percent. Treasurer Scott Morrison denied that the cut was a sign of a struggling economy, saying that Australia was posting 3.1 percent growth, while Stevens said it was unlikely to overheat the housing market. The majority of economists had forecast that the RBA, an inflation-targeting central bank, would cut interest rates, with 20 out of 25 surveyed by Bloomberg News predicting the move. The Australian dollar fell 0.4 percent to 75.09 US cents at 2.33pm in Sydney (0430 GMT), according to Bloomberg.

More cuts expected

Commenting on the global economy, Stevens noted that the underlying pace of growth in Australia's largest trading partner China "appears to be moderating". Australia has been growing more strongly than most of the world's advanced economies but like

most countries is struggling to kickstart inflation, with oil prices subdued and global trade tepid. Wages growth has also remained soft, while "labor market indicators continue to be somewhat mixed but are consistent with a modest pace of expansion in employment in the near term," Stevens said. "It's not that they've got a newly bearish view of the economy or that inflation was materially different from their expectations, it was more that they cut rates back in May and felt that they had room to do it further this month," National Australia Bank senior economist David de Garis said.

The rate cut is expected to take some time to feed through to possibly pushing up consumer prices, with the RBA's own forecasts in May expecting inflation to only lift towards the target band in late 2017 or in 2018. "We think that (low inflation) is going to persist for a while and we think that, on balance, the next few inflation prints are going to drive the RBA into more action, most likely in the first-half of next year," JP Morgan senior economist Ben Jarman said.

Leading Australian economist, Bill Evans of Westpac Bank, said the RBA was expected to sit on the sidelines and observe the next few growth and inflation readings before acting again, with uncertainty about the global economic environment also a key factor. "For us the real issue will be the environment in 2017 when the housing cycle will be in reverse; jobs growth may have cooled; global growth, particularly in this region, will have slowed further; and Australia's interest rates may still be attractive to international investors," Evans said in a note. — AFP



TOKYO: Shoppers walk next to a clothing shop in Tokyo. Japan's Cabinet has approved a fresh economic stimulus package worth more than 28 trillion yen (\$275 billion) to help revive the country's stalling growth. — AP

JAPANESE GOVT APPROVES \$130 BILLION FISCAL STEPS

BOJ DENIES CURBING STIMULUS

TOKYO: Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's cabinet approved 13.5 trillion yen (\$132 billion) in fiscal measures yesterday even as the central bank fought market speculation that it is preparing to put the brakes on monetary stimulus for the world's third-biggest economy.

The government's package includes 7.5 trillion yen in spending by the national and local governments, and earmarks 6 trillion yen from the Fiscal Investment and Loan Program, which is not included in the government's general budget.

But even before the announcement, Japanese government bonds saw their worst sell-off in more than three years as investors feared the Bank of Japan may ratchet back the pace of its aggressive government bond buying. The BOJ disappointed markets on Friday by keeping bond purchases steady, defying expectations it would Hoover up more, and made traders even more nervous after announcing it would re-evaluate policies in September. Governor Haruhiko Kuroda declined to comment on the spike in JGB yields but said the planned review will not lead the BOJ to weaken its stimulus. "I don't think that would happen," Kuroda told reporters, when asked whether the promised "comprehensive review" might lead to reduced BOJ stimulus.

Concerted action

He spoke after meeting Finance Minister Taro Aso to discuss Abe's stimulus package. Kuroda and Aso stressed the importance of concerted government and BOJ efforts to defeat deflation. Yesterday morning, Abe said "We compiled today a strong economic package draft aimed at carrying out investment for the future." "With this package, we'll proceed to not just stimulate demand but also achieve sustainable economic growth led by private demand." The package's headline figure is 28.1 trillion yen, but it includes public-private partnerships and other amounts that are not direct government outlays and thus might not give an immediate boost to growth.

Abe last month ordered his government to craft a stimulus plan to revive an economy dogged by weak consumption, despite three years of his "Abenomics" mix of extremely accommodative monetary policy, flexible spending and structural reform promises. The BOJ's review has spooked investors, who are unsure how BOJ policy might change. The price of 10-year JGB futures closed down 0.91 point on Tuesday to 151.33, and has dropped 2.47 points in the last three sessions - the biggest three-day fall since May 2013. The expected appointment of Toshihiro Nikai, an advocate of big public works spending, to the No

2 post of Abe's ruling party in tandem with a cabinet reshuffle on Wednesday underscores Abe's shift toward his "second arrow" of fiscal policy amid concerns monetary easing is reaching its limits. Precisely how the spending will be financed is unclear, although the government is considering issuing construction bonds when compiling a supplementary budget later this year. The stress on fiscal steps is raising doubts about Japan's ability to fix its already massive debt. The government estimates the stimulus would push up real gross domestic product by around 1.3 percent in the near term.

The package will be implemented over several years, officials added. SMBC Nikko Securities expects the package will push up real GDP growth by just 0.4 percentage point in the year ending March 2017 and 0.04 percentage point the next one. When public works spending and cash payouts fade late in the fiscal year ending March 2018, Japan "will likely face a fiscal cliff," said Koya Miyamae, senior economist at SMBC Nikko Securities. "To prevent a fiscal cliff, the government will likely repeat large-scale stimulus. Considering that a general election must be held by late 2018, direct government spending would become larger, which could further delay Japan's fiscal consolidation goal." — Reuters



SYDNEY: A shopper looks at clothes in a store in Sydney. Australia's central bank cut interest rates to a new record-low yesterday in a widely expected decision after a recent run of soft inflation readings. — AFP

SRI LANKA WITHDRAWS FREEHOLD LAND OFFER TO CHINESE COMPANY

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka said yesterday it was withdrawing permission for a Chinese company to buy the freehold to 20 hectares of land being reclaimed under a \$1.4 billion port project after India objected. Instead it will grant the state-owned construction company a 99-year lease on the land next to the port in Colombo, under a new agreement. "India had a big concern about giving freehold land to China near the Colombo harbor," government spokesman Rajitha Senarathne told reporters.

"We have amended the agreement. There will be no freehold land but it will be on a 99-year lease." The government had put the project on hold pending a review of all the big-ticket agreements signed under the previous administration of Mahinda Rajapakse. The former president relied heavily on Chinese investment to rebuild the country's infrastructure after the end of the island's decades-long ethnic war in May 2009, a move which some say alienated India.

The Chinese-funded port was also controversial among environmentalists. Senarathne said the developers had agreed to drop a proposed Formula One track and increase public park space, and environmental safeguards would be put in place. The project is being funded by China Communications Construction Company and was launched by Chinese President Xi Jinping in September 2014

during a visit to Colombo. Beijing has been accused of seeking to develop facilities around the Indian Ocean in a "string of pearls" strategy to counter the rise of rival India and secure its own economic interests.

But Senarathne said the government had decided to go ahead with the project under new terms. Colombo would set up an offshore banking centre to compete with Dubai and Singapore, he said. The reclamation represents the biggest-ever single foreign investment in Sri Lanka. It will add 269 hectares (672 acres) of real estate in the congested capital, which has a population of over 650,000. Once completed, the Chinese will have 108 hectares (266 acres) on a 99-year lease for commercial development. Earlier, 20 hectares of that was to be on a freehold basis.

Under the agreement, the Sri Lankan government will get 62 hectares (153 acres) and the rest will be public parks and access roads. China, the largest single lender to Sri Lanka, secured contracts to build roads, railways and ports under Rajapakse, who is under investigation over allegations of corruption during his decade in power. The administration of President Maithripala Sirisena says the terms negotiated by the previous government were unfavorable. But it has still decided to go ahead with most of the Chinese-funded projects. — AFP

YANGON: Myanmar is hoping to lure 7.5 million tourists a year by 2019, an official said yesterday, as the impoverished former junta-ruled nation emerges as one of Southeast Asia's hot destinations. Travel to the once-cloistered country used to be reserved for the well-heeled and intrepid, prepared to endure the travails of a country under military rule with patchy electricity and limited communications.

But foreign tourists have flocked in since the country began opening up in 2011, with a celebrities such as pop stars Beyonce and Jay Z helping to popularize the message that the country is open for visitors.

This year Myanmar is on track to welcome 5.5 million tourists, nearly a million more than 2015, Tint Thwin, director-general of Ministry of Hotels and Tourism said. "We hope the number will grow to 7.5 million tourists per year within three years," he said on the sidelines of a major tourism conference in Yangon.

"We will try to find new destinations for tourists to visit and we will also support community-based tourism," he said in an effort to raise incomes in one of Asia's poorest countries. In comparison, neighboring Thailand—a regional tourism behemoth—received 30 million visitors last year, offering a tantalizing glimpse of the riches to be made. Curiosity in Myanmar's culture and natural beauty has surged in recent years in lockstep with the rollback of most international sanctions and the ascension of Aung San Suu Kyi's pro-democracy party to power. But challenges remain.

Hotels are expensive and often do not meet

the standards of more traveler-friendly countries like Thailand, Malaysia and Vietnam. There have also been a number of incidents where tourist behavior has clashed with Myanmar's conservative culture. A Spanish tourist was deported last month for sporting a tattoo of the Buddha on his

leg in the Buddhist-majority country, while authorities are struggling to prevent the surging visitor numbers from damaging the vast Bagan temple site. Myanmar travel groups are also hoping to attract wealthier package tours to provide year-round jobs. — AFP



YANGON: Visitors and devotees tour Myanmar's landmark Shwedagon Pagoda in Yangon. Myanmar is hoping to lure 7.5 million tourists a year by 2019, an official said yesterday, as the impoverished former junta-ruled nation emerges as one of Southeast Asia's hot destinations. — AFP



MUMBAI: In this June 29, 2016 photo, Indian Muslim woman Shagufta Sayyd, right, sits along with her mother Shama as they listen to Khawtoon Shiekh, an activist of Bhartiya Muslim Mahila Andolan, or the Indian Muslim Women's Movement, at their office in Mumbai, India. — AP Photos



MUMBAI: In this Feb. 21, 2016 photo, Indian Dawoodi Bohra women walk past others shopping for clothes in a Bohra neighborhood in Mumbai, India. The Dawoodi Bohras are an affluent trading community of about a million people concentrated mostly in Mumbai, but also seen across the United States and Europe. The community has a longstanding tradition of circumcising girls, known as khatna, going back to their roots in Yemen and its proximity to northern and northeastern Africa, where the practice is deeply entrenched.

BATTLE WITHIN INDIAN MUSLIM SECT ON CIRCUMCISING GIRLS

MUMBAI: When Bilqis talks about having circumcised her daughter, she goes back and forth on how she feels - sometimes within the same sentence.

The slender 50-year-old doctor defends what is widely known as female genital mutilation within her small, prosperous Shia Muslim sect in India, saying it's a mild version that amounts to "just a little nick. No harm done." Yet she also acknowledges regret and guilt at putting her daughter through a practice the United Nations calls a violation of girls' rights. "It's really nothing, it changes nothing," repeats Bilqis, who asks to be anonymous except for her religious name because of the personal nature of the subject. But she adds: "I have no doubt in my mind that it is not helpful. ... If I had a young daughter now there's no way I would have her circumcised."

The struggle within Bilqis and her Dawoodi Bohra community reflects a growing debate over the best way to address a custom that is proving stubbornly hard to eradicate. At least 200 million girls and women alive today have undergone some form of female genital cutting, according to the United Nations - 70 million more than in 2014 because of increases in both population and reporting. And the U.N. predicts the number of victims will increase significantly over the next 15 years because of population growth.

Faced with this prospect, experts in the respected international Journal of Medical Ethics in February proposed permitting small female genital cuts that "uphold cultural and religious traditions without sacrificing the health and well-being of girls and young women." But this approach is already carried out in the Bohra community and is proving highly controversial.

"They always say it's just a nick and a touch, but there are incidents where things have gone horribly wrong," says Masooma Rana, who broke the silence around female genital mutilation in her community last year with a series of online petitions that sought to ban it.

Rana remembers when she was 7, her grandmother promised her candy and ice cream. Instead, she was taken to a dingy room in a back alley. Her dress

was pulled up and her legs and arms held down. A sharp pain followed. She came home in tears.

No laws

She did not understand what had happened until her 30s, when she read about female genital mutilation. India has no laws banning female circumcision, and Rana says the letters she has sent to Dawoodi Bohra leaders have been ignored. The Dawoodi Bohras are an affluent trading community of about a million people concentrated mostly in Mumbai, but also seen across the United States and Europe. In the winding lanes of a Bohra neighborhood, observant men are distinguished by white and gold embroidered caps and beards. Women wear a long, colorful tunic down to their ankles, and a scarf over their hair.

The Bohras are known for their liberal attitude toward the education of women. Yet the community is also tightly controlled by an entirely male clergy, with headquarters in upscale Malabar Hill in southern Mumbai. Here, alongside the homes of Bollywood stars and billionaire business tycoons, sits the sprawling Saifee Mahal, the home of the religious head known as the Syedna.

When they reach puberty, Bohra boys and girls take an oath of loyalty to the Syedna, and he has a say in almost every aspect of their lives, including marriage and funerals. From Mumbai to New York, medical professionals receive the Syedna's blessings to perform circumcision for girls, known as khatna. The procedure goes back to the community's roots in Yemen and its proximity to northern and northeastern Africa, where the practice is deeply entrenched.

Circumcision has become a battleground for the two Bohra men vying for succession, the half-brother and the son of the former Syedna. The half-brother says it is time to end the practice. The son, whom most Dawoodi Bohras accept as their new leader, says the tradition must continue and notes that Bohra men are also circumcised. He declined to comment, but laid out some of his views in an earlier speech. "Our community is very pure compared to other people, and it's our duty to keep it that way,"

Syedna Muffadal Saifuddin said at a recent gathering in Mumbai. "Men have to do it, and even women have to do it."

Activists say the two cannot be compared, because there is enough scientific evidence to show that male circumcision has health benefits.

As the Dawoodi Bohras have traveled the world, they have taken the closely held ritual of circumcision with them. Aleya, a 34-year-old social worker in the United States, remembers the khatna being done by her grandmother's sister in a cold basement in New York. It was awkward and painful, she says.

Aleya, who asked for her full name not to be used for privacy, objects as much to the message sent as to the act itself. Older Dawoodi women call the clitoris "haram ki boti" or sinful flesh - the flesh that can lead a woman astray.

Horrible, disgusting

"It's horrible, it's disgusting, that these completely natural experiences are made to feel dirty," she says. "The guilt of sexuality is always on our heads. ... I'm not angry at my mother. I'm angry at the men who make these rules."

Bilqis, dressed in slim pants and a sleeveless blouse, comes across as the epitome of the modern Indian woman. She lives in a swanky high-rise apartment building with views of manicured gardens, a luxury in a city of matchbox homes. And she talks openly about her sex life, breaking a taboo that runs deep in Indian culture.

She grew up in an observant Bohra family in central India, the only girl among 10 brothers and cousins. Her father wanted them all to get a good education. It was almost drilled into her that she had to become a doctor.

It was a childhood more liberal than most girls in India can dream of. Her father never forced her to dress or behave a certain way. Her mother was a much more silent presence, but she never pushed her daughter toward traditional female roles either. Bilqis did not set foot in the kitchen.

"When I got married, I could barely boil an egg or make tea," she says. She was circumcised as a child, but has only the faintest memory of it. It was neither



NEW DELHI: In this Feb. 16, 2016 photo, Masooma Rana, an activist who broke the silence around female genital mutilation in her Dawoodi Bohra community last year with a series of online petitions that sought to ban it, speaks during an interview with the Associated Press in New Delhi, India. Rana remembers when she was seven, her grandmother promised her candy and ice cream. Instead, she was taken to a dingy room in a back alley where khatna, circumcision of girls, was performed on her.

harmful nor traumatic for her, she says, and has not hurt her sex life.

As a doctor, however, she knows that the circumcision of a little girl - sometimes by midwives and older Bohra women in the community - can be traumatic. She remembers a time when a child came to her after being cut too deep, requiring blood vessels to be cauterized. She does not have religious sanction to actually perform circumcisions. But in the past she has given certificates of circumcision to non-Bohra women who wanted to marry men in her community, even though many had never had the procedure.

She tells her female patients that circumcision has no benefits and potential risks. Yet by the time they talk to her, with their mothers or mothers-in-law, they've usually made up their minds to go forward.

No discussion or explanation

Fifteen years ago, she felt the same way. There was no nail-biting self-doubt or anxious buildup. She says she acted out of a sense of religious obligation. Bilqis told her daughter Sameena she would get a small injection. A nurse snipped off a tiny bit of skin. The girl did not cry, Bilqis says. She remembers

thinking "one social milestone passed. One responsibility dealt with."

Sameena, now 22, is a graduate student at an Ivy League school in America. She has not had sex, which is not unusual for women her age in India. But like her mother, she talks about it without the coyness or shyness of most young Indian women. Sameena is gradually coming to terms with the knowledge that she was circumcised at age 7. "It's a very clear memory," she says. "I remember thinking, why is this woman coming to me?"

There was no discussion or explanation of what had happened. Sameena says it didn't hurt, but the memory makes her uncomfortable, although she can't say exactly why.

The next time it came up was when she was 15 or 16, with other Dawoodi Bohra girls at school. "Ask your mom," they said. She did. Her mother told her it was something done in their community. Then, spurred in part by the increasing discussion around khatna in her community, Sameena began researching circumcision of Bohra women. First there was denial.

"How can they do this? We're educated women," she remembers thinking. And then anger. She says many Bohras are misled to believe that Islam condones the procedure, when no other Muslim community in India practices female circumcision.

"Who the hell are you to control anyone's sexuality?" she says. "I was very, very pissed off." She confronted her mother, and told her she would never do such a thing to her own daughter. She accused her mother of hypocrisy. Yet her anger is with the community rather than her mother; both women describe their relationship as very close.

They agree that the custom should be abolished but differ on how. Bilqis fears that the few vocal activists speaking out may only drive it deeper underground. But Sameena does not want slow and silent change - she wants the religious leadership to come out against the practice. "It's not going to end by not talking about it. You have to keep bringing it up as something that should not be done," she says. "That's the only way to tackle it." — AP

CLINIC PAGE



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Dr. Fahad Al-Mukhaizeem
ر. فهد علي المخيزيم



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



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



The Health Ministry recently launched a campaign on health awareness on various chronic diseases such as diabetes, hypertension, cancer, obesity etc in order to promote healthy lifestyles. Al-Sanabel Al-Thahabeya and Sebamed were among the companies who joined the campaign out of their belief that 'Prevention is much better than cure.'

SPEECH BY SNR COL ZHANG, DEFENSE ATTACHE OF CHINESE EMBASSY

YE General Khaled, distinguished guests, friends & colleagues, ladies & gentlemen: Asalamalicon!

This evening we are gathering here to celebrating the 89th anniversary of the founding of the Chinese People's Liberation Army, PLA. First of all, as the Defense Attache of the Chinese Embassy in Kuwait, I'd like to extend my warmest welcome to all of you. The Chinese People's Liberation Army, PLA, was created by the Communist Party of China (CPC) in August 1, 1927. Since its founding, the PLA has played an important role in the modern history of China and has grown from a single service into modernized armed forces.

Entering the new stage, under the strong leadership of the CPC Central Committee, the Central Military Commission (CMC) and Chairman Xi Jinping, the PLA is undergoing a strategy of reform and restructuring to build a strong armed force commensurate with China's international status, being in accordance with China's national security interests and capable of providing a guarantee for the realization of the Chinese dream of rejuvenating the Chinese nation. You may have noticed that last year in September China has separately announced to reduce its armed forces by 300,000 within the next few year.

The PLA has in recent years become a more prominent participant in the pursuit of international peace and security. With the growth of China's national strength, the PLA will gradually intensify its participation in such operations as international peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance, and do its utmost to shoulder more international responsibilities and obligations, provide more public security goods, and contribute more peace and common development.

According to the latest data, there are 2,880 Chinese peacekeepers at the moment carrying out UN peacekeeping missions around the world. Over the past 26 years, 31,000 Chinese military personnel have participated in 24 UN

peacekeeping operations and at least 13 Chinese soldiers have given their lives on the UN peacekeeping duty. China has contributed, among the permanent member states of the UN Security Council, the largest number of troops to UN peacekeeping missions and the second largest share to the UN peacekeeping budget.

The Chinese Navy has, within the UN framework, sent 23 escort fleets to the Gulf of Aden and waters off Somalia and completed escort missions for more than 6,000 international vessels over the past seven years. During the period, the PLA Navy has also conducted emergency missions such as evacuation program in Libya, escort of transport vessels carrying Syrian chemical weapons in the Mediterranean and evacuation of Chinese and foreign nationals last year in Yemen.

Ladies and gentlemen,

China has always pursued an independent foreign policy of peace and a national defence policy that is defensive in nature. China has followed the path of peaceful development and will unswervingly pursue this strategy. However, one cannot expect China to sacrifice its sovereignty for peace or development. Nanhai Zhudao (the South China Sea Islands) are China's inherent territory and China's sovereignty over Nanhai Zhudao is established in the long course of history.

While firmly safeguarding its territorial sovereignty and maritime rights and interests, China adheres to the position of resolving disputes through negotiation and consultation by parties directly concerned and managing differences through rules and mechanisms. China is committed to maintaining peace and stability in the South China Sea with the countries in the region and upholding the freedom of navigation and overflight in the South China Sea enjoyed by other countries under international law. The Chinese military will firmly safeguard its national



sovereignty, security and maritime interests and rights, firmly safeguard regional peace and stability, and firmly deal with various kinds of threats and challenges.

Ladies and gentlemen, Kuwait is the first Gulf Arabic country establishing diplomatic relations with China and this year 2016 witnesses the 45th anniversary of diplomatic ties between the two countries. The traditional friendship between China and Kuwait has emerged stronger over time and has stood the test of changing international and regional climate. The military-to-military exchange and cooperation between China and Kuwait has been on the right track and we are confident to expect more bilateral events in the near future.

Here, I'd like to take the opportunity to express most sincere gratitude to my colleagues in Kuwait Ministry of Defence, General Staff and Kuwait Military Attache Association, my fellow countrymen and all our friends in Kuwait. It is only with your support and cooperation that we can make such an achievement. Finally, let's together wish the friendship between the two countries and the two militaries lasting forever. Thank you very much!

MCDONALD'S ANNUAL COCA-COLA GLASS PROMOTION IS BACK!

McDonald's Kuwait announced yesterday the return of its annual and eagerly-awaited Coca-Cola glass promotion, which comes back this year in the shape of the classic Coca-Cola can. The complimentary and unique glasses will be available with every purchase of any large extra value meal, and exclusively with orders placed through the McDelivery service (via phone, app or online) starting from July 28 and until August 28.

Making the campaign a little bit more special, this year's Coke glasses take inspiration from the 2016 Rio Olympics, adding a premium yet playful touch to your McDonald's meal. Customers will have the opportunity to collect all of the six vibrant colors available, which include Aqua, Salmon, Green, Pink, Purple and Charcoal.

Commenting on the new range of glasses, Sherif Coutry, Marketing Director at McDonald's Kuwait, said: "We at McDonald's Kuwait have enjoyed a successful relationship with our long-time partner, Coca-Cola. This campaign is testament to our long term, joint commitment to continue the tradition of spreading timeless happiness with the iconic Coca-Cola glass-



es. We are delighted to be launching this new edition to our Kuwait customers." For more information on the new Coca-Cola glass promotion, please visit www.mcdonaldsarabia.com.

LAIF HOLDS 'ALL NATIONS NIGHT'



It was an awesome night on Friday at the National Evangelical Church of Kuwait (NECK) premises in Kuwait City as Christians from different denominations gather for the 'All Nations Night'. The power-packed program featured lots of activities including praise worship, bible teaching and other cultural displays. Different nationalities presented their songs in different languages. There were Christian representatives from US, Jamaica, Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Ethiopia, Malawi, Ivory Coast, India, Sri Lanka, Cameroon, Togo, Kenya, Egypt and The Philippines. The event was organized by the Life Abundant International Fountain Church (LAIF).



CLASSIFIEDS



KNCC PROGRAMME FROM THURSDAY TO WEDNESDAY (28/07/2016 TO 03/08/2016)

Channel	Programme	Time	Channel	Programme	Time	Channel	Programme	Time
SHARQIA-1	ALICE THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS	11:45 AM	FANAR-2	SUBMERGED	11:30 AM	Special Show "THE LEGEND OF TARZAN"	THE LEGEND OF TARZAN	7:30 PM
SHARQIA-1	THE CONJURING 2	2:00 PM	FANAR-2	THE LEGEND OF TARZAN	1:30 PM	THE LEGEND OF TARZAN	THE LEGEND OF TARZAN	10:00 PM
SHARQIA-1	KANGAR HOBINA	4:45 PM	FANAR-2	THE LEGEND OF TARZAN-3D	3:45 PM	THE LEGEND OF TARZAN	THE LEGEND OF TARZAN	12:30 AM
SHARQIA-1	KANGAR HOBINA	7:00 PM	FANAR-2	ALICE THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS -3D	6:00 PM	AVENUES-1	FINDING DORY	11:45 AM
SHARQIA-1	THE CONJURING 2	9:15 PM	FANAR-2	THE LEGEND OF TARZAN-3D	8:15 PM	AVENUES-1	KANGAR HOBINA	2:00 PM
SHARQIA-1	THE CONJURING 2	12:05 AM	FANAR-2	THE LEGEND OF TARZAN	10:30 PM	AVENUES-1	DISHOOM -HINDI	4:15 PM
SHARQIA-2	THE LEGEND OF TARZAN-3D	1:00 PM	FANAR-3	FINDING DORY	12:15 PM	AVENUES-1	KANGAR HOBINA	7:00 PM
SHARQIA-2	KANGAR HOBINA	1:30 PM	FANAR-3	SUBMERGED	2:30 PM	AVENUES-1	KANGAR HOBINA	9:15 PM
SHARQIA-2	ALICE THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS	3:30 PM	FANAR-3	SUBMERGED	4:30 PM	AVENUES-1	KANGAR HOBINA	11:30 PM
SHARQIA-2	THE LEGEND OF TARZAN	5:45 PM	FANAR-3	FINDING DORY	6:45 PM	AVENUES-2	THE LEGEND OF TARZAN -3D-4DX	12:30 PM
SHARQIA-2	ALICE THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS	8:00 PM	FANAR-3	SULTAN- HINDI	9:00 PM	AVENUES-2	TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES:	3:00 PM
SHARQIA-2	THE LEGEND OF TARZAN-3D	10:15 PM	FANAR-3	SUBMERGED	12:15 AM	AVENUES-2	THE LEGEND OF TARZAN -3D-4DX	5:30 PM
SHARQIA-2	THE LEGEND OF TARZAN	12:30 AM	FANAR-3	SUBMERGED	12:15 AM	AVENUES-2	ALICE THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS -3D-4DX	8:00 PM
SHARQIA-3	JASON BOURNE	12:15 PM	FANAR-4	ALICE THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS	12:00 PM	AVENUES-2	THE LEGEND OF TARZAN -3D-4DX	10:30 PM
SHARQIA-3	JASON BOURNE	2:45 PM	FANAR-4	ALICE THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS	2:15 PM	AVENUES-2	THE LEGEND OF TARZAN -3D-4DX	1:00 AM
SHARQIA-3	FINDING DORY	5:15 PM	FANAR-4	ALICE THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS	4:45 PM	AVENUES-3	CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE	11:45 AM
SHARQIA-3	JASON BOURNE	7:30 PM	FANAR-4	THE CONJURING 2	7:00 PM	AVENUES-3	THE CONJURING 2	2:00 PM
SHARQIA-3	ABU SHANAB	10:00 PM	FANAR-4	THE CONJURING 2	9:45 PM	AVENUES-3	CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE	4:45 PM
SHARQIA-3	JASON BOURNE	12:15 AM	FANAR-4	THE CONJURING 2	12:30 AM	AVENUES-3	THE CONJURING 2	7:00 PM
MUHALAB-1	JASON BOURNE	12:15 PM	FANAR-5	JASON BOURNE	11:30 AM	AVENUES-3	THE CONJURING 2	9:45 PM
MUHALAB-1	JASON BOURNE	3:00 PM	FANAR-5	JASON BOURNE	2:00 PM	AVENUES-3	THE CONJURING 2	12:30 AM
MUHALAB-1	JASON BOURNE	5:30 PM	FANAR-5	JASON BOURNE	4:30 PM	AVENUES-4	ALICE THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS	11:30 AM
MUHALAB-1	ABU SHANAB	8:00 PM	FANAR-5	JASON BOURNE	7:00 PM	AVENUES-4	JASON BOURNE	1:45 PM
MUHALAB-1	JASON BOURNE	10:15 PM	FANAR-5	JASON BOURNE	9:30 PM	AVENUES-4	FINDING DORY	4:30 PM
MUHALAB-1	JASON BOURNE	12:45 AM	FANAR-5	JASON BOURNE	12:05 AM	AVENUES-4	ABU SHANAB	6:45 PM
MUHALAB-2	THE LEGEND OF TARZAN	11:30 AM	MARINA-1	JASON BOURNE	12:30 PM	AVENUES-4	NO MON	9:15 PM
MUHALAB-2	FINDING DORY	2:00 PM	MARINA-1	JASON BOURNE	3:00 PM	AVENUES-4	Special Show "THE CONJURING 2"	9:00 PM
MUHALAB-2	FINDING DORY	4:15 PM	MARINA-1	FINDING DORY	5:30 PM	AVENUES-4	MON	11:45 PM
MUHALAB-2	THE CONJURING 2	6:30 PM	MARINA-1	JASON BOURNE	7:45 PM	360°-1	THE LEGEND OF TARZAN-3D	12:30 PM
MUHALAB-2	THE CONJURING 2	9:30 PM	MARINA-1	JASON BOURNE	10:15 PM	360°-1	THE LEGEND OF TARZAN	3:00 PM
MUHALAB-2	THE CONJURING 2	12:30 AM	MARINA-1	JASON BOURNE	12:45 AM	360°-1	THE LEGEND OF TARZAN-3D	5:30 PM
MUHALAB-3	THE LEGEND OF TARZAN-3D	12:30 PM	MARINA-2	THE CONJURING 2	11:30 AM	360°-1	THE LEGEND OF TARZAN	8:00 PM
MUHALAB-3	ALICE THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS	2:45 PM	MARINA-2	FINDING DORY	2:15 PM	360°-1	THE LEGEND OF TARZAN-3D	10:30 PM
MUHALAB-3	THE LEGEND OF TARZAN-3D	5:15 PM	MARINA-2	THE CONJURING 2	4:30 PM	360°-2	THE LEGEND OF TARZAN	1:00 AM
MUHALAB-3	ALICE THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS	7:30 PM	MARINA-2	FINDING DORY	7:15 PM	360°-2	ALICE THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS	11:45 AM
MUHALAB-3	THE LEGEND OF TARZAN	9:45 PM	MARINA-2	THE CONJURING 2	12:15 AM	360°-2	NOW YOU SEE ME 2	2:15 PM
MUHALAB-3	THE LEGEND OF TARZAN	12:05 AM	MARINA-2	THE CONJURING 2	12:15 AM	360°-2	SULTAN- HINDI	5:00 PM
FANAR-1	THE CONJURING 2	12:15 PM	MARINA-3	THE LEGEND OF TARZAN	12:45 PM	360°-2	SULTAN- HINDI	8:15 PM
FANAR-1	KANGAR HOBINA	3:00 PM	MARINA-3	ALICE THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS	3:00 PM	360°-2	NOW YOU SEE ME 2	11:30 PM
FANAR-1	KANGAR HOBINA	5:00 PM	MARINA-3	ALICE THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS	5:15 PM	360°-3	FINDING DORY	12:45 PM
FANAR-1	ABU SHANAB	7:15 PM	MARINA-3	THE LEGEND OF TARZAN	7:30 PM			
FANAR-1	KANGAR HOBINA	9:30 PM						
FANAR-1	ABU SHANAB	11:45 PM						

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Mukil Arasan, holder of Indian Passport No. G9180281, resident at No: 19, R.O.B. main street, Hall Garden, Royepettai, Chennai - 14, India. Have changed my name from Mukil Arasan in future, I will be known as Abdul Rahman. (C 5197)

I have changed my name as Uppalapati Subbarayudu Raju, instead of Uppalapati Subbarayudu. Any objections please contact below address: Uppalapati Subbarayudu Raju, S/o Uppalapati Chengalraju, D/No: 3/74, Passport No: G3449557, Gangarajapuram (VI), Raghavarajapuram (PO), Rly Kodur (M), Kadapa (Dst), Andhra Pradesh, India. (C 5196) 2-8-2016

SITUATION WANTED

Finance Professional: A well-qualified (MBA, CPA), Indian Finance Professional is looking for a change in job. 12 years of experience in Investment Banking, Real Estate & FMCG in the middle level position in Kuwait. Excellent communicator and adaptable. Please call 65094498. 1-8-2016

PRAYER TIMINGS

Fajr:	03:41
Shorook	05:09
Duhr:	11:54
Asr:	15:30
Maghrib:	18:39
Isha:	20:07



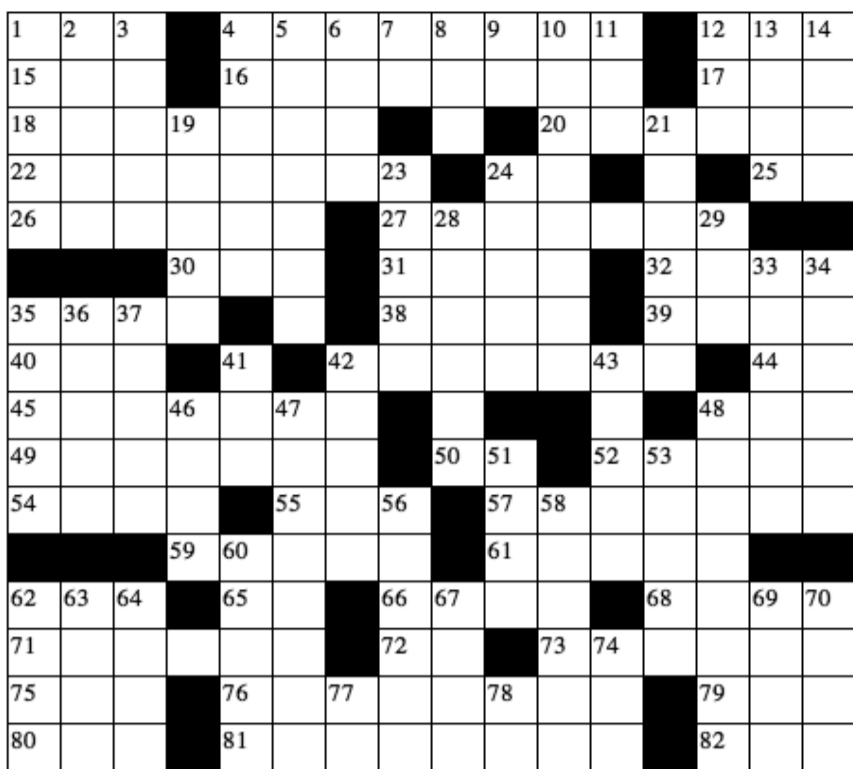
Flight Schedule

Directorate General of Civil Aviation Home Page (www.kuwait-airport.com.kw)

DIAL161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

Arrival Flights on Wednesday 3/8/2016				Departure Flights on Wednesday 3/8/2016			
Airlines	Fit	Route	Time	Airlines	Fit	Route	Time
THY	772	Istanbul	00:10	THY	9819	BRU	14:10
JZR	239	Amman	00:20	THY	767	Istanbul	14:10
JZR	267	Beirut	00:30	UAE	872	Dubai	14:15
FDB	069	Dubai	00:55	IRC	6512	ABD	14:25
DLH	635	Doha	01:00	CLX	792	Hanoi	14:30
QTR	1086	Doha	01:15	KNE	382	Taif	14:55
JZR	539	Cairo	01:20	KAC	773	Riyadh	15:00
PGT	858	Istanbul	01:40	MSR	576	Sharm el-Sheikh	15:00
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	01:45	KAC	673	Dubai	15:05
RJA	642	Amman	01:45	GFA	222	Bahrain	15:05
THY	1464	Istanbul	01:50	FDB	058	Dubai	15:05
KKK	750	TZX	01:50	QTR	1079	Doha	15:15
KKK	6506	Istanbul	02:05	KAC	617	Doha	15:15
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:15	KAC	741	Dammam	15:30
CEB	018	Manila	02:20	SVR	503	Madinah/Jeddah	15:45
UAE	853	Dubai	02:25	JZR	188	Dubai	15:50
MSC	405	Sohag	02:30	KNE	530	Jeddah	15:55
THY	1404	AYT	02:30	KAC	613	Bahrain	16:00
THY	768	Istanbul	02:50	KNE	684	Madinah	16:00
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:05	OMA	646	Muscat	16:10
OMA	643	Muscat	03:05	ABY	128	Sharjah	16:15
RJA	644	Amman	03:10	ETD	304	Abu Dhabi	16:20
FDB	067	Dubai	03:15	KAC	563	Amman	16:30
MSR	612	Cairo	03:15	NIA	252	Alexandria	16:50
QTR	1076	Doha	03:25	RJA	641	Amman	16:55
PGT	860	Istanbul	03:30	TBM	6314	Mashhad	17:00
KAC	544	Cairo	03:40	FDB	052	Dubai	17:00
JZR	555	Alexandria	04:15	JZR	266	Beirut	17:10
FEG	931	Alexandria	05:00	QTR	1073	Doha	17:25
DHX	170	Bahrain	05:10	MSC	508	HRG	17:30
THY	770	Istanbul	05:15	UAE	858	Dubai	17:40
KAC	412	Manila/Bangkok	06:30	IRC	527	Mashhad	17:50
BAW	157	London	06:40	SVR	511	Riyadh	18:15
JZR	1541	Cairo	07:10	JZR	184	Dubai	18:20
FDB	5061	Dubai	07:15	SAW	706	Damascus	18:20
JZR	503	Luxor	07:25	GFA	216	Bahrain	18:20
KAC	382	Delhi	07:30	JZR	538	Cairo	18:30
KAC	346	Ahmedabad	07:35	JZR	238	Amman	18:45
KAC	204	Lahore	07:40	KAC	1801	Cairo	18:55
KAC	206	Islamabad	07:40	QTR	1081	Doha	19:05
FDB	053	Dubai	07:50	JZR	124	Bahrain	19:20
KAC	302	Mumbai	07:50	MSR	621	Cairo	19:30
KAC	354	BLR	08:00	SYR	342	Damascus	19:45
KAC	156	Istanbul	08:00	GFA	218	Bahrain	19:50
KAC	286	Dhaka	08:05	FDB	064	Dubai	19:50
KAC	344	Chennai	08:15	KAC	361	Colombo	19:55
KAC	332	Trivandrum	08:15	ABY	124	Sharjah	19:55
KAC	352	Kochi	08:20	MSR	619	Alexandria	20:30
KAC	362	Colombo	08:20	FDB	060	Dubai	20:30
UAE	855	Dubai	08:25	KAC	283	Dhaka	20:30
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	09:00	UAE	876	Dubai	20:35
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:05	JAI	571	Mumbai	20:35
IRC	6511	ABD	09:15	KAC	331	Trivandrum	20:45
QTR	1070	Doha	09:20	DLH	634	Doha	20:50
IRA	665	Shiraz	09:25	KAC	343	Chennai	20:55
IRM	1188	Mashhad	09:40	KAC	351	Kochi	21:00
FDB	055	Dubai	09:50	KAC	543	Cairo	21:00
CCE	345	Sohag	10:00	KNE	232	Riyadh	21:10
UAE	873	Dubai	10:40	JZR	554	Alexandria	21:15
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40	MEA	403	Beirut	21:15
AXB	890	Mangalore/Bahrain	10:55	OMA	648	Muscat	21:15
MEA	404	Beirut	11:00	QTR	1089	Doha	21:45
JZR	165	Sohag	11:25	DHX	171	Bahrain	21:50
IAW	157	Al Najaf	11:50	FDB	5054	Dubai	21:55
ETD	9819	Abu Dhabi	12:10	ETD	308	Abu Dhabi	21:55
FDB	075	Dubai	12:25	JAD	300	Amman	22:00
JZR	241	Amman	12:30	ALK	230	Colombo	22:20
SAW	701	Damascus	12:35	KAC	381	Delhi	22:25
UAE	871	Dubai	12:45	UAE	860	Dubai	22:25
FEG	953	Asyut	12:55	THY	1413	TZX	22:25
MSR	610	Cairo	13:00	KAC	301	Mumbai	22:30
THY	766	Istanbul	13:10	KAC	345	Ahmedabad	22:55
CLX	792	Luxembourg	13:15	KAC	205	Islamabad	23:00
IRC	6521	Lamerd	13:35	GFA	220	Bahrain	23:00
KAC	792	Madinah	13:45	ETD	310	Abu Dhabi	23:05
KNE	231	Riyadh	14:00	JZR	528	Asyut	23:15
QTR	1078	Doha	14:05	QTR	1083	Doha	23:20
				MSC	502	Alexandria	23:30
				KAC	203	Lahore	23:40
				RBG			

CROSSWORD 1331



ACROSS

1. X-ray picture of the kidneys and ureters after injection of a radiopaque dye.
4. Taken before a meal as an appetizer.
12. A flat wing-shaped process or wing-like part of an organism.
16. The framework of a bed.
17. A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
18. Surveying instrument consisting of the upper movable part of a theodolite including the telescope and its attachments.
20. Inability to walk.
22. Expressing earnest entreaty.
25. A logarithmic unit of sound intensity.
26. Covered with paving material.
27. The supreme commander of a fleet.
30. (Irish) Mother of the ancient Irish gods.
31. Any of various edible seeds of plants of the family Leguminosae.
32. (Babylonian) God of wisdom and agriculture and patron of scribes and schools.
35. (botany) Of or relating to the axil.
38. Be idle.
39. According to the Old Testament he was a pagan king of Israel and husband of Jezebel (9th century BC).
40. A castrated tomcat.
44. Of or relating to the stomach and intestines.
45. The largest island of the central Ryukyu Islands.
49. A nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug (trade name Relafen).
50. (Akkadian) God of wisdom.
52. The capital of Morocco.
54. (Babylonian) God of storms and wind.
55. A former agency (from 1946 to 1974) that was responsible for research into atomic energy and its peacetime uses in the United States.
57. An event resulting in great loss and misfortune.
59. Red pear-shaped tropical fruit with poisonous seeds.
61. A worker who oils engines or machinery.
62. Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
65. A chronic inflammatory collagen disease affecting connective tissue (skin or joints).
66. An inclined surface or roadway that moves traffic from one level to another.
68. Agency of the United States government charged with mediating disputes between management and labor.
71. Cause to go crazy.
72. A state in northwestern North America.
73. Land received by fee tail v 1.
75. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
76. Capable of being attained or accomplished.
79. A beverage made by steeping tea leaves in water.
80. Thigh of a hog (usually smoked).
81. Bottom-livers having large eyes with metallic green luster.
82. The compass point midway between northeast and east.

DOWN

1. Not elegant or graceful in expression.
2. Mexican revolutionary leader (1877-1923).

3. Someone who plies a trade.
4. A port city in southwestern Iran.
5. A tricycle (usually propelled by pedalling).
6. Any place of complete bliss and delight and peace.
7. A substance produced by the hypothalamus that is capable of accelerating the secretion of a given hormone by the anterior pituitary gland.
8. A strong emotion.
9. A hard gray lustrous metallic element that is highly corrosion-resistant.
10. Not based on fact.
11. The month following January and preceding March.
12. An associate degree in applied science.
13. Set down according to a plan.
14. An Arabic speaking person who lives in Arabia or North Africa.
19. Any of various hard resins from trees of the family Dipterocarpaceae and of the genus Agathis.
21. A genus of tropical American plants have sword-shaped leaves and a fleshy compound fruits composed of the fruits of several flowers (such as pineapples).
23. The vertical triangular wall between the sloping ends of gable roof.
24. Affect with wonder.
28. A special loved one.
29. The syllable naming the sixth (submedian) note of a major or minor scale in solmization.
33. Capital and largest city of Iraq.
34. The state of existing and being localized in space.
36. Found pleasant or attractive.
37. A promontory in northern Morocco opposite the Rock of Gibraltar.
41. An awkward stupid person.
42. (the feminine of raja) A Hindu princess or the wife of a raja.
43. Trade name for an oral contraceptive containing estradiol and norgestrel.
46. A quantity of no importance.
47. That which weakens or causes a loss of strength.
48. Diverge from the expected.
51. (physics and chemistry) The smallest component of an element having the chemical properties of the element.
53. An active and efficient cause.
56. A hard medicated paste made of lard or oil mixed with wax or resin.
58. With mature or developed appearance.
60. Large swift fly the female of which sucks blood of various animals.
63. An amino acid that is found in the central nervous system.
64. (Old Testament) In Judeo-Christian mythology.
67. A Kwa language spoken in Ghana and the Ivory Coast.
69. The right to take another's property if an obligation is not discharged.
70. (Scottish) Bluish-black or gray-blue.
74. (meaning literally 'born') Used to indicate the maiden or family name of a married woman.
77. A brittle silver-white metalloid element that is related to selenium and sulfur.
78. A light strong brittle gray toxic bivalent metallic element.

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

There are new ideas with regard to education and job possibilities. These are issues that you are very prone to want to talk about, especially today. Today a friend or relative may be returning to the education circle. Issues may need to be resolved regarding your own education. Do not hesitate to get outside information or professional opinion if you think further education is right for you. Your mind is full of practical ideas, especially related to your job or skills. You enjoy working with your mind and can usually find a solution to even the worst problems. Your skills in this regard make you an expert at solving problems and you set good examples for others. Ideas of unidentified flying objects gain your attention this evening, perhaps time travel.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

You are a solid supporter of others, especially when one can easily see that they are on the right path. You will help if called upon to do so, but you may have trouble staying focused. Future plans with a loved one may continue to flood your mind. Sometimes the whole joy of an experience is in the looking forward. It might be a smart thing if you were to allow yourself some time for work. Once you begin some problem solving in the workplace, others had better step aside. You have a stick-to-itiveness that always finds you in the thick of things. This is a time to investigate ways in which to better your working position. It could be a good time to take risks and dare to be a little unconventional. A positive evening is in the forecast.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

A surge of independence, a need for freedom and an interest in trying new and different things may take hold this morning. Because you are able to handle difficulties more easily than in the past, you may have strong desires for some new kind of involvement. Careful-just when we think there are no more lions in the jungle, one may appear. In other words, go humbly through the next few days and enjoy the quiet times as creative times. You have a lot of energy to pour into anything you want to accomplish. Your increased self-confidence should bring you in touch with some rather interesting people and possibilities. Concentrate on securing business contacts. A new allergy or dental care program may be something for which you need to be attentive.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Fate sends opportunity your way, especially if you listen to your instincts and give your natural sense of curiosity a free rein. Travel and education can help uncover some of the answers that will give you the power or advantage you seek-do not cut yourself off from such experiences. Mass communications can be financially rewarding in some ways-think about advertising, broadcasting, publishing, etc. Decisive action is the main order of this business day. This could have to do with how you respond to change and maintain your independence. A change of residence may be necessary in order to take advantage of new career opportunities. Your originality and eccentricity are strong ingredients for your success now.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

The energies today indicate that you are bold enough to take the reins at most any desk. You find it easy to turn difficult situations into positive end results. Everything points to your taking charge and directing the day successfully for yourself and for those around you. You are a good teacher and leader and should feel a great deal of support for some new method or technique you have in mind. You are outgoing, overflowing and very generous so stop wondering why people flock around you to gain your attention. Politics could be considered this birth year; you could make a positive difference for many people. There could be some healing, especially for young people-you love to listen to the sound of young voices. Make a wish!



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Ideas and communications are topics of interest this morning. Getting the facts and making sure that people get your message straight can make all the difference in the world. Through reading material or a television interview there may be some high-level differences of opinion or outlook regarding fundamental religious or philosophical beliefs. This may have you pondering, or questioning some of your very personal ideas and beliefs. Someone you love may be highly emotional this afternoon. It might be a good idea to suggest a physical checkup and find some vitamin therapy. You and your mate will have clear and positive communications if you can bide your time and let the emotions settle. Choose to find the most positive flow of thought.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Situations and people you thought you could rely on may test your problem-solving abilities. Talk things over, find out what is really happening and then you should be able to bring a difficult situation around to a positive ending. A feeling that things will work out correctly if left alone can be particularly misleading. Plans, decisions and problems prove easy to solve and may even turn lucky today. You feel successful and able to contend with difficulties. Good advice from a guide or older person may be in the forecast-a good day. You make your way now by using practical vision and common sense. This could be some kind of high-water mark for your career, recognition, etc. You may find that you enjoy your job or the responsibility it entails.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

This is a long dreamy time when you find it easy to lose yourself in one flight of fancy or another. This could be dangerous if you did not have control over your rational thinking. You may want to take on some form of exercise before eating at the noon hour today. This will help you get rid of the stress that you may occasionally find in your day. A light lunch is preferable today. You may become interested in some political or civic activity this afternoon. You are particularly sensitive to beauty and this afternoon favors buying art objects or other things of beauty. Purchases today are likely to be a good investment over the long run. Take time to play with young people this evening. A possible project for the family comes to your attention.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Your goals stand in stark contrast to the goals of others now and an adjustment must be made. There is a need for compromise, for coming to an understanding. This is a time of decision, when small changes can have big effects later. Make the right choice and you have benefits; the wrong one or no choice at all does you no favors. This is a good day for practical ideas and planning about your work or vocation. You may receive some recognition or special attention regarding your particular skills and abilities. You will be appreciative in all the appropriate places but quite frankly, you itch to travel and may even have a family or friends meeting this evening to make some decisions on what a vacation might entail.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Goals and security needs are a focus in your life at this time and they tend to be at odds. Striking a rational but caring balance between setting goals and keeping within certain boundaries may take some consideration on your part. If you are planning a through-hike on the Appalachian trail or any other adventure, packing for safety is the first consideration. Now is the time to act and decide; failure to do so can upset delicate psychological, physical and emotional balances. A clear-minded insight into your own plans and methods is available to you. Your efforts in any matter will be received with favor, especially by those at a distance. This may mean you will be learning and taking on new experiences that will add to your evolution.



Aquarius (January 20-February 18)

A relative or friend may have some career choices to make at this time. You may not be able to give direction but you can encourage and boost this person's self-esteem. In your own profession you will jump to the needs of many. There could be a hidden link that will highlight your point of view and gain the results that you want regarding discussions in a meeting this afternoon. You will exhibit your abilities to be candid and direct-saying the emotions for study at a later time. Remember to use your mind and not your emotions. Your ambitions go hand in hand with communication and using the mind and the two should never be far apart. A family discussion relates to moving, residence, domesticity, the possibility of a major purchase.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Your ambition and drive are strong. You are able to use good sense and make all the right decisions. There could be a change of job or an advancement of some sort within the workplace. This is a time to get ahead by taking action. Fresh insight comes to you through some news media source, giving you a whole new perspective. If you enjoy listening to ideas and reports from strange sources, it would be better to discuss the content among your non-working friends. This should prove to be a nice day that just flows along. You could feel real support and harmony at this time for circumstances and those around you. A family discussion begins and ends, not only passionately but positively. There is always new insight into those you love.

Wordsearch Puzzle

Animals 6

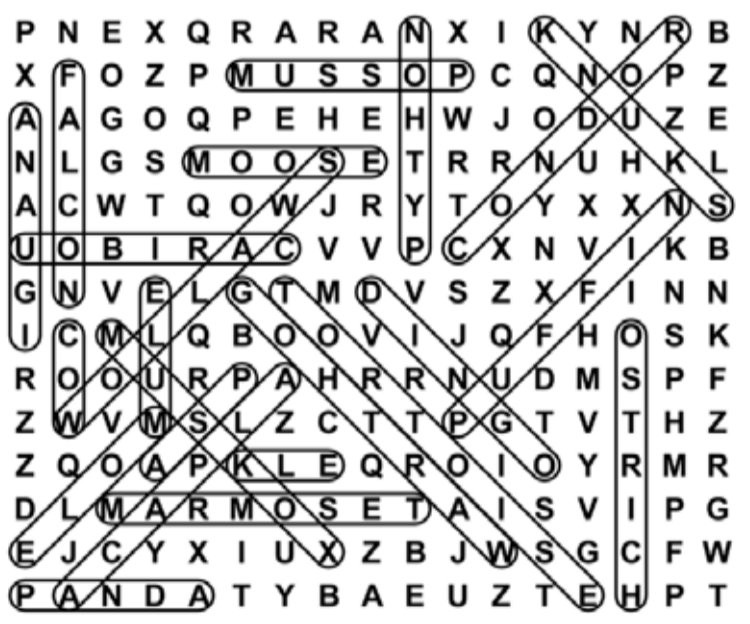
Find the words hidden in the grid of letters.



- | | | |
|-----------|--------|-----------|
| ALBATROSS | ERMINE | MONGOOSE |
| ANACONDA | FERRET | OCELOT |
| ARMADILLO | GIBBON | PHEASANT |
| BADGER | GULL | SHARK |
| CHAMELEON | HYENA | SQUIRREL |
| COUGAR | LEMUR | VULTURE |
| CROCODILE | LOON | WILDBEEST |
| EGRET | MARTEN | |

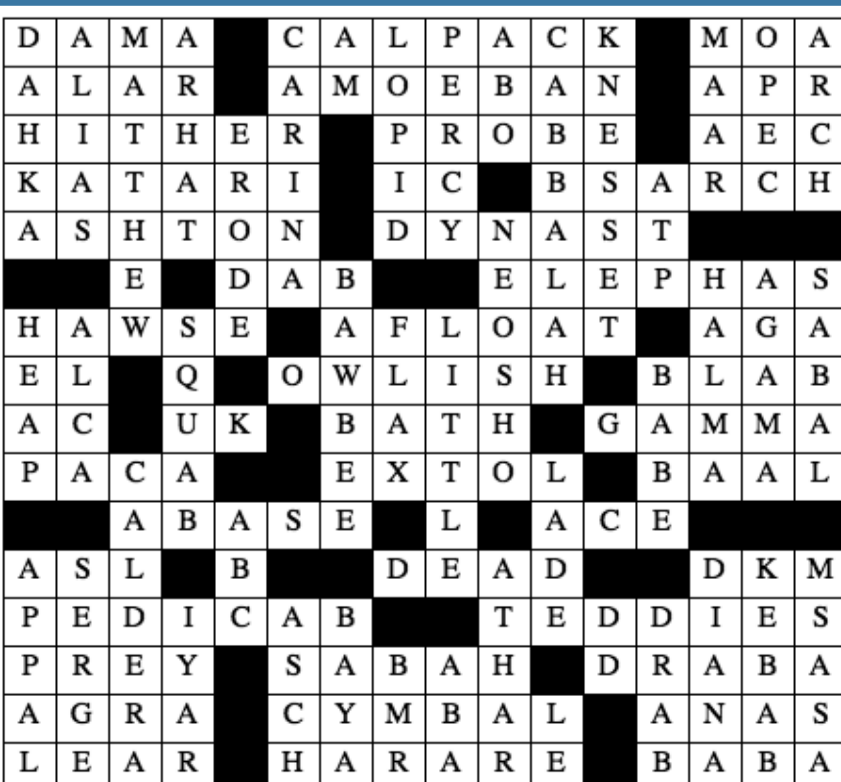
Yesterday's Solution

Animals 5 - Solution



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|---------|----------|----------|
| ALPACA | IGUANA | POSSUM |
| ASP | MARMOSET | PUFFIN |
| CARIBOU | MOLE | PYTHON |
| CANDOR | MOOSE | SKUNK |
| COW | MULE | SWALLOW |
| DINGO | MUSKOX | TORTOISE |
| ELK | OSTRICH | WARTHOG |
| FALCON | PANDA | |

Yesterday's Solution



Daily SuDoku



Yesterday's Solution





Photo provided by Dale Sievert shows moss growing in a pot in Sievert's garden in Waukesha County, Wisconsin.



This undated photo provided by Dale Sievert shows moss growing in a small private garden in Japan.



Moss growing in the snow in Sievert's garden in Waukesha County, Wisconsin.

Moss can be a versatile and beautiful addition to any garden



This undated photo provided by Dale Sievert shows moss growing in a small private garden, on rock below tree, in Japan. — AP photos

J Paul Moore, who owned a garden center in Tennessee for over 30 years, can't count the number of times people asked him how to kill moss. He and other experts, however, say moss deserves more respect, as a versatile and beautiful addition to any garden. "It's stunning in the winter when everything else is dormant and dull. It's like a little emerald island," says Moore, who's got an entire moss lawn. "It changes with atmospheric conditions - it's ever-changing." And it looks better than his grass lawn did in Nashville's hot dry summers, he says.

Moss provides a variety of shapes and textures, and can work in everything from a container to a whole lawn, like Moore's. "Mosses offer year-round green," says Annie Martin, author of "The Magical World of Moss Gardening" (Timber Press, 2016). It thrives in a surprising range of climates; she once harvested some moss off a hot tin roof in June and found it to be a species that also grows in Antarctica.

Some lessons on how to garden with moss can be found in Japan, where it is more valued. Dale Sievert has created Japanese-style gardens at his home in Waukesha, Wisconsin, and for public gardens in Wisconsin and Chicago. But this type of formal garden with great expanses of moss wasn't actually what he found most interesting when he visited Japan. Rather, it was how often moss was used in private gardens along city streets, in front of businesses and homes - just a couple square feet in a planter, or the space between a sidewalk and a building.

"That's how they garden with moss, in these little tiny spots," he says. So, he says,



This undated photo provided by J Paul Moore shows part of his moss yard in Nashville, Tenn.

start small. One possibility: Instead of using mulch, plant moss to cover the ground under a perennial that's bare at the bottom and bigger on top. Or start even smaller: in a flowerpot. Sievert has about 300 containers planted with moss, where they thrive even in the Wisconsin winter.

'Take your shoes off'

Another way to start is to encourage moss where it's already growing in your yard. That's

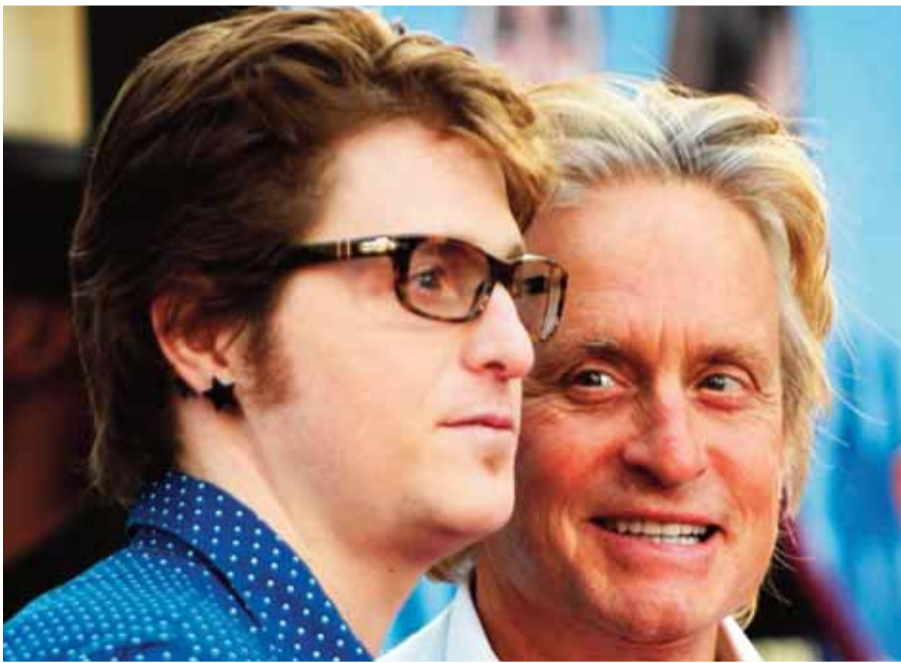
what Moore did when he decided to give up trying to grow grass in an area where it refused to thrive. Within two or three years, the moss had covered about 5,000 square feet. "The first thing people ask is, can you walk on it? What does it feel like on your bare feet?" he says. "I say, 'Take your shoes off!'" Although heavy traffic will wear it down, and you wouldn't want kids or dogs roughhousing on it, moss actually likes to be walked on.

If you want to encourage moss to spread,

remove weeds and grass, provide moisture and keep it clear of debris; don't let leaves and sticks pile up. You can also move it around to where you want it: Mosses don't grow from seed, but they do spread from any part of the plant. "They can grow from a leaf or a stem or rhizoid," says Martin. "Just cut them up or tear them up."

You can also buy moss to plant. Martin sells many species online from her moss nursery. "I have mats that roll out like a green carpet," she says. "They're great for people who don't have patience." Moss will go dormant if it's not watered, but uses less water than most other garden plants. Unlike them, it has no roots. The root-like structures you see when you pull up a clump of moss are called rhizoids. "Their only purpose is to hold it to the surface," says Martin. Since moss takes in water and nutrients through its leaves instead of through roots, several light waterings are better than a long drench. This also means that planting is easy: You don't need to dig holes or improve soil.

"You can use nutrient-poor soil where nothing else will grow and do nothing to prep it in advance except clear the debris away," Martin says. Another advantage: Moss doesn't need fertilizer or pesticides. The same substances that keep moss from freezing in winter also taste bad to insects. But to its fans, moss' best feature is its unique charm. "When you talk about moss to anybody, they smile. It's like the plant equivalent of a teddy bear," says Moore. "It conjures up elves in the forest." — AP



This file photo taken on April 27, 2009 shows actor Michael Douglas arriving with his son Cameron Douglas for the world premiere of 'Ghosts of Girlfriends Past' at the Grauman's Chinese Theater in Hollywood, California. — AFP

Michael Douglas's son leaves prison after 7 years

The eldest son of actor Michael Douglas has been released from prison after serving seven years for drug trafficking, and is now in a halfway house in New York, US media reported on Monday. Cameron Douglas, 37, was sentenced in 2010 to five years in prison for possession and sale of methamphetamine. His sentence was extended by two years in solitary confinement after he admitted smuggling drugs into the prison. Cameron Douglas's son with his first wife Diandra Luker, was originally set to be released in 2018 but is currently living at a rehabilitation center in New York, EOnline and ABC News reported. Cameron Douglas now plans to write a tell-all book describing his life as heir to one of the most respected Hollywood dynasties and how drugs led him

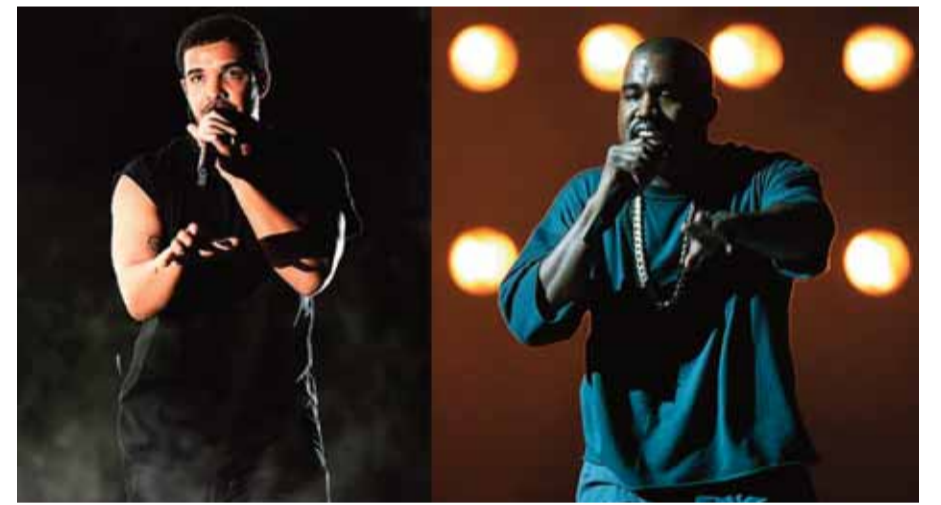
to prison, according to the New York Post's gossip section "Page Six."

The Oscar-winning actor visited his son in prison regularly. He criticized the US penal system when accepting an Emmy Award for playing the role of the pianist Liberace in the TV movie "Behind the Candelabra" in 2013. "At first I was certainly disappointed with my son, but I've reached a point now where I'm disappointed with the system," he said. "If you happen to have a slip, they punish you. In my son's case, he has spent almost two years in solitary confinement." The actor's representatives did not immediately respond to a request for comment from AFP. — AFP

Kanye West hints at possible collaboration with Drake

Kanye West has teased the possibility of collaborating on an album with Drake. The hip-hop superstars appeared together during a performance at OVO Fest in Drake's native Toronto on Monday. At one point during the show, video shows West asking the crowd if they were "ready for this album" before pointing toward Drake as he entered the stage.

Both Drake and West have mentioned the possibility of working with one another previously. The rappers also appeared together during a concert in West's hometown of Chicago last week. — AP



Kanye West and Drake

Kesha drops sex abuse lawsuit against Dr Luke to focus on music

Pop star Kesha has dropped her sexual abuse lawsuit in California against record producer Dr Luke, saying she wants to focus on getting back to her music. The "Tik Tok" singer, who has not released an album for four years, will continue her fight in the New York courts to get out of a multi-album recording deal with Sony Music and Dr Luke, her attorney, Daniel Petrocelli, said in a statement. "Kesha has dismissed her California action without prejudice while she pursues her appeal and other legal claims in the New York courts," he said. "Kesha is focused on getting back to work and has delivered 28 new songs to the record label."

The 29-year-old singer filed a lawsuit in California in 2014 accusing Dr Luke, one of the music industry's most successful producers, of rape and emotional abuse during the early stages of her career. Dr Luke, whose real name is Lukasz Gottwald, has repeatedly denied the claims and has countersued for defamation. But the denial earlier this year by a New York

judge of Kesha's bid to extricate herself from her recording contract sparked an emotional #FreeKesha campaign on social media that earned support from leading stars such as Taylor Swift, Adele and Lady Gaga. Kesha is appealing the New York ruling and in April she released her first single in three years. Last week, she started a US tour.

On Monday she thanked fans for their support. "My fight continues. I need to get my music out," she wrote on her Instagram account. "I have so much to say. This lawsuit is so heavy on my once free spirit, and I can only pray to one day feel that happiness again." Dr Luke's attorney, Christine Lepera, said in a statement the accusations against him were "false and meritless" and that Kesha's decision to dismiss the sex abuse claims in California came "because she has no chance of winning them." — Reuters



In this file photo, Kesha appears on stage at the Billboard Music Awards in Las Vegas. — AP

Winfrey picks Whitehead novel for book club

Oprah Winfrey has a new book club pick, Colson Whitehead's "The Underground Railroad," a historical novel that imagines the network of safe houses and passages that helped slaves escape to free territory is an actual train. Winfrey told The Associated Press during a recent telephone interview that she knew from the first sentence that she would want to share her passion with her audience, an impulse she has relied on with uncommon success for 20 years. "I was blown away by it," Winfrey said. "Blown away" is an often-used expression, but with this book it was to the point of sometimes putting it down and saying, "I can't read anymore. I don't want to turn the page. I want to know what happens, but I don't want to know what happens."

"The Underground Railroad" was focused to come out in September, but after learning of Winfrey's decision, Doubleday moved up the release date to Tuesday and more than doubled the announced first printing, from 75,000 to 200,000. An interview with Whitehead appears in the September issue of Winfrey's magazine, "O," which comes out next week. Winfrey's website, Oprah.com, will include a reading guide and Winfrey's comments, and "Underground Railroad" will be featured on the social media site Goodreads (Goodreads.com/OprahsBookClub).

National Book Critics Circle award
Whitehead, 46, is the author of highly regarded novels

such as "The Intuitionist" and "John Henry Days," and a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Critics Circle award. In "The Underground Railroad," his sixth novel, he imagines that the network of safe houses and passages that enabled slaves to reach free territory is an actual train. The book was already highly anticipated, with the trade publication Kirkus Reviews calling it "startlingly original" and praising Whitehead for examining "race mythology and history with rousing audacity and razor-sharp ingenuity." Winfrey said the novel was so vivid she double-checked her history books to make sure the rail system didn't exist.

During a recent telephone interview, Whitehead said that he

swore out loud - while on a plane - when he learned his book had joined Winfrey's pantheon of favorites. "I was in high school when her show became national," he said. "She was an ambassador from black America and, obviously, a huge presence." Winfrey started her club in 1996 with Jacquelyn Mitchard's "The Deep End of the Ocean," and laughs as she recalls her early doubts that you could use a television show to talk about a novel. Her choices would sell hundreds of thousands of copies, and sometimes millions, but Winfrey originally saw the club as an extension of what she did in person, when she handed out copies of Alice Walker's "The Color Purple" to passers-by near where her program was taped in Chicago. — AP

G O S S I P



Justin Bieber has taunted Taylor Swift on Instagram

The 22-year-old singer posted a picture of himself on a video call with Taylor's ex Calvin Harris and Kanye West, who she is embroiled in a public feud with, and captioned the image: "Taylor swift what up (sic)." Both Calvin and Kanye are smiling in the picture and no doubt all three had plenty to talk about. Taylor, 26, reportedly was not impressed with Justin's on/off relationship with her best pal Selena Gomez, 24, from 2011 to 2014 and it has been claimed that she urged Selena to dump him. And Calvin, 32, would have had plenty to say after his bitter break-up with Taylor in May and her subsequent new relationship with Tom Hiddleston. He also recently slammed his former lover in a lengthy Twitter rant after it emerged she had secretly written his song 'This Is What You Came For', blasting her and her team for "going out of their way to try and make ME look bad at this stage." He added: "I figure if you're happy in your new relationship you should focus on that instead of trying to tear your ex bf down for something to do. I know you're off tour and

you need someone new to try and bury like Katy [Perry] ETC but I'm not that guy, sorry. I won't allow it. Please focus on the positive aspects of YOUR life because you've earned a great one. God bless everyone have a beautiful day." Kanye has recently been involved in a huge public spat with Taylor over his controversial single 'Famous', after she claimed she didn't give him permission to sing about her. However, his wife Kim Kardashian West decided to leak a series of videos on Snapchat which featured the rapper on the phone to Taylor discussing the controversial lyrics and she appeared to give it the go-ahead. However, his wife Kim Kardashian West decided to leak a series of videos on Snapchat which featured the rapper on the phone to Taylor discussing the controversial lyrics and she appeared to give it the go-ahead. The 34-year-old singer revealed her sons Jayden, nine, and Preston, 10, have gotten her into the hugely popular mobile augmented reality game and they now play it together all the time. Speaking on 'Rove and Sam' on Australia's 2DayFM, she

said: "We do that a lot. [My kids] are addicted to it, they're constantly talking about it, and I'm like, 'Well you know what, it's summer we have nothing to do today, let's go Britney is not the only star to become obsessed with the game, Justin Bieber recently joined dozens of other people in New York's Central Park as they His manager Scooter Braun posted a video of Justin as he ran into a huge swarm of people and everyone could be heard yelling about the rare Gyarados creature as they tried to capture him. Scooter wrote: "This is amazing. @justinbieber and @alfredoflores in nyc. He finished the post with lots of crying laughing emojis. John Mayer recently spent \$99.99 for 14,500 PokeCoins, while Tyga was Budapest airport. And Lily Allen revealed how she had become obsessed with it and had even been hunting for them at the Church of Scientology Celebrity Center in Hollywood. Lily has been sharing her new passion with her fans on her Twitter page, The mum-of-two said the game was "pure escapism".

Adele was torn between two outfits for Glastonbury performance

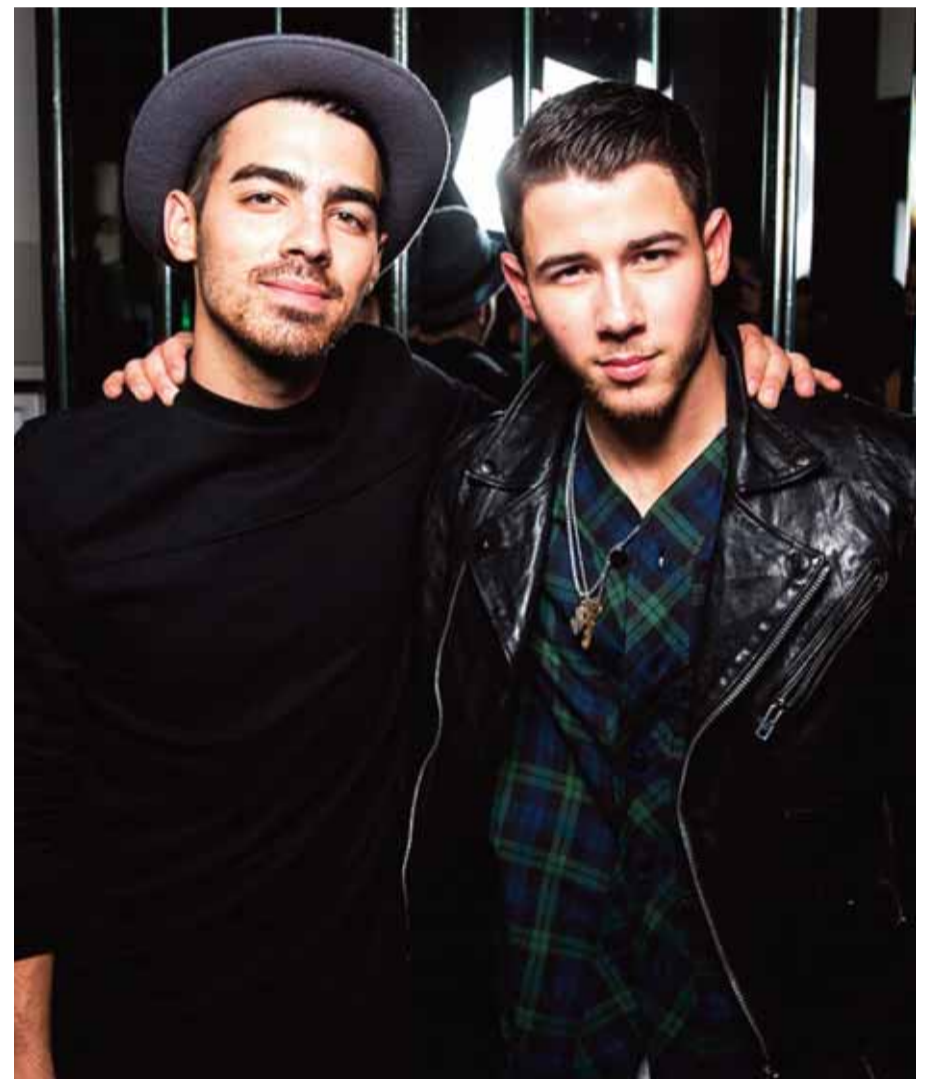
Adele was torn between two outfits for her performance at Glastonbury festival. The annual music extravaganza just 48 hours before gracing the Pyramid stage at the annual music extravaganza, which saw her headline on June 25. Speaking about styling the power house for her 90 minute gig, the creative director of the luxury French fashion house, Clare Waight Keller, said: "[I] fitted the dresses on her on the Thursday before. I was at her house and she was going between two looks, before deciding that [the one she wore] was 'more Glastonbury.' When she had the dresses on she twirled around asking us what we thought. She's so cool, such a big personality, I love her." And the creative mastermind has revealed the designer label's bohemian vibe is perfect for festivals, and was what Adele most wanted to channel in her black maxi embroidered dress at Glastonbury. She explained to the Telegraph.co.uk: "There's always been that bohemian spirit. You can be who you want to be for that weekend and do things that you wouldn't normally do. The history of festivals is about this very sense of spontaneity and sense of freedom. I think the fact that there have been so many English designers has [also] seeped in a bit to the culture [of the house]. There's a feeling that these long flow-y dresses which might be worn for evening dress for some people, can also be something you can fly around a festival in." Meanwhile, the mother of one - who has son Angelo with her partner Simon Konecki - has revealed playing at Glastonbury was "the best moment of my life". Speaking previously, the 'Hello' hitmaker said: "Oh my God, this is the best moment of my life. Glastonbury means the world to me, I'm not even lying. I have always wanted to do this but I've been too scared."



Jonas brothers try not to date the same women

Joe and Nick Jonas check in with each other to make sure they don't date the same women. Between them the famous siblings have dated some of the world's most beautiful women, including Kate Hudson, Lily Collins, Olivia Culpo, Demi Lovato and Gigi Hadid but Joe says they never date the same women because they run it by the other brother first. Speaking to hashtag Legend magazine, Joe, 26, said: "We're pretty supportive of each other. There might be a rare occasion where we've got to make sure, 'Hey, you haven't dated this person, have you?'" And he hasn't ruled out the possibility of the pair reuniting with older brother Kevin, 28, to reform The Jonas Brothers band. He said: "One day it will make sense to do something together again but, right now, we're still focused on our individual careers and that's what's really important to us." Nick, 23, and Joe recently moved in together and while they are both on the road a great deal with their individual music careers, Joe loves getting to spend time with Nick when he can. He said: "It's pretty awesome. You know, I would say it's nice because we are both so busy that we're never at home at the same time. We can actually enjoy our space and not feel crowded, which I think is really nice. I

think there are times, if you're around your siblings too much, that they drive you crazy. But Nick and I get along, we like spending time with each other, although I like to take control of the interior decorating stuff. I'm actually really glad that he's let me take the reins on that." However, Joe is having a blast with his new DNCE bandmates and revealed how he and Cole Whittle once got left behind in Toronto after partying with a cheerleading squad. He said: "Me and Cole have had a pretty crazy night one or two times where we stayed up all night. Once we were in Toronto, partying and hanging out with a cheerleading squad, and we got left behind by our tour bus, which was pretty amazing. So, five in the morning, the tour bus just took off without us. We were literally at the border back to the United States. We were just sitting on the street in the freezing cold in the middle of December waiting. We called the bus driver and he was like, 'What do you mean? I already left. You weren't there on time.' The bus eventually came back for us, but it took about an hour. We were drunk and happy enough to just hang out and Cole kept pointing at the CN Tower and calling it the space noodle."



Will Smith refused to let Margot Robbie tattoo him

The 26-year-old actress showed up on the set of 'Suicide Squad' with a tattoo gun and offered to ink her co-stars, including Will, 47, and Cara Delevingne, 23, but he was not impressed. He told Entertainment Tonight: "I'm a grown-ass man. Margot comes bounding into work with all of her 24-year-old glory like, 'Guys! Guys! I got a tattoo gun! I got a tattoo gun! We're all getting tattoos!' I was like, 'No, we're not.'" And Margot admits her tattoo skills leave a lot to be desired. She said: "Picture what a four-year-old would draw and stick it on your fridge. That's kind of one of my tattoos. I tattooed Cara's toes and she tattooed mine as well." Meanwhile, Will revealed what he loves most about 'Suicide Squad' is that it is a celebration of "diversity" because of the eclectic cast and characters. He said: "What I love about working with this group, it's a rainbow. It's all races, creeds and colours. It's the diversity that this country is supposed to be about." Praising director David Ayer's work on the project, he added: "I've made a lot of movies, and some of them you can't even count as movies. David Ayer said some-

thing that was really interesting: He said it's not a movie of good versus evil, it's a movie of bad versus evil, and this is one of the baddest casts in the whole damn world right here." 'Suicide Squad' follows the group of incarcerated baddies as they are assembled to form a special black ops team to carry out a highly dangerous mission for a secret US government agency. The world premiere took place in New York City on Monday and the Warner Bros. Pictures movie hits cinemas on August 5.



Price and Hayler to renew their wedding vows

Katie Price and Kieran Hayler will renew their wedding vows. The couple have got their marriage back on track after Kieran was caught cheating with two of Katie's close pals and after Katie dressed up in a wedding dress during filming for her new reality TV show, 'Katie Price's Pony Club', Kieran admitted a vow renewal ceremony is on the cards. In a Q & A with Tony Cowell for TLC, he said: "Do you really think that would be the end of mine and Kate's vow renewal? I can imagine there will be another in the distant future! You know she loves a wedding dress, and she's not scared to say so. Even when we were filming she was on 'Loose Women' in a wedding dress, she just loves it! It's probably quite nice for some of the other husbands to see their wives back in Wedding dresses, I'm sure it's a lovely thing as a woman. Kieran also revealed that while he initially found taking part in a reality TV show "strange", he would be willing to work on another if Katie wanted him to. He said: "For me, I have never done it before so it was very strange to have a camera put in your face for a lot of the time, but I was more than happy to, everyone knows it's what Kate loves and it's what she does best. For me, it was more whether or not we would get private time alone and with the kids; and we were given that. I couldn't fault it. It was perfect. "Look whatever Kate wants to do, I will do, I'm her husband and that's part of my role." Former stripper Kieran, 29, also admitted he doesn't miss his grueling work-out to maintain the perfect physique. He said: "I had to have an amazing body, that's what the women paid for. "Now I am happy at home and comfortable, I don't want to go the gym six times a week and have an immaculate diet. I'm so happy now I can eat whatever I want." "I'm not in bad shape. But I'm happier now spending time with the kids - I don't want to be stuck in the gym!" The new six-part series will follow Katie as she creates her own horse school - com-

prised of her daughter Princess, nine, son Junior, 11, and four of their friends - to guide the novice riders as they take on the elitist world of pony clubs. And Kieran admitted his and 38-year-old Katie's son Jett, who turns three later this month, is already an experienced rider. He said: "Jett already is! He has his own pony, he's on lead reins, and he loves the horses, and insists on feeding them every night. He's going to follow in his mum's footsteps definitely!" 'Katie Price's Pony Club' airs on Thursdays from August 18, at 9pm on TLC.



German heavy metal festival bans bags amid security fears

Heavy metal fans planning to attend this year's Wacken Open Air festival in Germany might want to travel light. Organizers say rucksacks and bags are banned from the main festival grounds this year for security reasons. Safety concerns have increased at

public events across Germany since a suicide bomber blew himself up outside a music festival in Ansbach last month, injuring 15 people. Wacken spokeswoman Anna Lorenz said yesterday that checking rucksacks would slow security checks too much. But festival-goers will be able

to take in waist packs, and larger bags are still allowed at camping sites nearby. The Aug 4-6 festival, held in a small village northwest of Hamburg, is expected to draw 75,000 people this year. The over 120 acts include Iron Maiden, Saxon and Blind Guardian.





Zayn Malik on why he left One Direction

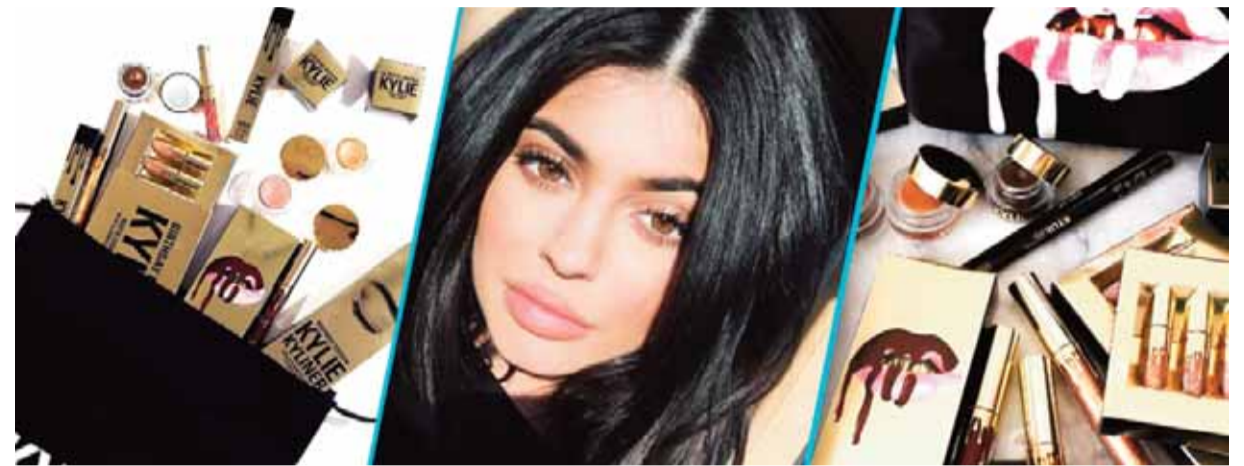
Zayn Malik has more "freedom" to wear what he wants since leaving One Direction. The 23-year-old singer-songwriter has admitted he is able to wear "whatever" now he has embarked on a solo music career, which allows him to be more "creative" and experimental with his ensemble and have a say in what garments he wants to wear. Speaking to Elle magazine about how his style has changed since he ditched his fellow band members, including Harry Styles, Liam Payne, Louis Tomlinson and Niall Horan, he said: "Since leaving One Direction I've been

given the freedom to be able to wear whatever I want and that's made it more interesting. More creative. I can say I want to wear metal arms and it'll happen." And the dark haired hunk has revealed he does not like to use social media and refrains from using his phone to take selfies. He explained: "As much as social networking is a big thing now, there's something to be said about having something real, if I had a choice I would take the camera off everyone's iPhone and make sure we didn't have Twitter or Facebook. It affects art form. There's something to be said about liv-

ing in the moment. I try to keep my phone for calls." Meanwhile the 'PillowTalk' hitmaker - who is currently dating supermodel Gigi Hadid and have allegedly moved in to a Los Angeles home together - has revealed the pair are compatible because their career paths are similar. He said: "She's super intelligent, I think that's why it works so well. And we do the same type of job so we get that with each other. I have a lot of respect for women because of them. They are so strong, powerful and do everything themselves."

Ellie Kemper has given birth

The 36-year-old actress and her husband Michael Koman - who got married four years ago after a few years of dating - recently welcomed their first child together, PEOPLE reports. No other details have been revealed. Ellie announced her pregnancy during a taping of 'The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon' in April, but up until that point had kept her bump and exciting news under wraps. She told the host: "I have big news, I'm pregnant!" before pointing towards her pretty floral dress. The funnyman immediately leaned over and said, "Hi baby" before gifting her with a pot of Ben & Jerry's ice cream. Ellie kept her pregnancy hidden from her co-stars while shooting 'Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt' but did confide in producer Tina Fey as soon as she found out. She said: "We had a table read, and my character is supposed to be on a rollercoaster ... "It was still very early on, but I felt like a pregnant lady on a rollercoaster was not ideal so I had to tell my boss, Tina Fey. She knows every secret. I told her before I told my mom." After telling Tina, the pair decided to conceal her pregnancy by telling everyone on set she had suffered a back injury so couldn't go on the rollercoaster - but Ellie found the lie harder to pull off than she expected. She admitted: "I could not act like I had a back injury. "I'm an actress, presumably. It was so [hard]. Someone asked, 'What's wrong?' and words escaped me. I'm like, 'I sprained my spine! You can't sprain your spine! You can't do that! I kept forgetting I had [a back injury] so I kept doing things someone with a back injury can't do. They'd say 'Lunch!' and I'd like leap up and do cartwheels to catering. You're not supposed to do that!"



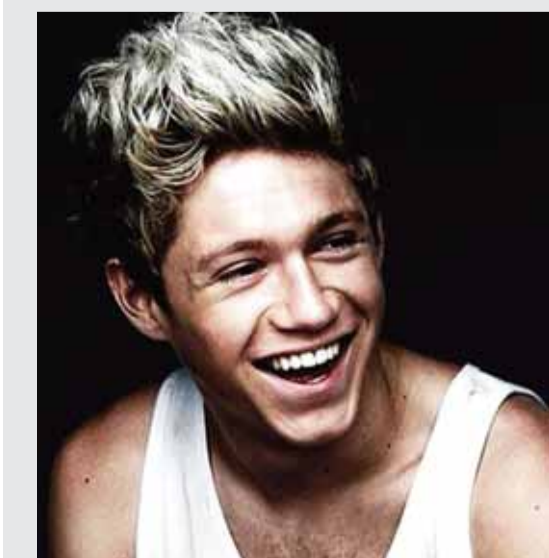
Kylie's limited edition birthday collection already is sold out

Kylie Jenner's birthday make-up collection sold out in five minutes. The 18-year-old beauty mogul - who launched a limited edition Kylie Cosmetics make-up collection to mark her 19th birthday on Monday has revealed the recent addition to her line sold out in under 10 minutes. The brunette beauty shared the news on her Snapchat as she counted down to the live unveil on her e-store. She said: "Oh my god we just 150,000 thousand people on my site with one minute to go. "180,000 people on the site "Oh my god 200,000 people and we haven't been up for one minute. "300,000 people are on my site right now. In five minutes and 300,000 people are on my site." And the brunette beauty took a still shot of just a black screen, with the caption: "Wow thank u guys ... everything else is sold out (sic)." The teen entrepreneur's new release included two cream eye shadows infused with gold, dark

bronze coloured eyeliner and gel liner called Kyliner, mini matte lip kits featuring her popular glosses Dolce, Exposed, Candy, KoKo, Kristen, and her new maroon limited edition shade Leo, as well as new lip gloss Poppin'. And the 'Keeping Up with the Kardashians' star - who turns 19 on August 10 - has revealed the launch of the new products saw her website attract the largest amount of customers "ever". She said: "I think this is the most we have ever had. This is crazy. "I want to cry!! Thank u guys so much!!" However, the television personality has admitted she will be restocking her company over the next 10 days. She said: "We have a good amount of quantity so don't get upset if we sell out, I will be restocking within the next 10 days."

Horan slams fan for taking photo of him sleeping

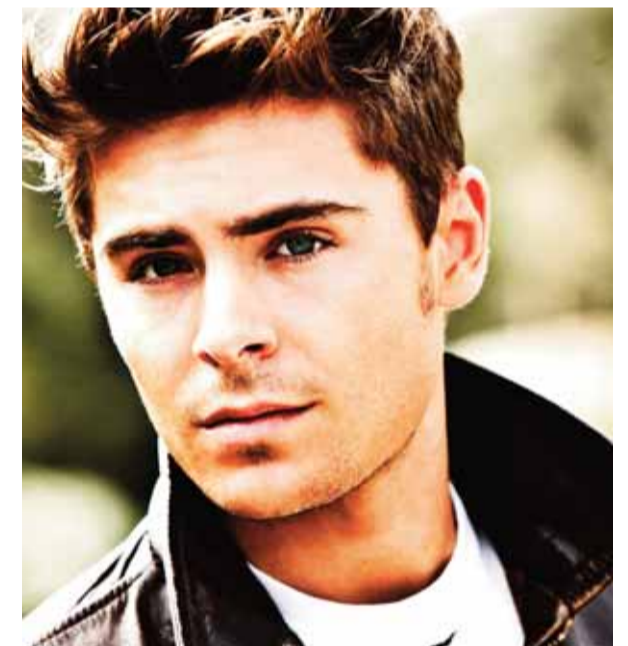
Niall Horan has slammed a fan for taking a picture of him while he was asleep on a plane. The One Direction singer was flying from London to Chicago to see his friend Ellie Goulding perform at the Lollapalooza music festival, when he met the fan, who snapped a picture of him sleeping after he declined a selfie. The fan shared the picture on social media and wrote: "And to sum up the perfect European adventure, I sat directly next to Niall from One Direction for 9 hours on my flight home from London last night. He was sick and asked for no selfies, but here is a pic I snapped when he was sleeping lol he was so friendly. "Talked about Ireland, LSE, lolla and more. Not a British Duke...But an Irish popstar will do. Thanks for treating me so well Europe! (sic)." Niall, 22, was furious when he found out about the picture and shared the post on Twitter with the words, "I think this thing is unreal. I mean if you can't sleep on a plane without people taking photos of you, what can u do (sic)." Meanwhile, Simon Cowell recently hinted that Niall is set to announce a solo deal with Sony soon. Simon - who guided Niall and his One Direction bandmates to fame after discovering them on the UK version of 'X Factor' - showered praise on the singer and revealed that a big announcement is coming. He said: "I think they're all gonna do great. Niall is the most loyal. We are expecting to announce something soon with him. I've always known he's loyal." Singer John Newman also revealed that he has been working on new material with Niall. He said: "I was having a text back and forth with Niall Horan the other night about some ideas, which is cool!"



Zac Efron: I can't date

Zac Efron says he will never be able to date anyone. The 'Neighbors 2: Sorority Rising' star doesn't think he will ever go on a "dictionary definition" date with a girl as it would take a very long time to "dispel whatever people think" about him. He said: "Dating is something I'll never be able to do. As in the dictionary definition of dating, because one way or another I've impacted that person's life and they'll soon see it. A date has to be very long to dispel whatever people think about me." However, that's not to say Zac hasn't tried the more modern methods of dating, including signing up to the dating app Tinder, but claims he was rejected because nobody believed it was actually him. He said: "Amazingly, when I signed up for Tinder, nobody swiped me! They thought it was fake. That never happened. Aha-ha." And the 28-year-old actor also admitted he "lost his mind" because of the internet as he would focus on the negative things people said rather

than the positives. He added to The Times newspaper: "I lost my mind because of the internet. I'd read 30 positive things and one bad thing, then I'd focus on that bad thing. It drove me crazy." Meanwhile, Zac previously revealed he used to Google himself every morning. He said: "What I found is structure. That led me to a balance of opposites. You get out of life what you put in. "There was a moment when my morning routine was, like, get up and Google yourself. But that stopped, dramatically and instantly, probably three years ago. I saw that viewing yourself through other people's pictures is not living your own life. "I wasn't really being myself. A lot of my hobbies had gone out the window. I couldn't skateboard or surf for fear of being followed. Crossing the line of fear is what leads to greatness."



Leto brings Fallon a gift from The Joker

Jared Leto presented Jimmy Fallon with a live snake on the 'Tonight' show on Monday. The 44-year-old actor refused to break character while filming 'Suicide Squad' as The Joker and bombarded his co-stars with gifts including a dead pig, live rat, used condoms and bullets, and took things a step further by terrifying the talk show host while promoting the upcoming movie. He stepped out on stage clutching a gift-wrapped box and said: "The Joker is a big giver of gifts, and he was thinking of you and wanted to pass on this gift especially for you." Jimmy apprehensively took the box and said: "I've read about things and I've heard about things, I heard the Joker gave people rats and things before... This is a gift from the Joker? That's very nice." The presenter struggled to open the box but once he got the lid off he screamed and recoiled. He said: "It's real! Dude, what is this? He got me a snake!" As the tiny reptile slowly inched out of the

box, Jimmy yelled again and said: "Oh no! Snake, get down! Joker... Snake! Get down. Oh no, no, no, no no..." He then quickly backed away from his desk as the serpent got free of the box, and urged his guest to rescue it and move it away. Jared picked up the snake and held it out towards the talk show host, who ran away and implored the 30 Seconds to Mars frontman to "please put it in the box". Jimmy finally admitted: "Thank you Jared, that's very, very nice [but] I'm afraid of snakes a little bit." Jared then handed Jimmy a note, supposedly from his alter ego. The presenter read: "Dear sweet Jimmy, enjoy my snake, it's long and skinny and easy to take." As Jared put the snake back in the box, Jimmy admitted he was thankful not to have been one of the cast members of the movie on the receiving end of his other gruesome gifts. He said: "I'm so glad I saw the movie and didn't have to act in it with you."

Fergie jokes that Kim and Kanye's feud with Swift is a publicity

Fergie hopes Kim Kardashian West and her husband Kanye West can find a way to "make up" with Taylor Swift. The 41-year-old singer recently got embroiled in the drama following Kim's decision to leak a recorded conversation between her rap superstar spouse and Taylor which confirmed she knew about his controversial song 'Famous' - which features lyrics where he calls the 'Shake It Off' hitmaker a bitch and says they might have sex - before he released it. Fergie made a throwaway comment that it could all just be a big publicity stunt, a theory she insists was just a joke, but she genuinely hopes the trio can become friends again because likes all of them. In an interview with UK radio station Capital, she said: "Oh my gosh, the other day I was doing this interview and I was completely joking and I said something about, 'Oh maybe it's all part of a plan, that they're gonna be at the MTV Awards and perform together; you know, whatever. I was just completely joking, it was just like a random thought. It's, like, exploded as if this was my conspiracy theory - no, I was just joking."

It's just my humour and I was trying to deflect the drama, if you will. I don't know, maybe it was wishful thinking. But I mean, I've just known them all a really long time, and I hope they find a way to make up." Kim recently starred in Fergie's racy video for her new single 'M.I.L.F. S' along with other lingerie-clad hot moms Chrissy Teigen, Alessandra Ambrosio, Ciara, Gemma Ward, Tara Lynn, Devon Aoki, Angela Lindvall, Isabeli Fontana, Amber Valletta and Natasha Poly. Fergie - who has two-year-old son Axl with husband Josh Duhamel - admits mother-of-two Kim, 35, was a "trouper" on set to pose in high heels for hours on end and was happy to be drenched in milk. The Black Eyed Peas star spilled: "Oh Kim was such a trouper. She was so professional. She worked long hours. I don't know how she stood on those 7-inch heels, whatever those were, 17-inch heels ... I don't know." Fergie was speaking on Roman Kemp on Capital which is broadcast Monday to Thursday 7pm-10pm and on Sundays from 9am to 12pm. — Bang Showbiz





An ethnic Tibetan model wears a traditional costume and fine jewelry during a fashion show at a local government sponsored festival in Yushu, in the northwestern Chinese province of Qinghai. The festival held since the 1990s lasts for around five days. It was suspended for several years following a 2010 earthquake in Yushu which killed some 2,700 people. — AFP photos



An ethnic Tibetan model wears a traditional costume and fine jewelry during a fashion show at a local government sponsored festival in Yushu.

Traditional Costume and Jewelry festival in Yushu



Ethnic Tibetan models wear traditional costumes and fine jewelry during a fashion show at a local government sponsored festival in Yushu.



An ethnic Tibetan model wears a traditional costume and fine jewelry during a fashion show at a local government sponsored festival in Yushu.



An ethnic Tibetan woman wears a traditional belt at a local government sponsored festival in Yushu.



Ethnic Tibetan models wear traditional costumes and fine jewelry during a fashion show at a local government sponsored festival in Yushu.



An ethnic Tibetan man wears traditional boots.



An ethnic Tibetan man wears a traditional costume and jewelry.



An ethnic Tibetan man wears a traditional costume and a ring.



An ethnic Tibetan man wears a traditional costume and a dagger.



An ethnic Tibetan woman poses for a photo.

FASHION



An ethnic Tibetan model wears a traditional costume and fine jewelry.



An ethnic Tibetan model wears a traditional costume and fine jewelry.



An ethnic Tibetan woman poses for a photo as she wears a traditional earring.



An ethnic Tibetan woman wears a traditional costume.



An ethnic Tibetan woman wears a traditional hat.



An ethnic Tibetan boy wears a traditional head band.



An ethnic Tibetan woman poses for a photo as she wears a traditional costume and jewelry.



An ethnic Tibetan woman wears a traditional costume and fine jewelry.



An ethnic Tibetan man wears a traditional costume and jewelry.



Ethnic Tibetan models wear traditional costumes and fine jewelry.



ICONIC ropes in Varun Dhawan as the brand ambassador

ICONIC, the youngest fashion destination from the stable of retail conglomerate Landmark Group has signed a two year endorsement deal with Bollywood's shining young star Varun Dhawan. Extremely popular with women for his fresh looks and boy next door image and with men for his chiseled body and style statements Varun has managed to win hearts in a short span of his career. Riding high on the release of Dishoom, Varun talking on his association with ICONIC, said, "The Middle East is a huge supporter of Bollywood and I have received immense love when it comes to my movies. An association with ICONIC, a trendy fashion destination stems from my passion for fashion coupled with a keen sense to stay in the hearts of the Arab world for a long time to come."

Raza Beig, CEO, Splash and ICONIC, said "An achiever at a very young age, we at ICONIC are proud to partner with the hot and charismatic Varun Dhawan. Both Varun and ICONIC are rapidly growing brand names in their own spaces and hence a perfect fit for each other. Varun is a contemporary fashion icon with a clean, classic and current style and ICONIC offers a similar kind of fashion for its discerning audience."

With the Region being at the forefront of fashion and ICONIC being a local retailer we work with the most suited talent, which essentially puts us firmly on the global fashion scene," further added Raza. The first campaign featuring Varun Dhawan with a leggy model will release across the GCC on September 1. ICONIC is located at The Avenues, The Mall, Level 1, Salam Mall -Salmiya and Sama Mall- Fintias.



Tissot welcomes its lady ambassadors on the Tour de France

As official timekeeper, Tissot was delighted to welcome its ambassadors Deepika Padukone and Liu Yi Fei on the Tour de France to celebrate the final stage in Paris. They were able to bear witness to one of the most important moments of the Tour as the riders went passed the mythical Arc de Triumph and passed on Les Champs-Elysees to finally reach the last finish line.

The leading Indian actress, who just received an award at the IIFA (International Indian Film Academy), and the very talented Chinese Actress and Singer, Liu Yi Fei, were welcomed by Francois Thiebaud, President of Tissot at the Tour de France Village of Chantilly, with the likes of Christian

Prudhomme, Director of the Tour de France and Bernard Hinault, five time Tour de France Champion before heading to the finish line.

This magnificent and idyllic venue presented the perfect setting to receive such personalities. Tissot and its ambassadors shared a wonderful time while witnessing the charm of the Tour de France, which is the amazing scenery it presents to the world along the way. It is a time that they will remember, as it goes down in history with the crowning of the 2016 Tour de France Champion following 21 rough stages timed by Tissot.



Palestinian American fashion designer Rami Kashou shows one of his designs, during a fitting session.



Palestinian women try on dresses designed by Palestinian American fashion designer Rami Kashou.



Palestinian American fashion designer Rami Kashou helps a Palestinian woman to try on one of his designs.



Palestinian American fashion designer Rami Kashou helps a Palestinian woman to try on one of his designs.



Palestinian American fashion designer Rami Kashou helps a Palestinian woman to try on one of his designs.



Rami Kashou helps a Palestinian woman to try on one of his designs.

Palestinian designer for rich and famous pops up in W Bank

Rami Kashou's designs are worn by Hollywood stars and royalty but for the past few days he has been back home in the occupied West Bank rather than London, Paris or New York. As on most days, Yasser Arafat Square in central Ramallah was crowded with pedestrians, taxis with screaming horns and fruit sellers lugging their goods on carts. But tucked behind a nondescript door another world beckoned: one of burgundy walls and floor-length mirrors, as Kashou hosted a three-day pop-up fashion shop.

A handful of women of all ages browsed the elegant designs, occasionally trying on clothes under the watchful eyes of Kashou, who rushed to dispense fashion advice when needed. The US-based fashion designer has a list of celebrity clients including Hollywood actress Jessica Alba, reality TV star Kim Kardashian and Queen Rania of Jordan. But Kashou, who is 40 and was born in Jerusalem, has now made copies for Palestinian women of his creations that they would otherwise only see in magazines. He left for the United States in 1996 and now lives in New York. "I was away for a long time," the bearded, shaven-headed Kashou, dressed in black, told AFP in the store. "I usually come to visit my family, (but) this is the first time I brought my designs here."

Project Runway

Kashou shot to fame in 2008 when he appeared on the fourth season of the "Project Runway" reality television. He reached the finals, coming second to Christian Siriano, who designed the dress worn by US First Lady Michelle Obama as she addressed the Democratic National Convention last week. Kashou said the show opened doors for him in America and elsewhere. "I benefited a lot. It was a big advert, especially for me as a Palestinian designer," he said. "And the Arab world became aware of me." He is now developing his brand in Arab countries.

In Ramallah, the Palestinian political capital in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, he showed off

his unique style of dresses, including one resembling a bouquet of flowers with a pink and red collar, which he said was inspired by a trip to Puerto Rico. The garments, including a magenta cocktail dress designed for supermodel Heidi Klum, feature a range of exquisite fabrics such as chiffon, georgette, lame and silk.

it." A single Rami Kashou dress can cost several thousand dollars, a sum impossible to imagine for the vast majority of Palestinians, where the unemployment rate is around 27 percent and one in five of those in work makes less than \$380 a month. Does the designer who has made it big in America really see opportunities in the



Palestinian women and their daughters choose dresses designed by designer Rami Kashou.

Suha Hussein, 32, inspected herself in the mirror as she tried on a sleek black Moroccan-style dress with beads engraved around the neck, based on an original made for Queen Rania. "I feel proud because we have such a talent and he is still interested in returning to his country," she said. Turning to the dress, she smiled: "I hope it isn't too expensive, so I can buy

Palestinian territories? "There is an important market here," he said. "It is extremely important to study the market to know the customers and their needs." "And it is wedding season, women here want glamour."—AFP



Palestinian American fashion designer Rami Kashou smiles as a Palestinian woman chooses one of his designs.