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IRAQ GRATEFUL TO KUWAIT FOR INVESTMENT, SUPPORT

KUWAIT TO PLAY VITAL ROLE IN AIDING MOSUL RESIDENTS

Min 30°
Max 45°
High Tide 03:03 & 15:43
Low Tide 10:09 & 21:51

SAUDI POLICE FOIL MOSQUE BOMBING

CAFE ATTACK THWARTED

RIYADH: Saudi police shot dead a would-be suicide bomber targeting a mosque in the Shiite-dominated district of Qatif, the interior ministry said yesterday. It was one of two attacks disrupted in the kingdom's Eastern Province since early August, when a Syrian and a Saudi were arrested on their way to bomb a restaurant, the ministry said. Yesterday's attempted attack - the latest targeting the kingdom's minority Shiites - happened around sunset prayers, the ministry said in a statement.

Security officers "managed to foil a terrorist operation targeting worshippers" at Mustafa Mosque in Qatif, the ministry said. When suspicious officers questioned the man, he tried to detonate a bomb in a sports bag on his back, leading the police to open fire. The suspect died on the way to hospital. Officers found four kilograms of explosives in his bag. "A search revealed a Pakistani ID which is still being confirmed," the ministry said. The earlier case happened on Aug 5 when police stopped a suspicious vehicle in Dammam, adjacent to Qatif.

Continued on Page 13



BAGHDAD: Iraqi President Dr Fuad Masum meets a delegation of Kuwaiti journalists. — KUNA

BAGHDAD: Iraq is grateful for the strong flow of Kuwaiti investments and undeniable political support, said Iraqi President Dr Fuad Masum late Tuesday. Speaking during a meeting with a visiting delegation of Kuwaiti journalists, Masum affirmed that his country was moving forward after years of problems and crises, noting that Kuwait had played an integral role in aiding Iraq during its darkest times. Relations were shaken during the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990; however, both nations have worked together to overcome obstacles blocking means to enhance ties, said the Iraqi president.

Regarding the future, the president said that Iraq might need support and assistance till 2020 due to a number of factors which include the presence of the so-called Islamic State (IS) in Iraq, the lack of diverse income resources, corruption at the level of political and state bodies, as well as sectarian strife that threatens to destroy the fabric of Iraqi society. He stressed that Iraq will overcome all of these challenges and will extend its hands to the international community in cooperation and collaboration to achieve mutual benefit for Iraq and other nations.

On the subject of Kurdistan's aspiration for full-independence, Masum said that the matter was not that easy, indicating that the issue required international recognition of the said independent state. He added that there was no animosity between Arabs and Kurds despite what has been said, affirming that all sectors of Iraqi society will move forward to develop the country.

Continued on Page 2

POWERFUL ITALY QUAKE KILLS 120

AMIR EXPRESSES SORROW • MYANMAR QUAKE DAMAGES TEMPLES

FRANCE BURKINI FUROR HEATS UP

NICE, France: French Interior Minister Bernard Cazeneuve warned yesterday against stigmatizing Muslims, as a furor over the banning of burkinis grew with the emergence of pictures showing police surrounding a woman wearing a headscarf on a beach. Speaking after a meeting with the head of the French Council of the Muslim Faith (CFCM), Cazeneuve said: "The implementation of secularism, and the option of adopting such decrees must not lead to stigmatization or the creation of hostility between French people."

Dozens of French towns and villages, mostly on the Cote d'Azur, have banned beachwear that "conspicuously" shows a person's religion - a measure aimed at the full-body Islamic swimsuit but which has also been used against women wearing long clothes and a headscarf. CFCM president Anouar Kbibech requested an urgent meeting with Cazeneuve after pictures emerged of a woman in a hijab sitting on a beach in Nice removing her tunic, watched by four policemen. The images, which went viral on social media, were interpreted as showing the woman being pressured by police into removing the garment.

"We have seen images of police officers forcing a woman on a Nice beach to remove her tunic when she wasn't even wearing a burkini," the CFCM said indignantly. Nice mayor's office, however, denied she had been forced to remove clothing, telling AFP the woman was showing police the swimsuit she was wearing under her tunic, over a pair of leggings, when the picture was taken.

Continued on Page 13



AMATRICE, Italy: A man walks amid rubble after an earthquake yesterday. — AP

ACCUMOLI, Italy: A powerful earthquake rattled a remote area of central Italy yesterday, leaving at least 120 people dead and scenes of carnage in mountain villages. With 368 people injured and an unknown number trapped under rubble, the figure of dead and wounded was expected to rise in the wake of the pre-dawn quake, Prime Minister Matteo Renzi warned.

"This is not a final toll," he said. Hundreds of people were to spend a chilly night in hastily-assembled tents with the risk of aftershocks making it far too risky for them to return home.

HH the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah yesterday sent a cable of condolences to President

of Italy Sergio Mattarella. In the cable, the Amir expressed Kuwait's solidarity with Italy over the quake which left a trail of death and destruction. HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent similar cables.

Scores of buildings were reduced to dusty piles of masonry in communities close to the epicenter of the quake, which had a magnitude of between 6.0 and 6.2. It hit a remote area straddling Umbria, Marche and Lazio at a time of year when second home owners and other visitors swell the numbers staying there. Many of the victims were from Rome.

Continued on Page 13



KARKAMIS, Turkey: Turkish army tanks and pro-Ankara Syrian opposition fighter trucks positioned two kilometers west from the Syrian border town of Jarabulus are seen moving position yesterday. — AFP

TURKISH TANKS ROLL INTO SYRIA, CAPTURE KEY TOWN

KARKAMIS, Turkey: Turkish tanks and hundreds of opposition fighters thrust deep inside Syrian territory yesterday in a lightning operation that within hours ousted Islamic State militants from a key Syrian border town. The air and ground offensive - the most ambitious launched by Ankara in the Syria conflict - made rapid progress towards Jarabulus with rebel fighters already proclaiming victory by the late afternoon just 14 hours after it started.

"Jarabulus is completely liberated," Ahmad Othman, commander of the Sultan Mourad rebel group, told AFP from the scene, while another rebel spokesman said IS fighters had fled towards Al-Bab to the

southwest. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan emphasized the operation was also targeting Kurdish militia fighters strongly opposed by Ankara - but backed by the US as a key ally against IS - who had also been closing in on Jarabulus.

But visiting US Vice President Joe Biden reassured Turkey that Washington had told the Kurdish fighters under no circumstances to cross west of the Euphrates River or face the total loss of American support. The operation - named "Euphrates Shield" - began at around 4:00 am (0100 GMT) with Turkish artillery pounding dozens of IS targets around Jarabulus.

Continued on Page 13

STONING RITUAL TO BE SHORTENED

RIYADH: A stoning ritual which led to the deaths of about 2,300 people during last year's hajj will be more tightly controlled during next month's pilgrimage, Saudi newspapers reported yesterday. The period during which pilgrims can perform the Jamarat ritual will be reduced by 12 hours, the Saudi Gazette and Arab News said. The symbolic stoning of the devil will be performed as usual over three days beginning Sept 11 at Mina, about five kilometers east of Makkah's Grand Mosque, Islam's holiest site.

But this year there will be no stoning allowed from 6:00 to 10:30 am on the first day, from 2:00 to 6:00 pm on the second day and from 10:30 am to 2:00 pm on the final day, the hajj ministry said. "This procedure will enable the pilgrims to throw stones easily and will prevent any stampede that may result from overcrowding," the Saudi Gazette quoted ministry undersecretary Hussain Al-Sharif as saying.

Continued on Page 13



KUWAIT: Kuwaiti shooters Fehaid Al-Deehani (left), who won the gold medal in the men's double trap event, and Abdullah Al-Rashidi, who won a bronze medal in the men's skeet event during the Rio 2016 Olympic Games, pose with their medals during an honoring ceremony yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

HABITABLE PLANET FOUND IN NEARBY SOLAR SYSTEM

PARIS: Scientists yesterday announced the discovery of an Earth-sized planet orbiting the star nearest our Sun, opening up the glittering prospect of a habitable world that may one day be explored by robots. Named Proxima b, the planet is in a "temperate" zone compatible with the presence of liquid water - a key ingredient for life. The findings, based on data collected over 16 years, were reported in the peer-reviewed journal Nature.

"We have finally succeeded in showing that a small-mass planet, most likely rocky, is orbiting the star closest to our solar system," said co-author Julien Morin, an astrophysicist at the University of Montpellier in southern France. "Proxima b would probably be the first exoplanet visited by a probe made by humans," he told AFP.

Continued on Page 13



A handout image shows an artist's impression of the planet Proxima b orbiting the red dwarf star Proxima Centauri. — AFP



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. —Amiri Diwan and KUNA photos



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. —KUNA



KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Acting Minister of Oil Anas Al-Saleh. —KUNA



KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Al-Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah. —KUNA

AMIR MEETS TOP STATE OFFICIALS

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace yesterday His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah also received His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince received

His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarah Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance, and Acting Minister of Oil Anas Al-Saleh, as well as Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Al-

Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah. In other news, His Highness the Amir addressed a cable of condolences to Singaporean President Tony Tan on demise of ex-president Sellapan Ramanathan. Their Highnesses the Crown Prince and the Prime Minister addressed identical cables of solace to the president of the friendly republic. —KUNA

QATARI AMIR HONORS KUWAITI DIPLOMAT

BAHRAIN HAILS KUWAIT'S SUPPORT

DOHA/MANAMA: The Amir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani granted Tuesday outgoing Kuwait's Ambassador Muteb Saleh Al-Mutawtah with the Sash of Merit in recognition of his efforts in boosting ties between the two countries. The Qatari Amir wished Mutawtah, who was ending his tenure, success in his future posts and further progress and prosperity to the Qatari-Kuwaiti relations. Meanwhile, the Kuwaiti diplomat expressed his gratitude and appreciation to Sheikh Tamim and Qatari officials for their cooperation during his tenure in the country.

Deep-rooted ties

Separately, Bahraini Prime Minister Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al-Khalifa praised yesterday the deeply rooted ties and support by the State of Kuwait to the kingdom on all levels. A statement from the Kuwaiti Embassy said Prince Khalifa made his remarks in a meeting with the Dean of the Diplomatic Corps and Kuwaiti Ambassador to Bahrain Sheikh Azzam Al-Sabah, accompanied by Kuwaiti Businessman Luai Al-Kharafi, praising as well the active role played by the business community. The premier underscored as well the strong ties, joint cooperation, and the constant progress and development between the two nations in all fields. —KUNA



DOHA: The Amir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani honors Kuwait's Ambassador Muteb Saleh Al-Mutawtah. —KUNA photos

KUWAIT HEAD OF ARAB TARIFFS COMMITTEE

CAIRO: The State of Kuwait has been elected for the sixth consecutive time as chair of Arab panel charged with tackling tariff exemption namely in the aviation realm. Omar Al-Wilayati, observer of international treaties at the Kuwaiti Ministry of Finance, said in a statement the State of Kuwait was elected as head of the committee, tasked with amending the treaty for tariffs exemption for Arab aviation and cargo. Wilayati, who was speaking on margins of the commission meeting held yesterday, said developments in the air transport sector have warranted re-examining the relevant 30-year-old accord, indicating that adopted proposals for the new treaty would be submitted to the Arab Social and Economic Council. —KUNA



BAGHDAD: Iraqi Defense Minister Khaled Al-Obaidi meets with a visiting delegation of Kuwaiti journalists. —KUNA

IRAQ GRATEFUL FOR KUWAITI INVESTMENTS, POLITICAL SUPPORT: PRESIDENT MASUM

Continued from Page 1

Meanwhile, Iraqi Defense Minister Khaled Al-Obaidi said Kuwait will have a big role in providing humanitarian aid to the people of Mosul after the success of the operations to liberate the city from the so-called Islamic State (IS).

Obaidi praised Kuwait's willingness to host donor conference for Mosul as announced by the Gulf country during the Arab summit held in Mauritania. Iraq is prepared to liberate Mosul from IS before the end of the year, Obaidi said during a meeting with the Kuwaiti journalists' delegation. Freeing Mosul is a complex war and all Iraqis must unite to end the terrorists' occupation of

the city of Mosul, he said.

The Kuwaiti delegation includes President of the Kuwait Journalists Association Adnan Al-Rashid, Deputy Director General for Editorial Sector and Editor-in-Chief of Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) Saad Al-Ali, and head of local department in Kuwaiti daily Al-Qabas Ibrahim Al-Saidi. —KUNA



KUWAIT: PAHW Director General Bader Al-Wugayan meets with members of a delegation from the Korea Land and Housing Corporation. —KUNA

GOVT TOUTS SOUTH SAAD AL-ABDULLAH PROJECT AS FIRST 'SMART CITY'

KUWAIT: The government is working laboriously to ensure the success of the South Saad Al-Abdullah housing project, pegged as Kuwait's first 'Smart City.' A statement issued by the Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW) yesterday noted that its Director General Bader Al-Wugayan met with a delegation from the Korea Land and Housing Corporation to plan out the project. Moreover, Wugayan noted that His Highness the Prime Minister's visit to South Korea in May set in motion this remarkable project, as the planning phase for the project

will be launched in November.

Furthermore, an official from the South Korean company predicted that the plan and design phase for the project is expected to last around 20 months, adding that the delegation has met with a number of government bodies involved in the project. Touted as the country's first 'Smart City,' South Saad Al-Abdullah will feature comprehensive Wi-Fi connection, in addition to being environment-friendly and equipped with the latest technological breakthroughs. —KUNA

KISR-KOC PROJECT TO PRESERVE CORAL REEFS IN KUBBAR ISLAND

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR) announced on Tuesday that it would conduct a survey on the coral reefs on the Kubbar island. The survey is a part of a joint research project with the Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) for the rehabilitation of the coral reefs on and around the island, KISR added.

According to the KISR statement, up to 60 percent of the reefs on Kubbar has died out. Major damage has been caused by visi-

tors who use anchors instead of the slips for tying their boats, KISR said. They also pollute the water in the vicinity of the island.

The rising temperature in the world over the past few years has also offered a killing factor. This has prompted cooperation between KISR and the KOC for developing solutions, namely securing artificial colonies for rehabilitating the reefs, in addition to securing incubators for them. —KUNA



Observer of international treaties at the Kuwaiti Ministry of Finance Omar Al-Wilayati

JUSTICE MINISTRY SEEKS NEW METHODS TO SIMPLIFY JUDICIAL PROCEDURES

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Justice is looking to incorporate technological methods into its works in a bid to simplify judicial processes, as more government bodies look to adopt electronic appliances. Advisor to the Minister of Justice and the ministry's official spokesman Nawaf Al-Sharqawi made those remarks after a workshop where a representatives of a Singaporean company detailed their experiences with the e-court system. Moreover, he noted that the ministry's suggestion to hold this workshop was an attempt to get a better understanding of the e-court system, from a company well-versed in how the system operates.

Furthermore, Sharqawi said the workshop gave ministry officials a chance to get acquainted with the e-court system and how the country's court system could stand to gain from employing this system. He also deemed the system as a useful tool that would facilitate and develop judicial processes in the country, adding that work is underway to implement this system. The Ministry of Justice has recently introduced a spate of electronic applications, including e-signature, e-archive and e-messages. —KUNA



PATIENTS RETURNING HOME COMPLETED TREATMENT: MINISTER

KUWAIT: Minister of Health Dr Ali Al-Obaidi said yesterday that Kuwaiti "patients who returned from abroad have fully completed their treatment in hospitals or centers specialized in health care, according to reports from these centers."

Obaidi affirmed the ministry's role in providing health care for its citizens both at home and abroad. The minister added "patients who are in hospital abroad, they are either in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU), or in the wards still receiving their treatment in hospitals, in addition to those who will undergo operations," affirming that the ministry will not intervene to end their treatment until their condition stabilizes then they will be authorized to return home." Obaidi pointed out that there are patients eligible for treatment abroad and



Minister of Health Dr Ali Al-Obaidi

have the approvals and are awaiting urgent appointments by hospitals and medical centers in the foreign countries. —KUNA

KUWAIT OIL PRICE BETWEEN \$35, 45 PB TILL END OF '16: ANALYSTS

KUWAIT: The price of Kuwaiti oil is expected to be between \$35 and 45 per barrel till the end of 2016, said Kuwaiti analysts yesterday. In different statements, the analysts noted that the price of the Brent mix is expected to hit between \$40 to 50 pb till the end of the year, adding that the price might reach \$55 to 60 pb in 2017.

On his part, head of Al-Ofuq consultancy center Dr Khaled Bodai said that it was expected that prices would near the \$50 pb margin this year. He added that reaching \$100 pb, as the case in 2014, would be almost impossible next year, noting that producing countries were not interested in bringing the price back to the three-digit number.

The reasonable price would be between \$60 and 65 pb, said Bodai, adding that due to a number of factors including the rate of exchange of the US dollar and lack of growth in the Chinese economy led to the unstable price. The price will remain wavering in the foreseeable future, said the analyst.

Meanwhile, oil analyst Mohammad Al-Shatti said that the price recovery was due to an understanding between procedures and consumers regarding the level of production. The dynamic flow of oil at the world markets helped the price to reach a reasonable level, said Shatti who hoped that the situation will continue as it is to enable Kuwaiti oil to reach prices that were suitable for the national economy. —KUNA

DELAYING ECONOMIC REFORMS PUT KUWAIT IN DIFFICULT POSITION: API

KUWAIT: Delaying financial and economic reforms will put the future of Kuwait's growth in a difficult position, said Dr Bader Malallah, Director General of Arab Planning Institute (API). The delay will have a negative impact on the government's ability to expand in

the construction of public facilities, infrastructure, and development projects, Malallah said yesterday. The General State budget is threatened by a huge deficit due to decline in oil prices, he added.

Malallah said that there were great efforts made by various government bodies to support small and medium businesses as a key factor in economic growth. In regard to steps taken by Arab Planning Institute, Malallah said that the institute offered training programs for small and medium size businesses including workshops and seminars which were held in cooperation with various sides.

The Arab Planning Institute (API) is a non-profit regional organization whose primary mission is to advance the cause of economic and social development in the Arab countries through National Capacity Building, research, Institutional Support and consultancy, expert-group meetings and publication. —KUNA



Dr Bader Malallah, Director General of the Arab Planning Institute



AMMAN: Kuwait's Ambassador to Jordan Dr Hamad Al-Duaij (left), Royal Medical Service General Manager Major General Dr Muaian Al-Habashnah (center) and WHO representative in Jordan Dr Maria Cristina Rofeli (right) are pictured during the ceremony. —KUNA

JORDAN RECEIVES TWO KUWAIT FINANCED MOBILE MEDIC UNITS

AMMAN: Jordan's Royal Medical Services of the Armed Forces received yesterday from the World Health Organization (WHO) two mobile medical clinic units funded by the State of Kuwait in support of providing treatment to patients in remote areas.

The ceremony, was held at the headquarters of the Royal Medical Services in the capital Amman, and was attended by Kuwait's Ambassador to Jordan Dr Hamad Al-Duaij and Royal Medical Service General Manager, Major General Dr Muaian Al-Habashnah and WHO representative in Jordan Dr Maria Cristina Rofeli.

Duaij stressed on the depth and strength of relations between Kuwait and Jordan in various fields, praising bilateral cooperation in the field of health and med-

ical care. The Kuwaiti ambassador praised the role played by Jordan's Royal Medical Services and the optimum use of available resources through medical qualified personnel and modern techniques, stressing on the importance of benefiting from the Jordanian expertise in this area. Duaij also stressed keenness on the Kuwaiti leadership, government and people to strengthen relations with Jordan and provide necessary support and aid to the large number of Syrian refugees in Jordan.

Meanwhile, Habashnah praised the continued support by Kuwait to Jordan and the World Health Organization. Habashnah added that financing the project by Kuwait was a clear evidence of the "fruitful cooperation" in the field of providing medical and health care. —KUNA



AMMAN: One of two mobile medical clinic units funded by Kuwait, which were received by Jordan's Royal Medical Services of the Armed Forces yesterday.

IMPORTANCE OF KNOWING THE RIGHT OCTANE FOR YOUR CAR

By Alwatheq Darwish

KUWAIT: As the Kuwait government increases the prices of petrol, the Premium 91 is expected to go up to 85 fils from the present 60 fils per liter while the Premium Super 95 will cost you 105 fils, 40 fils more than the current price of 65 fils. The price of Ultra 98 will go up to 165 fils from 90 fils. That means for an average driver who fills his car using Octane 95 at the cost of about KD 15 or KD 20 a month will have to shell out approximately KD 24 or KD 32 respectively per month after the increase.

Many drivers may think of using lower octane rating petrol, which is cheaper, and may wonder if they can do so. To answer this question we must first know what is octane number or rating. In simple words, it is a measure of ignition quality of petrol. The number starts from 0 to 100 with some fuel having a rating more than 100.

The higher the number, the lesser the tendency to "knocking" (Combustion caused by premature burning of fuel in the combustion chamber). This premature burning occurs when fuel mixture burns before the time determined for normal burning initiated by spark ignition. Premature burning causes shockwaves which will damage the engine if allowed to run for a long time. This knocking can sometimes be unnoticeable, and only evident under severe driving conditions. So, coming back to our ques-



KUWAIT: This file photo shows cars lined up at a gas station in Kuwait City on August 1, 2016. —Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh

tion, the wise thing to do is to use petrol having the octane rating recommended by the manufacturer.

In addition, it may be noted that there is no benefit of unnecessarily paying more by filling higher octane petrol than recommended by

your car manufacturer which can be found in your car's owner manual. Some cars can run on a slightly lower octane rating than recommended by electronically detecting knock and delaying the spark timing at the expense of power output and economy.



KUWAIT JULY INFLATION RISES TO 3.06 PERCENT

FOOD AND BEVERAGES RECORD HIGHEST INCREASE

KUWAIT: Inflation in consumer prices in Kuwait rose to 3.06 percent in July, compared to the same month 2015, according to the Kuwait Central Statistical Bureau. The department said in its monthly report that the index figure for the month of July 2016 recorded an increasing at 141.7, by 0.07 percent as a result of the rise in prices of some major groups of influential figures in the movement and low standard of some groups. The CPI for the month of July 2016 recorded an increase estimated at 3.06 percent compared to July 2015.

The following is a list for the last monthly changes of prices: Food and beverages: 0.46 percent, tobacco and narcotics: 0.00 percent, clothing and footwear - 0.16 percent, housing services: 0.00 percent, furnishing equipment and household maintenance: - 0.14 percent, health: 0.23 percent, transport 0.00 percent, communication: 0.00 percent, recreation culture - 0.08 percent, education 0.00 percent, restaurants and hotels 0.00 percent, miscellaneous goods and services 0.30 percent.

Annual Change in Groups (percent): Food and beverages: 1.19 percent, tobacco and narcotics: 0.59 percent, clothing and footwear: 0.55 percent, housing services: 7.33 percent, furnishing equipment and household maintenance: 2.65 percent, health: 2.03 percent, transport: - 1.92 percent, communication: 0.50 percent, recreation and culture: 0.31 percent, education: 3.48 percent, restaurants and hotels: 4.05 percent, miscellaneous goods and services: 1.15 percent.

The following is an analysis of the price indices for the main group's index of consumer prices:

Food and Beverages:

The Index for this group increased in the month of July 2016 by 0.46 percent and the following indicators affecting the food group in the month of July 2016 as a result of:

1. Rise in prices of fish seafood by 1.35 percent.
2. Rise in prices of fresh, chilled frozen fruits by 0.67 percent.
3. Rise in prices of fresh, chilled frozen vegetables by 1.27 percent.
4. Rise in prices of sugar sugar products by 0.22 percent.

5. Rise in prices of beverage by 0.07 percent.
6. Fall in prices of milk, cheese eggs by 0.29 percent.
7. Fall in prices of other foods by 0.07 percent.
8. The price of cereals and bread stood at 120.4.
9. The price of meat poultry stood at 151.9.
10. The price of oil fats stood at 138.5.

Annual inflation rate for this group increased in July 2016 by 1.19 percent compared with July 2015.

Tobacco and narcotics:

The index stood in July 2016 at 152.5, as in the last month without any change. Annual inflation rate for this group increased in July 2016 by 0.59 percent compared with July 2015.

Clothing and footwear:

The Index for this group decreased in the month of July 2016 by 0.16 percent, the following indicators affecting "Clothing and Footwear" group:

1. Fall in prices of clothing by 0.16 percent.
2. Fall in prices of footwear by 0.08 percent.

The annual inflation rate increased for this group in the month of July 2016 by 0.55 percent compared with July 2015.

Main group of 'Home Furnishings and Equipment Maintenance':

The Index for this group decreased in the month of July 2016 by 0.14 percent, the following indicators affecting 'Home Furnishings and Equipment Maintenance' group:

1. Fall in prices of furniture, furnishings carpets by 0.30 percent
2. The prices of household appliance stood at 135.8.

Annual inflation increased in July 2016 by 2.65 percent compared with July 2015.

Main group of health:

The Index for this group increased in the month of July 2016 by 0.23 percent, the following indicators affecting the health group:

1. Rise in prices of medical products and appliance equipment by 0.59 percent.

Annual inflation rate for this group

increased in July 2016 by 2.03 percent compared with July 2015.

Transport:

The index stood in July 2016 at 122.9, as in the last month without any change. Annual inflation rate for this group decreased in July 2016 by 1.92 percent compared with July 2015.

Main group of communication:

The index stood in July 2016 at 101.5, as in the last month without any change. Annual inflation rate for this group increased in July 2016 by 0.50 percent compared with July 2015.

Recreational and cultural group:

Index for this group decreased in the month of July 2016 by 0.08 percent, the following indicators affecting 'recreational and cultural' group:

1. Fall in price of audio-visual audio - visual photographic information by 0.26 percent.
- Annual inflation rate for this group increased in July 2016 by 0.31 percent compared with July 2015.

Education:

The index stood in July 2016 at 139.6, as in the last month without any change. Annual inflation rate for this group increased in July 2016 by 3.48 percent compared with July 2015.

Restaurants and Hotels:

The index stood in July 2016 at 143.8, as in the last month without any change. Annual inflation rate for this group increased in July 2016 by 4.05 percent compared with July 2015.

Miscellaneous goods and services:

The index for this group increased in the month of July 2016 by 0.30 percent as a result of:

1. Rise in prices of personal effect by 0.88 percent.
2. The price of personal care stood at 133.0.

Annual inflation for this group increased by 1.15 percent in July 2016 compared with July 2015. —KUNA

In Brief

SPEAKER SENDS CONDOLENCES

KUWAIT: National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem sent two cable of condolences yesterday to Italian Parliament Speaker Pietro Grasso and President of the Italian Chamber Laura Boldrini, expressing sorrow on the earthquake that hit the country earlier in the day. In his cables, Ghanem expressed full solidarity with Italy and its people, wishing speedy recovery to all injured. — KUNA



KUWAITIS SAFE

ROME: No Kuwaiti nationals were affected by the six-magnitude earthquake which hit the central region of Italy, said Kuwaiti embassy in Rome yesterday. The embassy said that hotlines were established to answer Kuwaiti citizens inquires and emergency calls, which are 00393294966232, 00393662108903, and 0039388909466. The consulate in Milan also offered an emergency number for Kuwaiti citizens. The number is 00393317207743. — KUNA



GCC INSTITUTION TO PRESENT WORKS

AMMAN: The GCC Joint Programs Production Institution (GCCJPP) will showcase three works at the Jordan-hosted Third Media Festival. The institution will present a 30-episode children television program themed 'my career' which sheds light on various crafts, in addition to two documentaries titled 'Mangrove Trees' and 'Kingdom of Birds in Bahrain', public relations chairman Ali Al-Mutair said. — KUNA



Photo

of the day



KUWAIT: An overhead view showing the Arabian Gulf Road, Dasman Diabetes Institute and other Kuwait City landmarks overlooking the Arabian Gulf. — Photo by Dherar Sharaa

FAKE DOMESTIC HELP OFFICE BUSTED

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Residency detectives arrested several expats running a bogus domestic help office in Jleeb Al-Shuyiukh. Tips were received about the office, and when the information was confirmed, detectives to arrest the suspects. Five Ethiopians, five Cameroonians, three Ghanaians and three Beninese were without IDs, while six were reported absconding by their sponsors. The arrestees confessed that

they work on daily wages at homes, and engage in vice acts when they do not find work.

Fugitive busted

Interior Ministry Relations and Security Information Department said criminal detectives arrested a bedoon wanted to serve jail sentences totaling 13 years. Detectives located Zaidan Nuhayer and followed him for two days, then on Tuesday night, they went to arrest him.

He attempted to escape through the roofs of neighboring homes, but he was arrested and sent to concerned authorities.

Department relocated

The Interior Ministry's Relations and Security Information Department announced yesterday that the Mubarak Al-Kabeer residency affairs department will move to a new building in Subhan today.

No injuries in fires

Firefighters dealt with a fire in a Sulaibiya house yesterday, Kuwait Fire Service Directorate's (KFSD) Public Relations and Information said. Sulaibikhat and Doha fire centers responded and found the fire was in the kitchen of the house. The fire was put out, and no injuries were reported. Meanwhile, fire broke out in a vehicle on Sixth Ring Road near Saad Al-Abdullah. Jahra occupational fire center responded and put out the fire. No injuries were reported.



KUWAIT: This handout photo released by the Interior Ministry yesterday shows people arrested in a fake domestic help office yesterday.



Firefighters extinguish flames in a vehicle on Sixth Ring Road.



Damage seen inside a Sulaibiya house after a fire was put out.



KUWAIT: The Interior Ministry's Undersecretary Lieutenant General Suleiman Al-Fahad met at his office yesterday with Takashi Ashiki, the Ambassador of Japan to Kuwait, accompanied by Japanese Military Attache Daisuke Kadota. The two sides discuss boosting cooperation in the security and technology fields.

MP PROPOSES MANDATORY VOTE ON GAS PRICES HIKE

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: MP Khalil Al-Saleh said he submitted a proposal to amend article two of decreed law 79/1995 with regards to fees and financial costs for using public facilities and services. The amendment says the gov-

ernment cannot increase the price of oil derivatives such as gasoline without a law issued by the National Assembly. Saleh said the government cannot increase power and water prices until after referring to the

Assembly, which has no supervision with regards to gasoline prices, which "prompted me to present a proposed law that commits the government not to increase gasoline prices until after referring to parliament."

Prices freeze

Meanwhile, MP Ahmad Mutee Al-Azemi asked Commerce Minister Yousuf Al-Ali to stop price liberalization and continue with the previous decision to freeze them. He said the issuance of a new decision to liberate prices is shocking, especially since the commerce ministry announced a freeze with the start of the new gasoline prices next months. He said the price liberation decision will hurt citizens and deplete their pockets, which cannot bear any increase in prices.

Files saved

Public Authority for Sports (PAS) inspectors prevented files at the Kuwait Olympic Committee to be moved out of the building in Hawally. The inspectors went to Nugra police station and lodged a notification about an attempt to smuggle some files they were supposed to check.



MP Khalil Al-Saleh

ernment cannot increase the price of oil derivatives such as gasoline without a law issued by the National Assembly. Saleh said the government cannot increase power and water prices until after referring to the

LAND BORDER, TRAFFIC CHIEFS MOVED IN LATEST RESHUFFLE

NEW POWER TARIFFS IN EFFECT APRIL 2017

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: Deputy Premier and Interior Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khalid issued three decisions transferring three assistant undersecretaries to new departments. Major General Abdullah Al-Muhanna was moved from traffic affairs to land borders, Sheikh Mubarak Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah from state security to administrative affairs and Sheikh Mohammad Al-Yousuf Al-Sabah from land borders to legal affairs at the ministry.

New tariffs

The Ministry of Electricity and Water (MEW) said the new tariffs will go into effect at the start of the fiscal year 2017/2018, as MEW Undersecretary Mohammad Bushehri wanted the new tariffs by



Major General Abdullah Al-Muhanna

April 1, 2017. The new tariff is 25 fils per kilowatt and KD 4 per 1,000 gallons of water.

Divorce statistics

The Statistics and Research Department at the Justice Ministry said that it registered 568 cases of



Sheikh Mohammad Al-Yousuf Al-Sabah

"women asking to be divorced from their husbands". The biannual statistics show that the number of divorce cases reached 1,711. Documented marriages from Jan to June 2016 number 7,503, compared to 3,587 divorces. The statistics also showed the month with

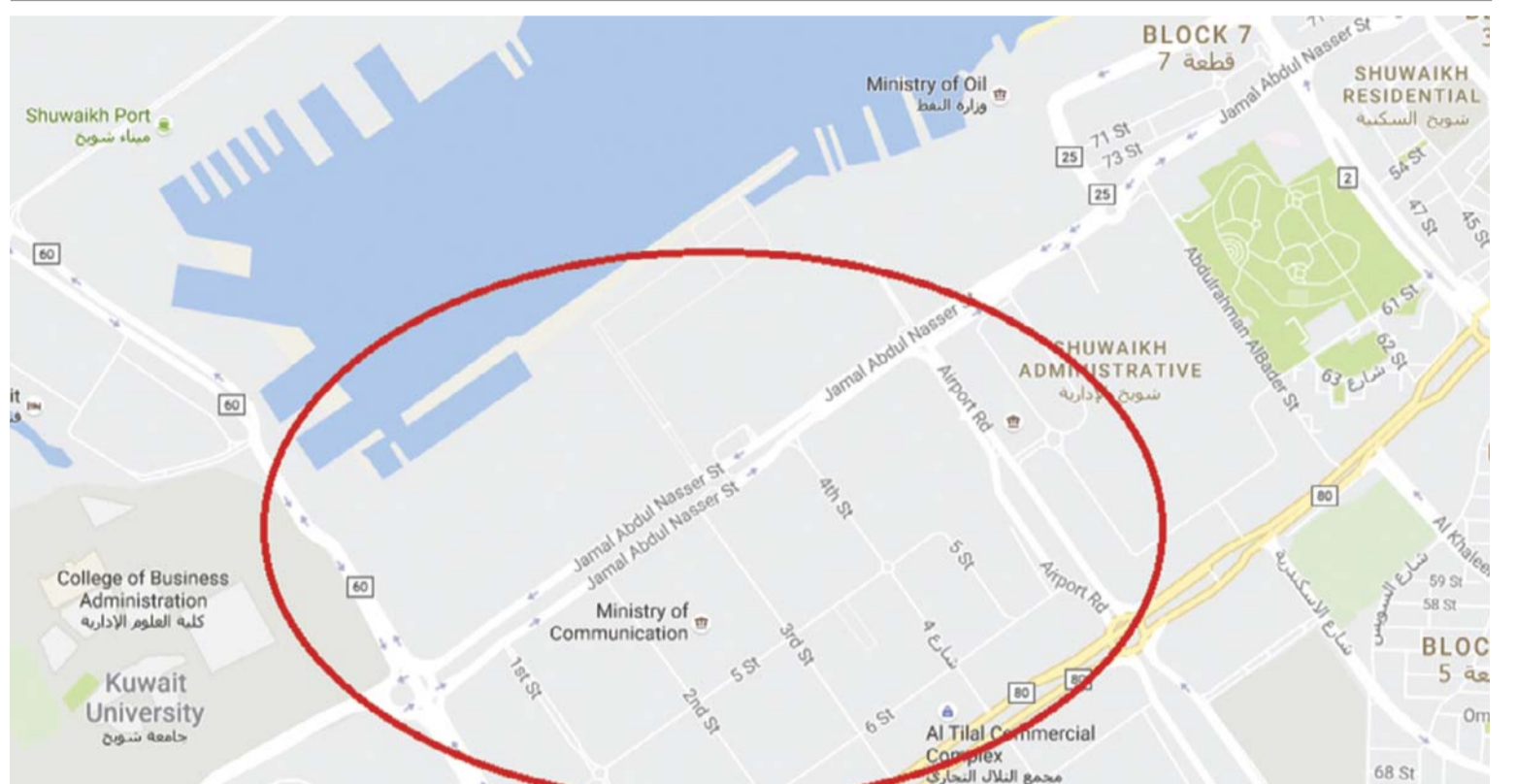
most marriages was April with 1,604, while June saw the least. May saw the most divorces at 713, while June saw the least.

Sheep prices

Two weeks before Eid Al-Adha, demand for sheep has pushed the price of Naimi sheep to KD 100 to KD 120, while Iranian sheep prices have reached KD 75 to KD 95. It is expected prices will go up as Eid approaches.

Mutlaa city

The Central Tenders Committee (CTC) approved the second contract of Mutlaa residential project after opening the tender envelopes. The least offer was by a local Kuwaiti company at KD 94.8 million, while the highest valued tender was also by a local company at KD 162.5 million.



KUWAIT: The traffic department announced that two lanes of Jamal Abdulnasser Street will be closed, leaving one lane open in the section between Ghazali and Airport roads in the direction of Kuwait City from midnight on Thursday, Aug 25, and will reopen on Sunday, Aug 28 at 5:30 am. The closure will be repeated for five weeks.

CONDOLENCES

**Kuwait Times Editor-in-Chief,
management and staff**

Convey their sincere condolences

To the Shuhaiber family

On the sad demise of

Ibrahim Jabra Shuhaiber

Founder and Chairman of the

English School Fahaheel

May his soul rest in peace

Al-Anbaa

THE MEDIA IS FOR THE INFORMED

By Dr Nermin Al-Houti

This was the title of a column published on Aug 8 by my colleague and friend Madhi Al-Khamis, and when I read it, away from the example he gave, I paused at many questions, the most important of which is - who is a media person? And how our information has become now?

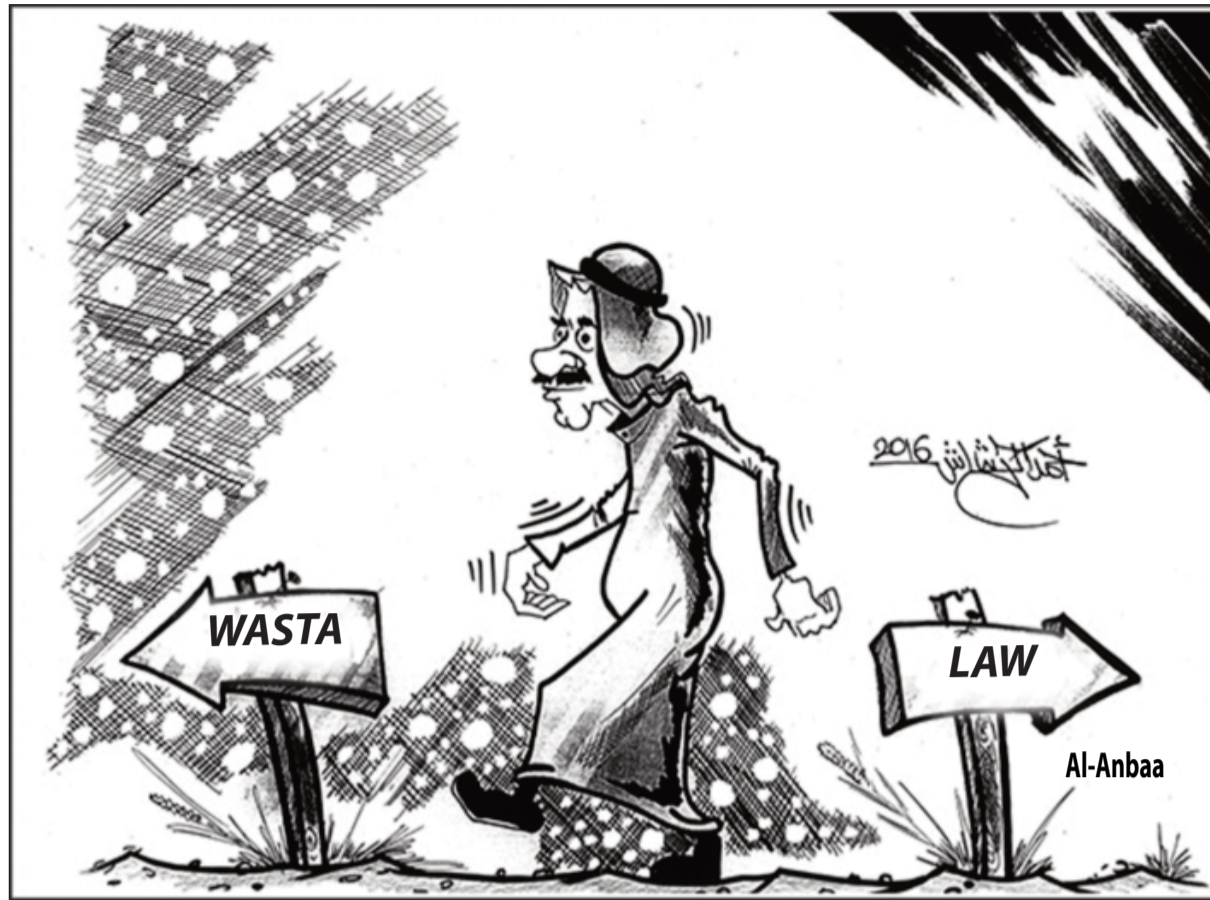
If we speak about how information has become, we will find that what we studied, applied and practiced in the past has nothing to do with our current time. Information and the society in the past were two sides of a coin. Everyone was working towards taking the individual to a higher level, so our society can become an advanced one.

But today, information has become an individual tool that is employed according to personal interests resulting in the appearance of many images that have nothing to do with the society, because in the past the individual was talking to the society, but today each individual is talking to another, to a point where information is carrying many images and faces that do not address the society, rather they are certain messages sent from one person to certain characters.

"Who are the informed?" This is the question being asked by many in our society. The media person in the past was working hard to be able to deliver his information message to his fans. The media people in the past, although a minority, used to prepare their material in all information fields, and their ambitions were to be information schools for future generations.

But today, all have become information people, and all are schools, but who are their students? Who are their examples? The answer is "himself alone who learns in his own school", which made information for the informative, and the majority of our society's ideologists and media people.

— Translated by Kuwait Times



RENTS BACK TO REALITY

KUWAIT: Rents dropped by an average of KD 60 compared to two months ago in Salmiya, according to a report published yesterday. The report says that decisions such as increasing electricity and water fees as well as gasoline prices has caused monthly rents to drop from KD 400 and KD 360 to KD 320 and KD 300 respectively in some places in Salmiya for example. This comes contrary to the norm, as the current back-to-school season and end of summer vacation usually features an increase in rents.

Al-Rai's report quotes Qais Al-Ghanem, Secretary of the Real Estate Association, who previously predicted a drop in rents due to a 30 percent decrease in investment lands' prices in many areas including Hawally, Salmiya, and Farwaniya, in addition to the fact that supply now far exceeds demand.

"Landlords usually wait for



September and October to rent their empty apartments," Ghanem said, adding that the story is likely to be different this year as rents are expected to see a notable decrease. "The real

estate market has been saturated following the boom in construction investment buildings, and rents will eventually go down following years of rent bubbles," he indicated. — Al-Rai



Fawaz Al-Hasawi (pictured courtesy of Nottingham Forest's official website).

HASAWI FRONTRUNNER FOR KFA PRESIDENT POST

KUWAIT: Current owner and Chairman of Nottingham Forest Fawaz Al-Hasawi is expected to be named President of Kuwait Football Association during a meeting for the Public Authority for Sports today, Al-Rai reported yesterday. The meeting should also announce the appointment of Sheikh Fahd Jaber Al-Ali as Chairman for Kuwait Olympic Committee. Sheikh Fahd is currently the Chairman of the Boxing and Weightlifting Association, while Hasawi also previously chaired the Qadsiya Sports Club.

The meeting is also expected to discuss a report on the participation of a number of Kuwaiti athletes at the 2016 Rio Olympics as independents, as well as a report on the reasons behind Kuwait's suspension from international competition.

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) had recently accused Kuwait's government of "aggravating" the tensions that led to the country's ban from the Rio Olympics. New and proposed laws on state controls over sporting bodies have led the IOC and world football body FIFA to suspend Kuwait since last October.

The Kuwait government has in turn condemned the IOC and recently sought \$1 billion in damages in a Swiss court, which was rejected. The IOC said in a letter to the Kuwait government that a new law passed in June tightens state control over sports bodies, rather than loosening it. The letter said that "contrary to what has been suggested in a number of public statements... (the law) increases significantly the power of the government authorities to interfere with the internal operations" of sports organizations. Kuwait has since offered a new law, but the IOC rejected the draft, AFP reported Friday. Kuwait has now been suspended twice by the IOC since 2010 over political interference. FIFA has frozen its membership three times since 2008.

Because of the showdown, Kuwaiti athletes at the Rio Olympics have competed as neutrals under the IOC flag. Fahaid Al-Deehani won the men's double trap gold and Abdullah Al-Rashidi, wearing an Arsenal shirt, scooped a bronze in the men's shooting skeet.



KUWAIT: Khaled Al-Mutawa, General Manager - International Banking and Investments, accepts the award from Citibank representatives.

GULF BANK RECEIVES STP AWARD FROM CITIBANK

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank yesterday announced it has been awarded the prestigious 'Straight Through Processing Excellence' Award 2015 from Citibank for the Bank's 95 percent + commercial payments STP rate. This is the fifth consecutive year that Gulf Bank receives this award.

Straight Through Processing (STP) is the full automation of a payment transactions by which financial institutions receive and process a payment by an electronic system without the requirement of any manual intervention. This automated process increases the efficiency and eliminates any delay in execution of payments.

The award was received by Khaled Al-Mutawa, General Manager - International Banking and Investments; Maab Al-Qassem, Executive Manager -

International Banking and Investments; and Bader Al-Ali, Assistant General Manager - Operations. It was presented by a team of Citibank representatives that included Mohamed Al-Hammadi - Vice President - Correspondent Banking Group Middle East - Treasury and Trade Solutions and Mohannad Barakat - Head of Transaction Banking - Kuwait.

Receiving the award on behalf of the Bank, Mutawa said: "We are honored to receive this award and proud to be recognized by such a renowned financial institution as Citibank. Receiving this award is acknowledgment for being one of the top correspondent banks and it reinforces our reputation as a market leader in operations and service quality."

Crime

Report

PROBE IN ARDIYA WOMAN'S DEATH

KUWAIT: A citizen finally missed his daughter after not seeing her for three days, then discovered her body in her room. The coroner recovered the body to determine the cause of death. The citizen, who lives in Ardiya, told police he found his daughter unconscious in her room. Police and paramedics rushed to the scene, and found the woman was dead. The death was registered as suicide, as police wait for the coroner's report.

Drug possession

Ahmadi police sent a citizen in his forties to the Drugs Control General Department (DCGD) after arresting him with illicit tablets. Fahd Al-Ahmad police stopped a car whose driver seemed to be very nervous, and when he was searched, the drugs were found.

Family feud

Two brothers ganged up against their cousin in their diwaniya in Fahd Al-Ahmad. The beaten man went to the police station and told them what happened and submitted a medical report stating the injuries he sustained from the beating.

Fugitive caught

Jahra detectives arrested a citizen sentenced to eight years in jail after he showed strong resistance in front of his house. Jahra detectives received tips about him, so they waited in front of his house and when he left it, they moved to arrest him, but he resisted before being brought under control. He was sent to the Criminal Sentences Enforcement Department to serve his sentence.

Bootleggers arrested

Two men were sent to Hawally security directorate with 74 imported liquor bottles and 74 homebrewed ones. Police are investigating to identify their supplier. A patrol in Salmiya suspected the car with the two Indian men inside. When the car was searched, 148 bottles were found. — Al-Rai



Ooredoo general manager and CEO Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdullah Al Thani is pictured with Kuwaiti shooter Abdullah Al-Rashidi.

OOREDOO RECEIVES OLYMPIC CHAMPION ABDULLAH AL-RASHIDI

WINNER OF THE BRONZE MEDAL IN SHOOTING IN THE RIO OLYMPICS

KUWAIT: Ooredoo Kuwait received the bronze medal champion in the skeet shooting competition of the Rio 2016 Olympics, Kuwaiti shooter Abdullah Al-Rashidi. The champion was received by the general manager and CEO Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdullah Al Thani.

Commenting on the victory, the CEO reiterated his pride in Rashidi's achievement, stressing the company's overall interest in celebrating local achievements and endorsing talented individuals in all fields. This interest stems from the company's overall strategy which is based on caring, connecting and challenging, and is implemented through the company's corporate social responsibility strategy.

Meanwhile, Kuwaiti champion Abdullah Al-Rashidi said: "I would like to thank Ooredoo for their generosity and their ongoing interest in supporting talented people, and in sharing the celebratory spirit with the people around Kuwait." Ooredoo has awarded Al-Rashidi with a special line that includes free local calls and internet, in addition to a smartphone.

Olympic champion Abdullah Al-Rashidi won the bronze medal after scoring 16 points, two points ahead of the Ukrainian shooter Mikola Milchev who scored 14 points in the skeet shooting competition. This is the fifth time he participates in the Olympics.



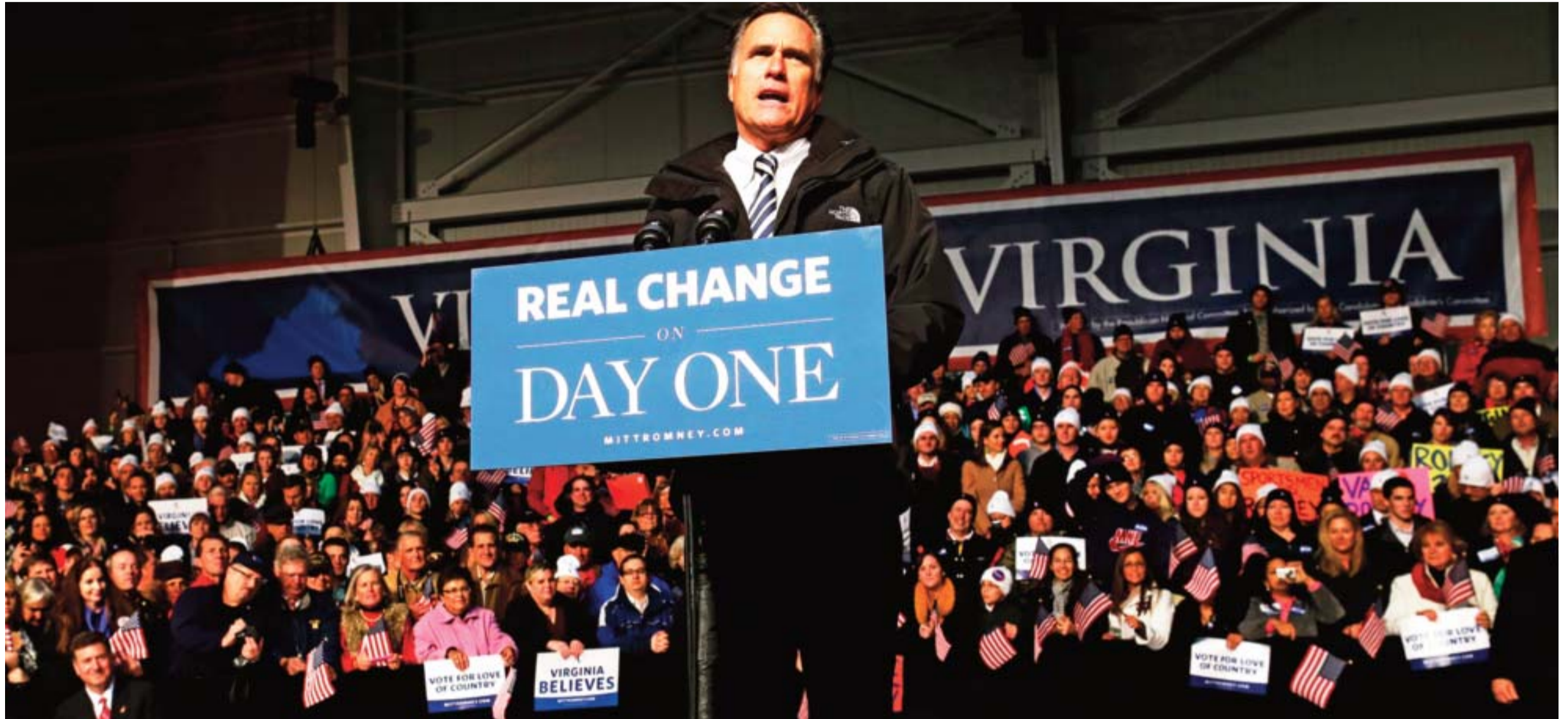
KUWAIT: Kuwait National Guard's Acting Undersecretary Major General Faleh Faleh met yesterday with the Ministry of Electricity and Water's Assistant Undersecretary for Water Operation and Maintenance Khalifa Al-Furaj. Faleh presented Furaj with a copy of a documentary produced by Kuwait National Guard, and previews the stages of producing water and delivering it to consumers in Kuwait.





EU scholarship becomes casualty of Turkey coup

DAMAGED YAZIDI WOMEN RECOVER IN GERMANY



VIRGINIA: In this Nov 4, 2012 file photo, then-Republican presidential candidate, former Massachusetts Gov Mitt Romney speaks in Newport News. — AP

DEMOCRATS GETTING NOSTALGIC ABOUT ROMNEY
HORRIFIED BY PROSPECT OF A TRUMP PRESIDENCY

WASHINGTON: When President Barack Obama ran for re-election, Democrats made no secret of their disdain for Mitt Romney. That was all before Donald Trump. Horrified by the prospect of Trump in the White House, Obama and his party have changed their tune about Romney. As they denounce Trump as "unhinged" and unfit, they're getting nostalgic about the 2012 Republican nominee they now describe as principled, competent and honorable.

It's a sharp reversal from four years ago. Back then, Democrats spent hundreds of millions of dollars portraying the former Massachusetts governor as a callous, unpatriotic, pet-abusing caricature of the uber-rich. Yet as Trump is proving, everything in politics is relative. "He was in it for the right reasons," Stephanie Cutter, Obama's 2012 deputy campaign manager, said of Romney. "He truly believed in wanting to make this country better. We just differed significantly on how to do that."

Ideological clashes

Cutter said that in 2012 Democrats had ideological clashes with Romney, but didn't doubt his temperament or basic competence. She said unlike Trump, Romney didn't "insult his way through his campaigning," malign minorities, or threaten to violate the Constitution or to abandon US allies. New York Rep. Steve Israel, one of the Democratic Party's top campaign strategists, said "Romney was qualified, but he had the wrong ideas. Trump is unqualified, dangerous and still has the wrong ideas." And Obama's 2012 campaign press secretary, Ben LaBolt, put it this way: "I don't think anybody would have truly expected the country to go to hell in a handbasket" if Romney had won. "Trump presents an entirely different level of threat," he said.

Rewind to 2012. A pro-Obama super PAC aired a TV ad indirectly alleging that Romney caused a woman's death. Democrats accused him of animal cruelty over a decades-old story about Seamus, the family dog, forced

to ride rooftop on a road trip. Vice President Joe Biden told a largely black audience that Romney and his running mate were "going to put y'all back in chains." All the while, Obama attacked Romney's business record ruthlessly, as Democrats questioned whether Romney's use of offshore accounts made him unpatriotic. Obama's campaign even suggested Romney might have committed a felony by misrepresenting his employment status to federal regulators.

Great irony

It's this year's great irony that the same Democratic attacks that landed hard on Romney seem to bounce right off of Trump. Where Romney had to downplay his wealth, Trump boasts of his riches, and brushes off controversies over remarks perceived as insensitive to women or minorities. Russ Schrieffer, a top Romney adviser in 2012, said he hoped Democrats were learning that words matter, even in politics. He described a campaign equivalent of "The Boy Who Cried Wolf." "Don't be surprised when your accusations against Trump are falling upon deaf ears and aren't working, when you've used them in the past against a person for whom the descriptions didn't fit," he said.

But Israel, who oversaw Democrats' efforts to win House seats that year, said he didn't think the attacks had gone too far. After all, Romney and Republicans were similarly tough on Obama, calling him a liar and a failed president. "The rhetoric gets heated on both sides of the aisle in any campaign," Israel said. Many Republicans, too, have declared Trump dangerous and unsuitable for the Oval Office. Chief among them is Romney, who implored fellow Republicans during the primary not to nominate Trump and called him a phony, a fraud, a bully and a con man.

"I have never seen anything like it, and kudos to Romney for having the courage of his convictions when it comes to Trump," said Dan Pfeiffer, Obama's White House communications director during the campaign. These days, even Obama seems to acknowl-

edge that Romney wouldn't have been awful - at least not compared to Trump. Earlier this month, Obama said he would have been disappointed had he been defeated by Romney in 2012 or by Sen. John McCain in 2008, but never questioned either Republican's ability to do the job.

A representative for Romney declined to comment

on Democrats' newfound affection. But Eric Fehrnstrom, a longtime Romney adviser, called it an attempt to make GOP voters more comfortable with the idea of voting for Clinton. "He knows whatever expressions of support for him now coming from Democrats are purely political," Fehrnstrom said. "They're totally insincere." — AP

FRANCE TO TEACH CHILDREN HOW TO RESPOND IN SCHOOL ATTACKS

PARIS: French schools will now hold three security drills a year - including one in which an alleged assailant enters their premises - as the French government ramps up security measures after a string of deadly extremist attacks. Education Minister Najat Vallaud-Belkacem and Interior Minister Bernard Cazeneuve announced a series of measures yesterday to improve how French schools and children handle terror threats. Students will be taught how to hide or to escape, depending on the situation and where they are.

All students aged 13-14 and class representatives will also get a basic training on life-saving measures. Vallaud-Belkacem said, as of now, only 30 percent of students are trained. In pre-school and kindergarten, for children aged 2 to 6, no mention of an attack or a danger should be made but children must be taught to hide and keep quiet through games, Vallaud-Belkacem said. "It's not a question of succumbing to

panic or into paranoia, but simply to face our responsibilities," Vallaud-Belkacem said, noting Islamic radical Mohamed Merah's attack on a Jewish school in 2012 in the southwestern city of Toulouse.

Cazeneuve said the plan aims at "preventing the risk of an attack and at the same time guaranteeing a serene atmosphere in schools." Other security measures are already in place since last year's deadly attacks in Paris. Some police forces patrol in school areas and parents and students are requested to avoid gathering near schools and systematically report any suspicious behavior or object.

School principals will hold meetings with parents to detail the security measures at the beginning of the school year in September. The government has also decided to provide 50 million euros (\$56.2 million) to local councils in charge of the school buildings - to help them pay for security equipment such as video door phones and new alarm systems. — AFP

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HASAKEH: A STRATEGIC PRIZE FOR SYRIA'S REGIME AND THE KURDS

BEIRUT: Kurdish fighters and Syrian government forces had clashed heavily for a week in the battle for the northeastern city of Hasakeh before agreeing to a ceasefire on Tuesday. The fighting was the most intense between the two sides since the start of the Syria war five years ago, and it drew in both Russian military officials and the US-led coalition. Why is Hasakeh so important and what is likely to happen next?

Who's who in Hasakeh?

Kurdish fighters in the city belong to the Asayesh police force and the powerful People's Protection Units (YPG), which functions more like an army and has scored key victories against the Islamic State jihadist group. Facing off against them were fighters from the pro-government National Defence Forces (NDF) militia, as well as a small contingent of traditional army soldiers.

Analysts say few regular soldiers were involved in the battle because they are spread too thin on other fronts. The US-led coalition bombing IS in Syria has backed the YPG in its operations against jihadists with air support and military advisers. After Syrian air strikes on YPG positions in Hasakeh last week, the

coalition scrambled aircraft and warned Damascus against endangering coalition advisers. Steadfast regime ally Russia has strengthened its relationship with Syria's Kurds and mediated Tuesday's ceasefire agreement.

A week of clashes

Fighting erupted last Wednesday initially between the Asayesh and the NDF before the YPG and Syria's military, including its air force, joined the battle. The majority of Hasakeh's population is Arab but Kurdish forces controlled two-thirds of the city even before the recent round of fighting broke out. On the eve of the truce agreement, the Kurds were in control of 90 percent of the city, with regime forces regrouping in the centre where government administrative buildings are located. The ceasefire was reached after several days of Russian mediation, including at the coastal Hmeimim air base. The deal also called for the "withdrawal of all armed forces from the city," according to a statement distributed by a Kurdish official. Rami Abdel Rahman, head of the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, said the truce agreement was "a defeat for the regime and a victory for the Kurds".

Why is Hasakeh important?

Hasakeh province shares borders with Turkey to the north and Iraq to the east. It was known as Syria's breadbasket before the war because of its fertile land and was also a major source of cotton. There are also oil fields in the province, and recently Kurdish authorities began refining their own supplies for consumption in areas under their control.

Most of the province is held by the Kurds, but the regime has a small presence in Hasakeh city, Qamishli to the north, and some Arab-majority villages. IS jihadists still hold some territory on the southern edges of the province, which borders Deir Ezzor. "Ultimately, a strategic province of Syria bordering the Kurdish-speaking regions of Turkey and Iraq is out of government control," said a Syrian political source close to the Damascus regime. "This will strengthen the Kurds' desire for autonomy if not full independence," said the source. Washington-based analyst Mutlu Civioglu told AFP that Hasakeh could serve as "a hub to secure a broader Kurdish region".

What next?

Since Syria's conflict broke out in March 2011, the country's Kurds have tried to walk a fine line of neu-

trality, siding with neither the regime nor the uprising. In mid-2012, government forces withdrew from Kurdish-majority areas in Syria's north and Kurds began establishing their own autonomous administration. In March, Kurdish parties and their allies announced a federal region that would unite the three autonomous "cantons" already in place in northern Syria.

The declaration was fiercely criticized by Syrian officials in Damascus, and tensions began to rise in Hasakeh and elsewhere. "The regime needs to recognize the autonomous administration as a fait accompli," said Meskin Ahmed, a Kurdish official inside Hasakeh. Civioglu said Hasakeh could be a good place to experiment with power-sharing arrangements particularly as Kurds lay the groundwork for a federal region. He said Kurds see Hasakeh as "a point that the regime needs to be cleared from". But Civioglu said he expected further confrontations in Qamishli further north, as well as in the city of Aleppo, where Kurds control one neighborhood wedged between rebel and regime forces. "As of now, the (ceasefire) agreement shows that the Kurds got what they wanted with minimal casualties," Civioglu said. — AFP

BIDEN CALLS ON TURKEY TO BE PATIENT IN GULEN CASE

'I UNDERSTAND THE INTENSE FEELING YOUR GOVERNMENT HAVE'

ANKARA: US Vice President Joe Biden called on Turkish authorities yesterday to be patient with the US legal system as Turkey seeks the return of a cleric accused of masterminding last month's failed military coup. Biden, who met with Turkish officials in Ankara, said that the extradition process would take time as he reaffirmed Washington's cooperation in the case of US-based Muslim cleric Fethullah Gulen. Gulen has denied any involvement in the July 15 coup attempt that killed more than 270 people.

"I understand the intense feeling your government and the people of Turkey have about him," Biden said at news conference after meet-

ing with Prime Minister Binali Yildirim. "We are cooperating with Turkish authorities. Our legal experts are working right now with their Turkish counterparts on the production of and the evaluation of material and evidence that needs to be supplied to an American court to meet the requirements under our law in the extradition treaty to extradite Gulen." Biden sought to assuage concerns that the US was shielding Gulen. "We have no, no, no, no interest whatsoever in protecting anyone who has done harm to an ally. None," he said. "But we need to meet the legal standard requirement under our law." He also warned that President Barack Obama

wouldn't intervene in the extradition process. "We should make clear under American law that no president of the United States has authority to extradite anyone under his own power, that only an American court can do that. "Were a president to attempt to do that, it would be an impeachable offense," he said.

Extradite Gulen

Turkish officials, including President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, have repeatedly called on the US to swiftly extradite Gulen, who lives in Pennsylvania in self-imposed exile. The formal extradition request for his alleged involvement in the coup will be submitted next week, Turkish Justice Minister Bekir Bozdog said yesterday. "It's never understood that the wheels of justice move deliberately and slowly," Biden said. "It's totally understandable why the people of Turkey are angry. But there should be no doubt that we will continue to work closely with the Turkish government as this process unfolds."

Biden also rejected suggestions that the US government knew about plans for a coup in advance. "The United States of America did not have any fore-knowledge of what befell you on the 15th of July," he said. Turkey's prime minister again called on the US to speed up the process in the Gulen case. "If the process can be sped up for (Gulen) to be returned to our country in order to be punished, if our cooperation in this regard continues to grow, then the Turkish people's sorrow, its disappointment in this regard will quickly give way to positive sentiments," Yildirim said.

Earlier, Biden toured the sections of parliament damaged during the coup attempt. A small group of young demonstrators protested Biden's motorcade as he headed to Yildirim's residence, the state-run Anadolu Agency reported. Anti-American sentiment has been on the rise in Turkey since the coup. Biden hopes to smooth relations, but has limited leverage. — AP



ANKARA: US Vice President Joe Biden, left, waves after he was greeted by Turkish Prime Minister Binali Yildirim. — AP



IRBID: Asma Dawaghreh poses for a photo at her apartment. — AP

FORCED RELOCATIONS RAISE DOUBTS OVER JORDAN'S TRIBAL TRADITIONS

IRBID: It was four in the morning when Asma Dawaghreh fled her home with her sick husband and six children. With nothing but the loose change in her pockets, she packed her family into a car and left under the cover of darkness. Her family is one of dozens uprooted every year in the kingdom under the tribal practice of "jalwa" - Arabic for "eviction" - in which an entire clan can be forced to relocate because of a crime committed by a family member.

In Dawaghreh's case, a nephew on her husband's side of the family stabbed his cousin to death, forcing three dozen relatives to flee their village in northern Jordan. The Dawaghrehs fled pre-emptively, fearing revenge killings, and then found that they were barred from returning. In exile, they were pressured into selling their supermarket, the family's source of income. Three years on, they have moved home six times and are increasingly impoverished.

"I can't even afford to buy bread now. What is my crime? What is my son's crime ... my husband's crime?" said the 40-year-old, speaking in the family's latest refuge, a rundown apartment in the northern city of Irbid. "We had no business in this." Jalwa predates the 1946 founding of modern Jordan. It is rooted in tribal tradition, under which the practice was applied in cases of murder or rape when the assailant and the victim lived in the same area.

Although jalwa is not written into Jordanian civil law, the practice continues unchallenged - and sometimes with the support of civil institutions - because of the country's strong tribal influence. Over the years, tribal leaders and local authorities have arranged the forced relocation of hundreds of people across the country. In some cases, relatives of the attacker as distant as a fifth cousin have had to move.

Blood feuds

Supporters say forced relocation prevents blood feuds between tribes, while critics denounce it as collective punishment. The government is now trying to scale back the practice, proposing to limit forced relocation to the perpetrator and his immediate family. The initial period of banishment would be one year, with the possibility of extension. The proposed amendment was adopted by the Cabinet earlier this year. It now awaits approval by parliament and a signature by King Abdullah II. If the amendment is passed, it will be the first time jalwa is enshrined in civil law.

An Interior Ministry official in charge of tribal affairs said the government is trying to adapt tribal law to modern times. Jordanians have homes and jobs, and can't just pack up tents and move to a different area, as during their nomadic past, said the official, Turki Akho Arsheidah. "We have to implement these amendments to adapt to the 21st century." Jalwa is still being practiced, to varying degrees, across the Middle East, with forced relocation more common in rural areas than in cities. Although some governments have tried to curb the practice - either through outright bans or by negotiating with tribes - the tradition remains powerful.

This is particularly true in countries like Yemen, where the state has deteriorated. Jordan is unusual because of the strong tribal influence on the government. "In Jordan, tribal identity is connected to Jordanian identity," said Israeli historian Yoav Alon. Instead of ending tribal customs, the government has tried to strike a compromise with the tribes, who are the mainstay of the Hashemite monarchy. — AP

EU SCHOLARSHIP BECOMES CASUALTY OF TURKEY COUP

ISTANBUL: Turkey has cancelled a major EU-funded scholarship scheme after the July 15 botched coup bid, leaving in limbo dozens of Turkish students dreaming of studying in the European Union. The scrapping of the prestigious Jean Monnet scholarship aimed at helping cultivate pro-EU high-fliers in the longstanding candidate state is one of the many side effects of the failed coup whose shockwaves have affected every aspect of life in Turkey.

Burak Bulkan, 24-year-old student who graduated from Istanbul's Bosphorus University, said he applied for the scholarship and was offered places by universities including the London School of Economics and King's College London. Bulkan told AFP he cannot afford the British university fees without funds from the EU and needed a sum of around 20,000 pounds (23,000 euros/\$26,000) to study. "How many people in Turkey earn this amount of money in a year?" he said. "It is very hard, not only for me but for many people. Those who can still go are reliant on loans."

Early this month, the EU expressed "regrets" to have learned about the cancellation of the program for the 2016-17 academic year - a decision "taken by the Turkish authorities without the involvement of the EU". The Jean Monnet scholarship, one of the most renowned and long-running programs in Turkey, began in the 1990-1991 academic year providing scholars with opportunities to study in EU member states. The grant program, which covers tuition fees and living expenses, takes its name from Jean Monnet, a well-known French economist and a pioneer of the EU, who from the beginning of World War I had devoted his life to creating a united Europe. A total of 226 people were granted Jean Monnet scholarship in the 2015-2016 academic year and at least 170 were expected to utilize the funds for the 2016-2017, EU officials said.

'Extraordinary circumstances'

The cancellation comes after the failed coup bid seeking to bring the Turkish government from power and blamed on supporters of US-based Muslim preacher Fethullah Gulen, whose influence extends to key parts of the Turkish

state. Ankara has pressed ahead with a sweeping crackdown on alleged coup plotters in the wake of the putsch attempt, with a pledge to remove Gulen's "cancer cells" from the state institutions including the education sector.

Turkey's relations with the EU have worsened drastically following the coup over the crackdown and it has also barred academics from travelling abroad on work missions. Turkey's EU ministry said on August 10 the decision to suspend the program was made "in the light of extraordinary circumstances our country has been passing through." The ministry added the scheme was cancelled for the 2016-2017 academic year, and it was working to transfer this year's funds to the next academic year to help more people utilize the education grants.

'Strongest bond'

Can Baydarol, an expert on Turkey-EU relations, said EU-funded programs were a bridge

between candidate country Turkey and the 28-nation bloc. Baydarol said he believed the Jean Monnet program had been cancelled not because of the EU's alarm over the crackdown but because of the "uncertainties" inside Turkey. "I hope in very near future this program, the strongest bond between Turkey and the EU, will be reactivated," said Baydarol, deputy head of the European Union and Global Research Association.

Disappointed like many applicants in Turkey who took to social media or launched a petition campaign for the restart of the scheme, Bulkan said he was looking at other options. "I don't have enough resources to study abroad on my own terms, so I think I will give priority to doctorate at my (Turkish) university," he said. "For long years we have been working to attain Europe's standards economically, politically and socially," he said. "We kicked away the chance with our own hands." — AFP



ISTANBUL: Burak Bulkan, 24-year-old student who graduated from Istanbul's Bosphorus University, poses on August 23, 2016. — AFP

MALIAN JIHADIST 'LOST WAY' IN TIMBUKTU ATTACKS COURT SAYS

THE HAGUE: A Malian jihadist who admitted to razing ancient tombs in the fabled city of Timbuktu is "an honest man" who briefly took the wrong path in life, his lawyer pleaded yesterday, as prosecutors urged a jail term of up to 11 years. "For just over three months he lost his way," Ahmad al-Faqi al-Mahdi's attorney said at the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague. "He wanted to give advice to apply Sharia (Islamic) law, which was a terrible mistake that led to his guilt," lawyer Jean-Louis Gilissen told judges. He is "an honest man," Gilissen said.

Mahdi admitted at the start of his trial Monday to ransacking some of the West African city's most historic mausoleums during a two-week wave of destruction in 2012. He is the first Islamic extremist charged by the ICC and the first charged with crimes arising out of the conflict in Mali. Sentencing will be handed down on September 27.

Global outrage

The wanton destruction by jihadists, who considered the mausoleums idolatrous, triggered a global outcry. But Mahdi's lawyers said yesterday he acted out of the belief that what he was doing was right, based on an interpretation of Sharia law. Mahdi, who is aged about 40, had lived in Timbuktu for 11 years before armed groups arrived. His defense described him as "a generous man with an extremely sociable character" who worked for reconciliation between Muslim

groups, founded an NGO and facilitated dialogue between white and black Tuaregs.

Ansar Dine - a mainly Tuareg movement that in 2012 took control of Timbuktu some 1,000 kilometers northeast of Bamako, along with Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) — picked out Mahdi to head its "Hisbah" or "Manners" brigade, his lawyers said. Mahdi "was not a decision-maker, but headed those who carried out orders," the defense said. ICC prosecutors under a deal made with the defense asked for a sentence of between nine to 11 years.

The sentence should serve as an "effective deterrent" that plundering the world's heritage would not go unpunished, they added. The sentence should "fully reflect his guilt, serve as an effective deterrent and give justice to the victims," prosecutor Gilles Duterre urged. "It cannot be tolerated that world heritage can be deliberately destroyed, with disdain for the importance that it has to other people."

A former teacher and Islamic scholar, Mahdi admitted to the sole war crimes charge of "intentionally directing attacks" against nine of Timbuktu's famous mausoleums as well as the ancient door of the Sidi Yahia mosque between June 30 and July 11, 2012. Mahdi on Monday begged for "forgiveness" for his role in the destruction that shocked the world as he urged other Muslims not to follow such "evil" ways. — AFP

CLINTON IN EYE OF A TRUMP STORM OVER CHARITY DONORS

'CLINTONS SET UP A BUSINESS TO PROFIT FROM PUBLIC OFFICE'

NEW YORK: Donald Trump stepped up his attacks on Hillary Clinton Tuesday as her campaign battled to silence suggestions that donors to her family's charity paid for access when she was America's top diplomat. The Democratic nominee, looking to make history as America's first female commander-in-chief, is polling well ahead of her Republican rival but has hit choppy waters this week as the Trump campaign has fought to rebound from a series of damaging self-inflicted wounds.

"Hillary Clinton is totally unfit to hold public office," Trump told a rally in Austin, Texas interrupted several times by protesters. "It is impossible to figure out where the Clinton Foundation ends and the State Department begins," he added. Hours earlier, the Associated Press reported that more than half the people outside government who met Clinton while she was secretary of state donated money to the Clinton Foundation. "It is now abundantly clear that the Clintons set up a business to profit from public office, they sold access," he said. "This is corruption and this is why I have called for a special prosecutor to look into this mess," he said. The Trump campaign demanded an independent probe after conservative group Judicial Watch, which has targeted Clinton for years, released nearly 15,000 emails sent from her private server.

Among the emails are some purporting to show that donors to the Foundation lobbied one of her top aides, Huma Abedin, for access to Clinton. Asked whether Trump's donation of tens of thousands of dollars to the Clinton Foundation was also an attempt to gain access, campaign manager Kellyanne Conway told CNN he "wasn't paying to play." "He has never told me he was going to the State Department to have a meeting with Hillary Clinton," she said. Clinton, who on Tuesday attended a Hollywood fundraiser at the home of Justin Timberlake and his wife Jessica Biel, has so far not commented publicly on the report. But her campaign spokesman dismissed the AP analysis as based on "utterly flawed data" that "cherry-picked" from her schedule.

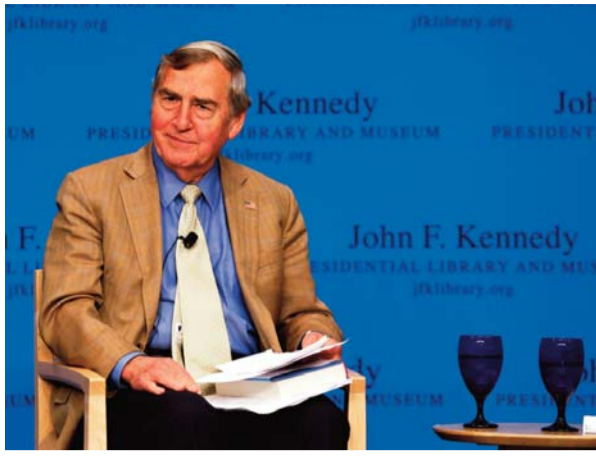
Misrepresent

"The data does not account for more than half of her tenure as secretary," Brian Fallon said in a statement. "Just taking the subset of meetings arbitrarily selected by the AP, it is outrageous to misrepresent Secretary Clinton's basis for meeting with these individuals," he added. The charity has raised some \$2 billion since it was founded in 2001 after Bill Clinton stepped down as president and disburses funds domestically and overseas, handing out some \$218 million in 2014.

Bill Clinton announced this week that if his wife is elected, the foundation will accept only US contributions, that he will step down from the board and will no longer raise funds for the charity. With Clinton now leading 47 percent to Trump's 41.5 percent, according to an average of national polls from Real Clear Politics, it is unclear to what extent the new reports can damage her standing. US voters remain alarmed by Trump's lack of experience, question whether he has the temperament for the job and a series of high-profile blunders have chipped away at his populist appeal.

Trump used the rest of his speech in Texas to make another sustained pitch for African-American voters who vote overwhelmingly Democrat and highlight poor border security in Texas. He reiterated calls to build a wall on the southern US border with Mexico in a bid to stop illegal immigration, a structure he said Mexico would pay for. He also repeated his calls for "extreme vetting" of immigrants, saying "hundreds of immigrants and their children" had been charged with terrorism in the United States since the September 11, 2001 attacks.

He promised to create safe zones in the Middle East, funded by Gulf States for refugees fleeing conflict and for visas to be suspended "when we can't perform effective screening." He was briefly joined on stage by mothers whose children were killed by illegal immigrants. "Your children did not die in vain, because we're not going to allow it to happen to others," he told them. — AP



BOSTON: In this Feb 5, 2013 file photo, Graham Allison, Professor of Government Harvard's John F. Kennedy School, listens during an event. — AP

DREAM TEAM OF HISTORIANS COULD ADVISE US PRESIDENT

BOSTON: Imagine a dream team of the nation's top historians, recruited by the White House to advise the president on major decisions. That's the idea being pitched by two Harvard University scholars who say many United States leaders know alarmingly little about history, both of their own country and of others. Professors Graham Allison and Niall Ferguson are calling on the next US president to create a Council of Historical Advisers that would tackle present problems by looking to the past. Trying to take down a terrorist group? The council would scour historical records to find similar groups, and then analyze which strategies worked against them. Facing a financial crisis? The council would glean lessons from past meltdowns and report their findings to the president. "I think there would be more than enough work for a council of applied historians," said Allison, a professor of government and director of Harvard's Belfer Center, a university think tank.

In an online manifesto published this month, the professors said they aim to close a "history deficit" in the White House. They contend that few leaders from any presidential administration have shown a deep understanding of history in the Middle East, for example, or of the United States' involvement in the region. The scholars are urging US presidential candidates to promise they will create the council if elected. Campaigns for Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump did not respond to requests for comment. The White House did not immediately comment on the proposal. US Rep Tom Cole, a Republican from Oklahoma and a former history professor, said in an interview that the council would have value only if the president wanted its advice. Still, Cole said he supports the idea. "We need leaders to understand the importance of making historically informed decisions. Most of them don't," Cole said.

'Lovely idea'

Others question whether academic historians could keep up with the pace of the White House, or if they could all agree. "The idea that historians would reach consensus on anything is a lovely idea that's not well borne out in practice," said Jon Alterman, a senior vice president of the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a think tank in Washington, DC, and a former State Department staff member under President George W. Bush. Alterman, who has a doctorate in history from Harvard, added that "the kind of history that is useful to policymakers is the kind of history fewer and fewer historians are doing."

The Harvard professors modeled their proposal after the Council of Economic Advisers, a White House agency led by three economists who are appointed to advise the president. Allison said that if economists and foreign policy experts are allowed a regular spot at the president's table, historians deserve a place, too. "There's nobody around with a crystal ball, so the question is whether they can add value compared to the competition, and I believe they can," Allison said. — AP

STANFORD JUDGE SPARKS DEBATE AFTER LEAVING OTHER SEX CASE

SAN FRANCISCO: The Northern California judge who sentenced a former Stanford University swimmer to six months in jail for sexually assaulting an unconscious woman has reignited debate about his ability to serve on the bench after removing himself from a separate sex-crimes case. Santa Clara County Judge Aaron Persky formally recused himself Monday from deciding whether to reduce a San Jose plumber's felony child pornography charges to misdemeanors. A law professor called the move unusual and said it makes it look like Persky is susceptible to "political pressure."



SAN FRANCISCO: This June 27, 2011 file photo shows Santa Clara County Superior Court Judge Aaron Persky, who drew criticism for sentencing former Stanford University swimmer Brock Turner to only six months in jail for sexually assaulting an unconscious woman. — AP

It's the second sex-crimes case that Persky has departed since his June sentencing of 20-year-old Brock Turner exploded in national media. It comes amid an effort to recall Persky and a formal misconduct complaint that a women's advocacy group filed with the state agency that disciplines judges. Another judge will rule on Robert Chain's child porn case in October. "While on vacation earlier this month, my family and I were exposed to publicity surrounding this case," the judge wrote in a brief ruling. "This publicity has resulted in a personal family situation such that a person aware of the facts might reasonably entertain a doubt that the judge would be able to be impartial."

Persky didn't respond to requests for comment. Two attor-

neys who argue cases in his courtroom have backed up his abilities. Santa Clara County deputy public defender Gary Goodman in June called him a "solid and respected judge," while defense attorney Barbara Muller said he's "one of the fairest judges" in the county. In Chain's case, Persky said last year that he was "receptive" to reducing the conviction if Chain stayed sober and out of trouble for a year. Persky, who has handled the case since early 2015, sentenced Chain to four days in jail and ordered him to register for life as a sex offender after he pleaded guilty to possessing dozens of sexually explicit images of children. The judge said he would consider reducing the conviction if Chain complied with the terms of his probation.

'No actual conflict'

Chain's lawyer, Brian Madden, has said his client "worked hard" to turn around his life since his 2014 arrest, including receiving alcohol abuse counseling. Madden didn't return a phone call Tuesday. University of California, Berkeley, law professor Christopher Kutz said "no formal or actual conflict" appears to exist between Persky and the child porn case, but the "appearance that he seems susceptible to political pressure" does. "It's a very unusual case," Kutz said.

It comes two months after the district attorney's office removed Persky from a different sexual assault case, saying "we lack confidence" in the judge's ability to decide it impartially. Organizers of an effort to get Persky removed from the bench say they will begin collecting signatures in April to qualify the issue for the November 2017 ballot. "Case after case, Judge Persky has demonstrated that his own personal bias compels him to prioritize the well-being of privileged men - rapists, abusers and possessors of child porn - over the survivors of their crimes," said Nita Chaudhary, co-founder of women's advocacy group UltraViolet, which has asked the Commission on Judicial Performance to remove Persky.

The six-month sentence he handed down to Turner, a Dayton, Ohio, resident who had been attending Stanford on a swimming scholarship, drew outrage. Persky cited a probation department recommendation and the effect the conviction will have on Turner's life. A jury convicted the former Olympic hopeful of sexually assaulting a young woman he met at a campus fraternity party in January 2015 after she passed out behind a trash bin. The two had been drinking heavily. The case sparked a national debate on college drinking and sexual assault. Stanford unveiled a revised student alcohol policy on Monday, banning hard alcohol from undergraduate parties and shots from graduate gatherings in an effort to combat binge drinking. Beer and wine are still allowed, a policy that the Distilled Spirits Council says "sends a dangerous message to college students" that beer and wine are "softer" than hard liquor. — AP



PHILADELPHIA: In this Aug 16, 2016 file photo, Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton speaks. — AP

DEAF DRIVER'S SHOOTING BY COP UNDER INVESTIGATION

CHARLOTTE: The North Carolina Highway Patrol is urging people not to jump to conclusions as state agents investigate how a deaf driver with a history of minor offenses ended up dead after leading a trooper on a 10-mile chase. The family of Daniel Kevin Harris said he was unarmed and suggested the sequence of events last week was a tragic misunderstanding - the type the state's training manual warns troopers to avoid when dealing with the hearing impaired.

The investigation into the shooting is ongoing, Secretary Frank Perry of the state Department of Public Safety said in a news release. "Let us all refrain from making assumptions or drawing conclusions prior to the internal and independent reviews" by the patrol, the State Bureau of Investigation and the district attorney, said Perry, whose agency oversees the Highway Patrol. Authorities haven't said why Trooper Jermaine Saunders fired, and a review of public records shows a few traffic charges against Harris from other states, including damaging his employer's vehicle with his own car after he was fired last year, according to a Denver police report.

Last Thursday's incident started when Harris did not pull over as Saunders turned on his blue lights on Interstate 485 near Charlotte about 6:15 p.m. and ended after Harris drove down several miles of surface streets to his home. The trooper was trying to pull him over for speeding. North Carolina's Basic Law Enforcement Training manual has a section that deals with interacting with deaf drivers. "Keep your eyes on the person's hands," it reads. "Deaf people have been stopped by an officer and then shot and killed because the deaf person made a quick move for a pen and pad in his or her coat pocket or glove compartment. These unfortunate incidents can be prevented by mutual awareness which overcomes the lack of communication." The victim's family said Harris likely didn't understand the officer's commands.

Thoroughly investigated

Harris' family said they want to make sure the incident is investigated thoroughly and also want the state to make changes so officers will immediately know they are dealing with a hearing-impaired driver. Authorities have released little information about the investigation, including any possible body camera or dashboard camera footage or whether a gun was found near Harris. Saunders has been placed on administrative leave. A spokeswoman for the SBI didn't respond Tuesday to questions, including whether authorities have interviewed Saunders yet.

Harris' family is raising money for his funeral and will put any extra money toward educating police officers on interacting with hard-of-hearing people and calling for a computerized system to alert officers they are dealing with a deaf driver, according to the family's posting on YouCaring.com. "You don't see deafness the way that you see the difference in race. We need to change the system," Harris' brother Sam said to reporters using sign language and an interpreter after a Monday night vigil. Sam Harris is deaf, and so are his brother's parents and other family members. They signed with each other as an Associated Press reporter knocked on their door Tuesday. Sam Harris didn't want to talk Tuesday but wrote a note leaving an email address for an interpreter, who said no interviews could be conducted that day. A review by The Associated Press shows Harris had been charged with traffic offenses and other misdemeanors in three states.

In 2015, Denver police were called to Shafer Commercial Seating after Harris was fired. Officials at the chair and table-top manufacturer said Harris "got very mad and stormed out" after being fired, hitting an employer's vehicle with his own car causing light damage, according to a police report. A warrant was issued, but never served, but it wasn't clear why. No one answered the phone at Shafer Commercial Seating after hours Tuesday. — AP

The Harley Street Clinic

HCA
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The Complex Care Hospital

Uniquely, The Harley Street Clinic is a specialist private cardiac, cancer and neurosciences hospital providing complex care to adults, children and babies. The Hospital has received multi-million pound investment and this has attracted leading specialists from major London teaching hospitals who are in turn supported by a team of caring, experienced and professional clinical staff.

The Hospital has separate paediatric and adult Intensive Care Units (ITU). The paediatric ITU is the largest private facility in the country. This allows us to support cardiology, cardiac, thoracic, cancer, spinal and other major treatments for children from babies to young adults. These facilities attract world-renowned paediatric consultants, who are supported by highly experienced and specialist doctors and staff.

Technology for treating cancers includes the UK's first CyberKnife and with both Gamma Knife and the latest Linear Accelerator treatments also available, the Hospital offers one of the widest portfolios of radiosurgical equipment in Europe.

Additionally, diagnosis is helped with direct access to the latest scanners such as PET CT, MRI, CT and Gamma Cameras.

LEADERS ON ONCOLOGY CARE (LOC)

LOC was founded in 2005 by four specialists and has now grown to be supported by 35 oncologists with a wide range of specialist expertise covering all types of cancer. Located next to the Sarah Cannon Research Institute and Harley Street Clinic, it avails of the Clinics diagnostic and therapeutic services. LOC is designed around the patient needs, and the patient orientated facility attracts London's very best consultants.

Treatment is delivered in a very personal way, with each patient treatment being individually tailored to take account of the

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

SARAH CANNON RESEARCH INSTITUTE (SCRI)

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



ALAHABAD: An aerial photo shows a cluster of houses marooned in floods. — AP

FLOODS HAVE KILLED OVER 175 IN INDIA

NEW DELHI: Heavy monsoon rains have ended two successive drought years in India with the Ganges River and its tributaries rising above the danger level, triggering evacuation of hundreds of thousands of people from flooded homes in north and eastern India, an official said yesterday. Drowning, electrocution or injuries from collapsed houses have killed at least 175 people, mainly in West Bengal, Assam, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar states

this season, said Rakesh Ranjan, a National Disaster Response Force official. Lightning has killed 57 people in Bihar state.

Ranjan said flooding worsened after water was discharged from various dams brimming after heavy rains in Madhya Pradesh and Uttarakhand states. Floods occur in many parts of India during the monsoon season, which runs from June through September. In the Hindu holy town of Varanasi in Uttar

Pradesh, flooding forced a halt to cremations at a main riverfront area. Some people have been lighting the funeral pyres at rooftops along the flooded river bank. Devout Hindus bring dead family members to Varanasi in the belief that being cremated there frees their soul from the cycle of death and rebirth.

Ranjan said yesterday that floodwaters have entered the low-lying areas of Varanasi, which is popular with foreigners for its

maze of buildings, temples and spiritual heritage. Thousands of pilgrims queue at the ghats, or steps, leading to the Ganges to take their holy dip. In Bihar state, more than 100,000 people have been evacuated from flooded villages and moved to government-run relief camps in the worst-hit districts of Patna, Vaishali, Bhojpur and Saran districts, said Vyas Ji, a top state relief official. — AP



KATHMANDU: In this photograph taken on August 3, 2016, Nepal's newly-elected Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal, known as Prachanda, (C), greets supporters as he leaves the Parliament Building in Kathmandu. — AFP

NEPAL PM TO VISIT INDIA TO MEND FRACTURED TIES

KATHMANDU: Nepal's new prime minister will visit India next month on his first foreign visit, seeking to repair the strained relationship between the neighbors, an official said yesterday. Nepal's relationship with India, which is often accused of acting as a "big brother" to its smaller impoverished neighbor-soured after a months-long border blockade last year by ethnic minority protesters. Kathmandu accused India of imposing an "unofficial blockade" on the landlocked nation in support of the Madhesis, who share close cultural, linguistic and family links with Indians across the border.

Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal, a former Maoist rebel chief better known by his nom de guerre Prachanda, sent special envoys to both neighboring India and China shortly after taking office earlier this month. "The focus of his visit is to evaluate the bitterness in the relationship after the blockade and resolve the problems," Chandra Prakash Khanal, the prime minister's political adviser, told AFP. Khanal said that during the visit,

scheduled for September 15-18, leaders will also hold discussions on road connectivity, industrial development and support for Nepal's reconstruction efforts after a devastating earthquake last year.

Nepal is heavily dependent on India for fuel and other supplies. Guna Raj Luitel, editor of the Nepali daily Nagarik, said the prime minister's visit to India, the traditional first stop for Nepali premiers, was a wise diplomatic move. "India is an important neighbor for us, but right now there is a confusion in the relationship," Luitel said. "During the visit he will have to assure that we want to maintain a good friendly relationship and respect India's interests in Nepal." The new constitution introduced last year, the first drawn up by elected representatives, was meant to cement peace and bolster Nepal's transformation to a democratic republic after decades of political instability and a 10-year Maoist insurgency. But ongoing discussions between the government and protesting parties have failed to yield an agreement. — AFP

KARACHI'S NEXT MAYOR WILL RUN CITY FROM BEHIND BARS

KARACHI: The imprisoned politician who is almost certain to be the next mayor of Pakistan's largest and richest city of Karachi will run the teeming metropolis via "video link" from his prison cell, his lawyer said yesterday. Waseem Akhtar, who was arrested last month on suspicion of aiding alleged militants, arrived in an armored police vehicle at the British-era Karachi Metropolitan Corporation building to cast his vote in the final round of elections that has his party in an unassailable lead.

Akhtar is a member of the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM), which swept local elections in December, but he could not take office because of legal challenges that prevented members of the city council from casting their vote. MQM controls the council. "He will open an office in jail and via video link he will conduct council sessions," Mahfooz Yar Khan, Akhtar's lawyer, told reporters outside the council building as his client voted inside. "He can run Karachi via video link for five years."

The election of an imprisoned politician as mayor is symbolic of the ongoing power struggle for control of Karachi, a port city that is home to 20 million people, the stock exchange, central bank, as well as militants and gangsters.

Akhtar's secular MQM has dominated politics and commerce in the city for decades, but a paramilitary crackdown on crime since 2013 has undermined its power base.

On Tuesday, police lodged a case of treason against MQM's firebrand London-based leader, Altaf Hussain, and sealed the party's headquarters after Hussain had incited supporters to attack the office of a TV channel in clashes that left one dead. How Akhtar will manage to run the city is far from clear, with the courts not expected to release him before he likely takes oath on Aug. 30. MQM officials have said they will ask authorities to provide him with a well-furnished office. Police will escort him to any meetings he is allowed to attend on the outside.

Security forces have arrested scores of MQM members in the last year and accuse them of torture, murder and racketeering in a bid to keep their grip on the city. MQM denies any link to crime and accuses paramilitary forces of a series of extra-judicial killings of its members. Akhtar was arrested on July 19 on suspicion of sheltering and providing medical treatment to alleged militants and criminals. He also faces earlier charges of inciting riots. — Reuters

INDIA PLANS SURROGACY BAN FOR FOREIGNERS, UNMARRIED COUPLES

CONCERNS ABOUT EXPLOITATION OF POOR INDIAN WOMEN

NEW DELHI: India's government yesterday approved plans to ban the booming commercial surrogacy industry, a move that would block thousands of foreign couples who flock to centers to have a baby. Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj said cabinet cleared a bill to restrict surrogacy services to local married couples, following concerns about the exploitation of young, poor Indian women who bear babies for others.

"This is a comprehensive bill to completely ban commercial surrogacy," Swaraj told reporters after the cabinet meeting. "Childless couples, who are medically unfit to have children, can take help from a close relative, which is called altruistic surrogacy," she said. Swaraj said foreign couples, along with all single or gay prospective parents, would be barred from surrogacy services in India if parliament passed the bill.

The government last year flagged the shutdown of the multi-million dollar industry, sparking an outcry from fertility specialists at the country's 2,000-odd centers. Ranks of childless foreign couples have flocked to the country in recent years looking for a cheap, legal and simple route to parenthood. But critics of the industry said a lack of legislation encouraged "rent-a-womb" exploitation of impoverished Indian women who were denied rights in surrogacy arrangements.

Swaraj said the bill would also address concerns about the welfare of the child, following reports disabled babies have been rejected by couples.

Some 2,000 infertile couples hire the wombs of Indian women to carry their embryos through to birth every year, according to the government. India, with cheap technology, skilled doctors and a steady supply of local surrogates, is one of relatively few countries where women can be paid to carry another's child.



ANAND: In this Nov 5, 2015 file photo, a couple from Britain hold their baby, born on Oct. 17 by a surrogate. — AP

Surrogacy for profit

Surrogacy for profit is illegal in many other countries. Swaraj said the ban would be introduced 10 months after the bill was passed in parliament, to allow pregnant women already in arrangements with couples time to give birth. The industry criticised the move as over the top, saying couples desperate to have children would be left with few options.

"While we need regulations to ensure that no women are forced into surrogacy, an outright ban isn't logical," Archana Dhawan Bajaj, fertility and IVF consultant at New Delhi-based Nurture Clinic, told AFP. Surrogacy mothers last year held protests against the government's

plans, saying they would be denied an income, usually about \$5,000 per pregnancy, a huge sum in India where millions live in grinding poverty.

After opening up to surrogacy in 2002, India has become one of the world's leaders, generating between \$500 million and \$2.3 billion annually, according to various estimates. Russia and some US states are among those that also allow commercial surrogacy. But India's clinics charge couples between \$20,000 and \$30,000, a fraction of the price in the United States. Thailand passed a law last year banning commercial surrogacy for foreigners after a series of high-profile scandals. — AFP



SRINAGAR: A Kashmiri Muslim man shouts pro-freedom slogans while protesting against the killing of civilian Amir Mir, outside a local hospital. — AFP

YOUTH KILLED IN NEW PROTESTS IN KASHMIR

SRINAGAR: Indian government forces fired shotguns and tear gas in India's portion of Kashmir yesterday to break up new protests demanding an end to Indian rule in the disputed Himalayan region, killing a young man and wounding at least 50 other people. Suspected rebels later hurled a grenade at patrolling police and paramilitary soldiers, injuring at least 18, three critically, police said. There was no independent confirmation of the attack.

A police officer said the clashes erupted after troops tried to stop thousands of people who defied a curfew in the southern town of Pulwama. He said the protesters hurled rocks at the troops, who fired shotguns and tear gas. The officer spoke on condition of anonymity in keeping with department policy. However, local residents said government troops swooped in on a neighborhood in

Pulwama early yesterday and vandalized a large tent shelter put up for a pro-freedom meeting and also beat up local volunteers.

A local resident, Yousuf Bhat, said the troops indiscriminately fired shotguns. He said youths retaliated later with rocks, triggering large clashes in the town. Among the injured civilians, eight were hospitalized in Kashmir's main city of Srinagar, where the young man died due to shotgun pellet injuries all over his body, police and doctors said. Several protests against Indian rule were also reported in other areas of the region. Also yesterday, Indian Home Minister Rajnath Singh arrived on two-day visit to the restive region to discuss ways to defuse some of the largest protests in Kashmir against Indian rule in recent years. The protests were sparked by the killing of a popular rebel commander on July 8. — AP

BANGLADESH ARRESTS ISLAMIST ACCUSED OF KILLING PUBLISHER

DHAKA: Bangladesh police said yesterday they had arrested six members of banned Islamist groups blamed for a series of deadly attacks, including the main suspect in the gruesome killing of a secular publisher. Moinul Islam Shamim was arrested on Tuesday night just outside the capital Dhaka for allegedly leading the fatal hacking attack on publisher Faisal Arefin Dipan in his office last year. "Shamim is the main accused in the Dipan murder. Police had announced a reward for any information leading to his arrest," deputy commissioner of Dhaka police Masruk Khaled told AFP. Shamim "admitted during interrogation" to his involvement in the October murder of Dipan who was a known publisher of books in Bangladesh by secular and atheist writers, Khaled said. Shamim is a suspected member of homegrown extremist group Ansarullah Bangla Team, which swears allegiance to a local branch of Al-Qaeda and has claimed responsibility for similar murders of about a dozen secular activists.

The elite Rapid Action Battalion also stormed two hideouts on Dhaka's outskirts and arrested five suspected members of banned Islamist outfit Jamayetul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), including one of its leaders who used to study in Canada. "They include Rasheduzzaman who took over as the JMB's regional chief recently. He studied in a Canadian university between 2006-2012," RAB spokesman Mufti Mahmud Khan told AFP of those arrested.

The government has blamed the JMB for the July 1 attack on an upmarket cafe in Dhaka in which 20 hostages, including 18 foreigners, were killed along with two policemen. Police have said Tamim Chowdhury, another senior JMB figure and a Canadian citizen of Bangladesh origin, masterminded the siege and a deadly attack on Bangladesh's largest Eid congregation a few days later. A reward has been offered for his capture.

Khan, however, could not say whether Rasheduzzaman was a Canadian citizen. The Islamic State group claimed responsibility for the siege, releasing photos from inside the cafe during the attack and of the five men who carried out the deadly assault and were shot dead at its finale. Authorities have rejected the claim, saying international jihadist networks have no presence in the world's third largest Muslim majority nation. — AFP

DUTERTE: UN PULL-OUT THREAT A 'JOKE'

MANILA: President Rodrigo Duterte has said his threat to pull the Philippines out of the United Nations for criticizing his deadly crime war was just a "joke", while attempting a light-hearted wordplay on genocide.

Duterte on Sunday said he may withdraw the Philippines from the world body after a UN human rights expert said last week his encouragement of security forces to kill drug suspects violated international law. "Can't you take a joke," Duterte told reporters on Tuesday when asked if he was serious.

Nearly 2,000 people have been killed since Duterte was sworn into office on June 30 and immediately launched his war on crime, according to the national police chief. Duterte has insisted most of the 756 people confirmed killed by police were drug suspects who resisted arrest, while the others died due to gang members waging warfare against each other. However rights groups, some lawmakers and others have said security forces are engaging in unprecedented extrajudicial killings. The US State Department also this week said it was "deeply concerned" about

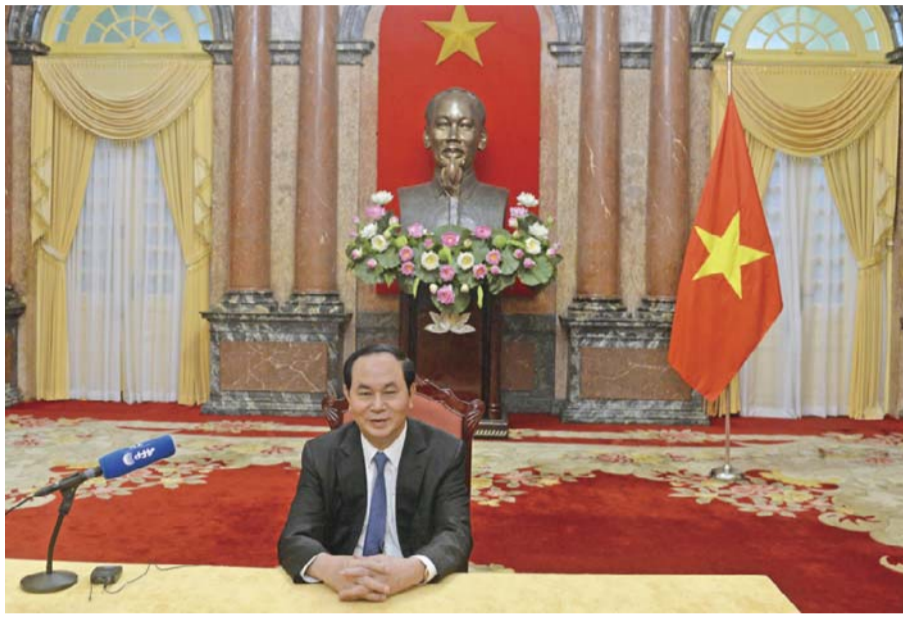
reports of extrajudicial killings. Duterte on Tuesday criticized Agnes Callamard, the UN special reporter on summary executions who said he was violating international law, branding her "ambitious" and "brainless". Duterte also said Callamard had accused him of genocide, which she did not. "That's the invention of a woman who wants to commit suicide," Duterte said, before offering his wordplay. "You can think of genocide, suicide or what, side by side, upper side, whatever, what if upper side or even upside?"

A local reporter then joined in, offering

"sunny side". Duterte smiled and said: "You reporters say that and then we will be the ones accused of saying that. You added something there." Duterte and his aides have previously cautioned reporters not to take everything the president says at face value. Duterte once promised 100,000 people would die in his war on crime with so many bodies dumped in Manila Bay that fish would grow fat from feeding on them. He also told a reporter he had personally killed three people.

During the election campaign, Duterte attracted criticism for saying he wanted to

rape a "beautiful" Australian missionary who was sexually assaulted and murdered in a Philippine prison. He later said it was not a joke, and refused to apologize. However when pressed on the issue this month in an interview with Al Jazeera, presidential spokesman Ernesto Abella said the rape comment was a joke. Abella sought to explain that Duterte's humor and abusive comments were because he was Cebuano, referring to people from the central and southern Philippines. "The Cebuano subculture speaks in a very rough kind of humor," Abella said. — AFP



HANOI: Vietnamese president Tran Dai Quang speaks during an interview with AFP at the presidential palace. — AFP

VIETNAM SEEKS SUPPORT FOR 'MARITIME FREEDOM'

HANOI: France and other countries should help to keep the peace in the disputed South China Sea, Vietnam's president told AFP yesterday, as unease grows over China's increasingly muscular approach in the key waterway. China claims most of the sea where it has built up reefs capable of hosting military equipment, sparking ire from competing claimants, including Vietnam, and raising fears of potential armed conflict. Speaking to AFP ahead of a visit by French leader Francois Hollande next month, Vietnam's President Tran Dai Quang said he hopes France and others will help to diffuse regional tensions in the waterway, which it calls the East Sea.

"We highly welcome the cooperation from France and other nations in the process of maintaining peace and stability in the region and the world and on the East Sea," he said, speaking from the presidential palace, the former residence of the Indochina governor during French colonial rule. Hanoi and Beijing have traded diplomatic barbs over disputed island chains and waters in the South China Sea and in 2014 China moved a controversial oil rig into contested territory, prompting riots in Vietnam.

The strategic waterway, also claimed by the Philippines, Brunei, Malaysia and Taiwan, is rich in energy reserves, fishery resources and is a busy shipping route. Quang's comments come after French Defence minister Jean-Yves Le Drian said in June he would ask European countries to conduct coordinated patrols in the South

China Sea. France and the United States have sent naval ships to the sea in recent months and have vowed to send more, angering Beijing. The Vietnamese president, whose role is mostly ceremonial, said Hollande's visit would help to boost military ties between the former colonial foes, as Hanoi has rapidly increased its defense budget in the last decade.

"Several directions for cooperation will be strengthened and opened, like... ensuring security, safety and freedom of maritime and aviation," Quang said in a statement to AFP after the interview. He added that Vietnam wants more unity in the regional 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), which has failed to forge a unified front against Beijing's militarization in the sea. "We have been active together with countries in the ASEAN community to increase unity, considering this an important structure to contribute to maintaining regional peace," he said.

Last month Manila won its case against Beijing at a UN-backed tribunal in the Hague which rejected China's claims to most of the sea. Beijing boycotted the hearing, and ASEAN has sidestepped the issue, failing to comment directly on it at a meeting of ministers last month. Diplomats say Beijing has deftly courted Laos and Cambodia to split the bloc and blunt unified criticism. France and Vietnam signed a strategic partnership agreement in 2013, which included boosted defense cooperation. — AFP

N KOREA TEST-FIRES SUBMARINE LAUNCHED MISSILE NEAR JAPAN

STEP FORWARD FOR ITS NUCLEAR STRIKE AMBITIONS

SEOUL: North Korea yesterday test-fired a submarine-launched missile 500 kilometers towards Japan, marking what weapons analysts called a clear step forward for its nuclear strike ambitions. The flight distance, which was tracked by South Korea's military Joint Chiefs of Staff, far exceeded any previous SLBM tests, suggesting significant progress in technical prowess. A proven SLBM system would take North Korea's nuclear strike threat to a new level, allowing deployment far beyond the Korean peninsula and a "second-strike" capability in the event of an attack on its military bases.

"While there are still a lot of questions about the details, this test certainly seems to have been successful," said Jeffrey Lewis, director of the East Asia Nonproliferation Program at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies in California. "This system is still in development, but North Korea is clearly making progress," Lewis told AFP. South Korea's Yonhap news agency cited a military source as saying yesterday's launch had been made at an acute angle to limit the missile's range. If fired at the optimum angle, it could cover more than 1,000km, the source said.

Current UN resolutions prohibit North Korea from any use of ballistic missile technology, but Pyongyang has continued to carry out numerous launches following its fourth nuclear test in January. South Korea has responded by agreeing to deploy a sophisticated US anti-missile system known as THAAD—a move that has seriously strained relations with North Korea's main diplomatic ally, China.

'Effective countermeasure'

Lewis noted that an SLBM was an "effective countermeasure" to THAAD, and other missile systems with forward-looking radars, since the submarine can launch the missile from behind the radar. Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said yesterday's missile breached his country's Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) and condemned what he called an "unforgivable, reckless act".

Earlier this month, North Korea fired a land-launched ballistic missile directly into Japanese-controlled waters for the first time, drawing an outraged response from Tokyo. The latest test came just days after North Korea threatened a pre-emptive nuclear strike against South Korea and US forces who kicked off their annual "Ulchi Freedom"



SEOUL: A South Korean army soldier aims his machine gun during an anti-terror drill as part of Ulchi Freedom Guardian exercise at the National Assembly. — AP

military drill on Monday. Seoul and Washington insist such joint exercises are purely defensive in nature, but Pyongyang views them as willfully provocative.

The South's Joint Chiefs of Staff statement said that the North was clearly bent on escalating tensions and said the SLBM test posed a "serious challenge" to security on the Korean peninsula. "We will deal strongly and sternly with any provocation by the North," it said. Washington also condemned the test and Pentagon spokesman Gary Ross said US commitment to the defense of allies South Korea and Japan remained "ironclad".

Beijing expressed its opposition to North Korea's nuclear and missile development hours after Pyongyang's missile launch. "China is opposed to North Korea's nuclear and missile development process and any actions that trigger tensions on the Korean peninsula," Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said yesterday after a meeting with the foreign ministers of Japan and South Korea in Tokyo. The Ulchi Freedom drill plays

out a scenario of full-scale invasion by the nuclear-armed North. It is largely computer-simulated but still involves around 50,000 Korean and 25,000 US soldiers. The exercise always triggers a rise in tensions, and coincided this year with a particularly volatile period in cross-border relations following a series of high-profile defections. Last week North Korea's deputy ambassador to Britain, Thae Yong-Ho, defected to the South—a rare and damaging loss of diplomatic face for Pyongyang and a major PR victory for Seoul.

In comments clearly aimed at riling Pyongyang, South Korean President Park Geun-Hye said the "unpredictability" of supreme leader Kim Jong-Un's character intensifies the dangers of further North Korean provocations.

North Korea has conducted a number of SLBM tests—most recently in April and July—with varying degrees of success. Previous flight distances have not exceeded 30 kilometers, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff statement acknowledged that yesterday's test showed a marked improvement. — AFP

WOMAN DIES IN AUSTRALIAN 'ALLAHU AKBAR' STABBING

SYDNEY: A young British woman died and a man was critically injured when a French national allegedly stabbed three people while saying "Allahu Akbar" at an Australian backpacker's hostel, police said yesterday. Police are investigating the murder, which occurred late Tuesday in Home Hill, a rural town south of Townsville in far north Queensland state, but could not say whether the alleged attacker had been radicalized.

The motivations behind the stabbings, which left a 30-year-old British man in a critical condition and a local man with non-life threatening injuries, were still unknown, Deputy Commissioner Steve Gollschewski said. "Initial inquiries indicate that comments which may be construed of being of an extremist nature were made by the alleged offender," he said. It is alleged that the suspect used the phrase 'Allahu Akbar' during the attack and when arrested by police, he said.

"While this information will be factored

into the investigation we are not ruling out any motivations at this stage, whether they be political or criminal," he added. Gollschewski said investigators would also consider whether mental health or drug misuse were factors in the incident in which a dog was also fatally injured. Police said the Frenchman, who had been in Australia since March, allegedly said "Allahu Akbar" (God is greatest) both during the attack and his arrest, which were reportedly witnessed by about 30 people at the hostel.

When asked if the 29-year-old had links to the so-called Islamic State group, Gollschewski said "no" and added that there was no ongoing threat to the community. "At this stage there's no indications... other than the fact he was acting alone," Australian Federal Police Commander Sharon Cowden added at the same press conference. "It is a shocking incident and the community should remain vigilant. He was lawfully in Australia and at this stage he is not known to any authorities." — AFP

FORMER UN CHIEF TO COUNSEL MYANMAR ON RAKHINE STATE

YANGON: Former UN chief Kofi Annan will advise Myanmar's new government on resolving conflicts in Rakhine, a region divided on religious grounds and home to the stateless Muslim Rohingya, it was announced yesterday. The country's western state is deeply scarred by bouts of sectarian bloodshed in 2012 that forced more than 100,000 Rohingya into squalid displacement camps.

The Rohingya, a minority in overwhelmingly Buddhist Myanmar, are denied citizenship and face severe restrictions on their movements and access to health care and other basic services. Finding a solution for the group, who are reviled by Buddhist nationalists, has posed a tough challenge to the new civilian administration led by Aung San Suu Kyi. The veteran democracy activist has come under fire from international rights groups for failing publicly to address the plight of the Rohingya as she seeks to avoid stoking further

unrest over the sensitive issue.

On Wednesday her office announced the formation of an advisory panel that will be chaired by former UN secretary general Annan and focus on "finding lasting solutions to the complex and delicate issues in the Rakhine State". A spokesman for the Kofi Annan Foundation confirmed the news and said the Nobel laureate would travel to Myanmar in early September. The nine-member commission will submit recommendations to the government on "conflict prevention, humanitarian assistance, rights and reconciliation, institution-building and promotion of development of Rakhine State," said a statement from Suu Kyi's office. It did not mention the Rohingya by name. Hard line Buddhists reject the term and insist the nearly one-million strong group are illegal immigrants from neighboring Bangladesh, even though many have lived in Myanmar for generations. — AFP



PATTANI: A forensics unit inspects the site of a deadly bomb blast from previous night outside of a hotel. — AFP

ONE DEAD, DOZENS WOUNDED IN LATEST THAI CAR BOMBING

PATTANI: A car bomb exploded in a nightlife district in Thailand's deep south, killing one and wounding more than 30, in a nation already on edge after a bombing spree that targeted tourist towns. The latest blast struck late Tuesday outside a hotel in Pattani, one of three Muslim-majority southern provinces battered by a long-running and shadowy rebellion against the Buddhist-majority state. "So far there is one killed and more than 30 injured," Major General Thanongsak Wangsupa, Pattani provincial police commander, told AFP yesterday. "The hotel building was considerably damaged."

Pictures showed fires burning on the road outside the hotel's shattered facade, with police picking through the rubble. Nearby a car was destroyed, with karaoke bars, massage parlors and restaurants also damaged. Pattani is not popular with tourists, but analysts said the militants were sending a message after coordinated bomb and arson attacks struck multiple resort towns on August 11-12, leaving four dead and 37 injured including Europeans.

Heightened concerns

Those attacks heightened concerns Thailand's southern insurgency may have spread north after

years of stalled peace talks—a theory the country's junta has downplayed given the importance of tourism to the economy. The entertainment district hit by the car bomb is one of only a handful in the restive south, offering bars, a disco and prostitution, said Don Pathan, a security analyst based in the region. "It's the type of place that society around here frowns upon," he said.

The southern rebels focus most of their attacks on security officers and symbols of the state, but they do occasionally strike nightlife venues. "The campaign against social evil is not very high on the agenda of the insurgents here. Their strategy right now is to make the area as ungovernable as possible," Pathan told AFP. Speaking to reporters after the Pattani hotel blast, Thailand's deputy junta leader Prawit Wongsuwan again dismissed any link between the tourist town attacks earlier this month and the southern insurgency. He also said any negotiations with the rebels would be shelved until violence subsides. "All violence must first stop before we can set the terms of reference for talks. They need to show their sincerity," he said.

The 90-kilogramme bomb was hidden inside a stolen hospital vehicle and detonated shortly after a

smaller explosive at a nearby bar. The first blast did not cause any injuries. "The car was parked in front of the hotel lobby for a few minutes after first bomb went off and people were not suspicious because it was a hospital vehicle," said Colonel Pramote Prom-in, a southern army spokesman. The so-called "double tap" tactic is often adopted by the southern insurgents and was used in many of the recent attacks on tourist sites further north. A staff member at Pattani's local hospital said 32 people were injured, five of them critically. All are Thai nationals, the worker added, asking not to be named.

Zachary Abuza, an expert on Southeast Asian militant groups, said car bombs are a standard insurgent tactic but Tuesday night's blast was the largest he had seen in recent months.

"They're clearly trying to send a signal that with the post-Mothers' Day bombing spree they are able to hit major urban areas," he told AFP, referring to the recent attacks on tourist sites that he believes were the work of the insurgents. Most embassies warn nationals against all travel to Pattani because of the long-running rebellion. Thailand annexed the culturally distinct zone bordering Malaysia over a century ago. — AFP

STONING RITUAL TO BE SHORTENED

Continued from Page 1

He did not elaborate on how the new time restrictions would reduce the potential for overcrowding. In another crowd control move, pilgrims are not allowed to circumbulate the holy Kaaba one hour before or after regular prayers at the Grand Mosque when they begin their hajj, Saudi Gazette and Arab News said. This year's pilgrimage begins on Sept 9 but hundreds of thousands have already arrived from around the world. It is among the five pillars of Islam and every capable Muslim must perform it at least once in a lifetime. The 2015 stampede was the worst disaster in hajj history. It occurred outside the five-storey Jamarat Bridge, a structure resembling a huge parking garage which hosts the stoning ritual and cost more than \$1 billion to

build. It is almost one kilometre long and allows 300,000 pilgrims an hour to carry out the ritual. Pilgrims blamed the stampede on police road closures and poor management of the flow of hundreds of thousands of pilgrims in searing temperatures. Crown Prince Mohammed bin Nayef, the interior minister who also chairs the hajj committee, ordered a probe immediately after the disaster but there has been no word on its findings. However, officials have announced a number of safety measures including the revised stoning schedules. At least 2,297 pilgrims died during the stampede on September 24, according to data from foreign officials, some of whom expressed concerns about difficulty in identifying the victims. Saudi Arabia issued a death toll of 769. — AFP

TURKISH TANKS ROLL INTO SYRIA, CAPTURE...

Continued from Page 1

Turkish F-16 fighter jets, backed by US-led coalition war planes, also hit targets inside Syria. A dozen Turkish tanks then rolled into Syria in support of Syrian opposition fighters who had also crossed, with 1,500 of them now in the area according to state media. The rapidity of the advance was stunning and in complete contrast to the long-grinding battles where Kurdish forces had taken towns in northern Syria like Kobane and Manbij from IS. As well as tanks, an AFP photographer in the area of Karkamis opposite Jarabulus saw several smaller military vehicles believed to be carrying the pro-Ankara Syrian rebels. Security sources quoted by Turkish television said a small contingent of special forces had travelled into Syria to secure the area before the larger ground operation. The effects of one air raid on the northern outskirts of Jarabulus were easily visible, sending up a cloud of black smoke and sand. Turkey wants to show it is serious about taking on IS, which has been blamed for a string of attacks inside the country - the latest a weekend attack on a Kurdish wedding in Gaziantep that left 54 people dead, many of them children. Ankara was long accused of turning a blind eye to the rise of IS in Syria and even aiding its movements to-and-fro across the border, claims the government had always vehemently denied. Turkey has long been alarmed about the activities inside Syria of the People's Protection Units (YPG) militia, which Washington sees as an ally but Ankara regards as a terror group. But Biden yesterday said Washington had made clear to pro-Kurdish forces in Syria

that they must not cross west of the Euphrates River. "They cannot, will not and under no circumstances (will) get American support if they do not keep that commitment. Period," he said. Saleh Moslem, head of the Democratic Union Party (PYD), the YPG's political wing, tweeted that Turkey was now in the "Syrian quagmire" and would be "defeated" like IS. But a senior US administration official said Washington had already been "syncing up" with Turkey for the operation and US advisors had been in a planning cell. Erdogan said the operation was aimed against both IS and PYD - "terror groups that continuously threaten our country in northern Syria". "We have said 'enough is enough'... This now needs to be resolved," he said. The Turkish air strikes were the first since a November crisis with Russia sparked when the Turkish air force downed one of Moscow's warplanes. A dozen IS targets were destroyed in yesterday's air strikes. Turkish artillery meanwhile destroyed 70 IS targets, according to Turkish television. The movements have come at a critical juncture for Turkey in Syria's five-and-a-half-year war, with signs growing it is on the verge of a landmark policy shift. Ankara has always called for the removal of President Bashar Al-Assad, putting Turkey at odds with his main supporters Iran and Russia. However Prime Minister Binali Yildirim acknowledged at the weekend for the first time that Assad was one of the "actors" in Syria and may need to stay on as part of a transition. But in a note of discord, Russia said it was "deeply concerned" at the situation on the border warning of a "further degeneration of the situation". Assad's government - which has long had little sway in this region - condemned the incursion as a "flagrant violation" of its sovereignty. — AFP

HABITABLE PLANET FOUND IN NEARBY SOLAR...

Continued from Page 1

An exoplanet is any planet outside our Solar System. Lead author Guillem Anglada-Escude, an astronomer at Queen Mary University London, described the find as the "experience of a lifetime". Working with European Southern Observatory telescopes in the north Chilean desert, his team used the so-called Doppler method to detect Proxima b and describe its properties. The professional star-gazers spent 60 consecutive days earlier this year looking for signs of gravitational pull on its host star, Proxima Centauri. Regular shifts in the star's light spectrum - repeating every 11.2 days - gave a tantalizing clue. They revealed that the star alternately moved towards and away from our Solar System at the pace of a leisurely stroll, about five kilometers per hour. After cross-checking an inconclusive 2000-2014 dataset and eliminating other possible causes, the researchers determined that the tug of an orbiting planet was responsible for this tiny to-and-fro. "Statistically, there is no doubt," Anglada-Escude told journalists in a briefing. "We have found a planet around Proxima Centauri." Proxima b is a mere four light years from the Solar System, meaning that it is essentially in our backyard on the scale of our galaxy, the Milky Way. It has a mass around 1.3 times that of Earth, and orbits about seven million kilometres from its star. A planet so near to our Sun - 21 times closer than Earth - would be an unlivable white-hot ball of fire. But Proxima Centauri is a so-called red dwarf, meaning a star that burns at a lower temperature. As a result, the newly discovered planet is in a "Goldilocks" sweet spot: Neither so hot that water evaporates, nor so cold that it freezes solid. But liquid water is not the only essential ingredient for the emergence of life. An atmosphere is also required, and on that score the researchers are still in the dark. It all depends, they say, on how Proxima b evolved as a

planet. "You can come up with formation scenarios that end up with an Earth-like atmosphere, a Venus-like atmosphere" - 96 percent carbon dioxide - "or no atmosphere at all," said co-author Ansgar Reiners, an expert on "cold" stars at the University of Goettingen's Institute of Astrophysics in Germany. Computer models suggest the planet's temperature, with an atmosphere, could be "in the range of minus 30 Celsius on the dark side, and 30 C on the light side," Reiners told journalists. Like the Moon in relation to Earth, Proxima b is "tidally locked", with one face always exposed to its star and the other perpetually in shadow. Emerging life forms would also have to cope with ultraviolet and X-rays bombarding Proxima b 100 times more intensely than on Earth. An atmosphere would help deflect these rays, as would a strong magnetic field. But even high doses of radiation do not preclude life, especially if we think outside the box, scientists say. "We have to be very open-minded as to what we call 'life'," Jean Schneider, an expert on exoplanets at the Observatoire de Paris, told AFP. Some 3,500 exoplanets have been discovered since the first confirmed sighting in 1995. Most of these distant worlds - like our own Jupiter and Neptune - are composed of gas, an inhospitable environment for life. Even the 10 percent that do have rocky surfaces are mostly too cold or too hot to host water in liquid form. And - until today - the handful that are in a temperate zone are effectively beyond reach. Last year, for example, NASA unveiled Kepler 452b, a planet about 60 percent larger than Earth that could have active volcanoes, oceans, sunshine like ours, and a year lasting 385 days. But at a distance of 1,400 light-years, humankind would have little hope of reaching this Earth-twin any time soon. By comparison, Proxima b is a stone's throw away, though still too far away for humans to visit with present-generation chemical rockets. "This is a dream for astronomers if we think about follow up observations," said Reiners. — AFP

POWERFUL ITALY QUAKE KILLS 120

Continued from Page 1

The devastated area is just north of L'Aquila, the city where some 300 people died in another quake in 2009. More than half of the deaths occurred in and around the villages of Amatrice, Accumoli and Arquata del Tronto. Guido Bordo, 69, lost his sister and her husband after they were trapped inside their holiday house in the hamlet of Illica, near Accumoli. "There's no sound from them, we only heard their cats," he told AFP before the deaths were confirmed. "I wasn't here. As soon as the quake happened, I rushed here. They managed to pull my sister's children out, they're in hospital now," he added, wringing his hands in anguish. Sergio Camosi escaped in his underwear with his wife and daughter just before his house caved in. "We ran down the stairs but the door was blocked by stones so we had to climb out the window," he said tearfully. Among the victims was a nine-month-old baby girl whose parents survived, an 18-month-old toddler and two other young children who died with their parents in Accumoli. Two boys aged four and seven were saved by their quick-thinking grandmother, who ushered them under a bed as soon as the shaking began, according to reports. She also survived but lost her husband. And there were sobs in Illica when two sisters were reunited with their poodle, Lello, pulled alive from their abandoned house. It was Italy's most powerful earthquake since the 2009 disaster in L'Aquila. "Half the village has disappeared," said Amatrice mayor Sergio Pirozzi, surveying a town centre that looked as if it had been subjected to a bombing raid. Pope Francis interrupted his weekly audience in St Peter's Square to express his shock. "To hear the mayor of Amatrice say his village no longer exists and knowing that there are children among the victims, is very upsetting for me," he said. Civil Protection chief Fabrizio Curcio classed the quake as "severe". The shocks were strong enough to be felt 150 km away in Rome, where authorities ordered structural tests on the Colosseum. Some of the worst damage was suffered in Pescara del Tronto, a hamlet near Arquata in the Marche region where the bodies of the dead were laid out in a children's play park. With residents advised not to go

back into their homes, temporary campsites were being established in Amatrice and Accumoli as authorities looked to find emergency accommodation for more than 2,000 people. Amatrice is a hilltop beauty spot famed as the home of amatriciana, one of Italy's favorite pasta sauces, and is a popular destination for Romans seeking cool mountain air at the height of the summer. It was packed with visitors when the quake struck at 3:36am (0136 GMT). Three minutes later the clock on the village's 13th-century tower stopped. The first quake measured 6.2, according to the United States Geological Survey (USGS), which said it occurred at a shallow depth of 10 km. It measured 6.0 according to Italian monitors, who put the depth at only four km. A 5.4-magnitude aftershock followed an hour later. Separately, a powerful 6.8 magnitude earthquake struck central Myanmar yesterday, killing at least three people and damaging nearly 200 pagodas in the famous ancient capital of Bagan, officials said. The quake, which the US Geological Survey said hit at a depth of 84 km, was also felt across neighboring Thailand, India and Bangladesh, sending panicked residents rushing onto the streets. Two girls, aged 7 and 15, were killed in Magway region where the quake struck, according to Myanmar's Ministry of Information. A collapsed building in a nearby town also killed a 22-year-old man and injured one woman, local police told AFP. Heavy damage was also reported in Bagan - Myanmar's most famous archaeological site and a major tourist destination 30 km north of the quake's epicenter. Some 171 of the city's more than 2,500 Buddhist monuments were damaged by the tremors, according to a statement posted by the Ministry of Religious and Cultural Affairs on Facebook. "Some were seriously damaged," Aung Kyaw, the local director of Bagan's culture department, told AFP. Photos showed clouds of dust billowing around some of the site's larger temples, with bricks crumbling down their tiered facades. A police officer from Bagan said a Spanish holidaymaker was slightly hurt when the quake knocked her from the temple where she was watching the sunset. Scaling Bagan's ancient structures to watch the sun set over the vast plain of pagodas is a daily ritual among tourists and local pilgrims. — Agencies

FRANCE BURKINI FUROR HEATS UP

Continued from Page 1

The police issued her with a fine and she then left the beach, the officials added. The bans, which follow a string of jihadist attacks around France, including a massacre in Nice on Bastille Day last month, have sparked a heated debate about Muslim integration and French secular values. While presented by the mayors as necessary to defend secularism and public order faced with rare sightings of burkinis on French beaches, police have also fined women for being fully clothed and having their heads covered, out of the water. On Tuesday, a 34-year-old mother, who gave her name only as Siam, told AFP she was fined on the beach for wearing leggings, a tunic and a headscarf. "I had no intention of swimming," the woman, who was accompanied by her children at the time, said. A witness to the scene, journalist Mathilde Cusin, said some onlookers had applauded the police and shouted at Siam to "go home". Kbibech referred to her case in a statement ahead of his meeting with Cazeneuve. The CFCM was "concerned over the direction the public debate is taking," citing the "growing fear of stigmatisation of Muslims in France", he said. The

photos of the woman on the beach in Nice, first published by Britain's Daily Mail, caused a furor on Twitter, with the hashtag #WTFFrance becoming a top trending topic. "Just let this sink in. Men with guns forcing a woman to undress, with the weight of the law behind them," read a tweet by user Abdel-Azim, who is described as the editor of a religious magazine, which was retweeted more than 26,000 times. "I am so ashamed," French feminist Caroline De Haas tweeted. Today, France's highest administrative court, the Council of State, will examine a request by the Human Rights League (LDH) to scrap the ban. Lower courts have upheld the bans, with a tribunal in Nice - 0 where a Tunisian radical used a truck to mow down a crowd of Bastille Day revellers on July 14 - said the burkini could "be felt as a defiance or a provocation exacerbating tensions felt by" the community. France enforces a strict form of secularism, aimed at keeping religion out of public life. Islamic dress has long been a subject of debate in the country, which was the first in Europe to ban the Islamic face veil in public in 2010, six years after outlawing the headscarf and other conspicuous religious symbols in state schools. However, ordinary citizens are allowed to wear the headscarf in public. — AFP

SAUDI POLICE FOIL MOSQUE BOMBING

Continued from Page 1

Two suspects tried to flee but were detained. Officers found guns and a suicide belt with more than seven kilograms of explosives, the ministry said in a separate statement. "They were trained by Daesh elements abroad to target, in a suicide operation, Al-Saif Restaurant and Cafe in Tarot" neighboring Qatif, the ministry said, using an Arabic acronym for the Islamic State (IS) group. Initial investigation identified the suspects as Abdullah Al-Ghunaimi, 27, of Saudi Arabia, and Hussein Mohammed Ali, 24, of Syria. "They were to implement the operation at 11:00 pm the same day," the statement said. "Investigations so far reveal that two other Syrians are involved and have been arrested." On July 4, a Pakistani resident of the kingdom blew himself up near the United States consulate in the Red Sea city of Jeddah, wounding two policemen. It was

one of three separate attacks throughout the kingdom that day. One occurred at a Shiite mosque in Qatif, leaving the body parts of three people. Near Islam's second holiest site, the Prophet's Mosque in Madinah, four people died in another suicide blast. No group claimed responsibility but CIA director John Brennan said the three bombings bore the "hallmark" of the IS group of Sunni extremists. Since late 2014 IS has claimed a series of bombings and shootings targeting Shiites in the Sunni-majority kingdom, as well as the security forces. Dozens of victims were killed, largely in Eastern Province, home to most of the country's Shiites. Authorities arrested 19 people, including 12 Pakistani nationals, after the July attacks. In another incident this month, a Yemeni accused of running over and stabbing a policeman in the southwestern region of Asir had pledged allegiance to IS, the interior ministry said. — AFP



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3 OLYMPIC WEIGHTLIFTING GOLD MEDALISTS FAIL DOPING RETESTS

BUDAPEST: Three Olympic champion weightlifters from China and eight other medalists stand to be stripped of their titles after failing retests of their doping samples from the 2008 Olympics. The International Weightlifting Federation says the 11 tested positive for a range of banned substances in the latest scandal to shake the sport, which is already processing retests which caught numerous medalists from the 2008 and

2012 games. They are all provisionally suspended until the doping cases are resolved. The IWF said in a statement on its website Wednesday that Chinese gold medalists Cao Lei, Liu Chunhong and Chen Xiexia all tested positive for GHRP-2, which stimulates growth hormone production, while Liu also tested positive for the stimulant sibutramine. The other eight medalists include cur-

rent world record holder Andrei Rybakov of Belarus, who won silver in 2008. All tested positive for various anabolic steroids, according to the IWF. The other medalists are Anastasia Novikova of Belarus, Kazakhstan's Maria Grabovetskaya and Irina Nekrasova, Russia's Khadzhimurat Akkaev and Dmitry Lapikov, and Ukraine's Natalya Davydova and Olha Korobka. Four other weightlifters from Beijing

2008 who did not win medals were also named as having failed tests. They include Kazakhstan's Maiya Maneza and Belarus' Iryna Kulesha, both of whom won medals in 2012 but not 2008 and are already suspended over retests from 2012. A further 10 lifters who competed at the 2008 Olympics, including five medalists, had already been suspended in June and July after failing an earlier wave of

retests. One medal, the silver won by Turkey's Sibel Ozkan in the women's 48-kilogram class, has already been stripped. The retests are part of an ongoing process led by the International Olympic Committee. Weightlifting at this month's Rio Olympics has also been marred by doping, with Kyrgyzstan's Izzat Artykov losing his bronze medal after testing positive. —AP

CELEBRATING OLYMPIC GOLDS, NORTH KOREA VOWS TO BE SPORTS POWER

PYONGYANG: Despite claiming only two gold medals in Rio, North Korea is as determined as ever to fulfill one of leader Kim Jong Un's primary goals: To become an international sports superpower. North Korea's small Olympic team won its two golds in weightlifting, where it has a number of world-class and world-record-holding lifters, and gymnastics. Weightlifter Rim Jong Sim won the gold in the women's 75-kilogram division, while gymnast Ri Se Gwang won the men's vault. The North also won three silver and two bronze medals. "When our Rim Jong Sim stood on the podium with our national anthem playing, she cried and my

mother and I cried, too, as we watched on TV," Ri Yun Gum, an 18-year-old government worker, said Monday in Pyongyang as the Rio games were coming to a close. "I think our athletes are able to win not just because they train hard, but because of their mental toughness." The performance was a tad shy of expectations, since North Korea had four golds in London. But transforming North Korea, which has very limited economic resources and a population of only about 25 million,

into a player to be reckoned with on the global sports stage is one of Kim's pet projects, and he has poured funds into the development and training of promising athletes over the past several years. It has already made a visible mark on Pyongyang. The relatively affluent capital has seen the rise of a number of major new or renovated sports venues, and each year its usually restricted streets are opened for the Pyongyang Marathon, which has become a major tourist attraction. Though pickup volleyball games and football matches in schoolyards have long been a staple in the city, it's now a common sight to see young people out jog-

ging or even canoeing on the two main rivers that run through Pyongyang. And while South Korea lets its top athletes get out of military service as a gold medal reward, elite athletes returning home to the North after winning international competitions often get a hero's welcome - and maybe a condo. Of course, Pyongyang's push to garner international prestige and generate national pride by winning medals isn't terribly original. It appears to have been pulled straight out of the playbook of former Soviet bloc countries like East Germany, and is similar to the strong political significance sports are still given in Russia and China, North Korea's two biggest historical backers. But the campaign is also seen as part of Kim's effort to make North Korea a more modern nation. "There are two reasons why sports are important," Jang Sok Ha, manager of the newly opened Pyongyang Sports Equipment Factory, told The Associated Press on Monday. "People in good health can work harder, but they also need cultural rest and recreation."



PYONGYANG: Youths play with a ball during a break at Pyongyang International Football School in Pyongyang, North Korea, yesterday. North Korea has poured funds into the development and training of promising athletes over the past several years in an effort to fulfill one of leader Kim Jong Un's primary goals to become a country be reckoned with on the global sports stage. —AP

mother and I cried, too, as we watched on TV," Ri Yun Gum, an 18-year-old government worker, said Monday in Pyongyang as the Rio games were coming to a close. "I think our athletes are able to win not just because they train hard, but because of their mental toughness." The performance was a tad shy of expectations, since North Korea had four golds in London. But transforming North Korea, which has very limited economic resources and a population of only about 25 million,

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THE HAGUE: Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte (L) receives the medal winners who took part at the Olympics in Rio 2016, in The Hague, yesterday. —AFP



SYDNEY: Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull looks at the bronze medal of Australian Olympic team member Jessica Fox (L) during the welcome ceremony of the Rio Olympic team in Sydney yesterday. Australia set aside squabbles over under-performing athletes to welcome home the Rio games team as heroes. —AFP

AUSTRALIA SETS ASIDE WOES FOR RIO 'CHAMPIONS' WELCOME

SYDNEY: Australia set aside squabbles over under-performing athletes yesterday to welcome home the Rio Olympics team as heroes. Generous public funding for a return of just half the expected medal tally Australia's worst performance since Barcelona in 1992 — have sparked recriminations. But Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull made light of such woes in leading the tributes at a packed ceremony in an aircraft hangar at Sydney airport. "Every single one of you is a champion," he told the cheering crowd. "Our performance is not just measured by the final medal tally. We are committed to supporting Australian sport, both our participants at the grassroots level, the young boys and girls starting out, and elite athletes like yourselves," Turnbull said. Australia finished 10th on the medals table with eight gold, 11 silver and 10 bronze medals. "On behalf of all Australians, congratulations... welcome home, well done," the prime minister added. Chef de mission Kitty Chiller, who had to explain so many failures and missteps to

the public, was equally positive. "Our 421 athletes went to Rio and did their absolute best and that is all that we ever asked of anyone," she said. "This was a games where we demonstrated the strength of our youth. Sixty-five percent of our team were Olympic rookies and 43 percent were under the age of 25," Chiller said, looking forward to Tokyo 2020. "Our Olympic team is not just about medals. Our team culture and respect for one another has been a key part of this journey." Chiller admitted that "Rio certainly had its challenges" after the Australian team at first refused to move into sub-standard accommodation, but added: "The village was the best ever, eventually." The end of the games saw relations fracture between the Australian Olympic Committee and the government-funded Australian Sports Commission (ASC) in a stormy debate over the appointment of businessmen as heads of Olympic sports. Australia's highly ranked swimmers were at the vanguard of medal hopes but came away with just three gold. —AP

BRAZILIAN POLICE SAY EVIDENCE LINKS HICKEY TO TICKET SCAM

RIO DE JANEIRO: Brazilian police say they have uncovered evidence linking the detained head of the Olympic Council of Ireland Patrick Hickey to a Rio Games ticket scam. Hickey, 71, also head of the European Olympic Committees and an International Olympic Committee (IOC) member, has been held in a Brazilian top security prison since police raided his Rio hotel on August 15 during the Olympics as part of their probe into the affair. Warrants for the arrest of four others were issued including Marcus Evans, a British businessman who is also the chairman of Ipswich football club in England. "The analysis of the pieces of evidence, and above all of the emails, confirm that the president of the Irish Olympic Committee, Patrick (Hickey), was in direct contact with Marcus Evans, who is the head of THG," Rio police investigator Ricardo Barbosa told a Rio press conference Tuesday. He said the British company THG, a hospitality firm, "was the organizer of this criminal system that consists in the illegal sale of tickets at prices much higher than the official price, under cover of a hospitality programme." Hickey and another suspect Kevin Mallon, arrested on August 5, are being

held at Rio's Bangu 10 prison while arrest warrants had been issued for seven others who are on the run including Evans, police said. The scandal has been mounting since the arrest of Mallon, an Irish director of THG. Police said they seized hundreds of tickets from Mallon, some of which had the Olympic Council of Ireland name on them. Tickets, including for the Rio opening ceremony with a face value of about \$1,400 were offered for sale at \$8,000. As part of the probe Rio police on Sunday raided the offices of the Irish delegation in the Rio Olympic Village and seized passports from three Irish Olympic officials. They also confiscated phones and computers, Irish officials said. Passports seized belonged to Kevin Kilty, head of the Irish delegation in Rio, Dermot Henihan, secretary general of the Olympic Council of Ireland, and Stephen Martin, police said in a statement. Evidence linked the three to the illegal ticket scam, police said. Since his arrest Hickey has "temporarily" stood down from his official positions. The International Olympic Committee has not yet launched an official investigation. —AP

AFTER RIO RISK, OLYMPIC OFFICIALS LEARN LESSONS

RIO DE JANEIRO: Taking the Olympics to Rio de Janeiro was always considered a bit of a risk. Now that South America's first games are drawing to a close, the question is: Did the gamble pay off? The answer, according to experienced Olympic officials and experts, is a mixed bag. Yes, Brazil managed to pull it off under difficult economic and political conditions, with the sports competitions, venues, athletes, friendly hosts, television images and Rio's scenic backdrops all rising to the occasion. Yet, behind the scenes, there were also troubled Olympics that fell short in other areas - empty seats, ticket fiascos, organizational mishaps, spread-out venues, green water, street crime, traffic chaos and lack of a clear Olympic feel in the parks. The Olympics on TV are never the same as the Olympics on site. That's been the case more than ever this time, reminiscent of the 1996 Games in Atlanta, where great sporting moments contrasted with lost buses, failures in the technology system

and other off-the-field problems. "This has been probably a little below the expectations of the experts, but will have televised well for the 99.9 percent of the population of the world that experiences the Olympics," senior Canadian IOC member Dick Pound said. International Olympic Committee vice president John Coates of Australia acknowledged the games have not run as smoothly as desired. "It's been difficult," he said. "To be fair, some of that was because of the economic and political background on which the games are being held." **SHORTAGES** For Olympic historian David Wallechinsky, attending his 17th games, the shortage of volunteers, lack of Olympic signage and other logistical glitches have outweighed the well-run competitions and welcoming Brazilian people. "I think these games will be seen in the continu-

um of Atlanta, Athens, Rio - the ones that didn't work out," he said. "One just hopes the lessons are learned." But the games must be judged from a local perspective. Many Brazilians and Rio residents - known as Cariocas - will feel pride over how they've put on the world's biggest sports event and will cherish their moments on the global stage. And, for the host country, the games are ending on a delirious high-with a gold medal in men's soccer. Brazilian fans wanted more than anything to finally win the top Olympic prize that has eluded them in their national sport. Rio Mayor Eduardo Paes said the Olympics have been a catalyst for building new public transport lines and renovating the port area, insisting that no white elephants will be left behind. Comparing Rio to the richer cities that lost out for the 2016 Games would be misguided, he said. "We come from a tropical experience, the Latin ways of Brazil, which sometimes made the IOC

members a little bit crazy," Paes said. "If you want to be fair to Rio, you cannot compare us to Tokyo, to Chicago, to Madrid. These are cities that have much better infrastructure. They come from developed countries. You have to compare Rio to Rio." When Rio was chosen as host city seven years ago, IOC members were convinced the time had come to take the games to South America. Brazil was a rising economic force at the time. But local organizers quickly fell behind in preparations and were forced into an Athens-like mad dash to catch up. Then, over the last two years, the economy plummeted into its worst recession in 80 years, the country was engulfed by a massive corruption scandal centering on the state-run oil company Petrobras, and the president was suspended and sent for impeachment. "It's also a games in the middle of reality, not organized in a bubble," IOC President Thomas Bach said Saturday. "They were games in a city where

there are social problems and social divisions. ... The IOC has shown that it is possible to organize games also in countries which are not at the top of the GDP rankings." **EMBARRASSING SETBACKS** The athletes produced the goods - Bolt with three more gold medals to take his career tally to nine, Michael Phelps with five more golds for a total of 23, and gymnast Simone Biles with four golds. But the games also were marred by the bad behavior - and concocted stories - of Ryan Lochte and his US swimming teammates. For all the drumbeat of bad news in the months ahead of the Olympics, two of the biggest issues caused barely a ripple. The Zika virus, which had led some scientists to call for the games to be postponed or moved, was hardly mentioned. Worries over Rio's sewage-filled waters did not hamper the competitions, with only a handful of athletes falling ill. —AP

ANCELOTTI DEFENDS 'TICKING TIME-BOMB' RIBERY



MUNICH: This file photo taken on July 11, 2016 shows Bayern Munich's French midfielder Franck Ribery during the first training session with new Bayern Munich's head coach Carlo Ancelotti at the club training area in the southern German city of Munich. Bayern Munich's new coach Carlo Ancelotti has defended veteran winger Franck Ribery, who has been dubbed 'a ticking time-bomb' in the German media for a string of on-field tussles. — AFP

BERLIN: Bayern Munich's new coach Carlo Ancelotti has defended veteran winger Franck Ribery, who has been dubbed 'a ticking time-bomb' in the German media after a string of on-field tussles.

Bayern start the new Bundesliga season tomorrow at home to Werder Bremen and Ancelotti says people are getting carried away in their criticism of Ribery.

"People are currently exaggerating a little in terms of Ribery," the Italian told broadcaster Sport1.

"History has shown us that he has always been a correct (well-behaved) player."

But Ribery has been involved in a series of scuffles during recent matches. The 33-year-old shoved his elbow in the face of Borussia Dortmund midfielder Felix Passlack during a challenge in

Bayern's 2-0 German Super Cup win a fortnight ago. Then at minnows Carl Zeiss Jena last Friday, the Frenchman struck a Jena defender on the head while vying for the ball in a 5-0 romp in the first-round of the German Cup.

He also pushed over Inter Milan's Felipe Melo during a match on Bayern's pre-season tour of the USA in July.

Ribery, whose contract expires in June, was not sent off for any of the fouls, only booked for the incidents with Melo and Passlack.

Ex-Bundesliga referee Thorsten Kinhofer described Ribery as a "ticking time-bomb". "Sure, he gets fouled a lot, but he is also easily irritated," Kinhofer added in German daily Bild.

"The opponents try to make use of that by provoking him. It can also be tactics. The question is whether he's willing to learn at his age."

But Ancelotti says the matter should be put to bed as Bayern attempt to win a fifth straight league title in his first season in charge after replacing Pep Guardiola.

"I think we should forget the matter and leave it at that," he said.

"He (Ribery) has trained well and is ready to start the new season." Meanwhile, Ancelotti has said Bayern's veteran captain Philipp Lahm, 32, who has a contract until 2018, could emulate Italian icon Paolo Maldini, who won the Champions League in 2007 with AC Milan at the age of 39.

"And he (Maldini) did that with big health problems, especially his knees," said Ancelotti. "Lahm doesn't have those, he is fit, trains very well and is always the first (at training) and the last to leave. I am convinced he can play until he's 39." — AFP

WALES MANAGER EYES JOB IN EUROPE

WALES: Wales manager Chris Coleman has distanced himself from a return to the Premier League, indicating that he might prefer to work in Europe when his time in charge of the Euro 2016 semi-finalists ends.

Coleman, who has had previous spells in charge of Spanish side Real Sociedad and AEL in Greece, has been linked with the vacant position at Hull City in the Premier League.

The newly promoted side made an official approach to the Football Association of Wales (FAW) in the summer but were refused permission to talk to Coleman.

"I think everybody is under the impression that everyone wants to work in the Premier League," said Coleman, who announced Wales' first squad since their astonishing Euro 2016 campaign ended in defeat to Portugal last month.

"I want to work at the top level like everyone else, but it doesn't mean that's the Premier League. I want to work in Europe again.

"I'm happy, looking forward to this next challenge. There was an official approach

and the FAW turned it down. So that is the end of it. "With the Premier League, you look at it sideways, of course you do, but managing your national team comes around once if you're lucky. I don't think I'll have any regrets."

Coleman has included Gareth Bale, who scored twice for Real Madrid in their 3-0 win over Real Sociedad on Sunday, in the squad to face Moldova in a World Cup qualifier on Sept. 5.

"There's no surprise, scoring after about 75 seconds. He's capable of almost anything, I think Madrid are very excited about the future with him," Coleman said.

"They recognise they've got someone who will be there for a while and is capable of winning everything."

Coleman also includes Hal Robson-Kanu, another of the stars of Wales' Euro 2016 campaign, even though the striker has yet to find a club following his summer release by Reading.

"I'd like to see Hal settled, but he had an incredible campaign and he's got to get the best for Hal. There's nothing wrong with that," said Coleman. — Reuters



SHENZHEN: This file photo taken on July 28, 2016 shows Borussia Dortmund's Ousmane Dembele (R) playing the ball during the 2016 International Champions Cup football match between Manchester City and Borussia Dortmund in Shenzhen, south China's Guangdong province. Borussia Dortmund's CEO Hans-Joachim Watzke claims they beat Bayern Munich to sign French starlet Ousmane Dembele, but admits it will be harder to halt the Bavarians bid for a fifth straight German league title. — AFP

DORTMUND BEAT BAYERN TO SIGN DEMBELE: CEO

BERLIN: Borussia Dortmund's CEO Hans-Joachim Watzke claims they beat Bayern Munich to sign French starlet Ousmane Dembele, but admits it will be harder to halt the Bavarians bid for a fifth straight German league title.

The new German league season starts tomorrow with Bayern, under new head coach Carlo Ancelotti, hosting Werder Bremen at Munich's Allianz Arena while Dortmund start their Bundesliga season on Saturday at home to Mainz. Winger Dembele was voted France's Young Player of the Year last season and Dortmund paid Stade Rennes 15 million euros (\$16.9m) in the off season, beating Bayern to the 19-year-old's signature.

"At that moment, we were quicker (than Bayern), but I don't know how deep their interest was," Watzke told Sport1. "We got to him early and discovered him before he had played in the (French) league."

"He is an exceptional talent, but there is more to it than that, he has to learn the language and assimilate."

The France Under-21 international only made his French league debut for Rennes last season, but he announced himself with a superb goal for Dortmund in their 4-1 win over Manchester United during last month's tour of China. Bayern have won the German league title for each of the last four seasons since Dortmund took the 2011 and 2012 titles.

But having signed Dortmund captain Mats Hummels and Portugal midfielder Renato Sanches, the Bavarians are again clear favourites for the 2016/17 league crown with Ancelotti having replaced Pep Guardiola as head coach. "They (Bayern) have established themselves on the same level as Real Madrid, so it would be rubbish to say we'll attack Bayern," said Watzke. "You can only attack when the opponent has a

weak period." Dortmund have made eight new signings, including Dembele plus Germany forwards Andre Schuerrle and Mario Goetze.

Germany's World Cup winner is back in the black and yellow shirt after three frustrating years at Bayern, when the World Cup winner was either injured or left on the bench by ex-Munich coach Pep Guardiola. Watzke says he believes Goetze, who came up through Dortmund's youth academy, went to Bayern for the wrong reasons, especially as Guardiola had wanted to sign Brazil star Neymar, but eventually brought Barcelona's Thiago Alcantara to Munich.

"I believe the problem actually was that he (Goetze) wanted to work with Pep Guardiola more than to the club (Bayern Munich) itself," said Watzke.

"Then he realised that Guardiola had wanted to sign Neymar, that was where the misunderstanding lay." — AFP

NINE-MAN ROMA SUFFER CHAMPIONS LEAGUE WOE

BERNE: AS Roma suffered another European humiliation on Tuesday when they had two players sent off, lost 3-0 at home to Porto and missed out on the Champions League group stage.

After drawing 1-1 in Portugal in the first leg of the playoff tie, Roma started as favourites but never recovered after Felipe gave the visitors an eighth-minute lead.

They imploded completely when Daniele De Rossi and his replacement Emerson Palmieri were shown straight red cards either side of halftime.

Monaco joined Porto when they beat Villarreal 1-0 after a late penalty by Fabinho sealed a 3-1 aggregate win, and Legia Warsaw, Celtic and Ludogorets Razgrad also qualified, although none of them won on the night.

Ten-man Legia drew 1-1 at home with Irish part-timers Dundalk, but progressed 3-1 on aggregate to become the first Polish side to reach the group stage of Europe's premier club competition for 20 years. Former European champions Celtic squeezed past Hapoel Beer Sheva 5-4 on aggregate despite a 2-0 loss in Israel and Ludogorets held Viktoria Plzen 2-2 away to secure a 4-2 aggregate win.

Roma became the third successive Serie A team, and the sixth in the last eight seasons, to lose in the playoff round, leaving Italy with only two representatives - Juventus and Napoli - in Thursday's group-

stage draw. Roma have had their fair share of recent European disasters after losing 6-1 to Barcelona last season and 7-1 at home to Bayern Munich two years ago, but not even they could not have imagined how Tuesday's game would unfold.

Their initial confidence was shattered when Felipe headed Porto in front from Otavio's cross but the real trouble began in the 39th minute when midfielder De Rossi was sent off for a high tackle on Maxi Pereira.

Amid angry Roma protests, he was replaced by Palmieri who lasted only 11 minutes before he was dismissed for a shocking lunge.

Roma goalkeeper Wojciech Szczesny booked his place in rogue's gallery with a reckless charge out of his goal which allowed Miguel Layun to slot Porto's second into an empty net.

Almost immediately, Jesus Corona turned his marker inside out before scoring the third.

Dundalk, beaten 2-0 at home, made a brave effort in Poland and went ahead when Robert Benson thundered home an unstoppable volley in the 19th minute. The Irish side were given further hope when Legia's Adam Hlousek was sent off in the 67th minute, but they were caught on the break as Michal Kucharczyk levelled in stoppage time, ending their dream. — Reuters



ROME: Roma's forward Edin Dzeko of Bosnia and Herzegovina (R) vies with Porto's midfielder Danilo of Portugal during the UEFA Champions League second leg play off football match between Roma and Porto at the Olympic Stadium in Rome on Tuesday. — AFP

AFTER RIO GOLD, JONES EYES EUROS

BERLIN: Germany's new women's head coach Steffi Jones said yesterday that she plans to lift the European title next year to build on their gold at the Rio de Janeiro Olympics.

The 43-year-old ex-midfielder, who won 111 caps for Germany, has replaced Silvia Neid, who stepped down last Friday at the Rio Games after 11 successful years.

Germany handed Neid the perfect send off by winning the women's football Olympic gold for the first time thanks to a 2-1 win over Sweden at Rio's Maracana.

Victory gave Neid a golden goodbye in her last game after a successful reign, which included winning the 2007 World Cup, plus the 2009 and 2013 European championships.

The inexperienced Jones, who is preparing to take charge for the first time in next month's European qualifiers against Russia and Hungary, says her target is to win the women's Euro 2017 title in the Netherlands next August.

"If we're going to do something, we'll do it right. And that's why we want the title at the European championships next year," said Jones in Frankfurt.

Since retiring in 2007, Jones helped organise the 2011 women's World Cup in Germany and studied for her coaching licence. But with

no previous experience as a head coach, filling Neid's shoes will be a big test for her.

"It's a burden that I have already known about for a while, I know what I can do and I would not have taken the job if I thought I couldn't

have done it," she said. "For me, it's a dream job. I don't want to follow in Silvia's footsteps, but successfully continue her work with my own signature, as Steffi Jones."

Jones is a dual German and American citizen, the daughter of a

German mother and US soldier, who was raised in Frankfurt.

She was part of the squad which won the women's World Cup in 2003 and won Olympic bronze with Germany in 2000 and 2004. — AFP

HART, TOURE HANDED MAN CITY STARTS

MANCHESTER: Goalkeeper Joe Hart and midfielder Yaya Toure both make their first competitive appearances of the season in Manchester City's Champions League play-off round, second leg against Steaua Bucharest yesterday.

Both players have fallen out of favour since Pep Guardiola's appointment as manager during the close season and have been tipped to leave the club.

City are 5-0 up in the tie and all but qualified for the group phase. Guardiola has benched 29-year-old England international Hart, citing concerns about his passing ability, and selected Argentine Willy Caballero for City's first three games of the season.

Barcelona goalkeeper Claudio Bravo is reportedly close to completing a 17 million pounds (\$22.5 million, 20 million euros) transfer to City, which would leave Hart as third-choice goalkeeper.

Hart, who was handed the captain's armband for the game, has been linked with loan moves to Everton and Sevilla.

Ivory Coast midfielder Toure, 33, previously fell out of favour with Guardiola during their time at Barcelona.

Both players became stalwarts of the City team assembled following the club's takeover by the Abu Dhabi United Group in 2008.

They have contributed to two Premier League titles, two League Cup wins and the club's 2011 FA Cup success.

Meanwhile, Former Manchester United and Newcastle United winger Gabriel Obertan has joined Russian Premier League side Anzhi Makhachkala on a two-year contract, the club announced yesterday.

The 27-year-old Frenchman, who moved from Bordeaux to Manchester United in 2009, played only 14 Premier League matches for the English side.

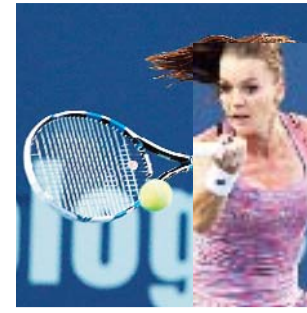
Obertan had played for Newcastle for the last five years. The winger made 77 appearances for the club in all competitions, scoring three goals, but did not feature in the first team since last September.

Newcastle announced in May that Obertan had been released after the club was relegated from the English Premier League.

Anzhi are coached by the former Czech Republic manager Pavel Vrba and the team is sixth in the table after four matches. — Agencies

Sports

Radwanska advances at Connecticut Open



S Lanka beat Australia, level ODI series 1-1



THURSDAY, AUGUST 25, 2016

AUSTRALIA SETS ASIDE WOES FOR RIO 'CHAMPIONS' WELCOME

Page 16



TOKYO: Tokyo governor Yuriko Koike (5th R), Japan Olympic Committee officials and their Rio de Janeiro Olympic squad leaders pose with flags during the official flag arrival ceremony at the Tokyo's Haneda airport yesterday. The Olympic flag arrived in Tokyo yesterday, as Japan's capital gears up to host the 2020 Games, with officials promising smooth sailing after Rio's sometimes shaky 2016 instalment. —AFP

OLYMPIC FLAG ARRIVES IN TOKYO FOR 2020 GAMES

TOKYO: The Olympic flag arrived in Tokyo yesterday as Japan's capital gears up to host the 2020 Games, with officials promising smooth sailing after Rio's sometimes shaky 2016 instalment.

Tokyo governor Yuriko Koike carried the flag during a ceremony at Haneda airport after stepping off a plane from the Brazilian host city, accompanied by a delegation who picked up a record 41 medals in Rio.

"I feel the full weight of the responsibility that this (flag) brings," Koike told the crowd. "I'm very happy that we're able to bring the flag back after more than 50 years." Tokyo last hosted the summer Olympics in 1964, highlighting Japan's post-war coming out party as it grew into a

global economic powerhouse.

"I hope we can revive the same emotion we felt in Rio at the Tokyo Olympics," said Saori Yoshida, a silver medalist wrestler and captain of the Rio delegation.

A kimono-clad Koike received the flag at the closing ceremony in Rio where thousands of fans and athletes donned ponchos on a wet and windy night for a colourful festival of Brazilian culture and music with bursts of fireworks.

Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe made a comical cameo as Nintendo video game character Super Mario as Tokyo set a light-hearted tone for its hosting of the Games in four years.

Abe came out from a pipe after a video

showed plumber Mario drilling down from Tokyo into the earth to reach Brazil.

"I wanted to show Japan's soft power to the world with the help of Japanese characters," Abe told reporters.

'PEACEFUL, RELIABLE'

Japan sold itself as a safe pair of hands to host the event and Abe pledged in Rio he would try to make it the best Games yet. But Tokyo's Olympic preparations have suffered high-profile setbacks including soaring costs and having to redesign the Games logo after accusations of plagiarism.

French prosecutors have also launched an investigation into alleged bribes linked to Tokyo's winning Olympic

bid, which organisers have denied.

Koike, who was elected in July as Tokyo's first female governor, has ordered officials to rein in ballooning costs and pledged a formal review.

That came as concerns grow over soaring costs which could potentially double or even triple from the reported original forecast of \$7.14 billion. The Games were awarded to Tokyo in 2013, with expectations that they would be a model of efficiency with the city touting itself as "peaceful, reliable, safe, and stable".

Tokyo's metropolitan conurbation is the world's largest with more than 35 million people, but streets are safe, trains run on time and the air is clean.

And with strict gun control and a public honesty visitors find disarming, few people ever experience serious crime.

The country is prone to natural disasters, particularly earthquakes, but strict building codes means they often pass with little or no damage.

The games in Brazil—which is embroiled in a political crisis over the impeachment of suspended president Dilma Rousseff—suffered its own series of setbacks.

Tourists, officials and athletes have had to dodge the scenic city's notorious street crime, structural problems inside the Olympic Village were a challenge and the Olympic diving pool turned green. —AFP

LIVERPOOL CRUISE, CHELSEA SQUEEZE IN LEAGUE CUP

LONDON: Daniel Sturridge scored twice as Liverpool strolled into the League Cup third round with a 5-0 win at Burton Albion on Tuesday, while Chelsea edged third-tier Bristol Rovers 3-2. Divock Origi, Roberto Firmino and Sturridge all scored as Liverpool, last season's beaten finalists, crushed Championship side Burton, who are managed by ex-Liverpool midfielder Nigel Clough.

Michy Batshuayi marked his full Chelsea debut with a brace against Bristol Rovers, while Victor Moses was also on target as manager Antonio Conte enjoyed a third straight competitive win.

"This was a very serious, professional display from our side," Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp told Sky Sports. "There were nice goals—nothing to criticise. It was humid today—not easy for either team."

"We gave a few players match-time because that's important. Some only got minutes in pre-season."

Premier League teams Crystal Palace, Everton, Hull City, Swansea City and Stoke City also went through, Peter Crouch scoring a hat-trick for Stoke in a 4-0 win at Stevenage.

But Watford lost 2-1 at home to third-tier Gillingham after extra time and West Bromwich Albion were beaten 4-3 on penalties by League One side Northampton Town following a 2-2 draw.

Klopp handed a debut to Cameroonian centre-back Joel Matip and welcomed back Senegalese winger Sadio Mane following a shoulder injury at Burton's Pirelli Stadium.

Mane teed up Origi to break the deadlock with a clever back-heel in the 15th minute before Nathaniel Clyne crossed for Firmino to head in the visitors' second goal.

A Tom Naylor own goal just after the hour made it 3-0 and Sturridge came off the bench to complete the rout with a late brace, tapping in James Milner's cross and slamming home from Mane's pass.

At Stamford Bridge, Batshuayi put Chelsea ahead in the 29th minute by sweeping in Nemanja Matic's cross and two minutes later Pedro Rodriguez set up Moses for a tap-in.

Batshuayi claimed a second from Ruben Loftus-Cheek's cross, but Bristol Rovers scored either side through Peter Hartley and Ellis Harrison to keep Conte's men on their toes until the final whistle.

Liverpool and Chelsea, League Cup winners in 2015, both entered the tournament in the second round because they are not involved in European competition this season.

Manchester United, holders Manchester City, Arsenal, Leicester City, Tottenham Hotspur, Southampton and West Ham United will all enter the competition in round three. —AFP



AMMAN: Jordanian Prince Faisal bin al-Hussein (C) poses for a photo next to Ahmed Abughauish (3L) who won the men's 68-kg taekwondo competition at the Olympics in Rio de Janeiro to take home Jordan's first ever Olympic medal, and other members of the Jordanian Olympic team upon their arrival at the Queen Alia International Airport in Amman on Tuesday. —AFP

JORDAN'S FIRST OLYMPIC MEDALIST COMES HOME

AMMAN: Jordan's first Olympic champion, taekwondo gold medal winner Ahmad Abughauish, has returned home to a royal welcome.

The 20-year-old was greeted by three princes, his family and a cheering crowd late on Tuesday at the kingdom's main airport, after his return from the Rio games.

Abughauish told reporters that he hopes to "uphold this title which I achieved this year, and to win in the upcoming Olympics 2020." His surprise win last week set off cheers across Jordan, which had never won an Olympic medal before. A public celebration will be held tomorrow in a park in the Jordanian capital, Amman. —AP

OLYMPICS PROTEST RUNNER FAILS TO RETURN TO ETHIOPIA

ADDIS ABABA: Olympic marathon silver medalist Feyisa Lilesa failed to return to Ethiopia Monday night despite assurances he would not be punished for his Rio protest over political repression in his country. An AFP journalist at the airport in Addis Ababa said Lilesa was not onboard the plane that landed on Monday night carrying Ethiopia's Olympics team.

Ethiopian sports officials congratulated team members but made no mention of Lilesa's silver medal achievement—one of only eight medals won by Ethiopia—and refused to answer any questions about the athlete.

On Sunday, Lilesa, who came second to Kenyan favourite Eliud Kipchoge in Rio, crossed his arms as he finished the marathon in a symbolic protest against the repressive Ethiopian regime.

The 26-year-old repeated the gesture during the race's medal ceremony, telling reporters later that he was afraid to go back to his homeland. Reports have suggested that the runner may seek political asylum in the United States, but a spokesperson for the US State Department refused to talk specifically about the case.

"We would encourage all governments to respect the rights of individuals to peacefully express their opinions," said the spokesperson. Lilesa's agent Federico Rosa had earlier told AFP that the runner would not be returning home after staging his protest, despite Ethiopian government assurances Lilesa would not face any issues if he went back. "I don't think that there is any way that he will (go back to Ethiopia)," Rosa told AFP earlier on Monday. "There are many people who say that it would not be good for him to go back." Rosa, who is based in Italy and has been the athlete's agent for three years, said he did not know exactly what his client was planning to do next, having stayed on in Rio at the end of the games. "I cannot say for sure because I have not spoken to him since just after the race, when we had a very short conversation," Rosa said. —AFP

Kuwait Times BUSINESS

THURSDAY, AUGUST 25, 2016

German economy grows at
'better than expected' rate

Page 23

Greece 'statistics row'
dangerous for bailout

Page 23



Qantas soars to
record profits

Page 25

Pages 25

GULF DROPS; SAUDI AND DUBAI HARDEST HIT



Photo shows the Empire State Building, in New York. Qatar's sovereign wealth fund has made an iconic purchase in America—a stake in the company owning New York's Empire State Building. — AP

QATAR MAKES AN ICONIC PURCHASE IN US

STATE FUND BUYS STAKE IN NY EMPIRE STATE BUILDING

DUBAI: Qatar's sovereign wealth fund has made an iconic purchase in America - a stake in the company that owns New York's Empire State Building. The \$622-million purchase by the Qatar Investment Authority comes as the Doha fund increases its investments in the US as the small country on the Arabian Peninsula tries to cope with low global oil and gas prices. The Empire State Realty Trust Inc., which manages the 102-story, 1,454-foot-tall building, announced the Qatari purchase late Tuesday, saying the fund would gain a 9.9-percent stake in the company.

The trust owns a total of 14 office properties and six retail properties around the New York area.

The Qatar Investment Authority did not respond to a request for comment yesterday. The pointed top of the Art Deco-style Empire State Building, once the tallest structure in the world, still stands out in New York's famed skyline. It remains a major tourist attraction and has been the centerpiece of major American films from "King Kong" to "Sleepless in Seattle." Tiny Qatar, an OPEC member, is a strong regional ally for Washington and hosts American bombers and

the forward headquarters of the US military's Central Command at its vast Al-Udeid air base.

Aircraft and personnel there are involved in the ongoing US-led campaign against the Islamic State group in Iraq and Syria. Qatar will host the 2022 FIFA World Cup and has been on a building boom, mirroring on a smaller scale the one that gripped the United Arab Emirates' city-state of Dubai. However, its government coffers have been hard hit by the drop of global oil prices, which have fallen from over \$100 a barrel in the summer of 2014 to around \$50 now.

The nation's investment authority, estimated to be worth some \$335 billion by the Las Vegas based Sovereign Wealth Fund Institute, has been increasingly eyeing opportunities in the US. Last September, it announced plans to open an office in New York and committed to investing \$35 billion in the US over the next five years. The fund's existing American holdings include a more than 10-percent stake in New York-based luxury jeweler Tiffany & Co.

It sold its share of the American film studio Miramax to Qatar-based media group beIN in

March for an undisclosed sum. Government-backed Qatar Airways, meanwhile, has been rapidly expanding its operations in the US, provoking a backlash from American carriers. Also among the Qatari fund's interests in America is a 44-percent stake in the \$8.6 billion redevelopment project in New York known as Manhattan West, which includes remodeling the building that's now home to the global headquarters of The Associated Press. The AP announced in August 2015 it planned to move from that building to another near the World Trade Center. — AP

FRANKFURT 'CHARM OFFENSIVE' FOR BREXIT-WARY COMPANIES

FRANKFURT: The marketing team of Frankfurt never expected its English-language dummy website to attract new businesses. Now they would actually go live after Britain's European Union referendum. "We hadn't really assumed that we would need the site at all," spokeswoman Michaela Kahle said, as the team thought Britons would surely vote "Remain". But as it turned out, the Welcome to Frankfurt/RheinMain site was not only put to good use, but has become a hit, with 27,000 views since Britain stunned the world by deciding to leave the bloc.

Quickly recovering from the shock, Kahle and her colleagues kicked into action, fielding inquiries from firms ranging from big banks to tiny financial technology start-ups looking at the possibility of relocating to the German financial capital. While Britain has yet to trigger the two-year exit negotiations, corporations wary of the impact of Brexit have begun scouting for alternative European headquarters. "It's the very beginning, and the firms themselves don't know yet when, or whether at all, they will move," Kahle said.

But they are asking questions about German law on immigrant workers, the talent pool in Frankfurt, banking licenses and regulation, and how easy it is to do business here in English. Home to the European Central Bank, the EU's insurance regulator EIOPA and 198 banks, Frankfurt is a natural contender in the battle to lure the City of London's financial behemoths. But the city on the Main has never truly challenged London for pre-eminence in Europe. Britain's capital prospered thanks to factors including the English language, its cosmopolitan history at the heart of a world-spanning empire, and the "big bang" financial liberalization of the 1980s.

Competition

As London cemented its status as a financial centre, its attractiveness only grew, as



FRANKFURT: Photo shows the skyline of Frankfurt am Main. While Britain has yet to trigger the two-year exit negotiations, corporations wary of the impact of a Brexit have begun scouting for alternatives to headquarter their European offices. Big banks to tiny financial technology start-ups look at the possibility of relocating their businesses to the German financial capital. — AFP

opening an office in the City meant direct access to a powerful network of expertise. But Brexit may force many financial services providers to look at moving as they will need a place to do business inside the euro-zone should they lose "passporting" rights that allow them to carry out euro-denominated trades outside the single currency area. A delegation of politicians from Frankfurt and its federal state of Hesse made a trip to London in early August to meet bank executives and talk up their town.

With an eye on the City's firms, Germany's Bankenverband (banking federation) has launched a broadside of reform demands it says will help attract new companies. Although Frankfurt has many advantages-

including its physical and digital infrastructure, ease of doing business in English and reliable German legal system-it's far from a given that it will beat competition from Paris, Amsterdam and Dublin, Bankenverband managing director Michael Kemmer warned.

The government must do more to support financial start-ups and make business and the law more accessible in English, among others, he said. Kemmer acknowledged with a chuckle the suggestion that his proposals-including loosening some regulations and abandoning plans for a financial transaction tax-were well-worn themes for banking lobbyists. But he insisted that "the need now is greater, as we're looking at real competition between cities as places to do business". Bank lobbyists also

want the European Banking Authority (EBA) relocated from London to Frankfurt.

Big commitment

While calling on the government to begin laying the groundwork immediately, Kemmer says he would be "surprised if banks don't wait until everything is cleared up" on a political level before deciding how to respond to Brexit. Most companies may opt for a wait-and-see approach, but at least one firm has already made a big commitment to the city on the Main, managing partner Ralph Schonder of real estate consultancy Knight Frank said.

"We've had a big rental of 10,000 square meters" since the vote, he said. "At this speed, and given the location, it wouldn't have happened without Brexit." Schonder acknowledged that such deals remain the exception-matching what other people familiar with the real estate market say. Deals are being "talked about, considered, but we're expecting it to happen later when the situation is clearer", managing partner Matthias Stanke at consultancy Colliers International said. German financial regulator BaFin also confirmed "a slightly rising trend" of inquiries about the legal environment and possibilities available in Germany.

But there was no corresponding increase in the number of actual applications for a banking licence, said BaFin's spokesman. With much of the sector biding its time before acting, it is unlikely commercial rents in Frankfurt will suddenly spike or that the city's international schools will suddenly fill up with the children of relocated bankers. None of the schools spoken to by AFP had experienced a surge in applications in the weeks since the referendum result. But in the long term, while "no-one welcomed Brexit", Bankenverband director Kemmer said, "we can do everything possible to strengthen Frankfurt as a financial centre". — AFP

WORLD BANK PRESIDENCY SEARCH OPENS WITH KIM'S HAT IN THE RING

WASHINGTON: World Bank chief Jim Yong Kim will seek a second term of office, the global development lender said yesterday as it announced the start of a selection process for the presidency. Kim's bid to remain as president comes in the face of a rare public rebuke from the Bank's rank-and-file, who earlier this month declared that the institution faced a "crisis of leadership." The executive directors expressed unanimous support for an open, merit-based and transparent selection, with nominations open to all member countries, the executive board said in a statement. Kim's five-year term ends on June 30.

Following an unwritten rule, the United States, the Bank's largest shareholder, has always chosen its president, while the International Monetary Fund leader has been drawn from Europe. The World Bank staff association said in an open letter on August 8 that this tradition flew in the face of principles of transparency, diversity and merit-based selection, given that the process had always selected an American man. The executive board said Kim had been selected in 2012 according to new principles meant to ensure an "open and transparent" process and that the next president would be as well. Kim was the first American candidate to face competition when Nigerian Finance Minister Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala also contended for the presidency. The latest selection process begins at midnight on Thursday, launching a three-week window for nominations. Kim's current term is not due to expire for more than 10 months, meaning the pending selection process begins significantly earlier than the previous one, which was conducted and concluded in the quarter prior to Kim taking office. A medical doctor and former president of Dartmouth College, Kim was the first Bank president not to be drawn from the financial or political worlds.

After taking office in 2012, Kim announced a new goal of eradicating extreme poverty by 2030 and a sweeping internal reorganization to foster collaboration across the Bank. However, the reforms appear to have alienated many staff members, who in employee surveys have reported feeling detached from senior management and unsure of the direction of policy. The Bank currently faces questions about its continuing relevance on the world stage as developing countries can now turn to a growing number of other lenders-such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, founded at China's initiative, which held its first annual meeting in June. — AFP

WHAT POLITICAL DEADLOCK? SPAIN ECONOMY FORGES AHEAD

MADRID: Spain has for months been awash with warnings that the country's long-lasting political deadlock threatens to harm a fragile recovery, but the economy is forging ahead regardless... for now, analysts say. The country has been without a fully-functioning government for eight months with squabbling political parties unable to reach any kind of pact following inconclusive polls in December, and again in June.

Acting Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy, whose conservative Popular Party came first in both polls though without an absolute majority, is negotiating to try to form a minority or coalition government. But he faces huge resistance and the prospect of yet more elections is looming large. On the economic front, however, "there is little evidence that this is having a significant impact," says Miguel Cardoso, chief economist for Spain at BBVA Research, pointing to the strength of most indicators.

Last year, the economy was one of the euro-zone's most dynamic, growing 3.2 percent, and GDP has risen for 12 straight quarters since Spain emerged from a severe crisis that erupted in 2008 when the property bubble burst. This trend is being spurred by household spending, which will grow about three percent on-year in the second half of

2016, predicts Cardoso. This spending is being boosted by people who kept their jobs during the crisis and have taken advantage of better times to buy items such as cars, a temporary phenomenon that "has a limit", he warns.

ECB support-

Unemployment has fallen, although at 20 percent it still remains the second highest rate in the euro-zone after Greece. Rajoy's caretaker government predicts it will fall even further in 2017 to 16.6 percent. Spain's economy—the fourth largest in the euro-zone—has benefited from the policies of the European Central Bank (ECB), like many others. The bank's monthly purchase of public and private debt under a stimulus program is fostering a climate of low interest rates for companies and the Spanish state, which is therefore keeping borrowing at historic lows.

"Rajoy is appropriating this politically, but this isn't happening only in Spain," says Jose Carlos Diez, economics professor at the Alcala University and a specialist in monetary policy. "In Spain, the effect of the ECB's intervention has been doubly more intense than in other countries," he adds, given that the country is only just emerging from the dire straits of the crisis. Carolina Morcos, an analyst

at brokers Renta 4, cautions that "the most regulated sectors are the most affected" by political uncertainty, pointing to energy and construction companies. A spokesman for a Spanish energy company, who wishes to remain anonymous, acknowledges there are many issues left outstanding, such as the policy towards renewables. The sector used to benefit from considerable state subsidies but these have dwindled with the crisis, and the current political deadlock means nothing is being done "good or bad", says the source.

Ups and downs

Despite this, he says, the fact that companies in the renewables sector such as Iberdrola, Endesa or Gas Natural Fenosa have expanded beyond Spanish borders "has allowed us to overcome the ups and downs of the domestic market in Spain over the past years". As for construction, the government has cut investment in public works in the past few months as part of efforts to reduce its deficit below the three percent bar set by the European Union. But in this case too, companies such as ACS, Acciona, Ferrovial or OHL have avoided the problem as they also expanded abroad after the property bubble burst. — AFP



MADRID: A painter works on a facade of a restaurant in the Malasana neighborhood of Madrid, Spain. The Malasana quarter with its cobblestone streets is a lively area full of restaurants, pubs and clothes shops. — AP



SAINT-FLORENT-DES-BOIS: An employee of the Jacques Coutrier Organization (JCO) fireworks company, prepares the equipment for a firework in Saint-Florent-des-bois, western France. — AFP

EU WARNS, 'GREECE STATISTICS ROW DANGEROUS FOR BAILOUT'

BRUSSELS: The European Union called on Greece yesterday to quash what Brussels said were false accusations the Greek statistics agency rigged data to help foreign creditors and warned that the row posed risks to Athens' current bailout program. The Greek government quickly replied that it was "surprised" at the call from the European Commission for it to take a stance on a judicial matter and insisted it respected the independence of the Elstat statistics office.

Despite insisting she would not interfere with national courts, Marianne Thyssen, who oversees the Commission's data agency Eurostat, told reporters that former Elstat chief Andreas Georgiou effectively had no case to answer after the Supreme Court this month reopened an investigation into whether the former IMF economist had manipulated public debt data. Georgiou, who stepped down in 2015 after five years running Elstat through the height of the Greek and euro zone debt crisis, has denied suggestions by politicians, including from the current left-wing government, that he may have helped Athens' foreign creditors, including his former employer, by exaggerating Greece's public debt problems.

A year after Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras secured a new bailout for Greece from its euro zone partners, Thyssen said the government must "actively and publicly challenge the false impression that data were manipulated during 2010-2015 period and to protect Elstat and its staff from such unfounded claims". Failure to do so would damage the already fragile credibility of the Greek state with international creditors. Asked whether it could also jeopardize future disbursements of bailout funds, she declined to speculate but said: "It is necessary to get the record straight and avoid misinterpretation because this could be very dangerous."

A Letter

Thyssen, as social affairs commissioner, oversees Eurostat which collates national data and she said that Eurostat had fully

verified the Greek figures provided during Georgiou's term - a contrast, she noted, to those sent to Brussels before he took office in 2010, when angry euro-zone partners say Greece concealed the depth of its public deficit. "For the Commission and Eurostat it is absolutely clear that data on Greek Government debt during 2010-2015 have been fully reliable and accurately reported to Eurostat-unlike the situation before this period," she said. Greek government spokeswoman Olga Gerovasilis said Athens was surprised by the Commission's comments. "In its letter the Commission states its standard principle to not comment on cases pending in the justice system, a principle which is shared and followed by the Greek government," Gerovasilis said in a statement.

"However, there is a contradiction between this principle and the urging for the Greek government to take a stance on whether statistical data in 2010 were valid or not." With Valdis Dombrovskis, the Commission vice president for the euro, and Economics Commission Pierre Moscovici, Thyssen wrote to Greek Finance Minister Euclid Tsakalotos on Tuesday. A government spokesman said the minister had already replied. Georgiou was charged in 2013 with inflating figures on the 2009 budget deficit. His case has seen fellow senior economists and statisticians from around the world rally behind him. Some are helping to pay for his defense costs.

The case had appeared to be languishing but a move at the Supreme Court earlier this month to reopen it has put Georgiou under renewed pressure and, in Brussels' view, raised questions about the independence of Elstat from external pressures. A recipient of repeated bailouts from its fellow members of the euro zone, Greece's credibility with its European partners remains fragile. Germany and other powers are still angry at the way, as they see it, successive governments in Athens ran up unsustainable debts, masked by dubious fiscal data, triggering a crisis that nearly wrecked the entire euro project. — Reuters

GERMAN ECONOMY GROWS AT 'BETTER THAN EXPECTED' RATE

EASTERN GERMANY REMAINS ECONOMICALLY ANEMIC

FRANKFURT: Strong foreign trade and buoyant consumption drove Germany's economy, Europe's largest, to better-than-expected growth in the second quarter, federal statistics office Destatis said yesterday. Gross domestic product (GDP) grew by 0.4 percent between April and June, adjusted for seasonal, calendar and price effects—twice as fast as analysts surveyed by Factset predicted.

However, the final figure, which confirmed a preliminary Destatis reading earlier in August, represented a slow-down from the unexpectedly strong 0.7-percent expansion in the first quarter. "Compared with the previous quarter, the positive impulses above all came from foreign trade," Destatis said in a statement. According to preliminary estimates, exports of goods and services increased by 1.2 percent between April and June, while imports fell by 0.1 percent.

Overall, the data showed "mixed signals" in the German economy. Households increased spending by 0.2 percent and the state by 0.6 percent compared with the previous quarter. But business investment in capital goods fell by 2.4 percent and in construction by 1.6 percent. Looking back at the previous year, the economy was 1.8 percent larger between April and June than the same period in 2015, adjusting for price and calendar effects—a slightly slower growth rate than the first quarter's 1.9 percent.

In the coming quarters, "private consumption should remain an important growth driver on the back of low inflation, low interest rates, low unemployment and higher wages," analyst Carsten Brzeski of ING Diba bank said, while Germany's refugee crisis will continue to bolster state spending. Investment remains "the economy's Achilles heel," he noted, adding that Chancellor Angela Merkel must produce "a clear vision for Europe" with other EU leaders to reassure investors in Germany.

Eastern Germany

Twenty-six years after reunification, eastern Germany remains economically anaemic with little prospect of catching up with the rest of the country by 2030, a study published yesterday said. Of the eastern states, only "Saxony and Brandenburg will reach the level of overall average German growth" between 2015 and 2030, wrote Joachim Ragnitz of the Ifo economic think-tank. The remaining federal states formed from the former territory of the German

Democratic Republic (GDR) - Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, Thuringia, and Saxony-Anhalt—will by contrast reckon with "in parts extremely low growth rates".

Eastern Germany's GDP grew by 1.2 percent per year between 2010 and 2015, underperforming the 1.6 percent achieved by western Germany plus Berlin, Ifo calculated. While Brandenburg benefits from its proximity to Berlin and Saxony boasts two attractive large cities in Dresden and Leipzig, the other "new states" face significant challenges. The former GDR has seen a decades-long emigration of the young, exacerbating the ageing population problem due to low birth rates that affects all of Germany.

"Exactly the people with a high level of qualifications who could push increased productivity and innovation are lacking," Ragnitz wrote. As well as sapping the supply side of the economy with a brain drain, demographic weakness also

undermines demand, as fewer people are around to spend in the local economy. Meanwhile, Ragnitz noted that "large, structurally defining firms are largely lacking", apart from subsidiaries of foreign firms, meaning "higher-value business functions are lacking and strategic decisions taken without taking east German interests into account."

Most firms in eastern Germany remain small, concentrating on market niches and are therefore "by definition notable for their limited opportunity to expand". Not one of the 30 leading firms listed on the DAX stock market index is based in the former GDR. Ragnitz argues that public investment should be focused on improving small-and medium-sized firms' competitiveness and make up for lacking private investment in research and development. But both EU structural development funds and solidarity payments from wealthier western states are set to dry up in 2020. — Agencies



FRANKFURT: An office is pictured in Frankfurt am Main. While Britain has yet to trigger the exit negotiations, corporations wary of the impact of a Brexit have begun scouting for alternatives to headquarter their European offices. — AFP

IN SURPRISE MOVE, ICELAND CUTS INTEREST TO TAME ITS CURRENCY

REYKJAVIK: Iceland's central bank yesterday cut its key deposit interest rate by 50 basis points to 5.25 percent because monetary policy earlier this year has been more successful than expected, the central bank said. The surprise move comes amid optimism over the country's inflation target and could signal both a normalization of the economy and concern over capital inflows strengthening the currency.

"It appears that it will be possible to keep inflation at target over the medium term with a lower interest rate than was previously considered necessary," the central bank said in a statement. Ahead of the monetary meeting analysts at Islandsbanki expected unchanged interest rates. "I think the

concern about outflow of money has now been replaced about a concern for a strong inflow," Markets and Money Advisory economist Lars Christensen said. The Icelandic crown has strengthened by more than 8 percent over the last five to six months.

"Today's news indicates that the Icelandic economy is on track to be normalized," Chief Analysts Jakob Christensen from Danske Bank said. The strong Icelandic crown has increasingly attracted investors from abroad but created challenges for exporters in Iceland. It is the first time since November 2014 that the Icelandic central bank has cut the key deposit rate, which is now at its lowest level since August last year. — Reuters

News

In brief

Emirates NBD's Islamic arm cuts over 100 jobs

DUBAI: Emirates Islamic, the sharia-compliant arm of Dubai's largest bank Emirates NBD (ENBD), has laid off more than 100 people as part of cost cutting to adjust to a cooler economy, sources familiar with the matter said yesterday. Growth in much of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has slowed this year because of low oil prices. Earlier this year, Emirates Islamic cut around 200 jobs. Emirates Islamic employs around 2,000 people, an ENBD spokesman said in April after the previous cuts. Most of the latest jobs to go were in the department servicing small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), the sources said. One added the layoffs occurred between April and the end of July. ENBD declined to comment when contacted by Reuters. After years of helping to propel rapid growth in the UAE economy, SMEs started to suffer last year when prices of the commodities which they trade sank, causing some to default on their debts. Their plight has been worsened by a slowdown in the local economy.

COFCO buys out the rest of Dutch commodity trader

BEIJING: China's state-owned grain giant COFCO will buy out minority shareholders in Netherlands-based commodity trader Nidera and take full ownership of the company, it said, as it seeks to become an agribusiness powerhouse. COFCO's deal to buy out the remaining 49 percent of Nidera, which trades grains and soybeans among other agricultural commodities, comes two years after it bought just over half of the company for \$1.2 billion. It is the latest in a string of major overseas investments by Chinese companies seeking to meet rising demand for food and energy in the world's second-largest economy.

SOUTH AFRICAN ASSETS SINK; POLICE SUMMON FINANCE MINISTER

JOHANNESBURG: South African assets slumped yesterday after an elite police unit summoned Finance Minister Pravin Gordhan over an investigation into a suspected rogue spy unit in the tax service, fuelling speculation that there was a plot to oust him. Gordhan and other former officials at the South African Revenue Service (SARS) must report to the Hawks on Thursday morning in relation to contravention of surveillance regulations, a source close to the matter told Reuters.

The announcement added to investors' worries about leadership at the finance ministry as Africa's most developed economy teeters on the edge of recession and credit rating agencies consider downgrading it to "junk" status by year-end. Shadow finance minister David Maynier urged authorities not to take any more formal steps against

Gordhan. "The arrest of the finance minister would shatter investor confidence, risk a sovereign ratings downgrade and be a disaster for the already fragile zero growth, zero jobs economy in South Africa," the member of the opposition Democratic Alliance said in a statement.

The Treasury confirmed the Hawks had contacted Gordhan and that he was seeking legal advice, but declined to go into further details. Gordhan is due to speak at a debate in Cape Town at 7 pm. Hawks spokesman Hangwani Mulaudzi said it did not comment on ongoing investigations. The rand extended losses after dropping 3 percent the previous session when the news about Gordhan emerged. Bonds also slumped with the yield on benchmark 2026 issue rising 46 basis points to 8.935 percent. South Africa's stock market banking index opened almost four percent down. A

Zuma-backed plan to build a fleet of nuclear power plants, at a cost of as much as \$60 billion, has been a cause of tension with the Treasury for months and is likely adding to pressure on Gordhan's position, analysts say. Russian state-backed companies are the favourites to win the nuclear bid, industry sources say. "This is all part of a plot to oust Gordhan," political analyst Prince Mashele said. "Gordhan refuses to sign-off on the Russian nuclear deal." Gordhan has refused to be drawn publicly on whether he supports the nuclear project but has said South Africa will only enter agreements it can afford. Presidency spokesman Bongani Majola did not respond to requests for comment. Local media reports in May said Gordhan may face arrest on espionage charges for setting up the unit to spy on politicians including President Jacob Zuma. — Reuters

AUSTRALIAN CARRIER QANTAS SOARS TO RECORD PROFITS

SYDNEY: Australian carrier Qantas yesterday posted record annual profits and announced its first payout to shareholders in seven years, staging a turnaround after axing jobs and selling aircraft in an aggressive restructuring. The results were also boosted by the sharp fall in global oil prices and a less competitive domestic market that has given the firm a stable base of earnings.

Other international airlines such as Cathay Pacific, ANA and Japan Airlines have seen profits plunge amid intense competition from lower-cost rivals and as terrorism fears eat into demand. Qantas reported a net annual profit of Aus\$1.42 billion (\$1.08 billion) in the year to June 30, an 80 percent increase from the previous corresponding period. Underlying profit before tax-Qantas' preferred measure-jumped by 57 percent to also hit a record of Aus\$1.53 billion. The company resumed paying dividends of seven cents per share, the first payout since 2009 and announced a share buy-back of up to Aus\$366 million.

Qantas also said it would give a Aus\$3,000 one-off bonus to some 25,000 staff who had signed up to a pay freeze. "These are fantastic results that we've had in the last year, as I said, record results for the group," chief executive Alan Joyce told reporters. "We do see the strong performance of the company continuing. This business has taken a lot of cost out and improved revenue dramatically. The transformation program has changed the business completely, delivering over Aus\$1.66 billion in performance improvements. Without that, we wouldn't be where we are today."

Qantas shares closed 1.47 percent higher at Aus\$3.45 in Sydney trading. Global ratings agency Standard & Poor's said the result had no immediate impact on Qantas' rating, which is currently at investment grade 'BBB-'. "Underpinning the credit rating is the airline's prudent financial policy framework that we view favourably against Australian corporate and global industry peers," S&P said in a statement. The ratings agency downgraded Qantas to "junk" in December 2013 after the airline issued a shock profit warning and announced job losses, before lifting it from 'BB+' to 'BBB-' last November when earnings improved.

Advantage over global peers

The aggressive push to cut some Aus\$2 billion in costs and restructure the airline over three years began in early 2014, with thousands of jobs axed and dozens of aircraft sold or orders deferred. Qantas said it has since hit Aus\$1.66 billion in cost and revenue savings including Aus\$557 million in the financial year ending June 2016. The carrier added that it expected to reach Aus\$2.1 billion in cost and revenue savings by June next year.

"One of the reasons why Qantas is looking quite compelling and is producing very good results of late is the fact that the domestic market here has now basically shrunk to mostly a duopoly between them and Virgin," IG Markets' analyst Angus Nicholson said. "Many other airlines are faced with sharp competition on many of their different major routes, which crimps potential earnings and crimps margin

growth." Qantas' domestic business reported record underlying earnings of Aus\$578 million, a 20 percent increase from the prior year, while its international division posted a 92 percent jump in underlying earnings to a record Aus\$512 million.

The airline's discount carrier Jetstar likewise reached record profits, with a 97 percent leap in underlying earnings to Aus\$452 million. "Qantas now has this quite comfortable steady cash flow coming

from the domestic market that can really finance their ventures into the more competitive international routes and that's probably its major advantage against many other airlines," Nicholson added. Joyce said Qantas was set to roll out wifi access for passengers on its regional and international fleets, and would start selling tickets for its Dreamliner flights before the end of this year, with routes for the incoming Boeing jet starting in 2017. — AFP



SYDNEY: Two Qantas planes taxi on the runway at Sydney Airport in Sydney, Australia. Qantas Airways Ltd posted a record full-year profit of 1.53 billion Australian dollars (\$1.1 billion) yesterday, after undergoing a cost-saving restructuring amid steep losses just two years ago. — AP



BOURNEMOUTH: People gather on a public beach in Bournemouth, England. Global travel spending is still growing, although at a slower pace, despite weakening economies and fears over terrorism, according to a report yesterday, by the World Travel and Tourism Council. Growth in the United Kingdom is actually expected to exceed the rest of Europe, in 2016. — AP

EXCLUSIVE OFFERS FROM ALGHANIM & SONS AUTOMOTIVE FOR CHEVROLET

KUWAIT: Yusuf A Alghanim & Sons Automotive, the exclusive distributor of Chevrolet vehicles in Kuwait, is proud to present its customers a fantastic opportunity to own the car of dreams with prices and offers they won't find anywhere else besides their favorite dealership. This limited time promotion entails special prices, amazing benefits and valuable cashbacks on a range of Chevrolet's most popular 2016 models.

Customers who purchase a Chevrolet from Alghanim Automotive this summer will get to choose a special offer that suits their needs best: either 0% interest over 5 years of cash-priced installments, in cooperation with Al-Amanah Investment Company, or an instant cashback of up to KD1200, available on most of the 2016 Chevrolet models. It's worth mentioning that customers who take advantage of the financing option will be enrolled to the installment plan without the need for down payment, bank standing order, guarantor or

stamp on registration book (locals only), all while enjoying the convenience of early settlement, fast approval and online payment. Chevrolet Alghanim urges its customer to take advantage of this limited time summer offer by visiting any of its Chevrolet showrooms around the country, in Safat Alghanim Al-Rai, Sharq, Fahaheel, Al-Ahmadi, and Shuwaikh.

Chevrolet Care

All customers who purchase a Chevrolet from Yusuf A. Alghanim & Sons will receive the benefits of the Chevrolet Care Program, which entails new levels of post-sale support and trust. The Chevrolet Care is an exceptional customer service that is based on four main pillars: competitive and transparent service costs (especially for four-wheel drive vehicles), scheduled service appointment booking with same day delivery, quality service by certified technicians and 3yr/100,000km warranty with 24x7 roadside assistance for 4 years.

NIGERIA GETS TOUGH WITH MARAUDING 'SONS OF THE SOIL' HUNTING FOR LAND

LAGOS GOVERNOR VOWS TO CRACK DOWN ON 'OMO ONILE'

LAGOS: A year before his wedding, Jude Egharevba was overjoyed when he bought a plot of land to build a house for him and his fiancée on the outskirts of Lagos, Nigeria's commercial capital. But his joy was short-lived, after a group of young men stormed his land and demanded cash to leave peacefully. The same men and other gangs visited his land several times and disrupted the building work, forcing Egharevba, an oil and gas executive, to pay them off with one million naira (\$3,175) over the course of a year in order to finish the construction.

These men, known as the Omo Onile, which means "Sons of the Soil" in the local Yoruba language, roam Lagos looking for land owners and property developers to dupe and extort for money. "They milk you at every stage, and beat up your workers if you don't pay," said Egharevba, 28, who had to postpone his wedding due to the constant setbacks to the construction of his house. The menace of the Omo Onile, whose numbers have swelled in recent years amid rising unemployment in Nigeria, is discouraging investors, hindering businesses and holding back development in Lagos state, government officials say.

Earlier this year, the governor of Lagos, Akinwunmi Ambode, vowed to crack down on those who extort landowners or take over their property, and set up a task force to tackle the problem. The state's assembly followed his lead, and on Aug 15 the Lagos State Properties Protection Law was enacted. The law punishes land theft and a range of related offences with fines and a jail term of between five and 21 years.

"These hoodlums were becoming embarrassing, and were frustrating companies," Akinjide Bakare, chairman of the Omo Onile task force, told the Thomson Reuters Foundation by phone. "Lagos was losing investments to other states, and the government decided to step in and act," Bakare added.

'Sons of the soil'

Land disputes and theft have long been a contentious issue in Lagos, and across Nigeria, according to land rights experts. Dating back to the 1920s, most disputes within society and customary court cases have been about land, said a staff member at the National Archives of Nigeria, who asked to remain anonymous because he was not permitted to speak to the media. In 1978, Nigeria passed the Land Use Act, which nationalized all land, and was intended to override customary land rights - where people have traditional rights but no legal recognition or protection of their land. This aimed to make land more accessible, improve tenure security, and boost development.

But the act made allocating land discretionary, fuelling state corruption, and contributed to Nigeria's large informal land market, academics and development experts say. "Some Omo Onile believe the land was originally theirs and so act as if government ownership does not count," said Matthew Ottah, a Lagos-based lawyer and also a victim of the Omo Onile. While there are no estimates of the number of Omo Onile, their ranks are believed to be growing as Nigeria's unemployment rate has reached a seven-year high - 12 percent - and Lagos state's population continues to grow past 20 million people.

Across Lagos, the Omo Onile idle in their communities, often drinking and smoking, but always on the lookout for abandoned projects, land purchases and deals struck by construction firms. "There are no jobs from the government and vulcanize (local rubber) work does not pay so this is better than stealing," said Jamui Alao, a young man who scouts out potential victims for the Omo Onile in Ajah, an area still under development in Lagos. Some have set up small, bogus offices to bait prospective landowners, sometimes with illegible or misspelt signage and flyers, where they pose as genuine real estate developers. They issue fake certificates of occupancy, collect

money from landlords overseeing renovations, and conspire with some local traditional leaders to fleece property developers. "Those who have money for land must settle with those who are keeping the land safe," Alao added. "The new people must show respect to the old people - the sons of the soil."

Battle far from over

When construction boss Kunle Adigun decided to take on the Omo Onile years ago, and press charges against the intruders, he arrived at his building site to find all his workers had quit. "Eventually, I had to pay up," the 32-year-old said. "It is no good arguing with them or bringing police into the matter, because even they want to get money from land deals." Previously, forcibly entering a person's land or seizing that land was punishable under the Lagos Criminal Law by two years in jail, yet it was rarely enforced, experts say.

Frustrated by the impunity of the Omo Onile, lawyer Ottah, who has been supporting their victims for over a decade, set up a start-up for land verification, identifying "risky lands", detailing a history of land cases, and selling land. "For unsuspecting buyers, I recommend a trustworthy lawyer, a quantity surveyor ... and prayers," Ottah said with a smile. The new Properties Protection Law, which criminalizes a range of offences from the illegal occupation of property and the use of land agents to selling property without authority, has been hailed by Lagos residents and activists alike.

Yet the battle against the Omo Onile and land theft is far from over, according to Samuel Oloyede, a professor of estate management at Covenant University, just outside of Lagos. "There is no way to completely eliminate this issue - the land is vast and there are no official records in many cases." "The new law will minimize disputes because no one wants to go to jail. But it cannot stop the problem completely because people will always find a way to cheat the system," he said. — Reuters

GULF DROPS; SAUDI DUBAI HARDEST HIT

MIDEAST STOCK MARKETS

DUBAI: Most major Gulf stock markets fell yesterday with few positive factors to spur buying and after Brent crude oil dropped back to just above \$49.0 a barrel. Gulf bourses surged earlier this month as funds returned to emerging markets globally. But that inflow largely seems to have halted, at least for now, and investors are focusing on other factors such as economic slowdowns in the Gulf and the prospect of more austerity steps by governments running deficits.

The Saudi Arabian index closed 1.1 percent lower at 6,028 points after heavy selling in the final half-hour, falling below minor technical support on the April low of 6,066 points. Earlier this week the index broke major support on its early August low of 6,226 points, turning it medium-term bearish. Petrochemical heavyweight Saudi Basic Industries outperformed, losing 0.3 percent. Al Jazeera Bank, which is sensitive to the stock market outlook because of its investment banking and asset management services, sank 1.7 percent.

Red Sea Housing, which builds accommodation for foreign workers in Saudi Arabia, plunged 10 percent. Tens of thousands of foreigners are being laid off, especially in the construction industry, because of the economic slowdown. Dubai's index dropped 1.5 percent as Emaar Properties lost 2.1 percent and top bank Emirates ENBD slid 3.0 percent. Construction firm Drake & Scull, however, climbed 1.0 percent in active trade. On Monday a top executive told Reuters that the company had asked advisers for proposals to review its business and find strategic investors.

Yesterday it issued a brief statement to the exchange saying it had not hired a legal adviser to help bring in a strategic investor, but did not comment further on the review. Qatar's index, which had underperformed the region on Tuesday when it dropped 0.9 percent, rose 0.6 percent on Wednesday in a broad rebound, with eight of the 10 most heavily traded stocks gaining and none falling. In Egypt, the index rose 0.5 percent. Arabia Investments jumped 4.4 percent in its heaviest trade since May. — Reuters

البنك الأهلي المتحد

ahli united bank

AHLI UNITED BANK ANNOUNCES WINNERS IN ITS WEEKLY DRAW

'AL HASSAD ISLAMIC SAVING' PROGRAM

KUWAIT: Ahli United Bank held its weekly draw of Al-Hassad Islamic Saving program on August 17, 2016. This program offers the biggest prize amount to the largest number of winners. The prize program succeeded in becoming the first prize account in Kuwait compliant with the Islamic Sharia principles. The program has been developed to fulfill the needs of the Bank customers and increase their opportunities in winning sizeable and attractive prizes in addition to enjoying the latest banking advantages that Ahli United Bank provides.

On this occasion, the bank issued the following press release: Al Hassad Islamic Saving program offers the highest amounts of prizes which amount to KD 3.4 Million per year. This Program also offers 26 weekly prizes, with the highest number of weekly winners. The Islamic Hassad Saving Account may be opened by the lowest amount to open an account, which is KD 100.

The winner of the weekly grand prize in the amount of KD 25,000/- is: Antonio Pablo Baraibar. The winners of the KD 1,000 prize each: Khaled Sulaeman Al Asrawi, Fahed Ahmed Al Bannai, Ali A Al Mutawa, Rajaraman Venkatraman, Hassan Abdulla Charkhi, Nawaf Khaled Al-Enizi, Fahad Abdulrahman Al Gareb, Falah Eid Al

Azmi, Nabel Yousef Al Naham, Khaled Bader Al Jnahi, Faisal Issa Al Bloushi, Maha Abdulrahman Elhage, Hind Mohammad Al Eissa, Wasim Mohamad Kaban, Adela Ibrahim Al Rumaih, Nafea Houry Al Dhafiri, Mona Duhawi Al Rasheedi, Nayef Nada Al Noumas, Awatef Mutlaq Al Ali, Zaid F Al Zaid, Mariam Abdulhadi Al Dhafiri, Khalil Ibrahim Jassim, Zahra Ateya Ghafail, Nissrean Waddeea Yaqoob, Maha Moh'd Al Sutaihi.

The Prize program of 'Al Hassad Islamic Saving' from Ahli United Bank offers a weekly grand prize worth KD 25,000/- in addition to 25 weekly prizes worth a total of KD 25,000 distributed to 25 prizes, KD 1,000 for each winner. In addition, prizes of Al Hassad Islamic saving program from Ahli United Bank offer 4 quarterly grand prizes announced in quarterly draws. Each is a "Salary for Life" prize which is worth KD 250,000. In general, Ahli United Bank continues to offer innovative tools and means to meet the needs of its customers to match the Bank's long history of distinctive services which extend over 74 years during which the Bank managed to take the lead among local banks. For further information about "Al Hassad Islamic Saving" account, customers may call at any Ahli United Bank branch, or call: "Hayakom" service at Tel: 181 2000.

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CORPORATE GOVERNANCE IN FOCUS AS GCC BUSINESS RELATIONS GROW



Jane Valls

KUWAIT: As the region continues to break through geographical borders in business operations, GCC corporate governance standards are being enhanced and global best practices are being implemented to cultivate effective international business landscape. "The growing volume and increased depth of cross-border relations has resulted in a high demand for more transparency and disclosure among investors which did not exist in previous years making it crucial that GCC board directors follow international best practices," said Jane Valls, Executive Director, GCC Board Directors Institute (BDI).

GCC corporate governance practices took centre stage at a first of its kind event held in London in August 2016, which brought together several Board

Directors from the region and leading international personalities. Signifying strong business relations between the GCC and the UK, the workshop titled "The Effective Director: Adding Value to your Board" was conducted outside the GCC for the first time and was held in strategic partnership with the Institute of Directors (IoD) in London.

"Each country has a unique approach to corporate governance. The GCC region is characterized by strong family structures and corporate hospitality based on trust and transparency which is evident in the way that board directors in the region function. What drives business performance at a global level however is how directors collaborate these specific national approaches with international standards that must be adhered

to," said Lady Barbara Judge, newly appointed chairperson of the IoD.

With relatively young economies, the GCC has formed robust corporate governance regulations that have helped develop and levitate the market in the international arena. As a result, international investments have increased, more businesses are establishing headquarters in the region and GCC companies are setting up in other developed markets. The two-day event for GCC delegates took place earlier in August on the IoD premises at the Pall Mall in London where several senior directors from the UAE, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia convened to discuss corporate governance practices in the Middle East and what it means to be a director in today's challenging market conditions.

MONGOLIA CRISIS WORSENS; LOCAL CURRENCY PLUNGES

DEALERS SCRABBLE FOR DOLLARS

ULAANBAATAR: Making money amid Mongolia's deepening economic crisis, currency dealers thronging the black markets of Ulaanbaatar wave wads of American dollars and Chinese yuan, warning desperate customers that foreign banknotes are becoming scarcer by the day. The Naiman Sharga market, close to the Mongolian capital's cluttered and impoverished "ger" or tent districts, has become a daily destination for residents panicked by a precipitous decline in the currency, the tugrik. "Now I can't find any more dollars," said Ganbold, a currency trader, sporting a white, brimmed hat and galloping-horse belt buckle.

Ganbold has traded currency since the fall of communism in 1990 and up until now he's been able to rely on the network of traders whenever he needed more cash. But if a shipment of dollars doesn't arrive from overseas as he hopes, Ganbold will have to close shop until more arrives. Mongolia's government, elected in a landslide at the end of June, has been plunged into turmoil after years of collapsing foreign investment, unsustainable fiscal expansion and a decline in demand for commodities like coal and copper.

Last week, the central bank hiked interest rates by 450 basis points to a record 15 percent, stabilizing a currency whose 9 percent fall against the dollar from the start of August made it the world's worst performer. Dollar supplies have dwindled,

and commercial banks were severely restricting currency transactions, with one bank refusing to convert any dollars, Ganbold told Reuters as frustrated buyers milled around him. Finance Minister Battogtokh Chojjilsuren said earlier this month that the central bank's foreign exchange reserves stood at \$1.3 billion. But, he added that after stripping out a 15 billion yuan currency swap agreement with China, reserves would show a deficit of \$46 million.

An International Monetary Fund team was in town last week to meet members of Prime Minister Jargaltulga Erdenebat's new government, but some analysts suspect Mongolia might turn to China for another swap agreement rather resort to the IMF. "There is a good chance China asserts its regional influence and offers Mongolia a bigger and better deal than the IMF in a bailout," Nick Cousyn, chief operating officer of brokerage BDBSec in Ulaanbaatar, commented. "Mongolia is highly strategic for China, given Mongolia's vast natural resources and potential as an economic corridor with Russia."

Anxious times

The government, which promised to cut debt and lure back foreign investors, has introduced austerity measures like cutting senior employees' salaries and cancelling monthly student allowances. Economic growth slowed to 1.4 percent in the first six months of 2016, down from an

all-time high of 17.3 percent in the mining-driven boom of 2011. Anxiety over the tugrik has driven many people to switch their savings into dollars, and the black market is cheaper than the official rate, with commercial banks restricting the amount that can be converted per day.

Nearly half of Mongolia's three million population live in Ulaanbaatar, and these are desperate times for those aspiring families sending their sons and daughters for a university education overseas. "My son is going to America for university tomorrow, but dollars are expensive and it's hard for us," a woman, who gave her name as Enkhmaa, said as she, and many other parents, hunted for the best rate among Naiman Sharga's dealers.

On Tuesday morning, traders were offering around 2,247 to 2,250 tugrik per dollar, which was still better than the official rate of 2,260 tugrik and the all-time low of 2,265.28 that was hit last Thursday. Bank of Mongolia Governor Nadmid Bayartsaikhan told local media on Friday that he expected a tough two years, renegotiating terms on foreign debt which had totaled \$23.5 billion in the first quarter of this year. In a transcript published on the bank's official website, he called the appreciation of the dollar "artificial," and said it would eventually reverse course. "That's why I would like to tell people not to be tricked by today's dollar exchange rate," he said. "Don't panic." —Reuters

RENAULT AL-BABTAIN ENTICING CUSTOMERS WITH NEW OFFERS

KUWAIT: Abdulmohsen Abdulaziz Al-Babtain Co (AABC), the authorized dealer of Renault cars in Kuwait, is enticing customers looking for a new sedan to check out their latest attrac-

tive offers on two of their most popular 2016 sedans: Symbol and Fluence. The Renault Symbol features modern design, expressed through sleek body lines and a dynamic appearance that

stands it out from the crowd. Its drivetrain features a peppy 1.6 litre engine that delivers 110 horsepower through a four speed automatic gearbox.

With a spacious interior that can

seat five adults in comfort and loaded with technology, automatic air-conditioning and cruise control system, the full option Symbol boasts awesome practicality at an even more affordable price of just KD 2,999. For customers who are looking for a greater level of refinement, the Renault Fluence delivers across all areas. From its bold yet fluid contemporary design, featuring its striking front grille that is guaranteed to turn heads, through to its intuitive technology including a digital speedometer to track speed at a simple glance and a hands-free key card that unlocks the doors and starts the engine without the need for insertion and then locks the doors again when the driver leaves the car.

Instant connectivity to all mobile devices comes as standard. Featuring the biggest interior space in its category, the rear interior is like a living room on wheels, offering supreme comfort while personalized air conditioning zones in the front and an adjustable air vent in the rear ensure ultimate driver and passenger climate control at all times. Featuring a 1.6 litre engine, producing 115 hp the Renault Fluence is available for a short time only at just KD 3,299.

Customers can avail the offer at the Renault Store in AlRai. Renault Al-Babtain is committed to continuously offer high vehicle service standards in Kuwait and the best after-sale services to its customers. Renault recommends that regular servicing and general vehicle maintenance is integral to reliability, roadworthiness and safety of the vehicle, driver and their family and society at large.



MEZZAN HOLDING GRABS MAJORITY STAKE IN AL SAFI FOOD COMPANY

KUWAIT: Mezzan Holding, one of the largest food, beverage, FMCG and pharma manufacturing and distribution companies in the Gulf, has completed its acquisition of 70% of KSA-based Al Safi Food Company, effectively granting Mezzan Holding a local platform to manufacture and distribute food and beverage products in the Kingdom. Based in Riyadh, Al Safi Food Company is a start-up food manufacturing company established by Saudi Arabia's Al Faisalah Group in January 2014 and operated in May 2015. The Al Faisalah Group, a leading diversified business group, will continue to be part of the Al Safi Food Company with the remaining 30% stake.

Mezzan Holding, a Kuwait Stock Exchange-listed company, acquired the 70% stake through a capital injection of SAR90.75 million (KD7.3 million). Mezzan Holding operates in seven countries through 29 subsidiaries and 7,500 employees, and generates approximately 75% of its revenues through retail-based activities. The capital injection includes planned capital expenditures leading up to end of 2017. Mezzan Holding Vice-Chairman, Mohammed Al Wazzan, said,

"Saudi Arabia represents a key growth market for our company. We look forward to grow our business in the Kingdom and serve Saudi households with high quality food products along our local partners, the Al Faisalah Group."

Mezzan Holding CEO Garry Walsh said, "The acquisition marks our real entry into the Kingdom's food manufacturing and distribution sector. Though the company was acquired while in a start-up mode, it has a high turnaround potential and will immediately provide a new platform for both margin growth and distribution scale, in addition to complementing our activities in other markets and contributing to the Group's bottom line starting from 2018 and beyond."

"Our Saudi Growth Strategy leading up to 2018 has three main priorities. Our first priority is to streamline operations by managing operating expenses, raw materials, and SKU rationalization. Our second priority is to introduce Mezzan-manufactured products from other countries, while raising the efficiency and production of Al Safi Food's baked goods production. Our third priority

is deploying the injected capital in expanding new product lines and build new factories to serve Saudi from within Saudi, and serve growing demand in Kuwait and neighboring markets through Saudi. "By 2018, we expect our Saudi business to contribute between 5% and 10% to our top line, and to grow there as the new Saudi-based food manufacturing facilities that we have planned start production."

Al Safi Food Company, which will soon be renamed to Mezzan Food Company, will have the right to manufacture, market and distribute food products in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The company was also awarded exclusive rights to continue to manufacture, market and distribute Al Faisalah Group's bakery and snacks line, as well as the exclusive rights to import, manufacture, sell and distribute all Mezzan Holding brands. Mezzan Holding was advised by Mohammed & Khlood Aldukheil Co (MKD) and Abdulaziz H Al Fahad & Partners. Al Faisalah Group was advised by Abdulaziz I. Al-Ajlan & Partners in association with Baker & McKenzie Limited.



WORLD-RENOWNED CENTRAL BANK GOVERNORS AT WIBC 2015

WORLD ISLAMIC BANKING CONFERENCE SET TO STRENGTHEN THE ETHICAL PROPOSITION

DUBAI: In strategic partnership with the Central Bank of Bahrain, WIBC 2016 is set to gather over 1300 leaders onto a single platform to chart new areas of growth, address economic uncertainties, and unlock opportunities available for the global Islamic finance industry. The event will be held at the Gulf Hotel in Bahrain on the 5, 6, and 7 of December under the theme of "Economic Uncertainties: Vigilance & Growth".

The 23rd edition of WIBC will celebrate the rich heritage and the legacy of the globally renowned brand, one that has for over two decades promoted excellence, innovation and growth for the \$2 trillion Islamic finance industry. Promising fresh and topical content, the event will help produce a roadmap for 2017 and beyond by harnessing technology, cutting-edge research and powerful speakers. WIBC is known to traverse boundaries; it has truly evolved into a global phenomenon attracting participants from the Middle East, East and West Africa, Southeast Asia, Central Asia, Europe, and North America.

Central bankers, ministers and other dignitaries attend this prestigious event with the view of exchanging best practices and learnings on emerging Islamic finance markets. Last year, WIBC played host to a session on country reports from Kazakhstan, Sudan and Canada, as well as welcomed speakers from the central banks of Bahrain, Pakistan, Kazakhstan and Turkey. This year, WIBC 2016 will welcome a delegation from the Central Bank of Russia, headed by Alexander P Torshin, State Secretary - Deputy Governor as a keynote speaker, among others.

WIBC is also known for its emphasis on ethical and values-based business in the context of Islamic finance. Indeed, Ethical Banking and Corporate Social Responsibility will be of prime importance on the agenda. The emphasis on technology is another great feature of WIBC 2016. Sessions will explore how to take

Islamic finance forward in a digitally connected world, producing insights from pioneers and innovators in the financial technology space. Key players from Fintech, mobile banking, crowd funding, and other tech sources will lead the innovation agenda at the conference. The WIBC audience will play a formative role in the discussions, participating via live voting across sessions.

On the intelligence front, WIBC 2016 will continue building on its track-record as the definitive platform for thought leadership with the launch of several reports in collaboration with leading players in the Islamic Finance and Digital Space. WIBC leaderboard this year will recognize excellence in the industry through the much-coveted WIBC Performance Awards 2016. The nominees will be announced weeks before the December event and the winners at the Gala Dinner on December 6th. In addition, as a part of the exhibition, a new feature will be added known as the 'WIBC Majlis' which will be an exclusive lounge area for conference participants, speakers and sponsors to gather and network in an informal setting.

The conveners of WIBC, Middle East Global Advisors (MEGA) have partnered with a powerful lineup of premier organizations. They include Kuwait Finance House (KFH), GFH Financial Group, Khaleeji Commercial Bank, Bahrain Islamic Bank (BisB), Al Salam Bank Bahrain, Boubyan Bank, Ithmaar Bank, Grant Thornton, Path Solutions, Luxembourg for Finance, Natixis, Eiger Trading Advisors Ltd, SAB IT, ELIAN, AFAQ Center for Research in Islamic Economy, DDCAP Group, Fitch Ratings, Bank Alkhair and many more. WIBC 2016 is a three-day gathering of the financial industry's leaders, taking place on the 5th, 6th and 7th of December at the Gulf Hotel in Manama, Kingdom of Bahrain. For more information, visit www.wibc2016.com.



NBK RECEIVES PCI-DSS CERTIFICATION FOR CREDIT CARD FRAUD PREVENTION

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) has received the Payment Card Industry (PCI) - Data Security Standards (DSS) Certification from the qualified security assessors, SISA to protect customers' credit cards from fraudulent acts and safeguard their personal data. SISA awarded NBK with the PCI 3.1 certification in a ceremony that took place in NBK's Head Office and presented to Dimitrios Kokosioulis, NBK's General Manager-Operations and Information Technology Group, in the presence of NBK officials.

NBK adopts the best, most-advanced practices in information security to protect customers from e-frauds that are remarkably on the rise regionally and globally. NBK has constant strive to invest in its IT systems to cope with the industry's fast changing requirements and provide its customers with utmost security at all times. PCI-DSS is mandated by the credit card industry such as VISA, MasterCard, American Express, Discover and JCB. Banking institutes are requested to conform to the data security standards to effectively protect cardholders' personal card data.

Compliance verification and implementation of the safety standards should be held on an annual basis by the qualified security assessors. After each successful valuation, the customer receives a standards compliance certificate, as well as performance report.

Commenting on this breakthrough, Kokosioulis said that this recognition confirms NBK's commitment to introduce and deploy the best, most-advanced security systems that guards customers' protection against fraud when using their credit cards. He stated that this accreditation translates NBK's commitment and dedication to its values, when it comes to information security and innovation, in its aim to provide customers with the safest banking experience ever.

He added that maintaining the safety of data and banking systems are one of its top priorities. Having said that, NBK exerts all efforts to upgrade its IT infrastructure and deploy the latest and best practices by an expert team, aspiring to stay up-to-date in the industry and provide the best banking services and products to customers without compromising on safety. Kokosioulis concluded by saying, "The first verification phase of the current PCI-DSS 3.1 certification is completed. The new PCI-DSS 3.2 will be NBK's goal for the year 2017-2018." This certification affirms NBK's leadership in deploying the latest security technologies along with the best qualified experts and advanced programs. In addition, NBK constantly strives to update its staff and customers with the latest security advancements and trends to protect them from fraud.

MICROSOFT AZURE NAMED LEADER IN GARTNER'S IAAS MAGIC QUADRANT

Gartner has identified Microsoft Azure as a leader in the analyst firm's Magic Quadrant for Cloud Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS), for the third year in a row, with the company placed favorably based on both completeness of vision and ability to execute.

Gartner's Magic Quadrant analysis series has long been regarded as a decision-makers' touchstone for determining the quality of both strategy and delivery for market players. Microsoft's Azure cloud platform enables the creation of virtual networks, servers and machines, and supports multi-tenant storage, object storage and a robust content delivery network for both Microsoft's and other vendor solutions. In addition, the Azure Marketplace offers third-party partners the ability to use the power and flexibility of the cloud to sell their own software and services. Azure also provides advanced services such as machine learning and Internet of things.

The Azure infrastructure is built on software that has security integrated from the ground up, and all data, whether at rest or in transit, is strongly encrypted. All of these offerings are supported by a

leading-edge Cyber Defense Operations Centre that monitors customer infrastructure around the clock.

"We are, of course, thrilled and honored that Microsoft Azure named a Gartner Magic Quadrant leader for the third year in a row," said Necip Ozyucel, Cloud and Enterprise Business Solutions Lead, Microsoft Gulf. "The cloud remains a powerful tool for business and public-sector innovation and we are always focused on bringing the very best technologies to bear, so that our customers can get creative without having to consider the unwieldy logistics of growing their network or upgrading hardware and software. Microsoft Azure is open, flexible and enterprise platform that we believe strong enabler for businesses growth and competitiveness"

Gartner's announcement comes at a time when the Gulf region is taking strident steps towards cloud infrastructure adoption. Saudi Arabia plans to invest \$2 trillion in IT projects in the coming years, with a significant portion to be invested in cloud. Meanwhile, the United Arab Emirates will see a gradual growth in IT spend from now until 2020,

according to a report from BMI Research. A compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 3.4% will inflate the sector to \$5.3 billion by the end of this period, with service revenue taking \$2.2 billion. An accompanying decline in hardware sales together with BMI's prediction that SaaS will take an increasing share of software sales, strongly indicates a decisive shift to cloud for the country.

When Microsoft announced the G series of virtual machines, back in Q1 of 2015, it represented the most memory, highest processing power and the largest local SSD capacity of any VMs then available in the public cloud. The G series, has allowed Azure to lead the market with continued innovation supporting SAP HANA workloads up to 32 TB. Azure also has industry-wide recognition for its support of Linux and other open-source technologies having nearly one third of all Azure VMs on Linux boxes.

Gartner's report singled out Microsoft's "rapid rollout" of these new features and many others, signaling that the company's brand and history, both with its customers and with its delivery of enterprise-class solutions and services, had all combined to allow the company to "rapidly attain the status of



strategic cloud IaaS provider". "Microsoft Azure encompasses integrated IaaS and PaaS components that operate and feel like a unified whole," Gartner analysts wrote.



UNDISCLOSED, VIETNAM: This undated picture released on August 24, 2016 by Fauna and Flora International (FFI) Vietnam shows a group of langurs sitting on a mountain in northern Vietnam. —AFP

RARE ENDANGERED PRIMATE SPOTTED IN VIETNAM

HANOI: A new group of critically endangered primates has been spotted in Vietnam, raising hopes the rare creatures may not be wiped out in the next decade as scientists had feared.

The Delacour's langur, black and white with a full face of whiskers, is indigenous to Vietnam, but their numbers have dwindled in recent years because of poaching and mining activity in the country's northern forests. A team of scientists from Fauna and Flora International spotted a group of about 40 of the primates, mostly juveniles and infants, bringing their total population to less than 250. "It's great news for this particular species because had we not found this new population, they were in grave danger of being wiped out within a decade," spokeswoman for FFI in Vietnam, Akofa Wallace, told AFP Tuesday.

"The fact that they are breeding is brilliant news," she added. FFI did not say where scientists spotted the langurs, whose habitat is threatened by mining activity in the area, including charcoal production. They are also targeted by poachers who hunt them for meat, with their bones

used for traditional medicine and their pelts for decoration.

The primate was discovered in northern Vietnam in the 1930s by French scientist Jean Theodore Delacour, and are only found in Vietnam. FFI country director Benjamin Rawson said urgent interventions were needed to protect the species, which numbered about 300 in the early 1990s. "We continue to work alongside officials and local communities to ensure the Delacour's langur doesn't become this century's first primate extinction," Rawson said in a statement.

The rare animals are protected under Vietnam's conservation laws, but critics say the legislation is not effectively enforced and poaching of rare or endangered species continues unchecked.

Vietnam is home to some of world's most endangered species, including the mountainous antelope Saola, the Red River giant soft-shell turtle and the Tonkin snub-nosed monkey. Wild animals are under constant threat in the country, with their body parts in high demand for both food and traditional medicine. —AFP

FUGITIVE TECH CEO EXPECTED TO PLEAD GUILTY IN FRAUD CASE

NEW YORK: A fugitive former technology company CEO who frustrated federal authorities by living comfortably in exile in southwest Africa for the past 10 years has agreed to return to the United States to face charges he hatched a scheme to pocket millions of dollars by secretly manipulating stock options and is expected to plead guilty, prosecutors revealed on Tuesday.

In a letter to a judge, the prosecutors said Jacob "Kobi" Alexander had dropped his extradition fight in Namibia and would plead guilty to securities fraud in federal court in Brooklyn.

Defense attorney Benjamin Brafman said Alexander would plead guilty to one count "relating solely to backdating" and would seek release on a \$25 million bond secured with \$10 million in cash. He said he was hopeful Alexander would get a lenient sentence.

The government has said it will oppose bail. Alexander vanished in 2006 while under investigation for backdating stock options for his Woodbury-based company, voicemail software maker Converse Technology Inc. A criminal complaint alleges that from 1991 through 2005 he

exercised options and sold stocks worth approximately \$150 million, making a \$138 million profit. Of that, about \$6.4 million was generated by backdating options, it says. In addition, the company awarded thousands of stock options to fictional employees and then transferred the awards to a secret slush fund under the name I.M. Fanton, which stood for phantom, court papers say. The scheme allowed Alexander to award those options to real "favored employees" and to himself without board of directors approval, the papers add.

Before he disappeared, Alexander, an Israeli citizen and a US permanent resident, transferred \$57 million to Israel, fueling speculation he may have fled there, authorities said. He later turned up in the Republic of Namibia, where he was briefly detained by local authorities but thereafter was allowed to freely live with his family while fighting extradition.

Over the years, Alexander bought a home in Namibia and invested in local businesses. There were reports that he flew in hundreds of people for his son's bar mitzvah and that he took up charitable causes in the capital city of Windhoek. —AP

WI-FI? WHY NOT? HOMELESS ARE AVID USERS OF FREE WEB KIOSKS

REPLACING OBSOLETE PAY PHONES

NEW YORK: An effort to replace obsolete pay phones with Wi-Fi kiosks that offer free web surfing and phone calls has been a hit with panhandlers and the homeless, the least wired people in the city.

The city doesn't track who's using the new LinkNYC terminals, but anecdotal evidence suggests many users are living on the streets. On several recent weekdays, people wearing plastic garbage bags or hauling dented shopping carts were hunkered down at terminals. "It's free. That's the best part about it," said a tall man drinking a beer out of a paper bag as he watched an R. Kelly video at a terminal in Manhattan's Chelsea neighborhood.

Usages

The man, who would give only his street name, Beef Stew, said that besides listening to music he uses the sidewalk kiosks to charge his phone.

Matthew Kane was sitting in front of a LinkNYC kiosk last week charging his phone and holding a cardboard sign that said, "She Had A Better Lawyer." The sign was effective: One man gave Kane a \$20 bill and another gave him a slice of pizza during the space of a five-minute conversation.

Kane, who said he was staying with acquaintances "here and there," guessed about half of the people he sees using the kiosks are homeless. "It keeps people connected to the rest of reality," he said. The Wi-Fi program is a public-private initiative run by CityBridge, a consortium of tech companies. The first units were installed in January. There are now about 350, mainly in Manhattan, with plans for 7,500 or more throughout the city.

Two sides of the narrow kiosks are digital billboards that display paid advertisements. Revenue from the ads pays for the program. A tablet-size screen in front provides fast web access. As with computers in libraries and schools, filters block access to pornography.

There are free domestic calls provided by Vonage, a headphone jack and a USB port for cellphone charging. People who have their own smartphones and laptops can use the free Wi-Fi broadcast from each kiosk by registering an email address.

The 9-1/2-foot-tall kiosks are intended to be accessed standing up, but users have placed discarded chairs and crates in front of some of them to sit on and use them more comfortably, prompting complaints from nearby merchants. "You have people sitting on castaway street furniture or milk crates, and some of them seem to be there long amounts of time," said Dan Pisark, vice president for retail services at the 34th



NEW YORK: In this Aug. 16, 2016 photo, Matthew Kane charges his phone while panhandling at a wi-fi kiosk at 39th Street and 8th Avenue. —AP

Street Partnership, a business group. CityBridge and city officials who oversee the program say they aim to provide internet access to people who don't have it, though not to the homeless specifically. "When we set out to bring Wi-Fi to sidewalks at no cost to taxpayers, we aimed not just to replace outdated pay phones with something more useful but to provide free services to all residents, including the one in five New Yorkers who don't have broadband access at home," said Natalie Grybauskas, a spokeswoman for Democratic Mayor Bill de Blasio.

Some 350,000 people have signed up for and have used the Wi-Fi alone, and tablets have been used 60,000 times per week, according to a spokeswoman for the program.

At least a few down-and-out users of the terminals said they were using them to try to find work. Michael Klein, who said he has been stay-

ing with different people since his father kicked him out for substance abuse, said he has used LinkNYC to look up information on Google, to make phone calls and to post "a half-assed resume" on Craigslist. "I panhandle, and I'm looking for a job," he said. "But when you're dressed like this you can't go in for an interview."

The kiosks have a feature that aims to deter people who set up camp and use them for extended periods. About every three minutes, the attached tablet asks if you want to continue your session, which annoyed user Rene Angelique. Angelique, who's from Egypt but came to New York two weeks ago via Boston, has been sleeping on park benches or at a LinkNYC kiosk in Manhattan. "They're a great help to me because I lost my phone and my passport and a lot of my resources," he said. "So to me, it's essentially a free laptop on the street." —AP

SAMSUNG, TENCENT SURGE IN RACE TO BECOME ASIA'S MOST VALUABLE FIRM

SINGAPORE: Tencent Holdings Ltd and Samsung Electronics Co Ltd are racing to be crowned Asia's most valuable company as expectations for robust earnings growth push their share prices to record highs. Their surge - both have gained by a third this year - has made them the world's best performing large-cap tech stocks and highlights how these nimble Asian firms are thriving while rivals Apple Inc and Alibaba have struggled.

"These companies can grow earnings despite weaker global growth," said Andrew Gillan, head of Asia ex-Japan equities at fund manager firm Henderson Global Investors, which is overweight on Asian technology firms. "The operating fundamentals of the Chinese internet sector particularly have surprised positively in the most recent quarterly results."

While many investors remain upbeat about Samsung and Tencent, some caution the firms are vulnerable to rapid swings in sentiment on any sign of slowing momentum. Samsung and Tencent have been more volatile than the Asia tech sector and the broader market this year. On Wednesday, Samsung said sales of its latest flagship smartphone were outstripping supply, but second-half profits could still take a hit if production shortfalls are not fixed and a recovery in components demand fails to eventuate.

Moody's Investor Service also warned that Samsung's profit margins might narrow in the second half because of seasonal factors in the consumer electronics business and competitive pressures.

For Tencent, the market expectations that are driving shares higher are themselves a risk, according to Nomura. A



faster-than-expected slowdown in personal computer game revenue, aggressive spending and new products or business models from competitors could weigh on earnings, the bank warned.

The numbers

Samsung and Tencent have added about \$30 billion in market value since Thursday, surging to all-time highs. Tencent is valued at \$249 billion, only 4 percent smaller than the most valuable Asian firm, China Mobile, at \$259 billion. Samsung is now worth \$239 billion.

Tencent is now the world's 12th-biggest company by market value and Samsung the 17th-largest, Thomson Reuters data shows. That's up from Nos. 26 and 33 respectively just five months ago, according to a PricewaterhouseCoopers ranking released March 31. Samsung shares' have significantly outperformed Apple's - the Korean firm has leapt 50 percent over the past year, while the U.S. company has gained 3 percent amid concern about weak sales in China. The gap between Samsung's price-to-earnings ratio of 12.4 and Apple's 12.7 is now the narrowest since late 2011, although Samsung is still worth less than half the \$586 billion Apple, according to Thomson Reuters data. —Reuters

CHINA UNVEILS 2020 MARS ROVER CONCEPT: REPORT

BEIJING: China has unveiled illustrations of a Mars probe and rover it aims to send to the Red Planet at the end of the decade in a mission that faces "unprecedented" challenges, state media said yesterday. China, which is pouring billions into its space program and working to catch up with the US and Europe, announced in April it aims to send a spacecraft "around 2020" to orbit Mars, land and deploy the rover.

Zhang Rongqiao, chief architect of the project, said Tuesday they were targeting July or August of that year for the launch, the Xinhua news agency reported. "The challenges we face are unprecedented," the report quoted him as saying. A Long March-5 carrier rocket will be dispatched from the Wenchang space launch centre in the southern island province of Hainan, Xinhua said, citing Ye Peijian, a mission consultant. The lander will separate from the orbiter at the end of a journey of around seven months and touch down near the Martian equator, where the rover will explore the surface, it said.

The 200-kilograms rover has six wheels and four solar panels, and will operate for around 92 days, according to Xinhua and other Chinese media reports. It will carry 13 sets of equipment including a remote sensing camera and a ground-penetrating radar to study the soil, environment and inner structure of Mars and look for traces of water and ice, Xinhua said. China has an ambitious, military-run, multi-billion-dollar space program that Beijing sees as symbolizing the country's progress and a marker of its rising global stature. The nation's first lunar rover was launched in late 2013, and while it was beset by mechanical troubles it far outlived its expected lifespan, finally shutting down earlier this month. But for the most part China has so far replicated activities that the US and Soviet Union pioneered decades ago. It has already been beaten to Mars by Asian neighbor India, which put a low-cost probe into orbit around the Red Planet in September 2014.

The US has landed two rovers on Mars and the former Soviet Union and the European Space Agency have also sent missions to the planet. China's first attempt to send a satellite into Mars orbit floundered in 2011 when the Russian rocket carrying the payload failed to make it out of the Earth's orbit. —AFP

LAWMAKERS DEMAND INFORMATION ON EPIPEN PRICE INCREASE



SACRAMENTO: In this July 8, 2016 file photo, a package of EpiPens, an epinephrine autoinjector for the treatment of allergic reactions is displayed. —AP

WASHINGTON: Members of Congress are demanding more information on why the price for lifesaving EpiPens has skyrocketed. EpiPens are injection devices used to ward off potentially fatal allergic reactions, and the price has surged in recent years. A two-dose package cost around \$94 nine years ago. The average cost was more than six times that in May, according to the Elsevier Clinical Solutions' Gold Standard Drug Database.

Sen. Charles Grassley, R-Iowa, wrote Mylan, the company that manufactures the devices, and asked for more information on why the prices have increased. He cited the cost to parents whose children need them and also to schools that keep the EpiPens on hand. He noted the costs can also be passed on to taxpayers when children are cov-

ered by Medicaid or other government programs.

Two other senators, Democrats Mark Warner of Virginia and Richard Blumenthal of Connecticut, also wrote the company about the high prices. Warner said in a letter Tuesday that the issue is personal for him. "As the parent of a child with severe allergies, I am all too familiar with the life-or-death importance of these devices," Warner wrote.

Rep. Grace Meng, D-NY, on Tuesday asked the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee to hold a hearing on the issue. She is a co-chair of the Congressional Kids Safety Caucus. "Thousands of Americans rely on EpiPens in a given year, and perhaps no time is more important in the purchasing of these devices than the beginning of a new

school year," Meng wrote in a letter to committee chairman Jason Chaffetz, R-Utah, and top Democrat Elijah Cummings of Maryland.

A two-dose package sold for an average \$608 in May, according to the Elsevier database, and has possibly risen since then. In a statement issued Monday, Mylan said it has savings programs for patients and is also offering free EpiPens to schools. The company said around half of US schools are participating in that program.

Recent changes in health insurance have resulted in higher deductible costs for many families, the company said. "This current and ongoing shift has presented new challenges for consumers, and now they are bearing more of the cost" of the devices, the statement said. —AP

LAZIZ THE TIGER AND FRIENDS
LEAVE GAZA FOR NEW LIFE

LEAVING BEHIND 'WORLD'S WORST ZOO'

EREZ, PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES: Gaza's last tiger left the war-ravaged Palestinian enclave yesterday with monkeys, emus, a porcupine and other animals from a zoo dubbed the "world's worst", heading for a new life in South Africa and elsewhere.

Laziz (Cutey in Arabic) the tiger and the 15 other remaining animals from the Khan Yunis zoo were driven on a trailer in cages to the Erez crossing before dawn, an AFP journalist said.

The animals crossed the border en route to sanctuaries and zoos in South Africa, Jordan and Israel for "a

better quality of life", the Israeli army said in a statement. As well as Laziz, five monkeys, two emus, two deer, two eagles, two turtles, a pelican and a porcupine were transferred, the Four Paws charity ensuring the animals' welfare said.

For months vets from Four Paws had been visiting the zoo in southern Gaza to treat the animals and transfer them out after international outcry at photos of their conditions. Dozens of animals had died in the zoo, some of starvation, and badly stuffed bodies of dead crocodiles, lions and others

were left in the open, surrounded by piles of bones.

The NGO says on its website that Khan Yunis had "been known as the 'worst zoo in the world' since it became public last year that the zoo was crudely mummifying the animals that died in their care and displaying them." Yesterday's transfer leaves the zoo empty and it will now be closed.

Smuggled in through tunnels

"So many people have followed the progress of our mission eagerly and shown their solidarity with Laziz

and the other animals," Four Paws vet Amir Khalil said in a statement. "We are happy that we were finally able to close down Khan Yunis zoo." Laziz's case attracted particular attention, after it was revealed the near-starving tiger had originally been brought to Gaza from Senegal via Egypt, where he was smuggled through tunnels into the enclave.

He will now be transferred to the Lionsrock refuge for big cats in South Africa. "We were quite worried if Laziz would go into his transport crate without any issues," Khalil said. "But the tiger just went straight into the box as if he knew that we will bring him to a nice home." In the years after its 2007 opening there were more than 100 animals housed at the zoo, but they were decimated by repeated wars and shortages of customers.

The owners were unable to afford enough food, with some animals starving. "I am very sad," lamented owner Ziad Aweda. "I brought these animals from Libya, Sudan, Egypt and even South Africa to Gaza." The nearly two million residents of Gaza are also suffering and find it difficult to get permits to travel to Israel, which has maintained a blockade on the enclave for a decade.

More than two-thirds of Gazans are reliant on some form of aid, according to the United Nations. Hamas, which runs Gaza, has fought three wars with Israel since 2008, the most recent in 2014 in which 2,251 Palestinians died, the majority civilians, according to the United Nations.

Seventy-three Israelis, including 67 soldiers, were also killed. The Israeli blockade of the enclave and Egypt's closed border have suffocated the economy, making it increasingly hard for Gazans to find money for leisure. —AFP



PHILADELPHIA: Zion Harvey, center, who received a double hand transplant in July 2015, sits next to his mother Pattie Ray, left, and holds hand with one of his surgeons, L. Scott Levin, right, during a news conference on Tuesday at The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. —AP

BOY WITH DOUBLE-HAND
TRANSPLANT'S NEXT
GOAL: PLAY FOOTBALL

PHILADELPHIA: It's been just over a year since 9-year-old Zion Harvey received a double-hand transplant, and he said Tuesday what he really wants to do is play football. "I feel happy about my new hands, and I don't feel different. I like now that I can throw a football further than when I didn't have hands," he said during a briefing at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, where he underwent the 10-hour surgery in July 2015. His mother, doctor and physical therapists joined him.

The nation's youngest hand transplant patient has been going through extensive rehab to learn how to use his new hands. He lost them and his feet to amputation seven years ago after suffering a serious infection, and has leg prosthetics that allow him to walk.

Earlier this month, the suburban Baltimore boy showed off his new abilities by throwing out the first pitch at an Orioles game. Dr. Scott Levin, team leader of Zion's surgery, said Zion coped with the surgery better than many adults handle simpler procedures. "I've never seen Zion cry," Levin said. "I've never seen him not want to do his therapy.

He's just a remarkable human being, let alone child or adult. He has such courage and determination and gives us all inspiration."

Zion said his wisdom comes "from the two most amazing people: my mom, and my grandmom," warning his mom: "Don't start tearing up." Twenty-eight people in the US have had hand transplants, and 11 had both hands replaced, according to the United Network for Organ Sharing. Worldwide, close to 100 people have had hand or arm transplants.

His mother, Pattie Ray, said it's been a long journey but now she feels like she is living her dream. "It's his dream, but it's mine, too. I'm just living through him, and I'm just here to support him in any way and help him do whatever it is that he wants to do, if it's a baseball - not a football. Just a baseball."

Zion told reporters his mom won't let him try out for football, and tried to counter her argument that it's too dangerous by pointing out he'd be playing against little kids, not professionals. She told him they would discuss it later.

"My next goal: convince Mom to let me play football," he said. —AP



BEIT DAGAN: A tiger named Laziz, which was evacuated from a zoo in Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip, is checked by members of the international non-government iFour Paws organization at the Israeli Hebrew University veterinary teaching hospital near Tel Aviv yesterday prior to being transported to South Africa. —AFP

FARM SAFETY TOP PRIORITY WITH
FARM TOURISM ON THE RISE

HARTFORD: With the growth of agritourism and more people visiting local farms, Connecticut officials are joining other states in educating farmers about how to mitigate health risks for their new visitors.

Connecticut's latest push comes after dozens of young children and adults were infected with E. coli in March after visiting a Lebanon goat dairy farm. Ten of the 41 confirmed cases required hospitalization.

While subsequent investigations showed no evidence the milk, cheeses, caramels or other products sold by Oak Leaf Dairy were the cause of the outbreak, officials believe visitors were sickened after coming in close contact with goats. Dr. Bruce Sherman, director of the Connecticut Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Inspection and Regulation, said people were petting the animals. Some purchased kid goats and brought them home. Meanwhile, E. coli was found on gates, a concrete floor and even a bale of hay where children sat, holding the kid goats. "A lot of farmers aren't aware of the risk, because they're so sporadic," Sherman said of such outbreaks. "The public isn't aware of the risk."

On Wednesday, both state and federal experts are scheduled to meet with Connecticut farmers at the Legislative Office Building in Hartford to discuss ways they can better protect public health, animal health and their businesses as they open up their farms to the public. Topics range from preventing outbreaks to safely preparing food on the farm.

According to the latest Census of Agriculture, popularity is growing for agritourism, a broad term that can refer to anything from corn mazes to pick-your-own strawberries. The number of US farms reporting income from agritourism operations grew about 42 percent from 2007 to 2012. In Connecticut, it grew nearly 135 percent over those same years. There are nearly 6,000 farms in the state, the majority of which are very small.

As interest has blossomed, Ohio and other states have sought to help shield farmers with agritourism operations from being sued over inherent risks, such as a horse kicking a visitor. The hope is to make it easier for farmers to purchase affordable insurance.

Joe Tisbert, president of the Vermont Farm Bureau Board of Trustees, said agritourism is very important to farmers in his state, where there are regular classes on food and visitor safety, as well as resources on marketing and risk management.

Tisbert, who grows organic produce on his Cambridge, Vermont farm, knows firsthand the importance of agritourism. His wife persuaded him four years ago to hold farm-to-table din-

ners. The couple now hires licensed chefs who come to the farm weekly and cook meals for hungry visitors. "I love it," he said. "I've eaten dinner with people from all over the world."

Henry Talmage, executive director of the Connecticut Farm Bureau, said his organization is working with farmers to help them take advantage of the trend toward more direct-to-consumer sales at the farms, whether it's offering community supported agriculture or CSA farm shares, selling fresh apple pies at an orchard or hosting wedding receptions. "There are certainly consequences of going down the road of agritourism," he said. "I wouldn't say that farmers are unaware of this. It adds complexity, there's no question." —AP



THOMPSON, CONNECTICUT: In this May 3, 2011, file photo, beef and dairy cows graze on a farm. —AP

UPROAR AS AUSTRALIAN STATE
BANS GREYHOUND RACING

SYDNEY: Greyhound racing has been outlawed in Australia's most populous state despite fierce resistance from dog owners, with the New South Wales opposition leader dubbing the ban a "cruel ambush" of working class people.

The ban, which will take effect from July 1st 2017, was passed in an overnight session by the New South Wales parliament in Sydney, state Premier Mike Baird said. Although opposed by the dog racing industry and sparking heated debate within his right-leaning coalition government, the ban is intended to save thousands of dogs.

"I'm proud of the decision we have made to save thousands upon thousands of dogs from cruelty and death," Baird said in a statement yesterday. "It wasn't an easy decision, but it was the right decision," he said, adding that the government would help trainers and breeders whose livelihoods were impacted.

Australia has one of the world's largest greyhound racing industries, but Baird introduced the ban following a string of scandals including "live baiting" and the slaughter of tens of thousands of dogs.

Live baiting has been banned for decades in Australia but the national broadcaster revealed in 2015 that live animals including piglets, rabbits and

possums were still being used as bait to train some of the nation's most successful dogs.

A subsequent state government inquiry found evidence of systematic animal cruelty, including the mass killing of dogs considered too slow to pay their way. Animal protection society RSPCA New South Wales welcomed the ban as a "historic turning point for animal welfare", but several members of Baird's coalition government crossed the floor to vote against the legislation.

One of them, Nationals lawmaker Katrina Hodgkinson, said the decision to ban the industry had upset people in her rural constituency. "When people have something involuntarily taken from them, when it's their passion and the reason for getting out of bed in the morning, it is natural for them to get upset or depressed or both, and wonder what's the point of it all," she told the Australian Broadcasting Corporation.

"These people are not criminals," she added. State opposition leader Luke Foley said the ban was "breaking the hearts of thousands of good men and women across the state." Foley said the ban would "criminalize an industry, a sport and an Australian way of life." "We have the uncivilized and cruel ambush of working people," he said during the debate. —AFP



YANGON: This picture taken on Jan 29, 2015 shows a male peacock displaying his feathers at the Hlawga National Park, in Mingaladon, some 22 miles (35 km) north of Yangon. —AFP

MYANMAR'S PEACOCK: A NATIONAL SYMBOL DYING OFF IN THE WILD

YANGON: Embraced by kings and freedom fighters alike, Myanmar's peacocks have long been a national symbol of pride and resistance-but they are becoming ever harder to spot in the wild.

Ornithologist Thet Zaw Naing is worried. Every year that goes by, Myanmar's national bird becomes a less familiar sight. "They always walk on the ground and they sleep in trees at night," he tells AFP. "And before they go to sleep, they always cry 'Oway Oway'. That's why people can know easily where they are and easily capture them."

Decades ago the birds, with their bright green plumage and famously ostentatious male tail feathers, were ubiquitous. But like so many of Myanmar's most iconic flora and fauna, rampant poaching and habitat loss under decades of unaccountable junta rule has hit their numbers hard.

For Myanmar, the declining peacock population is more than just a conservation tragedy-it's a blow to the national psyche. The bird occupies a lofty place in the country's culture. For decades it was the official symbol of Burma's last kings, the Konbaung dynasty. Their monarchs wore peacock insignia on their robes and famously sat atop the Peacock Throne until their rule was toppled by British colonialists.

During his fight against the British in the early twentieth century, independence hero Aung San-the father of democracy icon Aung San Suu Ki-created a magazine named the "Fighting Peacock". Years later, Suu Kyi and her National League for Democracy adopted the same bird as their party emblem in their long years of struggle against military rule. Whenever protests broke out on the streets of Yangon, peacock flags could be seen fluttering above the crowds.

'Serious decline'

Now elevated to the role of Foreign Minister and State Counselor since her party swept to victory in last year's elections, Suu Kyi delivers press conferences besides visiting dignitaries in front of an embroidered peacock wall hanging. But some worry the birds will soon only be visible inside history books and political rallies unless action is taken.

Having once ranged from India to Indonesia, the green peafowl, as its officially known, is in severe decline. The International Union for Conservation of Nature currently lists the species as endangered on their red list. "It has undergone a serious decline and the only sizeable remaining populations are found in dry forests in Cambodia, Myanmar and west-central Vietnam," the IUCN says, adding pockets still persist in northern Thailand, southern Laos, China's Yunnan province and on Indonesia's Java island. It is believed to be extinct in Bangladesh, Malaysia, peninsula Thailand and India-with the exception of a few individuals occasionally encountered in India's far northeastern Manipur state bordering Myanmar.

The Ministry of Environmental Conservation and Forestry in Naypyidaw says the birds are protected under the Wildlife Act of Myanmar, which prohibits their capture or killing.

But according to wildlife experts, the law is not properly enforced, and many people in rural areas are unaware of the peacock's legally protected status, poaching them for their eggs, meat and bright feathers.

Greater public awareness of the peacock's plight, particularly in rural areas, will be critical in bringing Myanmar's unofficial national animal back from the brink, says U Thet Zaw Naing. "The most important thing is to educate the people about how these peacocks are precious for the people and how Myanmar should be proud to have peacocks," he said. —AFP

ILLNESSES AMONG LOS ANGELES HOMELESS BLAMED ON 'SPICE' DRUG

LOS ANGELES: Synthetic marijuana is suspected to be behind an illness that has sent dozens of homeless people from a downtown Los Angeles neighborhood to emergency rooms in recent days, authorities said Monday.

Eighteen people from the Skid Row homeless district were treated by firefighters on Monday and 14 were taken to hospitals, Los Angeles Fire Department spokeswoman Margaret Stewart said. That came after the department on Friday evaluated about 50 people in the neighbor-

hood, transporting 38 to hospitals.

Although the cause of the illnesses has not yet been confirmed by toxicology tests, authorities said it was likely a type of synthetic marijuana called "spice." Local television news showed multiple men passed out in the street, many of them being treated by firefighters or other health personnel. "Because it's synthetic, nobody for sure knows what active ingredients are in there, the strength is variable," Marc Eckstein, the Los Angeles Fire Department medical director, said in a statement. —AFP

STATES FILE ANOTHER LAWSUIT OVER OBAMA TRANSGENDER RULES

COULD FORCE DOCTORS TO ACT CONTRARY TO THEIR BELIEFS

AUSTIN, TEXAS: Texas and four other Republican-led states filed another lawsuit Tuesday seeking to roll back the Obama administration's efforts to strengthen transgender rights, saying new federal nondiscrimination health rules could force doctors to act contrary to their medical judgment or religious beliefs.

The lawsuit is the second in recent months in which conservative states have sued over federal efforts to defend transgender rights. Social conservatives claimed victory Sunday when a federal judge in Texas halted an Obama administration directive requiring public schools to let transgender students use bathrooms consistent with their gender identity. Now they're asking that same court to block new regulations intended to ban discrimination by doctors, hospitals and insurers against transgender persons.

The latest lawsuit contends that the rules, which were finalized in May, could force doctors to help with gender transition contrary to their religious beliefs or medical judgment. Transgender rights advocates called that a far-fetched hypothetical, saying a person would not approach a doctor who lacked suitable experience and expertise.

Disregards

Joining Texas in the lawsuit are Wisconsin, Kentucky, Nebraska and Kansas, along with the Christian Medical and Dental Association and Franciscan Alliance, an Indiana-based network of religious hospitals.

"It discards independent medical judgment and a physician's duty to his or her patient's permanent well-being and replaces them with rigid commands," the lawsuit states.

Jillian Weiss, executive director of the Transgender Legal Defense and Education Fund, said the new federal rules were groundbreaking and pointed out that other states already had similar protections. Ten states



AUSTIN: In this May 25, 2016 file photo, Republican Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton, right, announces Texas' lawsuit to challenge President Obama's transgender bathroom order during a news conference. —AP

and Washington, DC, require private insurers to cover transgender health care, while six states plus the nation's capital cover such services through their Medicaid programs, according to advocates.

"The only thing a doctor is obliged to do is treat all patients, including trans patients, with dignity and respect and to make treatment decisions free from bias," Weiss said. "If a doctor has a sound, evidence-based, medical reason to delay transition care for a specific patient, that would be respected under the regulations."

The Obama administration finalized the regulations around the time it issued its directive to public schools regarding transgender students. Thirteen states signed on to

fight that directive, including three involved in the latest lawsuit, and won a temporary injunction this week from U.S. District Judge Reed O'Connor.

O'Connor ruled that the federal anti-discrimination law known as Title IX "is not ambiguous" about sex being defined as "the biological and anatomical differences between male and female students as determined at their birth." He also said federal officials skirted rules requiring a chance for input and feedback before new rules were implemented.

The Justice Department has not said whether it will appeal the ruling.

The new health regulations broadly affect the health care system because service providers

who accept federal funding have to comply. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services referred questions about the lawsuit to the Justice Department, which declined to comment.

An increasing number of large employers are voluntarily covering transgender treatment, following medical recognition that it can lead to healthier outcomes overall for the individuals involved. The number was up to 418 last year, from none in 2002, according to federal health officials. Medicare began covering medically necessary sex-reassignment surgery in 2014. Traditionally its medical necessity was questioned, and it carried a social stigma.—AP

RECORDINGS OF TIGER SOUNDS AIM TO HELP SAVE WILD POPULATION

MILWAUKEE: Researchers are trying to use sounds that tigers make to help protect and boost their populations. The Prusten Project is the idea of Courtney Dunn, a senior mammal keeper at the Dallas World Aquarium. The first part involves zoo tigers. Ten zoos have already recorded tigers with digital recorders, including the Milwaukee County Zoo, with at least another 10 planning to do so.

Dunn says tiger voices can be used like a unique vocal fingerprint. Project officials are building a computer program with the zoo audio to help identify tigers and determine more accurate population numbers so organizations know where to focus protection efforts. Dunn says they plan to put recorders in the wild next year in India and possibly Indonesia. —AP



MILWAUKEE: In this May 11, 2016, photo, a tiger lays in a nonpublic area at the Milwaukee County Zoo. —AP

CLINIC PAGE



Kuwait Times
248 33 199





Dr. Fahad Al-Mukhaizeem
د. فهد علي المخيزيم

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





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



Kuwait is a Green Oasis held a health awareness day at Yarmouk Cooperative Society, under the patronage of MP Abdallah Maayouf, along with several dignitaries. Advice was given on how to prevent chronic diseases such as hypertension, diabetes, and most importantly obesity, which is the source of several diseases.





A NIGHT OF MOVIE MAGIC FOR SPECIAL NEEDS CHILDREN WITH MCDONALD'S KUWAIT AND 'THE SECRET LIFE OF PETS'

In a long-held tradition upheld by the company, McDonald's Kuwait invited an audience of special needs children from across Kuwait to attend a private screening of the new animated blockbuster, "The Secret Life of Pets". Held at Marina Mall Cinescape, the event was organized in part-

nership with the Shabab Al Khair volunteer group.

The children were invited to spend a fun evening in the company of Max, Duke and the rest of the movie's endearing animated characters. The family-friendly film proved to be a big hit with the young audience, who

walked away with huge smiles on their faces. Following the screening, the children were treated to special movie-themed Happy Meals, and to cap off the evening they received goodie bags filled with fun gifts and "The Secret Life of Pets" memorabilia.

"We have always been very proud of the

special relationship we have with the special needs community in Kuwait, and these movie screenings have become one of our dearest and most beloved traditions. They have truly become something that all of us here at McDonald's Kuwait look forward to," said Sherif Coutry, Marketing Director at

McDonald's Kuwait.

Coutry further added, "As always we are grateful for the support of all the organizations and individuals from the special needs community, who help us make not only these screenings, but also all our other community initiatives, a runaway success."



AL MUHALLAB MALL'S SUMMER PROGRAM PROVING A HIT WITH KIDS

Al Muhallab Mall is heralding the success of its first ever month long Kids' Summer Program which is taking place throughout August. The events are proving hugely popular with families and children alike, whereby an array of fun-filled activities are arranged at the mall every Thursday and Friday, available for children to get pampered, entertained and educated.

Children heading to Al Muhallab Mall have the chance to explore their creativity through arts and crafts activities provided by 'Art Space' where they can build, create and design with their bare hands. In addition, a full range of live competitions, drawing and coloring classes, live entertaining performances, storytelling stations, fun photo booth sessions and the chance

to win prizes are on offer, as well as the opportunity to meet and interact with a variety of their favorite cartoon characters.

During each event, children also have the chance to learn the basic principles of engineering through "Kids Engineering" team, using different tools to build models from simple materials to enhance their practical sides. On this occa-

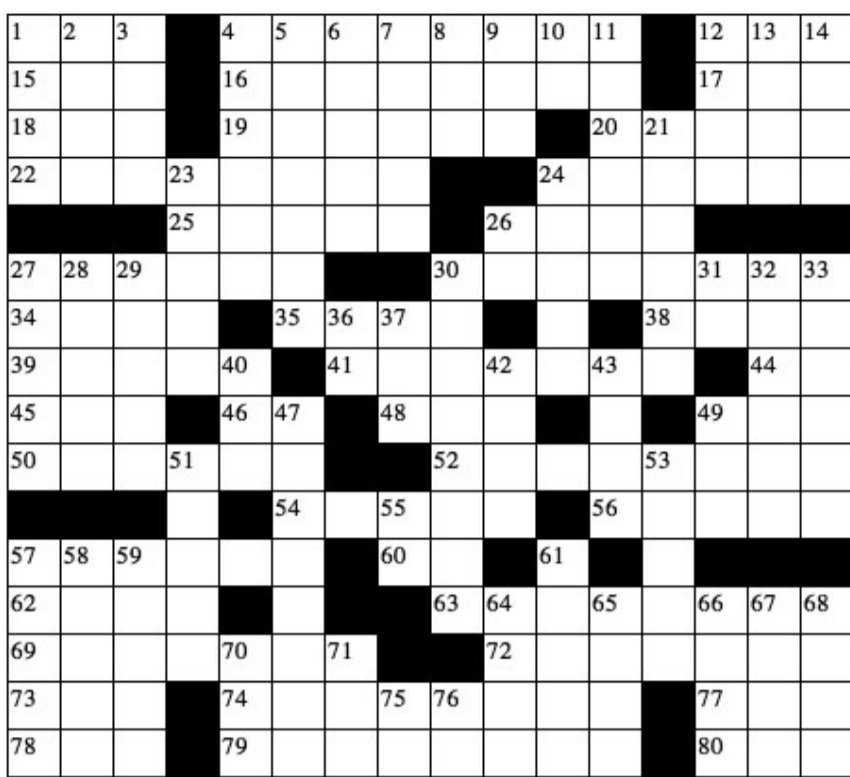
sion, Al Muhallab team invites all families and kids to join the event activities in the weekend from 7-9 pm in the basement of the mall.

Al Muhallab Mall's recently refurbished brand identity and corporate strategy aims at engaging with the general public through specially designed monthly activities and events that meet the needs of every seg-

ment of the society.

To know more about the Kids' Summer Program, customers can call the landline at (+965) 22662020. To know more about Al Muhallab Mall, follow the Mall's social media channels on Instagram: @AlmuhallabMall, Twitter: @AlmuhallabMall, or Facebook: Almuhallab Mall.

CROSSWORD 1353



ACROSS

1. A unit of electrical resistance equal to the resistance between two points on a conductor when a potential difference of one volt between them produces a current of one ampere.
4. Producing exhaustion.
12. Former measure of the US economy.
15. Liquid excretory product.
16. A member of a people inhabiting the Arctic (northern Canada or Greenland or Alaska or eastern Siberia).
17. The former capital and 2nd largest city of Brazil.
18. A period marked by distinctive character or reckoned from a fixed point or event.
19. Caught in European waters.
20. Small tropical American tree bearing edible plumlike fruit.
22. Become globular.
25. Become less tense.
27. A constitutional monarchy in southeastern Asia on Borneo and the Malay Peninsula.
34. (Old Testament) In Judeo-Christian mythology.
35. Law intended to eradicate organized crime by establishing strong sanctions and forfeiture provisions.
38. The basic unit of money in Western Samoa.
39. A clique that seeks power usually through intrigue.
41. (Christianity) Holding views that disagree with accepted doctrine.
44. A hard brittle blue-white multivalent metallic element.
45. Used of a single unit or thing.
46. A state in midwestern United States.
48. A label made of cardboard or plastic or metal.
50. A pocket-size case for holding papers and paper money.
52. (anatomy) Of or relating to a chiasm.
54. A narrow headband or strip of ribbon worn as a headband.
56. Spanish poet and dramatist (1898-1936).
57. A member of the lowest or worker Hindu caste.
60. A soft silvery metallic element of the alkali earth group.
62. A Loloish language.
63. Conveyed by sea.
69. An annual publication including weather forecasts and other miscellaneous information arranged according to the calendar of a given year.
72. A genus of Paridae.
73. A sudden loss of consciousness resulting when the rupture or occlusion of a blood vessel leads to oxygen lack in the brain.
74. A cut of pork ribs with much of the meat trimmed off.
77. An enclosed space.
78. Range of what one can know or understand.
79. Hard yellowish to brownish wax from leaves of the carnauba palm used especially in floor waxes and polishes.
80. The ratio of the distance traveled (in kilometers) to the time spent traveling (in hours).

DOWN

1. An organization of countries formed in 1961 to agree on a common policy for the sale of petroleum.
2. A man distinguished by exceptional courage and nobility and strength.
3. (statistics) Approximating the statistical norm or average or expected value.
4. English clergyman and founder of Methodism (1703-1791).
5. Large snake mackerel with rings like spec-

6. Jordan's port.
8. Bark in a high-pitched tone.
9. The United Nations agency concerned with international maritime activities.
10. A silvery soft waxy metallic element of the alkali metal group.
11. A geographical region of northeastern South America including Guyana and Surinam.
12. German tennis player who won seven women's singles titles at Wimbledon (born in 1969).
13. An intensive care unit designed with special equipment to care for premature or low-birth-weight or seriously ill newborn.
14. An excavation that is (usually) filled with water.
21. Marked by skill in deception.
23. Pasture grass of plains of South America and western North America.
24. (Norse mythology) One of a race of giants often in conflict with the Aesir.
26. Informal terms for a mother.
28. A city in southern Turkey on the Seyhan River.
29. A brief description given for purposes of identification.
30. Type genus of the Coraciidae.
31. A white soft metallic element that tarnishes readily.
32. Verse in the meter used in Greek and Latin poetry consisting of strophes of 4 tetrametric lines.
33. A percussion instrument consisting of a pair of hollow pieces of wood or bone (usually held between the thumb and fingers) that are made to click together (as by Spanish dancers) in rhythm with the dance.
36. That is to say.
37. A vacuum tube in which a hot cathode emits a beam of electrons that pass through a high voltage anode and are focused or deflected before hitting a phosphorescent screen.
40. A statement that deviates from or perverts the truth.
42. Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
43. Fossil fuel consisting of carbonized vegetable matter deposited in the Carboniferous period.
47. A language spoken by the Atakapa people of the Gulf coast of Louisiana and Texas.
49. The rate at which heat is produced by an individual in a resting state.
51. An ancient region on the coast of western Asia Minor.
53. Any location known for vice and corruption.
55. A soft gray ductile metallic element used in alloys.
58. Divide by two. divide into halves.
59. Cause to lose one's nerve.
61. Formerly a term of respect for important white Europeans in colonial India.
64. A very light brown.
65. A small cake leavened with yeast.
66. Danish philologist whose work on Old Norse pioneered in the field of comparative linguistics (1787-1832).
67. A less than average tide occurring at the first and third quarters of the moon.
68. (used of count nouns) Every one considered individually.
70. A committee in the executive branch of government that advises the president on foreign and military and national security.
71. 4-wheeled motor vehicle.
75. A radioactive gaseous element formed by the disintegration of radium.
76. (Akkadian) God of wisdom.

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Considering that your weekend was so full, this day is welcomed! Accomplishments and the completion of any projects or routine work are anticipated before the day even begins. This afternoon you may enjoy your friends and some light social involvement. Careful-you may find yourself more than a little interested in spending your money. You are nourished in great measure by the atmosphere and conditions you are able to set up. Now is the time to work on a budget-and this is what you may want to tell your friends when you finally realize you would rather see your bank account increase instead of decrease. By clarifying your budget, you will avoid many financial difficulties later. You enjoy the company of loved ones this evening.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Don't be surprised if you are not in top mental gear; these days occur occasionally. You could find yourself struggling to communicate. Take the time to write a grateful list. Hard words or confusing information or thoughts will not remain in your energy field for long. You will find that your hesitation to ask questions has vanished and your timing is greatly improved by the afternoon. Others will follow your example as you begin to see everything as steppingstones to a better you. You could be an excellent teacher in areas requiring discipline. You value order and place a high premium on hard work. You will have a guardian angel blessing you in all you do with family matters this evening. Relax, enjoy and listen to the musical sounds of their voices.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Everything points to you-moving forward. You could feel great support from those around you as you find a first in the way of accomplishment. Something you did not think you could do will be successfully accomplished. A little smile may appear on your face for the rest of this day. The afternoon is promising for working in groups. Your management abilities shine and you could be asked to organize or supervise some work process. You like work and career. This is an inspiring period, be it creative, personal or in the business world. You like radical approaches and may find yourself in support of whatever is a new wave product or advanced breakthrough. Swimming or some other form of exercise is helpful for your relaxation this evening.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

You could discover that you are appreciated for your ability to get things accomplished. Because of this, someone may seek you out for your ideas regarding business matters. You are able to cut through the formalities and get at what is beneath. You possess an architect's vision for what needs to be done and how to do it right to make it last-an expert or true builder. Others sense that you know just what tool to use and how and when to use it when it comes to problem-solving-a sense of the right path or dharma. You may even wonder why you do not exert this energy on yourself from time to time. There may be some insights to this quandary and you may find yourself making lists of things you want to change now. You are energized this evening.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

You may tend to ignore the law today-watch your speed and fasten your seatbelt. Your sense of direction may need more attention than usual as you seem a bit distracted. You have a way of making yourself known as you are greatly motivated to encourage others and to help whomever to move forward. Your outward seriousness about things is obvious but occasionally, like today, you can exhibit a great sense of humor. For some reason, today seems to be one of those days when you and a co-worker friend could exchange jokes much of the day long. There are things that test your patience but they will only last a short time. This evening you may decide to involve yourself with some genealogy study. You will have a helper in this research.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

This is a significant day-much can be accomplished. You show self-discipline and focus your energy on attaining your goals. You will most likely express yourself through those structures you've built up around you. Your environment can give you great insight at this time. Your needs are best fulfilled today by throwing yourself into your work. You are able to make meticulous plans at this time-your work is thorough. You can achieve much of lasting value. If there is any shopping to be done later this afternoon, tend to it yourself. A friend, with whom you usually shop, is ultra busy. With all of your abilities to express yourself, you may be tongue-tied when people gather to help you celebrate your special day-enjoy.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

This is a high-cycle day when you may find yourself signing contracts, making arrangements and scurrying around on time schedules. You may find yourself serving to guide someone younger than you in important matters. You may perceive how to proceed with plans and decisions with regard to your life situation. You could find that you are appreciated or valued for your feelings and your ability to respond quickly and get things done. More than one person will pay you compliments on your speedy abilities. Put your mind to work and take care of any details that you may have, for mental discipline should come easily. After work you will receive a door prize or gift from some unexpected source. You could be enjoying friends at a coffee house.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

You appear perhaps more charming and refined than usual. Now is the best time this month to request a raise, look for a new position, find a job or otherwise make yourself known. Take an opportunity to write out your goals. You have great psychological insight into life problems. You may consider some volunteer work in aiding, counseling or helping others understand difficulties. You can be fiercely tenacious. You always manage to come across as intense and personal when communicating and presenting yourself to others. Others are fascinated by the way you present yourself. It is easy for you to work with people from all walks of life. You could consider a job in management, perhaps teaching or athletic training or coaching.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 18)

You may find yourself very appreciative of your career and practical skills. You might enjoy solving puzzles and problems and finding solutions. Be very attentive to times and dates today as there is some possibility of misunderstanding. There is some inner peace and harmony that comes with doing a job successfully but you tend to enjoy teaching others and watching for the success of those you teach. This afternoon there is an opportunity to trade work with your fellow co-workers so that each of you learn each other's job for those times of vacation or absences. Your understanding of people and the ability to put sensitive situations into perspective are unique and valuable gifts. There is a chance to understand those around you.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

This is a great time to work with others. You may be asked to perform or oversee certain tasks today. Your executive abilities are in high focus. This could be an action-filled day when time seems to slow down as you encounter some of your more vulnerable areas. This kind of intensity points to inner change and growth. You have the green light for moving forward in your career decisions. You have plenty of drive and enthusiasm that should be easy to channel. You feel a love of order and an appreciation for responsibilities. In addition, mystical, metaphysical and occult subjects appeal to you. You will probably seek out contact in one of these areas to gain a greater understanding of life's mysteries. One of your favorites is the art of meditation.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

You value hard work and effort and will go about completing your designated tasks as quickly as possible today. You like to get down to the bare bones-to what is essential. You may find yourself being put to good use by your friends this afternoon. All of this should go rather smoothly. You may be tempted to overextend yourself today with regard to physical exercise or new business. Your energy is high and opportunities are many, but do not act rashly. Impulsive action could lead to accidents or overspending. Expand your experiences but stay clear of reckless behavior. There are opportunities to understand those around you this evening and interaction with others is good. A sense of support and harmony make this a happy time.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Your inner resources and emotions are accented. This could not only mean you have control over yourself in touchy situations but you can expect a sense of support and goodwill from others. This is a good day to get things done. You have good eye-hand coordination, particularly today. Any sustained effort will make almost any task run well. You may feel like exercising or getting outside from time to time-it would certainly give you a good break. Lovers, children and other people dear to your heart are emphasized this evening. Perhaps a picnic dinner at a nearby park would bring the family together in a positive atmosphere. Everyone may feel like doing something different afterwards. New insights are possible with someone older this evening.

Wordsearch Puzzle

Winter 1

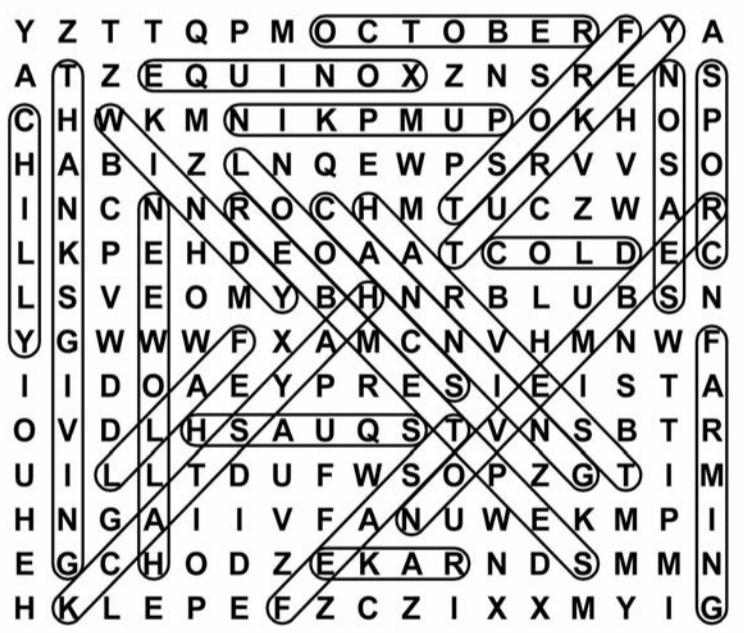
Find the words hidden in the grid of letters.



- ANTIFREEZE
- BLACK ICE
- COLD
- FIREPLACE
- FOG
- FROST
- HIBERNATION
- HOLIDAYS
- ICE SCRAPER
- ICICLES
- MITTENS
- SCARF
- SKATES
- SKI PANTS
- SLEET
- SNOW PLOW
- SNOWBALL
- SNOWMAN
- SOUP
- STORM
- TOBOGGAN
- WINTER TIRES
- WOOL SOCKS

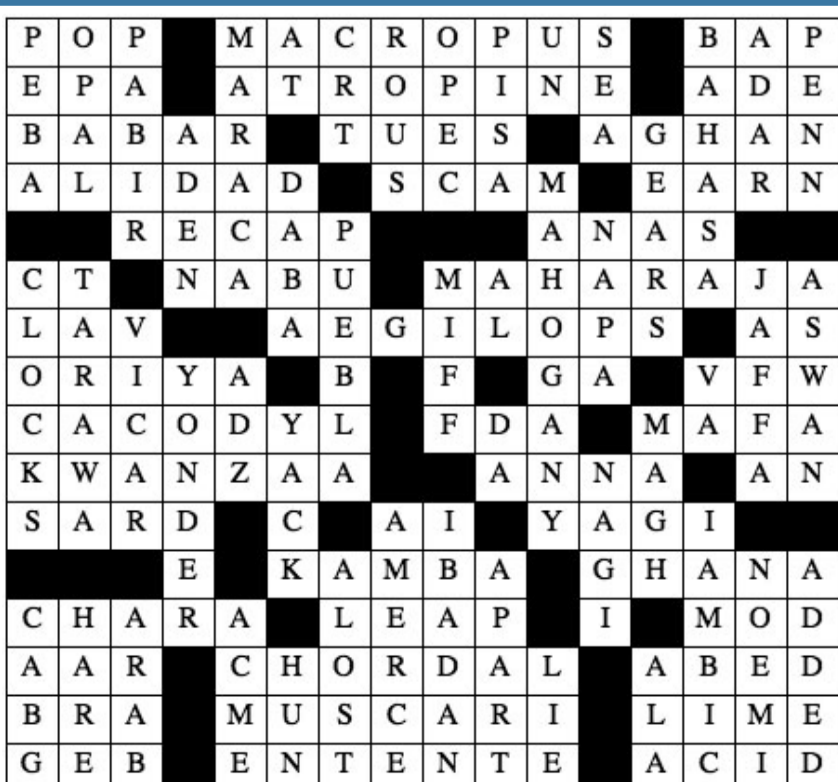
Yesterday's Solution

Autumn - Solution

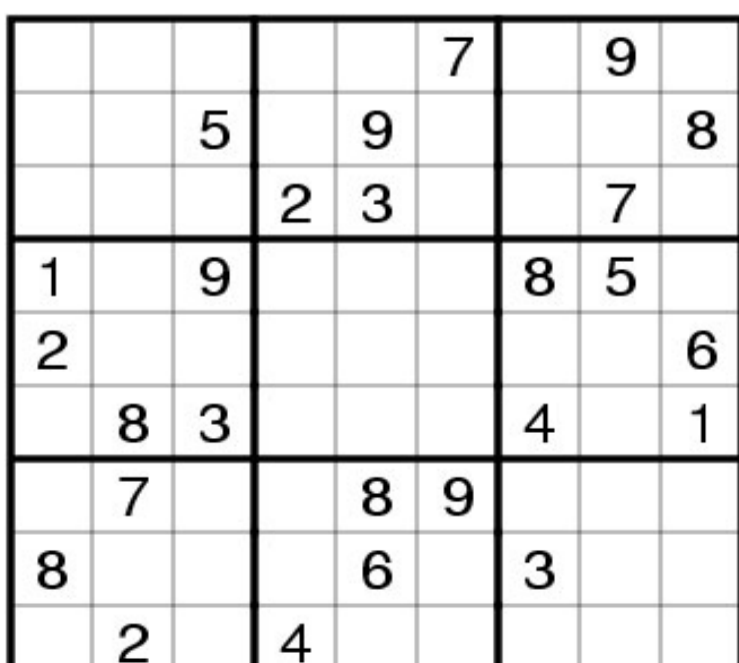


- CANNING
- CHILLY
- COLD
- CROPS
- EQUINOX
- FALL
- FARMING
- FEAST
- FROST
- HALLOWEEN
- HARVEST
- HAYSTACK
- NOVEMBER
- OCTOBER
- PUMPKIN
- RAKE
- SCHOOL
- SEASON
- SEPTEMBER
- SQUASH
- THANKSGIVING
- TURKEY
- WINDY

Yesterday's Solution



Daily SuDoku



Yesterday's Solution



For labor-related inquiries and complaints: Call MSAL hotline 128

Hospitals

Table listing hospitals such as Sabah Hospital, Amiri Hospital, Maternity Hospital, etc.

Clinics

Table listing various clinics such as Kaizen center, Rawda, Adaliya, etc.



PHARMACIES ON 24 HRS DUTY

Table with columns: GOVERNORATE, PHARMACY, ADDRESS, PHONE. Lists 24-hour pharmacies across different governorates.

INTERNATIONAL CALLS



Table listing international call numbers for various countries like Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, etc.

STATE OF KUWAIT DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT



Tel: (+965) 161 Ext: 2627 - 2630 Fax: (+965) 24348714 www.met.gov.kw

DAY: Wednesday 24/08/2016 Issue Time 07:00

Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Hot and Relatively humid with variable wind changing to light to moderate south easterly wind...

BY NIGHT: Relatively hot with light to moderate south easterly changing to south westerly wind...

Weather warning section including a table for station temperatures (KUWAIT CITY, ABDALY, etc.) and a SFC. CHART map.

4 DAYS FORECAST table with columns: DAY, DATE, WEATHER, Temperatures (MAX, MIN), Wind Direction, Wind Speed.

PRAYER TIMES table with columns: Prayer Name, Time (e.g., Fajr 03:58, Sunrise 05:21).

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT table with columns: Metric, Value (e.g., MAX. Temp. 43 °C, MIN. Temp. 31 °C).

All times are local time unless otherwise stated. UPO 2016/08/24 02:28 UTC V1.00 T2.3 ق.ت.خ.ع.ع/1-2



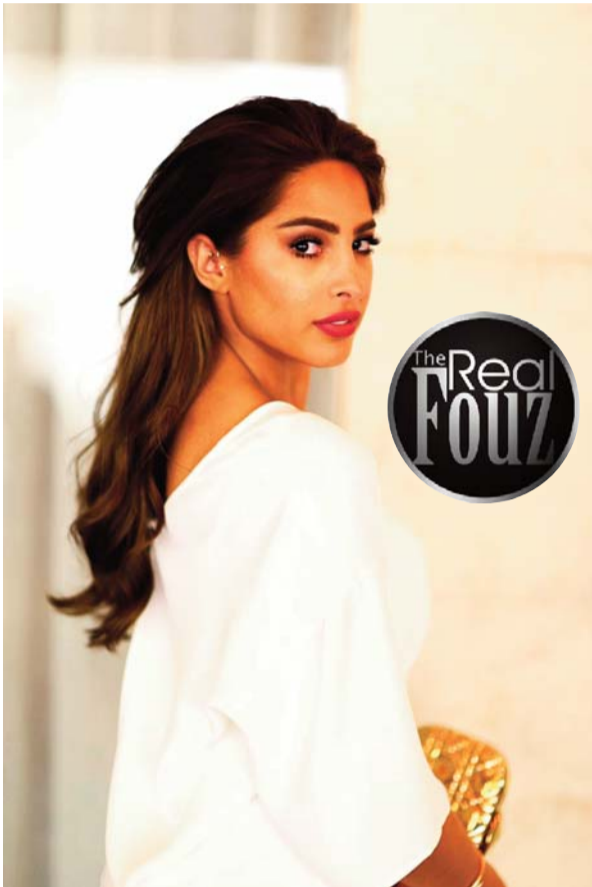
PRIVATE CLINICS

Table listing Ophthalmologists and General Practitioners with names and contact numbers.

Table listing Plastic Surgeons, Psychiatrists, Gynaecologists & Obstetricians, and General Surgeons.

Table listing Paediatricians, Dermatologists, Dentists, Neurologists, and Gastrologists.

Table listing Endocrinologist, Physiotherapists & VD, Rheumatologists, Internist, Chest & Heart, and Consultant Cardiologist.



Meditation and its benefits

Some days I feel like it is impossible to just sit down and relax with nothing on my mind and not worrying about what I'm going to be doing every second of the day. I also feel like I need more than 24 hours a day to finish all my work. It's even worse when you're obsessed with work and it takes up 99% of your life. Sometimes we get so caught up with our career or our job, trying to perfect it, fixing any mistakes and even pushing harder to reach our utmost potential and losing ourselves in the mist of it all.

Numerous times I've tried to take a break, and just free my mind from what can be an extremely fast lifestyle, until I realized that the reality of my job is that it requires me to be available and committed every hour of every day, which isn't a bad thing when you love your job, but it sure can be stressful sometimes. This is why I've tried so many things to detach myself from reality, to relief stress, and to find a few hours and sometimes a few minutes for myself to clear out my mind.

So, we've all seen and heard people say that working out releases stress, yoga also helps out a lot and I've come to believe that I am just not one of those people! Working out and doing yoga several times a week is definitely healthy and good for you, however, that's not what I was looking for, I was searching for something, any exercise that I can do to

lower my stress levels. While trying all these new techniques and reading up a lot about exercises, I said why not trying meditation. I went online and read about meditation and how it benefits your mind, and of course automatically I said this is not going to work and this is just another hippie thing to do. After a few tries, I actually detached and calmed down while meditating and it was the best thing I've ever done!

The benefits for your emotional being from meditation are:

1. It decreases stress and anxiety.
2. Enhances self-esteem and lowers depression for people who suffer from being social and expressive.
3. Helps prevent emotional eating and smoking.
4. Improves your mood and emotional wellbeing.

The Benefits for your mind

1. Increases mental health and focus.
2. Improves your memory.
3. Helps ignore distraction.
4. If you have ADHD, it helps your brain manage it more and correctly.
5. Practices your brain to solve problems more effectively with better thinking.

The Benefits for the overall health of your body

1. Improves your immune system.
2. Lowers blood pressure.
3. Improves your heart rate and breaths.
4. Lessens heart and brain problems.

With all of these benefits, meditation is super healthy for you and only when you find the right way to do it, because as I mentioned, not everyone can meditate the same way, sometimes a certain way won't work for you neither will it allow you to detach and meditate because it's all about finding peace in your mind and allowing your entire body to feel okay about being peaceful and numb, and just letting go of literally anything.

Read up about meditation and it is a great plus if you can find meditation music that can work for you, it's really helpful for you to get in tune with your body and some music is actually good meditation music for those who have problems with sleeping, I tried it and for a while I was a bit obsessed. You can try anything in the world, no matter how crazy it is, if you truly believe in it you will do it and it will work just perfectly for you. Your brain is more powerful than you think it is, use it wisely to benefit yourself and your health. Find your own peace!

Royal treatment: Creating a new look for the Queen Mary 2

What a daunting assignment for an interior designer: Redecorate the Queen Mary 2. The ship relaunched earlier this summer after \$132 million in renovations. Alison Clixby, director of hotel design and projects for Cunard and P&O Cruises, had to make the ship look fresh and contemporary while maintaining the look of luxury. She also had to keep in mind the ship's heritage. The QM2 is part of a line of Cunard ships named for British royals. Every ship in the fleet has been christened by members of the royal family, and 20th century VIP passengers included the Duke and Duchess of Windsor.

through in some ways - for example, using decorative patterns from the original ship in a more contemporary way - but we didn't want to do a direct copy.

We were also looking at things that would work when it's a very gray, winter trans-Atlantic crossing, or when she's on a world cruise in sunnier climes. We needed that real balance between traditional and classic, but referring back to the art deco heritage of the older ships.

AP: The QM2 has a lighter, airier feel than some ocean liners. How did you do that?

CLIXBY: We had the opportunity to re-carpet the entire ship including the cabins. Our principle was to have a holistic approach. Quite often on cruise ships, when they go through a refurbishment, they might change one thing but not adjacent spaces. We had the ability to do the whole thing, getting continuity and blends of color to change the whole color balance. There were a lot of old-fashioned colors on the ship - beige, brown, peach combinations - which were slightly on the 1980s side of color schemes. And now what you see in a lot of hotels is going more toward the warm grays, the taupes. We used those new colors and quite a mix of tones.

Red, blue, gold

We were also always looking to practicality when it comes to cleaning. Modern carpet technology is fantastic. You can blend more of the colors successfully so that something that appears to be quite light actually has a lot of depth of color to cover a multitude of sins. If you pull out the color tufts from every area, they would be identical - red, blue, gold. That made the difference. That shock of color made it feel fresher, but the underlying continuity is the warm grays.

AP: What's the difference between decorating public spaces like dining venues versus the private spaces?

CLIXBY: When we're doing the staterooms and it's personal, private space, you notice more of what you touch and feel and sit on. We did a lot in terms of new furniture details -

handles, stitching, the quality of fabrics.

In the public spaces, our primary focus was the first impression: The wow factor and representing the Cunard brand. We worked with the ship's existing structures but changed the features - chandeliers and dramatic artworks - and changed the color balance.

In the staterooms, we've got the blue with the gold Cunard crest for the bed, throw cushions, bed runners, bright throws and a blue Britannia color for the cabins. The other elements were more neutral to lighten things up.

AP: How did you balance the fussiness of vintage decor with contemporary style?

CLIXBY: Our natural tendency is, contemporary wins. But you want to create something that's timeless. You keep the pared-back aesthetic but add those older elements in. The furniture can be more decorative, for example. But we don't want to be completely design-led because that will be out of fashion very quickly.

In the lounge, decorative metal screens divide the space and make it more intimate. That's a direct reference back to metalwork from the 1930s. And we've got different fabrics on the seats, and then a button. The nail detail might be in a more contemporary gun metal, but that sort of element references traditional upholstery detailing.

AP: Any tips for home decor?

CLIXBY: A key element is lighting - whether that's being able to turn off the main light because it's making the room too bright, or adding some accent lights or concentrating on the color temperature of those lights so they're not too cold.

Also you would ideally declutter. On a ship, it's done for you - someone is tidying up and putting your things away constantly! But it takes a lot of discipline, and it's difficult when you've got families and children. But there is that idea where you think, if you could just spend the weekend decluttering and buying a couple of throw pillows, it would add some fresh texture or color. — AP



A pianist plays in the Grand Lobby aboard the cruise liner Queen Mary 2, docked at the Brooklyn Cruise Terminal, in New York. — AP photos



The Queens Grill Suite is shown aboard the cruise liner Queen Mary 2, docked at the Brooklyn Cruise Terminal, in New York.



The Queens Grill Balmoral Suite living room is shown aboard the cruise liner Queen Mary 2, docked at the Brooklyn Cruise Terminal, in New York.



Here's a Q-and-A with Clixby:
AP: The QM2 launched in 2004 but your research included visiting the original Queen Mary, which launched 80 years ago and is now docked in Long Beach, California.

CLIXBY: We wanted to bring out that heritage and history and refer back to those old ships. But the question was, 'What was it about those ships that we could use now moving the Cunard brand forward?' Cunard also wanted to promote luxury - five- and six-star and white-glove service. When I visited the Queen Mary in Long Beach, we looked for reference points like material elements that we could layer into the QM2. We needed to bring those elements



The Britannia Restaurant is shown aboard the cruise liner Queen Mary 2.



The detail of the back of a chair in the Queens Grill Restaurant is shown aboard the cruise liner Queen Mary 2.



The Queens Grill Balmoral Suite bedroom, on the upper level, is shown aboard the cruise liner Queen Mary 2, docked at the Brooklyn Cruise Terminal.

Harry Belafonte weighs in on Nate Parker and his new film

Harry Belafonte says it's unfair that Nate Parker's shining moment with his film "The Birth of a Nation" is being overshadowed by a 17-year-old rape case. But the iconic performer and activist adds that he's not clear about the facts and wants to look more into the story that's been dominating entertainment headlines. Belafonte said in an interview with The Associated Press on Tuesday that he saw Parker's upcoming Nat Turner slave rebellion drama and was wowed by the project. He called the film "a winner" and said 36-year-old Parker - who directed, wrote, produced and starred in the film - "a very bright young man."

But concerning the rape case, Belafonte, 89, said, "I don't even know what the facts are. I don't know what the truth is." Yet he also questioned why the old case just happened to resurface ahead of the film's Oct 7 release. "It's interesting because it's coming out the same time the film's coming out. Of all the stories you can tell, why are you telling this story?"

And if he was somebody who had committed a crime and got away with it, but he faced the justice system," Belafonte said. "The fact that (the system) may have screwed up, the fact that it didn't really take care of justice, the fact that he should have been punished or whatever is history," the singer added. "The fact is that he was confronted and then he did go through the process. Why are you bringing this up now? What has he done that requires this kind of animus?"

Parker was on the road to Oscar glory after "Birth" won key prizes at the Sundance Film Festival in January and was sold to Fox Searchlight for a record \$17.5 million. Then earlier this month, the Hollywood trade press began to run stories about a 1999 rape allegation made against Parker when he was a student and wrestler at Penn State University. Parker was acquitted, but his college roommate and "Birth" collaborator Jean Celestin was initially found guilty of sexual assault. It was later overturned when the accuser declined to testify for a

retrial. The accuser, after several previous attempts, committed suicide in 2012.

"How do I put it in a perspective that helps me with greater clarity understand why this is the consequence of something he's done by getting this high profile, 'cause this film is touching a lot of consciousness. Why isn't that the story?" Belafonte asked. "And is this going to be the price that young black women and men pay for making films of substance?" he continued. "Are they going to dig in and get dirt instead of fruit? What are we doing here? And where is the voice that defends him if he in fact is worthy of defending?" — AP



In this file photo Harry Belafonte arrives at the charity gala Ein Herz fuer Kinder (A heart for children) in Berlin. — AP

SoGoneChallenge gives Monica and 13-year-old hit a boost

R&B singer Monica says she's happy to see her 13-year-old hit "So Gone" trend heavily on social media, spike in sales and streams, and find a new audience with younger kids. The Grammy winner's 2003 song, produced by Missy Elliott, has enjoyed a rebirth since the #SoGoneChallenge was introduced, where rappers - or anyone - spit rhymes over the track's slick beat. It reached new heights when Chance the Rapper posted a video of his version earlier this month, which featured the 23-year-old rapping about his pregnant girlfriend.

"It's a humbling experience to have a generation of kids - some weren't born when the original came out - (listen) to the song now and creating their own feeling toward it," Monica, 34, said in a phone interview Monday. "So Gone" became a No.

1 hit on Billboard's R&B/Hip-Hop songs chart and peaked at No. 10 on the Hot 100 in 2003. After selling a few hundred copies in recent weeks, the song jumped from 224 digital sales to 2,080 through Aug 12-18, according to Nielsen Music. During that same period, the total on-demand streaming for "So Gone" jumped 289.8 percent, Nielsen said.

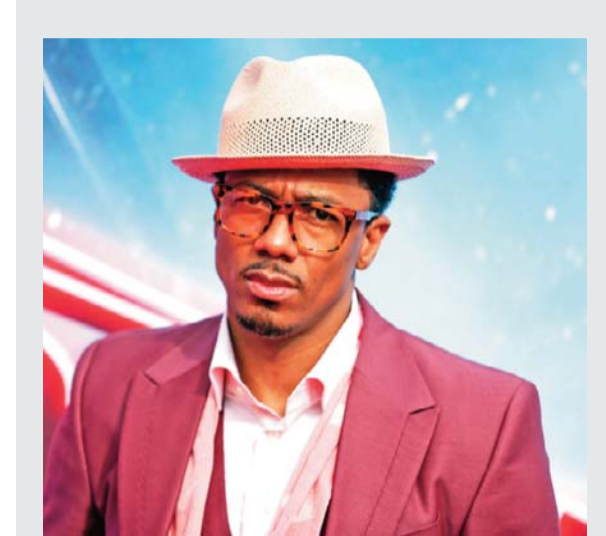
And Spotify said there's been about a 140 percent increase in streams for "So Gone" since Aug 11. Fans have launched both serious and hilarious videos for the challenge, from wedding proposals to playful fights about sharing boyfriends. NBA player Dwyane Wade, actress Keke Palmer and comedian Kevin Hart - as his rapper alter-ego Chocolate Droppa - also joined the challenge. Monica said she was inspired to participate after watching Chance show love to his future baby's mother. She said Elliott called her about how the #SoGoneChallenge had gone viral and later helped her craft her rhymes in the studio.

"I told her I wanted to take a moment and say, 'The same girl that I used to be, I'm her still, I just grew. I grew as a person,'" said Monica, who posted her version last week and earned praise for her lyrics. Monica said "So Gone," a song about a man's infidelity that samples The Whispers' 1977 tune "You Are Number One," was based on a phone conversation she had with Elliott. It was featured on her third album, "After the Storm." The album was created after Monica dealt with the suicide of her boyfriend and the deaths of her grandmother and cousin. She remembers feeling inspired and recharged when she recorded "So Gone."

"So Gone" is a record that's really special to me and always has been," she said. "My real hope is that ... it does make somebody feel like how I felt when I was making it. I felt hopeful, I was refocused, and I was realizing that my test would eventually be my testimony and that I was here for a reason." She said it's special to share this moment with Elliott, who has produced other songs for her, including the No. 1 R&B hit "Everything to Me." Monica said they were working on new music the day she filmed her #SoGoneChallenge video, which showed Elliott in the background. "This definitely sparked something special and ... as soon as we create a record that feels like ('So Gone'), I'm going to put it out," she said. — AP



File photo shows Monica attends the arrivals at VH1's Hip Hop Honors at David Geffen Hall at Lincoln Center, in New York. — AP



File photo shows Nick Cannon arrives at the 'America's Got Talent' Season 11 Red Carpet Kickoff at the Pasadena Civic Auditorium in Pasadena, Calif. — AP

Nick Cannon begins freshman year at Howard University

Nick Cannon's got talent - and homework. The host of "America's Got Talent" and "Wild 'n Out" has begun his freshman year at Howard University. Cannon posted photos on social media earlier this week of his first day on campus in Washington, DC.

Cannon says in a statement that he "decided to obtain my first college degree from an institution that had a proven legacy of producing great minds." A spokeswoman for Cannon declined to say what major or degree the 35-year-old actor-rapper is pursuing at Howard University. Cannon was back on set of "America's Got Talent" on Tuesday. — AP

MTV launches global contest for cover song stardom

MTV yesterday invited fans around the world to cover hit songs, with the winner set to earn fame by starring in an original video. The pioneering music network announced the contest ahead of Sunday's MTV Video Music Awards in New York and geared the initiative toward viewers in the network's more than 120 markets outside the United States. The network will announce a song each month. To enter the competition, international viewers will need to upload cover versions on YouTube and submit them online to be the "MTV Cover of the Month."

MTV International will recognize each month's winner through a recurring spot on television as well as a trophy. The network will also pick a winner of the year, who will star in an original music video to be produced and promoted by MTV. The first song in the contest, which will open after Sunday's awards gala, is Mike Posner's global hit "I Took a Pill in Ibiza." The track has already gone through a musical transformation. Posner wrote it as a pop song with light guitar but true to the sound of the Spanish resort of Ibiza it climbed the charts as an electronic dance track mixed by Norwegian duo Seeb.

"I'm all about anything that supports creativity and self-expression," Posner, who will personally select the winner, said in a statement. MTV International senior vice president Kerry Taylor said that the contest was part of the network's approach of preserving its well-known global brand identity while encouraging a local flavor. "Our focus is very much about being a global brand with local resonance," Taylor told AFP. Taylor said that MTV was open to covers from all around the world including with strong regional adaptations.

"When you look at the kind of success of people doing covers on YouTube and just knowing how much our audiences universally love music, this felt like a contest that would work as well in Asia as it would in the Americas," she said. MTV revolutionized the music industry from its launch in 1981 by intertwining a visual component with pop songs but the network has come to focus more broadly on youth culture. MTV International rebranded itself last year in part due to youth culture's rapid embrace of social media and the growing world of YouTube sensations. As part of the change, MTV International airs user-generated content-labeled with the hashtag #mtvbump-thousands of times per week. MTV has also produced international spinoffs of its popular series "Jersey Shore" and "Ridiculousness." — AFP

Probe into Fetty Wap video shoot faults school principal

An investigation into how rapper Fetty Wap was allowed to record a music video that included drug references and a pole dancer in his old New Jersey high school has concluded that the school's principal was solely responsible and should be disciplined, according to a published report. Zaititi Moody was put on administrative leave in June after Paterson school officials began looking into the video filmed at Eastside High School. District officials had a law firm investigate the matter, and NJ.com obtained a copy of the report through a public records request. The investigation was conducted by John E Wallace Jr, of the firm Brown & Connery.

The investigation found that Moody didn't follow all the requirements of the board's policies and regulations. It recommends that the district's superintendent impose "appropriate discipline." A telephone number for Moody could not be located. His lawyer declined to comment on the report. The report also stated that Fetty Wap's production company should have paid for using the facilities. The company gave \$500 to the Eastside Booster Club, but not the school itself. The video for the song "Wake Up" includes numerous drug references and features a scantily clad woman dancing on a pole inside a classroom. Numerous banners and posters seen in the video read, "Go Team Kush," which references a strain of marijuana.

Toward the end of the video, a woman presumed to be a teacher takes an apple from her desk and uses it as a bong. Some community leaders questioned why a video they said glamorizes negative behaviors was allowed to be filmed at the school. District officials have said they don't endorse the content of the video, which was shot during non-instructional hours and didn't include students. The report states that Moody had talked with Fetty Wap's manager following a concert in 2015, about the performer doing "positive things" at the school. Moody was later contacted by the production company and the manager about filming a video in the school.

Moody determined that filming the video would have educational value because the school had a video production class. He said he was unaware of the video's contents ahead of time, according to the report. Fetty Wap, whose real name is Willie Maxwell, has previously apologized to Moody and anyone who felt "disrespected." — AP



In this file photo, recording artist Fetty Wap performs at the 2016 Billboard Hot 100 Music Festival in Wantagh, NY. — AP



In this April 23, 2016 file photo, Burt Bacharach attends the 2016 Newport Beach Film Festival Honors in Newport Beach, Calif. — AP

Bacharach cancels 2 concerts to recover from broken arm

Burt Bacharach is canceling two September concerts to recover from a broken arm. A spokeswoman for the 88-year-old composer and conductor said Tuesday that Bacharach will skip scheduled performances on Sept 3 in Curacao and Sept 17 in Lancaster, California.

Publicist Tina Brausam said Bacharach plans to resume his touring schedule in October. She said she did not know how or when the six-time Grammy winner broke his arm. — AP

San Sebastian: Ethan Hawke set for Donostia Award

Ethan Hawke will receive a 2016 Donostia Lifetime Achievement Award at September's 64th San Sebastian Festival, the highest-profile fest in the Spanish-speaking world. Hawke will be honored Sept 17 at a ceremony prior to San Sebastian's gala screening of Antoine Fuqua's remake of classic western "The Magnificent Seven," in which Hawke co-stars alongside Denzel Washington. The film will close the Venice Festival and then segues to Toronto, where it opens the festival.

"Hawke's career, spanning thirty years and four Academy Award nominations, has solidified his reputation as a truly multifaceted artist, challenging himself as a screenwriter, director, novelist and actor of the stage and screen," the San Sebastian Festival said in a statement. An actor who has also leveraged his fame to give more prominence to high-profile independent titles as with his fruitful partnership with Richard Linklater which takes in titles such as "Boyhood," "Before Midnight" and "Before Sunset" - Hawke enjoys a broad base of fans and a wide industry respect in and outside Spain.

Rather like Mexico's Gael Garcia Bernal, who will also be honored at San Sebastian with a new San Sebastian prize, the Jaeger-LeCoultre Latin Cinema Award, Hawke has also doubled up as a director - helming 2006 music drama "The Hottest State" and 2015's documentary "Seymour: An Introduction." He also served as a producer of Antoine Fuqua's 2015 TV movie "Exit Strategy," for Fox, which he also toplined. In 2002, Hawke

received his first Academy Award nomination for best supporting actor for his work in Fuqua's "Training Day." His additional credits include "Dead Poets Society," "Good Kill," "Reality Bites," "Great Expectations," "Hamlet," "Gattaca," "Brooklyn's Finest," "The Purge," and "Before The Devil Knows You're Dead." As previously announced, Sigourney Weaver will receive another Donostia Award at the San Sebastian Festival's 64th edition, which runs Sept 16-24. — Reuters



SAUDI ARABIA SUBMITS SECOND FILM, 'BARAKAH MEETS BARAKAH,' FOR OSCAR FOREIGN LANGUAGE

Saudi Arabia has backed Mahmoud Sabbagh's "Barakah Meets Barakah" as its 2017 Academy Awards entry for best foreign language film. The movie marks the second-ever Saudi film to be submitted for consideration. "Mahmoud Sabbagh is a representative of a new generation who will soon be a pioneer in the history of filmmaking in Saudi Arabia," said Sultan Al Bazie, head of the Saudi Arabian Society for Culture and Arts and chairman of the nominating committee.

"This generation, who submitted more than 70 films in the third Saudi Film Festival organized by SASCA last March, are showing a lot of creativity and determination to express themselves and their culture through cinema," he added. "We feel proud to nominate 'Barakah Meets Barakah' as our country's second entry to the Oscars and we are optimistic that the next years will have more entries from Saudi Arabia." "Barakah Meets Barakah" made its debut at this

year's Berlin Film Festival, where it received positive reviews. The film follows a young couple on a first date in a society where public unchaperoned meetings are prohibited. It is a clash between the traditional societal values of Saudi Arabia and the modern world.

"This movie is about hope and making change. Even in the most challenging filmmaking conditions, there should be a voice that represents the normal stories of the people in Saudi Arabia," said writer/director Sabbagh. "Barakah Meets Barakah" will make its North American debut next month at the Toronto International Film Festival. MPM Films is handling worldwide sales but the film is still looking for North American distribution. — Reuters



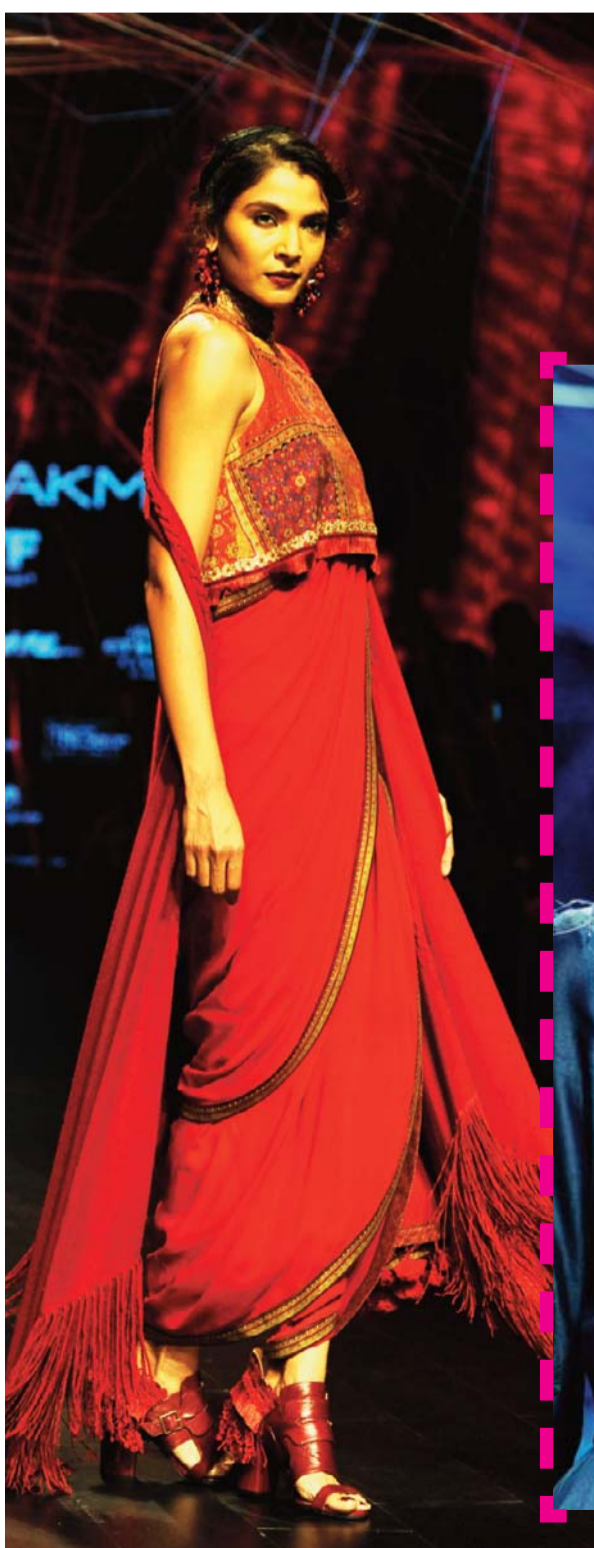


Indian Bollywood actress Kangana Ranaut (center) showcases a creation by designer Tarun Tahiliani (left) during Lakme Fashion Week (LFW) Winter/Festive 2016 in Mumbai. — AP/AFP photos

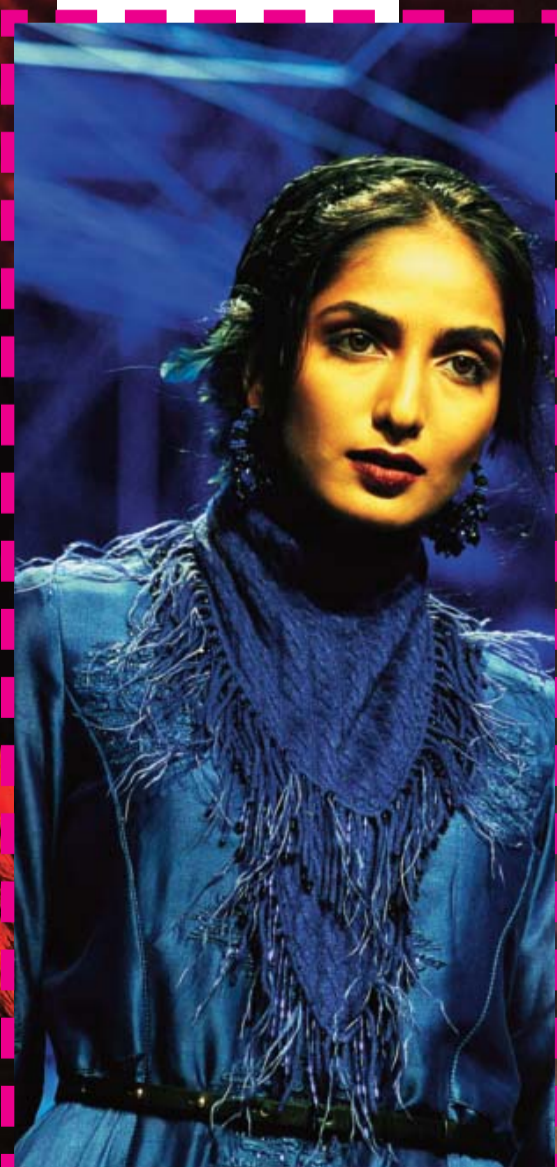
LAKME FASHION WEEK



Models showcase creations by designer Kasha.



Models showcase creations by designer Tarun Tahiliani.



Models showcase creations by designer Myoho.



Indian models showcase creations by designer Shahil Anega.

FASHION



Indian models showcase creations during the Gen Next show.



Ukrainian designer Yuliya Magdych holds an embroidered dress from her collection in Kiev. — AFP photos



Workers prepare fabric details for the embroidered shirts in the workshop.



Ukrainian designer Oksana Karavanska speaks to journalist.

Vyshyvanka: Ukraine's national costume conquers the catwalk

Fashionistas the world over are snatching up a must-have item for the "boho chic" look—an embroidered blouse or dress that is, in fact, Ukraine's national costume and new symbol of unity. Fashion bible *Vogue* wrote in its US May issue that the peasant-style "vyshyvanka", as it's called at home, has "made waves far past the Eastern European country". It is "this summer's most sought-after item of clothing", proclaimed the *Times* of London, while the *New York Times* advised readers to stock up on this "top of summer" fashion. But this is no passing trend.

Vyshyvanka tops and dresses decorated with colorful embroidery date back centuries, with styles and stitch designs often codified by region and long believed to protect wearers from evil spirits. And they will be out in force on Wednesday as Kiev holds celebrations for the 25th anniversary of Ukraine's post-Soviet independence. The style came back out of the closet after Ukraine's 2014 pro-Western revolt pulled the ex-Soviet republic out of Russia's orbit and gave it a new sense of national pride. Since then, no Ukraine holiday goes by without residents wearing the vyshyvanka. With many Westerners backing Kiev in its war against pro-Kremlin separatists in the east, a conflict that has claimed more than 9,500 lives, the vyshyvanka has made plenty of red carpet appearances elsewhere and even cropped up at the Rio Olympic games.

'At our roots'

And not just on Ukrainians. Celebrity fans include US burlesque dancer Dita Von Teese and French actress Melanie Thierry, who wore hers at the Cannes film festival, while Queen Maxima of the Netherlands was photographed in a vyshyvanka dress at the Rio games. "People may think New York City is where fashion is at, but I've got my eyes on Ukraine," said Kelly Osbourne, British singer and daughter of the legendary rocker Ozzy Osbourne in a proud Instagram posting of herself in a vyshyvanka model by Ukrainian designer Yuliya Magdych.

"The Ukrainian people lost a lot when (the separatist) war began" in April 2014, Magdych told AFP. "What do people rely on at such moments? We rely on our roots. And the vyshyvanka is at our roots—that is why everybody rushed to wear it." Magdych, 31, was born in western Ukraine, a predominantly nationalist region that takes a particularly dim view of Russia and was once part of Poland. She is the first Ukrainian designer to be represented in Britain's high-end Selfridges department store as well as on the online luxury fashion retailer Moda Operandi. It took time, she said, for people to understand that

embroidery was part of the "DNA of Ukrainian fashion." "Now, it is fashionable to wear a vyshyvanka. It is trendy to be a Ukrainian," Magdych said.



A close up shows parts of an embroidered dress from the collection of Ukrainian designer Yuliya Magdych.

'Unique work of art'

Oksana Karavanska, 50, another well-known Ukrainian designer, says she has received orders for her blouses and dresses from France to Canada and the United States. "The vyshyvanka has now become a worldwide hit", Karavanska said. "It is a unique work of art because nowhere in the country can you find two identical pieces. Each village has its own embroidery culture, each village has its own patterns." Fellow designer Kateryna Levenko, 69, has embroidered the traditional clothing since she was a schoolgirl in her native village in northeastern Ukraine where she learnt the craft from her mother.

She too attributes the worldwide interest in Ukraine's traditional dress to the 2014 revolution. "The world knew nothing about us until then," Levenko said. "They knew about the Soviet Union, didn't they? But many had not even heard there was a country called Ukraine." Magdych, meanwhile, has high expectations for the vyshyvanka, hoping it will become a fashion classic like a "Hermes scarf or Chanel ballet flats". — AFP



Kateryna Levenko, 69, embroideres a traditional towel.





People look at illuminate Chinese sculptures during the European premiere of the China Lantern Festival in Vienna, Austria. — AP



A Moroccan couple walks on the beach in the Moroccan capital Rabat.



Moroccans spend time at the beach in the Moroccan capital Rabat.



This file photo shows Moroccans playing in the sea at the beach in the Moroccan capital, Rabat.

The burkini in North Africa: 'Most people don't care'

The burkini, a body-concealing women's swimsuit that fits a conservative Islamic dress code, has stirred controversy in France, but on the beaches of North Africa, it has made few waves. On the coast of Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia, women are already wearing increasingly modest outfits-but few can afford the full-body costume. In Zeralda, a seaside resort in western Algiers, few women dare to wear a swimsuit, let alone a bikini, on public beaches. Hakima, a mathematics teacher in her 40s, wears a burkini in the sea before wrapping up in a large sarong when she gets out.

"It's more decent," she says. "The all-body swimsuit is a solution for practicing Muslim women who like the sea." But some women cover up against their will, like Manel Brahimi, a biology student. "I love swimming but if I wear a normal swimsuit, people look at me as if I'm a Martian," she says. Siham, 24, is also resigned to wearing cycling shorts under her one-piece swimsuit to "avoid being stared at". On the beaches of Rabat, swimmers splash around in various outfits including Bermuda shorts, tracksuit pants, leggings, denim shorts, and even suggestive wet T-shirts.

Few wear an actual burkini, a garment that on average costs 500 dirhams (50 euros, \$56) — outside the budget of most beach-goers in the Moroccan capital. The swimsuit was introduced to the country by Moroccans living overseas, says Miloud, a retiree. "They brought the fashion (of the burkini) here this year when they came on holiday to the beaches" in the conservative north of the country, says Miloud. Another beach-goer, Fadel, sees the outfit as "a story of big money" that "creates business for Islamic fashion stores." "But most people don't care," he says.

From bikinis to burkinis

Last week, Nice became the latest French seaside resort to ban the burkini after a string of terror attacks. Prime Minister Manuel Valls said the costume was part of a political project based "on the enslavement of women," and was "not compatible with the values of France and the republic". This month, youths on a beach on the French Mediterranean island of Corsica came to blows with a group of Muslim families, reportedly after a tourist snapped pictures of women bathing in burkinis. But the swimsuit has sparked no such controversy in Tunisia, says sociologist Abdessatar Sahbani. "Wearing the burkini, which has increased considerably since the revolution (in 2011), hasn't caused any problems on the beaches," he says.

"This summer, Tunisians are much more preoccupied with the economic and security situation." But changing social mores have given a boost to beach clubs reserved for women and children, such as the "Marina Club" east of Algiers. The club's clientele lounge next to a swimming pool sporting a variety of clothes from bikinis to burkinis, far from the gaze of men. The club is entirely staffed by women, from waitresses to lifeguards. Many of them are students.

"It's a haven of peace, a discreet place for a Muslim woman," says Ouahiba Chatouri, a retired air hostess in a two-piece swimsuit. In addition to the exterior wall, another wall

separates the pool from a special section for women who wear the full Islamic veil and don't want to undress in front of other women. "They don't appreciate the presence of young boys in there," says one client. She says she was surprised at the comparison between the gaze of a seven-year-old and that of an adult.

'We didn't yield'

In early August, an article in an Algerian newspaper provoked an outcry on social media for claiming that "nudity" on public beaches had turned them into no-go areas for families. It blasted Algerian women who "wear skimpy swimsuits as if they were on foreign beaches, and walk along the shore displaying their bodies full of tattoos." Yet in the 1990s, mixed beaches and swimsuits were the norm on Algeria's beaches. Saida, an English teacher, says the country's beaches were always mixed until recently.



An Algerian woman and child play on the sand at a public beach, reserved for families.

Now, "the walls have been put up between those who can pay to tan on a private beach and those who, by conviction or obligation, swim in an outfit society deems decent," she says. Katia Ouhid, who is in her 50s, says she wears the bikini "on principle." "I put on weight when I was pregnant, but I refuse to accept the diktat of society," she says. "When the Islamists banned women from going to the beach, we didn't yield. We went with family and friends and we wore our swimsuits."

Amina, one of her friends, says society has "regressed enormously in terms of individual freedoms," and says she misses the beaches where girls used to wear swimsuits in shimmering colors. "All it needs is a sign at the entrance: 'Family beach, modest dress required'," she says. — AFP



Algerian families gathered on a public beach, reserved especially for families and their children, in the capital Algiers.



Moroccans spend time at the beach in the Moroccan capital Rabat.



An Algerian family gathers on a public beach, reserved for families, in the capital Algiers.



Algerians gathering on a public beach, reserved for families in the capital Algiers.



Fully covered Tunisian Muslim women swimming at Ghar El Melh beach near Bizerte, north-east of the capital Tunis.



Moroccan women wearing the niqab, walking on the beach with their children in Casablanca. — AFP photos