

Mass grief as India political star Jayalalithaa buried



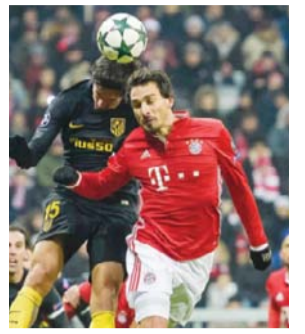
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AMIR CALLS FOR CONCERTED RESPONSE TO INT'L CHANGES

BRITISH PM JOINS GULF SUMMIT FOR POST-BREXIT TALKS



Min 11°
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High Tide 03:27 & 17:52
Low Tide 10:57 & 23:23

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MANAMA: Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) leaders pose for a group picture during a GCC summit in the Bahraini capital yesterday. (Right) HH the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets British Prime Minister Theresa May yesterday. —AFP/KUNA

News in brief

KFA chief Hasawi 'remains in post'
KUWAIT: Kuwait Football Association Chairman Fawaz Al-Hasawi remains at the helm of KFA, secretary general of an interim committee in charge of KFA Dr Mohammad Khalil said yesterday. "Al-Hasawi has not tendered his resignation," Khalil said, noting that KFA Deputy Chairman Assad Taki has stepped down for health reasons. Khalil dispelled allegations of "mass resignations" within KFA, adding that four KFA committee members have resigned and plans are underway to fill the vacancies. Notably, Hasawi, the owner of English Championship side Nottingham Forest, had announced his resignation on Twitter late Sunday without giving a reason.

Citizen arrested for publishing fake news
KUWAIT: Security forces arrested Khalifa Ali Al-Hashash, a Kuwaiti citizen, on charges of publishing "false news", the interior ministry said yesterday. Hashash, whose arrest was on a warrant issued by the public prosecutor, is accused of spreading false news on domestic affairs on social media, the ministry's public relations and security media department said in a statement. The department did not specify the nature of the false news Hashash published.

KOC: Restart of joint oilfields will take time
KUWAIT: The resumption of oil production from oilfields jointly operated by Saudi Arabia and Kuwait will take time and may face obstacles, the chief executive of the Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) said yesterday. "The joint Khafji and Wafra fields... will need some rehabilitation before they resume production," Jamal Jaafar told reporters in Kuwait. He said bringing back the oilfields "will face some technical and administrative difficulties but Saudi Arabia and Kuwait are able to overcome them." The fields are in the Neutral Zone that lies between both countries.

Output cut monitoring meeting in Feb or March
DUBAI: Kuwait will request that an OPEC committee responsible for monitoring compliance with a global oil output reduction agreement meet in February or March next year, acting oil minister Anas Al-Saleh said yesterday. "In my capacity... as head of the committee... I will call for a meeting of the first Monitoring Committee to take place in February or March 2017," Saleh said in a statement. "We will soon inform (our) customers that we will incorporate and apply a cut to their monthly contractual commitments and liftings in accordance with OPEC's recent agreement," Saleh said.

MANAMA: HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah said yesterday the Gulf Cooperation Council summit comes amid rapid international changes and critical conditions that necessitate continuing consultations and joint coordination to consider and preclude relevant reflections on GCC countries. Addressing the 37th GCC summit in Manama, the Amir said that the region is currently faced with grave challenges, where on the economic front, dwindling oil prices are a major concern. HH the Amir also added that there needs to be a shift in national ideologies, together with fresh fields of cooperation in order to cope with these challenges. He spoke of notable achievements brought about by joint GCC work, which includes economic gains that represent the aspirations of GCC citizens. He also highlighted the need for increased strategies to bolster GCC cooperation in an effort to amass further accomplishments that will reinforce solidarity among the Gulf nations.

Moreover, on the scourge of terrorism, Sheikh Sabah said that it poses a threat to regional security and stability, which calls for concerted efforts to eliminate this mounting threat. On Yemen, HH the Amir recounted that Kuwait had hosted peace talks that aimed to restore peace in the war-torn nation, lamenting that the warring parties failed to reconcile, which induced further bloodshed. On Syria, the Amir said that the GCC commiserates with the people of Syria, underscoring firm support of a political solution to a conflict that has remained unabated. Speaking on developments in Iraq, the Amir expressed satisfaction over the progress made in the fight against the so-called Islamic State (IS), as he wished the country a prosperous and bright future. On the Palestinian conflict, HH Sheikh Sabah regretted that efforts to establish peace remain at an impasse, noting that the international community is preoccupied with other issues.

Meanwhile, speaking on ties with Iran, HH the Amir said there needs to be constructive dialogue between the GCC and the Islamic Republic, noting that the talks should center on abidance by international law, including sovereign rights. The Amir also urged Tehran to cease meddling in the internal affairs of other nations, noting that the agenda of this GCC summit includes numerous pivotal issues. Meanwhile, British Prime Minister Theresa May was to meet Gulf leaders for talks on trade ties after Britain leaves the European Union. King Salman of Gulf heavyweight Saudi Arabia opened the summit with a call for "doubling of efforts" to face regional challenges. May was expected to meet the leaders later yesterday before addressing the summit today, when she will become the first British premier and the first woman to attend the annual gathering of the six oil-rich GCC states.

Continued on Page 15



KUWAIT: Opposition MPs gather at the diwaniya of MP Mohammad Al-Mutair yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

OPPOSITION AGAIN FAILS TO AGREE ON SPEAKER

MPs WANT TO HOLD SPORTS DEBATE

By B Izzak
KUWAIT: Opposition MPs met again yesterday to discuss selecting one candidate to fight the speaker's election on their behalf, but remained undecided on one of the two lawmakers who have announced their intention to contest the post. Twenty-two lawmakers attended the meeting and five others could not attend because they were tied up with other appointments, making the opposition bloc looking stable at 27, a formidable number that will change many factors in the Assembly. The meeting did not reach a final decision on who should run from the bloc for the speakership among the two candidates who already expressed the desire to contest - MPs Abdullah Al-Roumi and Shuaib Al-Muwaizri. The issue has remained the most crucial topic for opposition lawmakers, which could undermine the unity of the grouping. The meeting also discussed other issues including the issue of bedoons (stateless Arabs). MP Mohammad Hayef said they discussed a proposal to set up a committee for the bedoons in the Assembly, as the previous Assembly scrapped the committee and assigned the interior and defense panel to discuss their affairs. The lawmakers also discussed reaching a consensus on a number of priority issues that should be debated in the Assembly when it opens on Sunday. These include the issues of citizenship, amending the election law and scrapping some controversial laws. Opposition MPs plan to meet again before the opening session of the Assembly.

Continued on Page 15

PALESTINIAN WINS MULTAQQA ARABIC SHORT STORY PRIZE

KUWAIT: Palestinian author Mazen Maarouf won the Al-Multaqa Arabic Short Story Prize yesterday for the year 2015-16 for his collection of short stories, "Jokes for the Gunmen". The judging panel announced Maarouf as the winner in a ceremony held under the patronage of Minister of Amiri Diwan Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, among 189 Arab short story writers. Maarouf will get \$20,000 in cash, in addition to translating of his winning short stories into English and French. Dr Taleb Al-Rifaae, founder of Al-Multaqa, which was launched last year by the American University of Kuwait (AUK) in partnership with the Cultural Circle, said Al-Multaqa was a dream that came true, aimed at developing the art of short stories. The short story is very concentrated and equals the writing of poems, he explained. This annual prize, he said, aimed at encouraging people to write short stories and maintain it. Maarouf said the writing of short stories "is an essential and urgent literary need". "Jokes for the Gunmen" is a surrealist collection of 14 short stories about the reality of a child living in a war zone. — KUNA



KUWAIT: The Al-Multaqa Arabic Short Story Prize for the year 2015-16 is awarded to Palestinian author Mazen Maarouf. — KUNA

LIMAK CONSTRUCTION SPONSORS KUWAIT UNIVERSITY'S GOLDEN JUBILEE CELEBRATIONS

LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS AT THE NEW TERMINAL PROJECT

KUWAIT: Limak Construction, a leading contractor currently constructing landmark projects in the region, including the new terminal at Kuwait International Airport (KIA), take part in Kuwait University's Golden Jubilee celebrations at the College of Engineering and Petroleum and College of Architecture.

Held under the patronage of His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the three-day Golden Jubilee carnival is being hosted across Kuwait University's colleges from December 5 to 7. At the College of Engineering and Petroleum and College of Architecture the celebrations included an open day, walkathon, and scientific, cultural and design competitions. Hosted at the University's Khaldiya Campus the celebratory events were open to the public, students, faculty, and their families.

Limak Construction's support for Kuwait University's Golden Jubilee celebrations are part of the company's greater regional efforts to support education and learning opportunities in the fields of construction, engineering, architecture,



KUWAIT: Richard Meredith, Limak Construction's Project Director for the new terminal project speaks during the event.

and project management. Limak Construction is a 100% owned subsidiary of the Limak Group of Companies and a leader in building and managing state-of-the-art infrastructure projects.

Limak Construction's Project Director for the new Kuwait International Airport terminal project, Richard Meredith, said, "On behalf of my colleagues at Limak Construction we thank you for giving us the opportunity to be a part of Kuwait University's celebration and wish this reputable institution more success and achievement for years to come. Limak has a strong commitment to supporting education initiatives in our areas of operations. In Kuwait, as many of you know, we are currently building the new terminal at Kuwait International Airport and we will soon open our doors to students by offering them on-site learning opportunities and a chance to be a part of the project's history."

Established in 1976, Limak Construction is a fully owned subsidiary of Limak Group of Companies, one of the leading conglomerates in Turkey. The Group operates in over 17 countries with more than 50,000 employees and across various sectors, including tourism, cement, energy, infrastructure, airport management and operations, port management, food and aviation.



KUWAIT: Officials inaugurate the 6th Industries and Construction Exhibition. — KUNA

GOVT SUPPORTS, ENCOURAGES NATIONAL INDUSTRIES: OFFICIAL

KUWAIT: The government is backing and encouraging national industries, Director General of the Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW) Bader Al-Wugayyan said. This came in Wugayyan's statement to reporters on Monday, on the sidelines of inaugurating the 6th Industries and Construction Exhibition. He added that the government prioritizes national products in terms of tenders and purchases in accordance with the decisions taken to protect national products.

He referred to instructions given to local factories to increase production capacity to meet the needs of the current and future projects. The prices of construction materials are very suitable and equivalent to the international prices, he said, noting that Kuwait

has national products with competitive prices compared with foreign ones. He stressed the high quality of national construction products. Meanwhile, Chairman of Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) Ali Al-Ghanem expressed in a similar statement to reporters his happiness for Kuwait's national products taking part in the exhibition. He extolled the development of all industries at the exhibition, mainly the construction materials.

Dalia Wafaie, CEO of Expo Tag company specialized in organizing exhibitions and conferences, said the exhibition is held on an area of 2000 square meters and showcases all construction materials and others. The event runs until tomorrow, with the participation of 65 local and foreign firms. — KUNA

AHLI UNITED BANK PARTICIPATES IN 6TH INDUSTRIAL & CONSTRUCTION EXPO

KUWAIT: Ahli United Bank (AUB) announced yesterday that it is participating in the 6th edition of the Industrial and Construction Exhibition, which takes place between the fifth and eighth of December at Jumeirah Messilah Hotel. The event, which is held under the patronage of State Housing Minister, Yasser Hassan Abul, will provide the Bank an opportunity to provide visitors with a range of exclusive services and updates on its financial services.

Throughout the exhibition, the Bank will unveil a broad array of services that have been designed to meet visitors' varied needs, and are in line with the event's overall objectives of providing construction materials, decoration services, furniture, office design as well as construction and engineering consultancy. AUB said, "Our participation in the Industrial and Construction exhibition reflects our underlying commitment to support national industrial initiatives as well

as local product production, a key pillar in driving Kuwait's economic stability along with sustainable revenue generation. Moreover, our efforts aim at encouraging a strong push towards industrial and economic development."

"As one of the leading Islamic financial institutions operating in the local market, we know the importance of participating in such a renowned event, which sets a strong foundation to introduce our wide range of innovative banking and financial services, while also showcasing a variety of facilities that are on offer for those who are interested in knowing more about our financing benefits," added AUB.

AUB's booth will include a team from its customer service and financing departments to provide the necessary information around real estate financing services that are in line with customers' needs, and are sharia compliant.

The Bank continues to drive its efforts to reach to customers across Kuwait through a variety of events,

with the objective of providing the necessary information and updates around its financing products and services that have been developed to accommodate customers' needs. The initiative reflects the Bank's overarching approach to reinforce its relationship with customers from various segments.

The Industrial and Construction Exhibition is considered one of the largest industry functions that brings together experts in construction, decoration and design from both the public and private sectors. The event witnesses a large participation from various government organizations as well as specialized companies that provide the latest products related to construction.

For more information on AUB's wide range of products and services, customers are requested to visit any of the Bank's branches, or call its Hayakum telebanking service on 1812000. Customers also can log on the Bank's website www.ahliunit-ed.com.kw to find out more about its latest activities.

KFH PARTICIPATES IN 6TH INDUSTRIES AND CONSTRUCTION EXHIBITION

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) participated in the 6th Industries and Construction Exhibition currently being held from the 5th to the 8th December under the patronage of Minister of State for Housing Affairs Yasser Hassan Abul.

KFH's participation as a platinum sponsor reiterates its ongoing efforts to boost the national economy, strengthen the role of banking sector in the development of construction and industry, and to highlight its role in financing construction projects and contributing in implementing them.

The exhibition witnessed huge individual and corporate participation from public and private sectors. This allows KFH to further bolster relations with them with the objective of offering all needs that meet clients' aspirations.

A specialized KFH team is accessible for clients and visitors at the exhibition through a dedicated booth for the bank to demonstrate and showcase the vast array

of construction financing services such as the recent campaign to finance house construction from architectural designs to delivery in collaboration with a number of renowned constructions and work materials companies in Kuwait. The campaign offers clients unique privileges. It contributes to bolstering sales, revitalizing the market, boosting the construction industry in Kuwait, and supporting the suppliers.

The campaign grants clients streamlined financing facilities that include up to KD 70000 financing, a 15-year credit period, and a 12-month maturity period for the first installment, not to mention marginal profit rate. It is noteworthy that KFH spares no efforts in rendering best financing services as per highest standards of quality, yet it endeavors to communicate with its customers, listen to their feedback and to deliver superior value by tailoring its products or services to match their needs and meet their aspirations.



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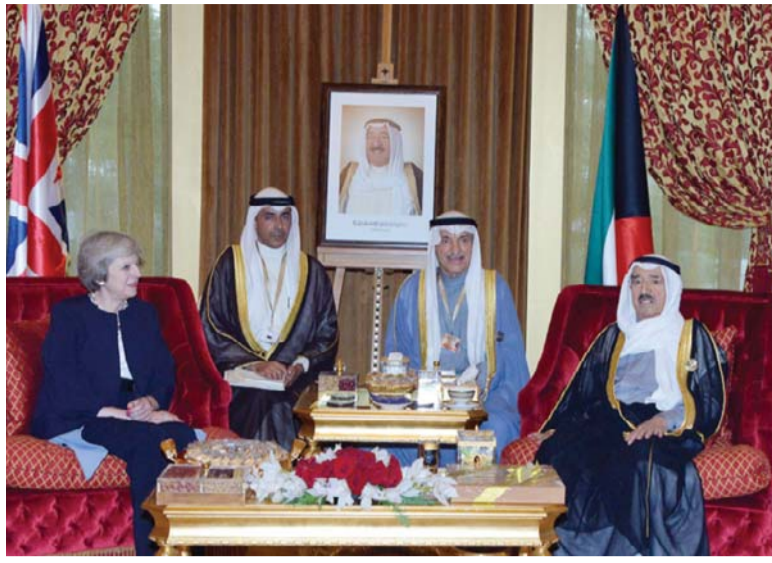
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MANAMA: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah attends the 37th Session of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Summit yesterday. — Amiri Diwan and AFP photos



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with British Prime Minister Theresa May.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah is seen off at the airport by His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

AMIR PARTICIPATES IN GCC SUMMIT IN MANAMA

HIS HIGHNESS MEETS UK PM

MANAMA: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah attended yesterday the 37th Session of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Summit, which kicked off in the Bahraini capital, Manama. Bahraini King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, Qatari Amir Sheikh Tamin bin Hamad Al Thani, UAE Vice-President, Prime Minister and Dubai Governor Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashed Al Maktoum and Omani Deputy Prime Minister Fahad bin Mahmoud Al Said also attended.

Earlier yesterday, His Highness the Amir received British Prime Minister Theresa May, yesterday at his place of residence in the capital Manama. During the meeting, His Highness the Amir and the British premier discussed bilateral ties, issues of common interest, and the latest developments in the region.

The meeting was attended by First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister, Finance Minister and Acting Oil Minister Anas Khaled Al-Saleh and members of the accompanying delegation.

Upon his arrival to Bahrain earlier yesterday, His Highness the Amir was received at the airport by King Hamad, as well as Bahraini Prime Minister Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al-Khalifa, Crown Prince, and Deputy Supreme Commander and First Deputy Prime Minister Prince Salman bin Hamad Al-Khalifa. He was also received by senior Royals, Shura and Representatives' Council's chairmen,



Bahraini King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa welcomes His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah upon his arrival to Manama.

Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)'s Secretary General, ministers, and ambassadors of the two countries.

Upon departure from Kuwait, His Highness the Amir was seen off at the airport by His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, senior Sheikhs, Deputy Chief of Kuwait National Guard (KNG) Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Minister of the Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, senior

staff at the Kuwaiti army, police, KNG, and Kuwait Fire Service Directorate (KFSD).

His Highness the Amir heads a delegation consisting of Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled, Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah, Anas Al-Saleh, Head of His Highness the Amir office Ahmad Fahad Al-Fahad, Amiri Diwan Advisor Mohammad Abulhassan, head of the Amiri Protocols Sheikh Khaled Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah Al-Nasser Al-Sabah, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Khaled Al-Jarallah, in addition to other senior officials from the Amiri Diwan and Foreign Ministry. —KUNA

SAUDI KING'S VISIT TO KUWAIT REPRESENTS HISTORIC TIES

'SAUDI KEY PLAYER IN RESOLVING REGIONAL ISSUES'

KUWAIT/RIYADH: Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz is set to visit Kuwait after the end of the 37th GCC summit to discuss means of resolving issues facing the region, as part of the strong ties shared between the two countries. The deep Saudi-Kuwaiti relations date back to the two countries' establishment era. The first agreement signed between the two sides was on December 2nd, 1922 to draw borders.

After Kuwait's independence from the UK, Saudi has directly recognized Kuwait as an independent nation. According to history records, a neutral Saudi-Kuwaiti zone used to exist; however, after the discovery of oil, the two sides agreed on drawing borders in that area in 1969.

Meanwhile, the kingdom played a huge role in supporting and liberating Kuwait from the Iraqi invasion in 1991. Back then, King Fahad bin Abdulaziz also provided aid and shelter for Kuwaitis who fled the invasion.

The two sides are also cooperating on all levels, as Saudi provides annual scholarships for Kuwaiti students to join the kingdom's universities. Moreover, being one of the top oil producers in the world, Saudi and Kuwait signed economic agreements that boosted their commercial exchange. In the same context, Kuwaiti investors have the biggest share among GCC citizens in Saudi's real estate and trade bureaus.

Historic

Meanwhile, a number of Saudi politicians and media figures said that their country's relations with Kuwait are exemplary, strong, and historic. In a number of interviews, the Saudi officials said that Kuwait and Saudi Arabia have always worked on means to bolster the brotherly and historic relations linking the two nations, adding that the fellow Gulf countries will continue to work together for their welfare and security.

Ex-member of the Saudi Shura Council Dr Mohammad Abdullah Al Zalfa said that it was natural for both GCC countries to have strong relations, noting that the ultimate test of ties came during the 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait which Saudi Arabia strongly opposed. The upcoming visit by Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud to Kuwait, the first of its kind since he became Monarch in 2015, will further enhance relations between the two countries, said Al Zalfa, adding that Kuwait and Saudi Arabia will surely continue to coordinate efforts amongst them within the regional and international domains.

In the meantime, Saudi UN goodwill and humanitarian relations Ambassador Mohammad Al-Hammadi said that the Saudi Monarch's visit to Kuwait came at a critical

moment in the region with the ongoing conflicts in Syria, Yemen, and Iraq. His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and King Salman will focus their efforts to fend off all kinds of threats against their countries and will work on measures to further enhance the strong relations, said Hammadi.

Meanwhile, head of Al-Shrouq strategic studies center Dr Abdulrahman Al-Bashen that the similarities between Kuwaiti and Saudi societies made relations strong and forever bonding. Bashen said that both nations were keen on regional and international security, adding that the two countries' coordinative efforts led them to stand together in pride within the international arenas.

Speaking on the significance of the Saudi King's visit to Kuwait, assistant chief editor at Al-Hayat newspaper Saud Al-Rayes said that the regional status quo required such coordination amongst leaders of the GCC. Only joint efforts and determination will lead the people of the region to safety, said Rayes. Also touching on the same issue, Sultan Al-Qahtani, chief editor of Al-Riyadh Post online, said that the inclusion of Kuwait in any Arab coalition was an important step for success. King Salman's visit to Kuwait is within the GCC countries efforts to boost coordination and cooperation, said Qahtani.

Resolving issues

Similarly, academics at Kuwait University (KU) stressed the importance of the Saudi King's upcoming visit in resolving issues of the region. King Salman's visit to the UAE, followed by Qatar, Bahrain, and then Kuwait, aims to boost cooperation in all fields, history professor Hamad Al-Qahtani said. Saudi Arabia has put huge efforts to end the war in Yemen and Syria and provide humanitarian aid to those affected by war in the Arab World, he added. Since his assumption of power in 2015, King Salman had a vision to resolve all issues facing the Middle East region, noted Qahtani. Meanwhile, he mentioned Saudi's role in protecting Kuwait against the Iraqi threats in the era of President Abdulkareem Qassim, where former Saudi King Saud bin Abdulaziz sent his army to support Kuwait. He also spoke of the Kingdom's role in liberating Kuwait from the Iraqi Invasion in 1991, in the era of King Fahad bin Abdulaziz.

Also, head of Political Science Department Dr Abdullah Al-Shayji affirmed that the GCC States are looking forward to create strong unity against all dangers. The Gulf Region is in need of such a step due to the current regional and international changes, including the escalating violence in the Arab World, the new US government, and the UK's exit from the European Union (EU), he explained. — KUNA

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KUWAIT: Firemen inspect the scene in Um Al-Haiman after the blaze was extinguished.



This photo released by the Interior Ministry yesterday shows a man arrested for drug possession and trafficking.



The fake doctor arrested yesterday for rape.

In my view

KUWAIT'S PLIGHT AND SOLUTION

By Nabila Al-Anjeri



One cannot be too optimistic about the current parliament despite of all the positive indicators in the recent election process, which included a growing number of new lawmakers and the fall of bothersome MPs, as expected. These indicators can be the cause of tensions within a few months unless a national salvation program is jointly set by the upcoming cabinet and an overwhelming majority of the parliament. Without a program, gaps will start developing within the government-parliament cooperation, which will probably pave the way for new interpellations eventually, or a parliament dissolution as some analysts expected after the elections.

A national salvation program and agreeing on joint priorities have an exceptional significance not only to avoid the dissolution of the assembly, but also to avoid other consequences that are not affordable keeping the current circumstances in mind. Aside from the direct damage on reform, development and planning for the near future, lack of cooperation will enhance further tension, while repeated dissolution will tarnish Kuwait's international image and portray it as being incapable of running its own matters despite the wealth and long regional parliamentary experience. In terms of the irrational sectarian and doctrinal speech, it is considered a cause for undermining national solidarity.

During the electoral campaigns, some candidates called for holding a national conference, which reminds us of what happened during the Iraqi invasion and clearly indicates the severity of the challenges we are facing at all levels. However, that is as necessary as the need for a brave governmental vision on which we can rely to set a salvation program that satisfies the parliament's majority. But the question is, how do we reconcile these populist calls, financial and economic reforms and sustainable development? Unless these issues become so convincing to not incite public opinion against the government and reform measures, it is impossible to do so. This might take some time until awareness programs start blossoming. Until then:

1- The government will have to do more than just provide services. It will have to be in contact with various citizens without any brokers or go-between people who would blackmail the voters using the state and trade in at the same time.

2- Both the government and state establishments will have to stop taking sides in public or behind closed doors at the expense of other powers and blocs. It must equally resolve the problem of revenge seeking. It must be open for new public and youth powers.

3- The government, the National Assembly and all Kuwaitis must realize that constant tension will open more foreign eyes, especially those powers that are already waiting to use our political gaps and domestic division to infiltrate and create more chaos and tumults, to help terrorists control Kuwait and after that crying over spilt milk will do us no good.

MAN KILLED IN UM AL-HAIMAN HOUSE FIRE SUSPECT TURNS HOUSE INTO 'DRUGS FARM'

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: A man died while his sister was injured in a house fire reported in Um Al-Haiman yesterday, the fire department said yesterday. Um Al-Haiman and Mina Abdullah fire centers headed to the scene in response to an emergency call, and found 30 people trapped inside. They started evacuating them despite some obstacles they faced such as windows protected by steel bars which had to be cut down. The man died before reaching the hospital while his

sister was admitted there for treatment, Kuwait Fire Service Directorate said in a statement.

Drug possession

A man who turned his residence into a 'drugs farm' was arrested in Sabah Al-Salem yesterday, the Interior Ministry's Relations and Security Information Department said. Police found a room equipped with heat control equipment in an apartment, along with paraphernalia, drugs and a scale. The suspect, Canadian, said he has been using his

house for two years for this activity.

Raped by fake doctor

A woman was raped by a person who posed as a doctor and lured her to his fake clinic in Farwaniya. In her statements to police, the Filipina woman accused the Egyptian man of sexually assaulting her shortly after she entered an office based on an address he had given her as that of his clinic. The man was identified, arrested and sent to the proper authorities for further action.

HEAVY OIL PRODUCTION STARTS IN 2018: KOC

KUWAIT: Heavy oil production will begin in the end of the year 2018 with roughly 10 to 15 thousand barrels per day at Ratqa refinery, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) Jamal Jaafar said yesterday.

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of a conference and exhibition organized by the Association of Petroleum Engineers, Jaafar noted that the heavy oil production will gradually increase to 60 thousand barrels per day six months after production starts. Moreover, he underscored that KOC remains diligent to bring its grand oil production plan of churning out 4 million barrels daily by the year 2020. Speaking on KOC's oil production capacity, he said it has the potential to reach 2.8 million barrels per day, which highly hinges on the needs of the oil market. On traditional oil production, the KOC CEO noted that it has largely dwindled, which prompted oil companies to resort to unconventional forms of oil production, as he highlighted the potential of GCC nations to create a thriving heavy oil market. The three-day conference and expo is patronized by Deputy Prime Minister, Finance Minister and Acting Oil Minister Anas Al-Saleh. —KUNA



KUWAIT: Newly-elected MPs are pictured inside the parliament's building, where they were taken on a tour yesterday ahead of the inaugural session next Sunday.— Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

ICM CALLS FOR CABINET THAT 'CONVEYS VOTERS' MESSAGE'

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: The Islamic Constitutional Movement (ICM) congratulated the Kuwaiti people for the success of the parliamentary elections and the results achieved by reformists. The results convey a general sense of public rejection to those who could not meet people's expectations, ICM's Secretary General Mohammed Abdullah Al-Olaime said in a statement.

Further, Olaime stressed that ICM demands the formation of a cabinet that will convey the voters' message and help achieve their aspirations. He added that the new cabinet's formation

will have to enhance national security, and revive the economy by fixing economic problems without overburdening the citizens. "The government must also support political reform, undo the injustice of withdrawing citizenships, stop prosecuting people for expressing political opinions and cooperate with lawmakers," he underlined, noting that ICM has conversations against reappointing ministers who had committed 'constitutional violations' as well as those who failed in running any public or private establishments.

Candidates' hiring
Candidates with pending

appointments for leading positions at the Ministry of Education will be appointed after the formation of the new cabinet, Assistant Undersecretary for Public Education Fatima Al-Kandari said. She added that lists of additional candidates will be issued by mid-December so that they can be interviewed shortly. In other news, and as per the instructions from the Civil Services Commission, the ministry will start withdrawing the vehicles handed over to all senior officials and under-secretaries starting from January 2017, and instead will pay them a KD 250 monthly allowance.

KUWAIT KEEN ON CLOSER TIES WITH HUMAN RIGHTS BODIES

KUWAIT: Kuwait is due to host on December 6-15 a contingent of United Nations (UN) officials dealing with legal discrimination against women, Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah said yesterday. The visit is a testament to Kuwait's commitment to human rights issues and an opportunity for the country to get acquainted with the latest developments in that field, Jarallah noted.

On the visit of the UN officials, he said that the Foreign Ministry is sparing no effort to ensure that it is a fruitful one, where officials from across the government spectrum, in addition to independent bodies, are expected to meet with the UN contingent.—KUNA

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KUWAIT: The Coast Guard Department of the Interior Ministry announced yesterday that they will carry out a shooting drill using live ammunition, on December 12-14. The department advised sea-goers to refrain from approaching the identified locations during the drill. —KUNA

FOOD CHOICE, GOLDEN SPONSOR OF HORECA 2017

KUWAIT: Food Choice Company's CEO Marwan Fares praised the Horeca Kuwait exhibition and its ability to attract companies specializing in hospitality, food industry and hotel requirements, in addition to travel, transport, oil and construction firm.



Marwan Fares

Fares added that with that in mind, Food Choice decided to participate in the event against as a golden sponsor, indicating that "it is of great significance to take part to enhance the company's expansion plans."

Following the success it has achieved ever since its establishment, Food Choice intends to continue growing and expanding internationally using various unique creative ideas, Fares stressed. At the same time, the company is keen on supporting new creations and observing health quality standards in catering and retail services, he added.

In addition, Fares noted that Food Choice was established in 2005 to supply the Kuwaiti market with world-standard food products, which soon earned it a good reputation for its keenness on finding innovative solutions and providing various services for hotels, restaurants and department stores. This went side by side with introducing international high quality products including meat, pastry, cheese, seafood and beverage brands such as Monin, Valrhona, Bonn Maman and the leading New Zealand dairy products brand of Fonterra to local markets, he added.

Fares further indicated that Food Choice also launched its own brand of a wide range of food products that it distributes in Middle East markets. "This success would not have been achieved if it were not for our strategy of employing highly qualified and experienced staff," he concluded.

Horeca Kuwait 2017 has so far attracted over 70 companies due to display their products in the presence of a group of international experts and chefs and a large group of company and hotel owners. The exhibition is organized by Leaders Group in collaboration with Hospitality Services Company at Kuwait International Fairgrounds in Mishref on January 16-18, 2017. It takes place under the patronage of Minister of Information, State Minister for Youth Affairs Sheikh Salman Al-Humoud Al-Sabah.

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News

in brief

EXPATRIATES CAN MANAGE MORE THAN ONE COMPANY

KUWAIT: Minister of Social Affairs and Labor, State Minister for Planning and Development Hind Al-Subaih issued a decision to allow an expatriate to be hired as a manager in more than one company, based on a recommendation from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. The previous regulations stipulated that an expatriate could only be hired as a manager in the same company he has his visa on, and could not be assigned to manage another company even if it belonged to the same group. — Al-Rai

Syrian refugees

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor approved requests made by local charity organizations to launch fundraising campaigns to collect donations for Syrian refugees during the winter. Each charity would be allowed to run a maximum six-month campaign, and abstain from collection cash donations and instead receive money through k-net. Up to 15 out of 27 recognized charities in Kuwait are expected to participate in the campaigns. — Al-Rai

2040 strategy

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) has no plans to merge any of its subsidiaries anytime soon, or at any point during its strategy for the year 2040. According to sources, the 2040 strategy, an upgraded version of KPC's 2030 strategy, will be sent to the Supreme Petroleum Council soon to be reviewed and approved. — Al-Rai

No exit

KUWAIT: The Dow Chemical Company has canceled its plans to exit from its investments in Kuwait, where it owns 42.5 percent of EQUATE Petrochemical Company. The US-based firm had decided in late 2014 to reduce its shares in two of the joint multibillion ventures it has with Kuwait, which are 'MEGlobal' and 'Greater EQUATE'. But those plans seem to have been changed since then, as Dow Chemical believes that investment in Kuwait has been successful, and sees the Gulf region as a whole as a promising market and has the potential to transform into a 'force' in the petrochemical industry, sources said. — Al-Jarida

Tree safe

KUWAIT: The conocarpus tree has no relations with successful allergy and asthma problems which Kuwait witnessed recently due to cold weather, the Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources said in a statement. It responded to speculations on social media that the exposure of these trees, which are the most common in Kuwait, to rainwater, has caused an 'outbreak' of allergic reaction and other negative effects especially for people with asthma in the country. — Al-Anbaa



Crime

Report

EX-CON CAUGHT WITH GUNS, DRUGS

KUWAIT: An ex-convict justified his possession of two unlicensed pistols as being for self-defense, while he admitted that the 30,000 illicit tablets he possessed were for sale. Detectives learned about the suspect's activities and arrested him near his house with the drugs and firearms.

Suicide

A Kuwaiti woman died of injuries after throwing herself from the fifth floor of a building in Andalus in an apparent suicide. Paramedics rushed the woman to Farwaniya hospital where she died. Investigations are underway.

Reckless driving

Detectives are looking for a patrolman who was driving recklessly during the rain. They learned about the incident from video footage posted on social media which apparently showed a police vehicle driving recklessly while it was raining recently.

Scam

A citizen fell victim of a scam when she bought a dress for KD 500 from a person who offered it for sale on Instagram. When the package arrived, she discovered that the dress was fake and was actually worth KD 30 only. A security source said the swindler tricked the victim by saying that she owned a big store. The dress was a counterfeit of a well-known brand. The victim contacted the lady, but her phone was not reachable and discovered that the invoice carried the name of a bogus company.

Behind her back

A girl filed a complaint with Hawally police against her two friends who registered telephone lines in her name without her knowledge. Police plan to call the girls for questioning.

Mugging

A Pakistani man told Jahra police that he was robbed by three men, one of whom claimed to be a detective. He said that they escaped with his wallet which had KD 130 in it and his phone. — Al-Rai and Al-Anbaa

الجريدة

Al-Jarida

SPEAKERSHIP ELECTIONS

By Dr Hassan Jouhar

Due to political reasons, I believe that the government must refrain from taking part in the speakership elections and be completely neutral. Talking about ministers' constitutional right to vote is futile for the same reasons. They can also abstain from voting, which is purely an unquestionable constitutional practice. The government's neutrality in the speakership elections primarily protects it and the principle of separation between the legislative and executive authorities. Since 1963, the government's role has raised so many questions, and minister's voting has frequently been used in the opposite direction of the legislative authority's tendencies. Moreover, it is meant to strike parliamentary majorities.

The government's neutrality is a must in order to show more respect to the people's will

On the other hand, a parliamentarian who wins the speakership through ministers' votes remains indebted to the government and may direct the entire parliament according to the government's wishes. The government's neutrality is a must in order to show more respect to the people's will, through which 50 members were elected and authorized to act on people's behalf. This became very clear in the recent elections when over 70 percent of voters took part. In addition, the

recent election being the seventh in 13 years, the government was the only one responsible for dissolving the parliament or for running unconstitutional elections, which led to annulling the parliaments of 2012 and 2013.

Voters were furious about the 2013 parliament's performance and described it as the government's parliament because it was too peaceful, fawning, and passed all the government's projects without discussion or hesitation. It was also responsible for committing unprecedented constitutional violations to protect the prime minister and cabinet members from political accountability through writing off grilling motions. The message was clear and the election results opened new horizons for restoring the parliament's prestige and status, which proves that the government no longer acts as a guardian to the parliament on its sessions.

Moreover, asking Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak to form the new cabinet itself is considered as a potential political crisis. He and his cabinet members' participation in the speakership elections might create a confrontation about it soon.

— Translated by Kuwait Times



ABK COMPLETES SELF-MANAGEMENT LEARNING PROGRAM FOR SENIOR FINANCE EMPLOYEES

KUWAIT: Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) has announced the successful completion of its self-management learning program for senior finance staff. Entitled 'Managing Self and Managing Others Effectively', the program has been developed as part of the Bank's commitment to acquiring and applying the latest methodologies in learning and development. It was designed and delivered by specially trained ABK staff over a period of six months.

The content of the program moves away from the traditional class room learning environment and offers a 'bespoke' learning solution to every participant. This is developed through psychometric assessment to understand individual needs, targeting specific development points, and then through tailored individual coaching and 'on the job' learning.

Commenting on the initiative, Hamza Enki, General Manager Human Resources at ABK said: "ABK is keen to deliver a high level of innovative and meaningful training

to its employees. The Bank's recent LPI accreditation is testament to its determination and clear direction, and the success of the 'Managing Self and Managing Others Effectively' program underlines this.

"With this program, participants can build stronger self-awareness, leadership and management skills and also develop their confidence and public speaking abilities. It also challenges them to open their mind to new methods and approaches and overcome obstacles which may have otherwise hindered their professional development. Based on its success so far, I am confident that the 'Managing Self and Managing Others Effectively' program will become a valuable and established part of our training portfolio in the future." ABK is committed to applying the latest systems and methodologies in learning, investing in all areas and departments to achieve positive growth overall. For more information about ABK please visit eahli.com or contact a customer service agent via 'Ahlan Ahli' at 1899899.

NUKS USA RECOGNIZES ZAIN'S SUPPORT

KUWAIT: The National Union of Kuwaiti Students in the United States (NUKS USA) recognized Zain's exceptional and continuous support as a Platinum sponsor of the Union's 33rd annual conference that was recently held in San Francisco, California.

NUKS USA Treasurer Dawood Al-Busairi presented Zain Kuwait's Corporate Communications and Relations Director Waleed Al-Khashti with the recognition token during the sponsors awarding ceremony. The union expressed their appreciation of Zain's continuous efforts as the event's main supporter for over 13 consecutive years.

The conference, which came under the patronage of HE the Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education Dr Bader Al-Essa and attendance of the Kuwaiti Ambassador to the US Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, annually welcomes the largest gathering of Kuwaiti students outside of Kuwait who attend from all over the USA. Zain's presence in the event conveys its enthusiasm to interact with the future generations of Kuwaiti youth, especially those who pursue their education abroad.

During its participation, Zain launched a new program to empower and support Kuwaiti entrepreneurs studying in the US. The program features an annual competi-



tion that receives and evaluates students' projects and small businesses in the areas of technological innovation. The winner received a two-week paid trip prize to Zain's strategic partner Huawei, a global technology innovation leader, where they will host the winner in their main headquarters in China for an amazing internship program.

Zain also organized its annual football competition for students for the fourth consecutive year, where the company awarded "the champions" team for winning the first place title and "Al-Mutaseem Billah Mobile" team for winning the second place title. The competition also featured a friendly

match that witnessed the participation of a number of Kuwaiti sports and arts stars.

Zain strongly believes in the role of the private sector in supporting the efforts and plans of the public sector to bring positive change into the society, especially efforts that empower innovative ideas. Zain has adopted many programs and initiatives to empower and support the youth's innovative ideas through the years.

Participating in this event affirms Zain's role as a leading national company that takes the development of young people seriously, with the ultimate intention to induce positive change within the Kuwaiti society.

BURGAN BANK PARTICIPATES IN THE PROTEGES 'JOBSHOP' CAREER FAIR LEAD BY KIPCO GROUP

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank announced its participation in the Proteges 'JOBSHOP' career fair hosted by Kuwait Projects Company (KIPCO).

Held under the patronage of Sheikha Al-Zain Al-Sabah, Undersecretary of the Ministry of State for Youth Affairs, the youth empowering event took place on December 3, 2016 at the KIPCO Tower. The event was designed for fresh graduates who had the opportunity to learn and explore career related possibilities and engage in exclusive one-on-one time with representatives from participating companies such as GIC, AUK and others.

During the event, Burgan Bank provided insightful information about the banking industry while showcasing a wide variety of employment opportunities for potential candidates across an extensive range of the bank's departments. Burgan Bank is a strong supporter of education and youth empowerment and will continue to participate in relevant initiatives to encourage hardworking individuals

who represent the future of the country's economy.

In line with Burgan Bank's CSR agenda and HRD initiatives, the company continues to be on the lookout to participate in such important events that add value to its business

and is a way forward in human capital development. The bank strives to offer the Kuwaiti community a high standard of employment and empower brilliant minds by offering career placements essential to pushing forward Kuwait's economic development.



Burgan Bank representatives with Shaikha Al-Zain Al-Sabah.



KUWAIT: The Commercial Bank of Kuwait sponsored Jahra Governorate's first annual walkathon, which took place recently under the patronage of Jahra Governor Fahad Al-Amir. This year's focuses on increasing public awareness against smoking and drugs.



Philippines' police 'murdered' mayor

FEARS OF LOSING HOME, LAND PLAGUE ONE IN FOUR INDIANS

SANCTIONS RENEWAL SHOWS US STILL 'ENEMY': IRAN

TEHRAN: Iran's President Hassan Rouhani said yesterday that Congress's decision to renew US sanctions for 10 years would elicit a "harsh reaction" and proved the United States was still an enemy. "America... is our enemy, we have no doubt about this. The Americans want to put as much pressure on us as they can," Rouhani said in a speech to students at Tehran University. The Iran Sanctions Act passed the US Senate 99-0 last week, after easily clearing the House of Representatives in November.

President Barack Obama is expected to sign the measure into a law, a White House official said, adding that the administration does not believe the extension violates last year's nuclear deal between major powers and Iran. Obama has suspended sanctions related to Iran's nuclear program since the agreement went into effect at the start of the year.

But Iran says that even if the nuclear sanctions remain suspended, just keeping them on the books amounts to a breach of the agreement. "If this is implemented... it would be a blatant and clear breach of the JCPOA (nuclear agreement) and would face a very harsh reaction from us," Rouhani said. The actual language in the agreement could be interpreted in different ways. It calls on the US to "cease the application of... all nuclear-related sanctions". It does not specify whether Washington can keep them in reserve for possible use in the future.

At a press conference yesterday, conservative parliament speaker Ali Larijani said parts of the deal were "rushed". "Some of the sections of the JCPOA should have been written with more precision to stop differing interpretations," Larijani said. "I believe Iran should file a complaint in regard of the Americans' breach of the JCPOA," he added. Rouhani and other top officials are due to meet on Wednesday to discuss the issue. Rouhani, who is expected to run for a second term in May, has faced a barrage of criticism from conservatives who say his team made too many concessions in the nuclear deal for minimal economic gain.

In yesterday's speech, he emphasized that his team had not acted alone and that supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was closely involved at every stage of the negotiations. "We took no step on the JCPOA issue without consulting the honourable leader," Rouhani said.

Although Iran has managed to significantly ramp up its oil exports since the deal, it has struggled to rejoin the international financial system because major Western banks remain reluctant to do business for fear of remaining non-nuclear US sanctions. The result has been that Iran has been unable to attract the huge foreign investment which Rouhani has said is necessary to rekindle the country's battered economy. — AFP



LA METRO ON ALERT AFTER BOMB THREAT

LOS ANGELES: Authorities ratcheted up security on the Los Angeles metro following a tip from overseas about an impending bomb attack yesterday against a station in the sprawling rail network. The threat was relayed by an anonymous man who called a public safety line run by an unidentified foreign government, which then passed on the information to a Federal Bureau of Investigation terrorism task force, said Deirdre Fike, assistant director in charge of the FBI's office in Los Angeles.

The target of the threatened attack was metro's Universal City station-located near the Universal Studios theme park-where the caller who spoke English said an explosive device would go off yesterday, Fike told reporters at a hastily organized press conference with local authorities. Officials said they were working to determine the credibility of the threat described as "very specific." "The threat is imminent and it's related to tomorrow" and concerned an off-ramp at the station, Los Angeles police chief Charlie Beck said. He added that authorities had little time to assess the seriousness of the threat and because of its imminent nature had decided to move quickly and alert the public.

Los Angeles County Sheriff Jim McDonnell said the call could be real or a hoax and urged commuters to remain vigilant and report any suspicious activity. He said undercover deputies had been deployed throughout the network, along with uniformed officers, members of the bomb squad and K9 explosive detection

units. Metro officials meanwhile tweeted a simple and succinct reminder to passengers, warning them to remain alert yesterday. "If you see something, say something," read the Twitter message sent from the rail-way network's @metrolosangeles handle.

Mayor Eric Garcetti said commuters should expect to be searched, but should go about their lives as normal. He said he planned to ride the metro yesterday from Universal City to reassure commuters. "My advice is right now, everybody should go about their normal day tomorrow," Garcetti said. He added that commuters should not be frightened by the heightened security. "Those are there for your protection, and we meet threats with every possible precaution that we can," he said. Authorities said there was added vigilance as the threat came about during the busy holiday season when many people were out shopping or would be visiting theme parks and attractions in and around Los Angeles, including Universal Studios and Disneyland. The Los Angeles metro system consists of six lines, including two rapid transit subway lines and four light rail lines that serve 93 stations.

The Universal City station on the metro system's Red Line has been listed as among the busiest in the network. Some 145,000 people use that line daily, Garcetti said. The Red Line connects North Hollywood with the central and downtown Los Angeles. Last year, an emailed threat forced the closure of Los Angeles schools for a day before it was determined to be a hoax. — AFP

ITALY'S YOUNGEST EVER PREMIER FELLED BY DISCONTENTED YOUTH

ROME: Twenty-year-old Francesco Incorvaia, a sociology student from Rome, was just the kind of voter Matteo Renzi had spent years trying to win over. Italy's youngest ever prime minister had changed labor laws in a bid to reduce one of Europe's highest youth unemployment rates, handed cash to low earners and proposed constitutional amendments to streamline lawmaking and boost an ailing economy. But Incorvaia and millions of other young Italians walked into voting booths at a referendum on Sunday and effectively threw him out of office, handing him a stinging defeat that left him no choice but to resign.

"At least this way there is an idea that the people can still have some say, without leaving too much power in the hands of people who don't care about us," Incorvaia said, standing outside his university department in Rome. According to a survey by research firm Quorum for SKYTG24, about 80 percent of voters aged between 18 and 34 opposed Renzi's proposal to shrink the upper house Senate and claw back power from regional administrations—a tsunami of opposition from a generation that is rewriting the political map in Italy.

Despite his youthful vim, Renzi, who was 39 when he took the premiership almost three years ago, came to be seen as part of the creaking old establishment he pledged to revamp. With Renzi pledging to step down, the younger generation's pre-

ferred anti-establishment 5-Star Movement has called for early elections and said it is ready to govern. M5S campaigned hard against Renzi's constitutional reform proposal, on the grounds it would remove democratic checks and balances, and it was clear many young people were also expressing their support for 5-Star in voting it down.

"Lots of people in the 5-Star Movement are young, so they seem like a new start compared to the 80-year-olds in the other parties," said Veronica Bagagnini, 20, a student from near Rome. Rising support for 5-Star has sent shivers through financial markets because the movement has promised to call a referendum on Italy's membership of the euro. It rivals Renzi's Democratic Party as the most popular party in opinion polls and would be favorite to win elections under the current system, which may be changed as mainstream parties seek to keep them out of power.

Young voters helped propel 5-Star into power in the municipalities of Rome and Turin this year. Overall, voters under 35 years of age represent about a fifth of the electorate. "For me the victory of the 'No' vote is above all an important signal, it signals that the people are tired of enduring the policies of austerity (and) neoliberal politics of Renzi's government and the previous governments," said "Students for No" campaign representative Federica Ciarlariello. — Reuters

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RADICAL ISM BREEDS IN DEPRIVED CORNER OF SERBIA

NOVI PAZAR: In a country proud of its Orthodox Christianity, the Serbian city of Novi Pazar is a place apart: young bearded men in ankle-length trousers stroll the streets, the restaurants don't serve alcohol, and the call of the muezzin punctuates the daily routine. Faced with massive unemployment and a feeling of exclusion against the backdrop of the Syrian war, this Muslim majority area of southwest Serbia has become a breeding ground for Islamist extremists.

"Death in the way of Allah in Syria, 14 May 2013, aged 27" was a notice once posted on the concrete walls of Novi Pazar, which lies in the region of Sandzak. Killed in Aleppo, Eldar Kundakovic used to be one of the young men aimlessly strolling the town, where around half of the 100,000 residents are jobless and a third of the population is under the age of 19, according to the latest census.

Kundakovic, who belonged to the ultra-conservative Salafist movement, divided his time between prayer rooms and the tailor shop run by his father, who since the death of his son has spent time at mosques trying to dissuade youngsters from becoming violent radicals. Novi Pazar is a city without an airport or train station, served by bad roads and enclosed by mountains, where the poverty rate is

50 percent, according to Serbia's statistics institute, making the Sandzak region the most deprived area of the Balkan country. A centre of textiles and commerce, it did not withstand the bloody breakup of Yugoslavia in the 1990s. A large number of the warehouses which employed thousands of workers fell into disuse.

'Silent radicalization'

Serbia estimates around 40 of its citizens have left to join the jihad in Syria and Iraq, some of whom have since returned or died there. They were mostly either youths from the Sandzak region or members of the ethnic Albanian community in the neighboring Presevo valley. Those who return are monitored by powerful intelligence services that date back to the Yugoslav era. Eastward departures have dropped off since the Islamic State group has begun to retreat.

But the presence of Salafist 'humanitarian organizations', ostensibly helping the needy in Sandzak, have become a cause of concern. In an April 2015 report, DamaD, a local cultural centre, said these groups had "completely isolated themselves from the rest of society" and were "committed to very conservative views on religion which support jihadist fights". The region's official Islamic authorities have



NOVI PAZAR: Esad Kundakovic (3rd right) prays at the central mosque in Novi Pazar in southern Serbia. Esad, father of late Eldar Kundakovic, who died in 2013 while fighting in Aleppo on the side of the Islamic State (IS) group, says that he couldn't stop his son from going to war but now spends most of his time explaining to other Muslim youth how pointless was his son's death. —AFP

meanwhile become weaker after splitting into two rival structures.

According to Serbian media, youths who left for Syria frequented in particular an association called Furkan, whose followers are linked to a headline Wahhabi community in northeastern Bosnia. One of them fired shots at the US embassy in

Sarajevo in October 2011. In 2014, the association disappeared after the dismantling of a jihadist network whose members were also part of Furkan. "But where are the people who were part of it?" asked Fahrudin Kladnicanin of Forum10, an initiative dealing with integration issues. "A lot of young people

participated in their activities, their conferences. I think that... they are still working on silent radicalization of some youngsters."

'Double standards'

In his pizzeria close to the city's football stadium, 44-year-old Admir, who declined to give his last name, acknowledged that "penniless students" receive aid from his religious association "Put Sredine" (The Middle Way). He denied any foreign financing, claiming his association ran on money from its members. He also rejects violence, but expressed disgust towards Shiites, "a sect", and Israel, "the world's biggest terrorist".

But what Novi Pazar needs most is development, says Kladnicanin of Forum10. "In last 10 years there has been no investment in Sandzak, not a single factory was opened," he said. City Mayor Nihat Bisevac says it was more realistic to rely on financial support from Sandzak's diaspora, which remains deeply involved in Novi Pazar-as is clear from the large number of foreign car registration plates. Still, another hope for the future is a planned highway between the Montenegrin port of Bar and the Serbian capital Belgrade, which is likely to pass near Novi Pazar. — AFP

SYRIAN ARMY CLOSES IN ON KEY ALEPPO DISTRICT

MOSCOW AND WASHINGTON TRADE BARBS

ALEPPO: Syrian regime forces were on the verge yesterday of seizing a major rebel district of Aleppo as Moscow and Washington traded barbs over stalled efforts to end fighting in the battle-worn city. After retaking control of about two-thirds of east Aleppo in recent days, forces loyal to President Bashar Al-Assad were advancing Tuesday on the large residential district of Shaar. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a monitoring group, said if the district is retaken rebel forces will be reduced to a "war of attrition" with the army. "It is the most important neighborhood in the heart of east Aleppo, and is on the brink of falling," Observatory head Rami Abdel Rahman said, adding that regime forces were already in control of about a third of the district. With the capture of Shaar, the army would hold 70 percent of east Aleppo, four years after rebels first seized it and divided the city.

The regime's rapid gains have left opposition fighters scrambling to defend the shrinking enclave they still control in Aleppo's southeastern districts. The international community has also struggled over how to respond, despite widespread concern over the fate of tens of thousands of civilians still in rebel-held areas. Russia, a key Assad ally, had announced talks with the United States in Geneva for Tuesday or Wednesday on organizing a full rebel withdrawal from Aleppo leading to a ceasefire.

'Attempt to buy time'

But on Tuesday Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov accused Washington, which has



IDLIB: A picture taken from a rebel-held area shows smoke billowing from buildings in the pro-regime Shiite town of Foua, in northwestern Idlib province yesterday following a reported rebel shelling. — AFP

backed rebel groups against Assad, of backtracking. "It looks like an attempt to buy time for the rebels to have a breather, take a pause and replenish their reserves," Lavrov told journalists, adding that Moscow had the impression that "a serious discussion with our American partners isn't working out." Washington for its part accused Moscow of stalling for time after Russia and China blocked a UN Security Council resolution on Monday calling for a seven-day ceasefire.

Russia said the resolution should have been postponed until after the Geneva talks, saying an agreement on organizing a withdrawal was close. The deputy US envoy

to the United Nations, Michele Sison, suggested there was no deal, accusing Moscow of using a "made-up alibi" to block the resolution. "We will not let Russia string along the Security Council," she said. "We will continue bilateral negotiations (with Russia) to relieve the suffering in Aleppo, but we have not reached a breakthrough because Russia wants to keep its military gains." The rebels have so far rejected any talk of leaving the city, with Yasser Al-Youssef of the leading Nureddin Al-Zinki faction describing the proposal as "unacceptable." "It is for the Russians to leave," he said. Rebels have been forced to evacuate several of their strongholds in Syria during

the conflict, most recently a string of areas near Damascus.

Key battleground

In many cases, they have reached deals with the government after months of siege and fierce fighting, agreeing to lay down their arms in return for safe passage to rebel territory elsewhere. But the loss of Aleppo would be the biggest blow yet to opposition forces in Syria's civil war, which erupted in 2011 with popular protests calling for Assad's ouster. More than 300,000 people have since died and millions forced from their homes. Aleppo, once Syria's celebrated commercial and cultural hub, has been a key battleground of the war and suffered some of its worst violence. The most recent offensive has left more than 341 people dead in east Aleppo, including 44 children, the Observatory says.

Rebel fire into the government-held west of the city has killed 81 people, including 31 children, in the same period, the monitor says. Tens of thousands of east Aleppo residents have also fled to different parts of the city, including to government-held areas and other rebel neighborhoods. Escalating bombardment of the neighboring rebel-held province of Idlib has also left dozens dead in recent days. At least 85 civilians, including 18 children, have been killed in air strikes on Idlib city and surrounding towns since late Saturday, according to the Observatory. It said both Russian and Syrian government warplanes took part in the bombing raids. —AFP

News

in brief



PATTANI: Rescue workers search for two missing boys who went missing during a flash flood in the southern Thai province of Pattani yesterday. — AFP

Severe flooding kills 14 in south Thailand

BANGKOK: Severe flooding due to heavy rain in southern Thailand has killed 14 people, including five students, the interior ministry said yesterday. Six days of floods have affected 582,345 people in 11 of Thailand's 76 provinces, the ministry said in a statement. One person is reportedly missing, while three others suffered injuries. Trains have also been halted in one province off the Gulf of Thailand as the rails there were submerged under rising floodwaters. Southern Thailand is a popular destination for visitors due to its scenic islands and beaches, and the floods are expected to put a dent in the area's tourist industry, with the high season running from November to February. However, the waters are receding, with three of the 11 provinces now off the list of flooded provinces. A fourth province is expected to be declared clear as well, an official at the interior ministry said. But Thailand's Meteorological Department forecasts more heavy rains next week for southern Thailand.

Indonesian authorities burn massive drug haul

JAKARTA: Police began torching about a ton of illegal drugs in Jakarta yesterday, as Indonesian President Joko Widodo defended his tough war on narcotics. Authorities wheeled out giant furnaces to incinerate some of the massive haul on display, including nearly half a ton of methamphetamine, 190,000 ecstasy tablets and 420 kilograms of marijuana. Widodo and other top officials, wearing protective gloves and masks, inspected the drugs before tossing bags of pills into the incinerator. Indonesia has tough drugs laws but Widodo has made combating narcotics a top priority since taking office in late 2014, resuming the execution of traffickers after an unofficial hiatus. Eighteen convicted drug smugglers-including 15 foreigners-have been sent to the firing squad in Indonesia under his administration. Widodo has defended his hardline stance, claiming Indonesia faces a "drugs emergency" and must act to protect the next generation. "Every year 15,000 Indonesian youth die because of drugs. How many drug dealers and traffickers die every year?" he said.

Cambodia upholds drug sentences for foreigners

PHNOM PENH: A Cambodian appeals court yesterday upheld the prison terms of a Frenchwoman, an Australian woman and a Nigerian man for trying to smuggle heroin to Australia. Judge Pol Sam Ouen said the sentences given by the Phnom Penh Municipal Court in May 2014 to then-19-year-old Frenchwoman Charlene Savarino, 41-year-old Ann Yoshe Taylor of Australia and 23-year-old Precious Chneme Nwoko of Nigeria were correct and accorded with the law. The lower court had sentenced Savarino to 25 years in prison, Taylor to 23 years and Nwoko to 27 years. Savarino and Taylor were arrested in September 2013 at Phnom Penh International Airport after police found 2.2 kilograms (4.8 pounds) of heroin in Taylor's luggage as they prepared to fly together to Australia. Nwoko, Savarino's boyfriend, was believed to have masterminded the smuggling and asked Savarino to make the arrangements. Cambodia is not a major producer of illegal drugs but has increasingly become a smuggling transit route.

Hair today, gone tomorrow: Serial sniper strikes Japan

TOKYO: A suspected serial hair-sniper has been arrested in Japan after being accused of stealing tresses from unsuspecting women on rush-hour trains. Police charged the 23-year-old graduate student with assault on Monday after he admitted cutting the hair of a woman on a packed morning train in Nagoya, a city west of Tokyo. Akiya Yoshida is also being investigated for possible involvement in about 30 other cases over the past several years. Yoshida said he had planned on selling his ill-gotten merchandise online, according to the top-selling Yomiuri newspaper.

PHILIPPINES' POLICE MURDERED MAYOR

MANILA: Philippine police murdered a town mayor while he was helpless in a jail cell, justice department investigators said yesterday, contradicting claims by the accused and President Rodrigo Duterte that he was killed in a gun battle. The accusations by the National Bureau of Investigation deepened concerns that police were carrying out summary executions as part of Duterte's controversial war on crime, which has claimed more than 5,100 lives in just over five months.

The NBI, equivalent to the Federal Bureau of Investigation in the United States, said police shot dead mayor Rolando Espinosa and his cellmate Raul Yap, as they were defenseless in a provincial jail cell last month. "After conducting an exhaustive investigation of the incidents surrounding the killing of Mayor Espinosa and Yap, the NBI concluded that the testimonies of several witnesses had disputed the claim of an alleged shootout between the (police) operatives and inmates Mayor Espinosa and Raul Yap but (was) a 'rub out'," the NBI said in a statement.

"Rub out" is a local expression, referring to the police killing a suspect and then saying he died in a gun battle. "The pieces of evidence, both testimonial and the forensic evidence all agree. We believe we have a very strong case," NBI deputy director Ferdinand Lavin told reporters. Lavin said the NBI was recommending murder and perjury charges against 24 officers for their alleged role in the killing and subsequent lies.

The accused police had claimed they fired in self defense at the pair when they went into the jail cell before dawn to execute a search warrant. The police alleged Espinosa, who was in jail after being arrested in October on drug and gun possession charges, had a firearm and methamphetamines in the cell. Lawmakers, media groups and human rights advocates had ridiculed that version of events, asking why police had to execute a search warrant in a jail cell at night and why CCTV footage of the event had disappeared.

However Duterte, who has pledged never to let a policeman go to jail for prosecuting his war on crime, repeatedly defended the officers involved. Duterte's police chief stood down the police officer in charge pending an investigation, but the president immediately reinstated him.

Duterte had accused Espinosa, mayor of Albuera town in the eastern province of Leyte, of being a drug lord. In a speech late Monday, the president again defended the police in the Espinosa case. Duterte, 71, won May elections in a landslide on a promise to kill tens of thousands of criminals to prevent the Philippines from becoming a narco-state.— AFP

ALEPPO 'TWITTER GIRL' SAFE AS FAMILY FLEES

ALEPPO: A seven-year-old Syrian girl whose Twitter account from Aleppo gained international attention has fled her home amid heavy fighting, but she and her family are safe for now, her father said yesterday. With her mother's help, Bana Al-Abed had been posting heart-rending tweets in English on life in the besieged eastern districts of Syria's Aleppo. But as Syrian government forces edged closer to their home in recent days, the Abed family fled and the Twitter updates slowed. "Our house was damaged in bombardment," her father Ghassan said by phone from east Aleppo, two-thirds of which has been seized by advancing government forces.

"The army got really close to our neighborhood. We fled to another part of east Aleppo and the family is doing well," he said, adding that "the internet connection is very weak here." Since late September, Bana and her mother Fatemah have garnered more than 211,000 followers by tweeting regular updates on battered Aleppo. Pictures of massive white columns of smoke, captioned "Aleppo right now. We (are) so scared," are interspersed with shots of Bana reading or scrawling in a notebook.

The account captured the attention of novelist JK Rowling, who responded to a picture of Bana poring over an electronic copy of the "Harry Potter" series. On November 29, Bana's account tweeted a photograph of a heavily damaged building, with the caption: "This is our house. My beloved dolls died in the bombing of our house. I am very sad but happy to be alive." Several days later, Bana wrote that she was sick: "I have no medicine, no home, no clean water.

This will make me die even before a bomb kill me." Many of the tweets have included cries for help, but the



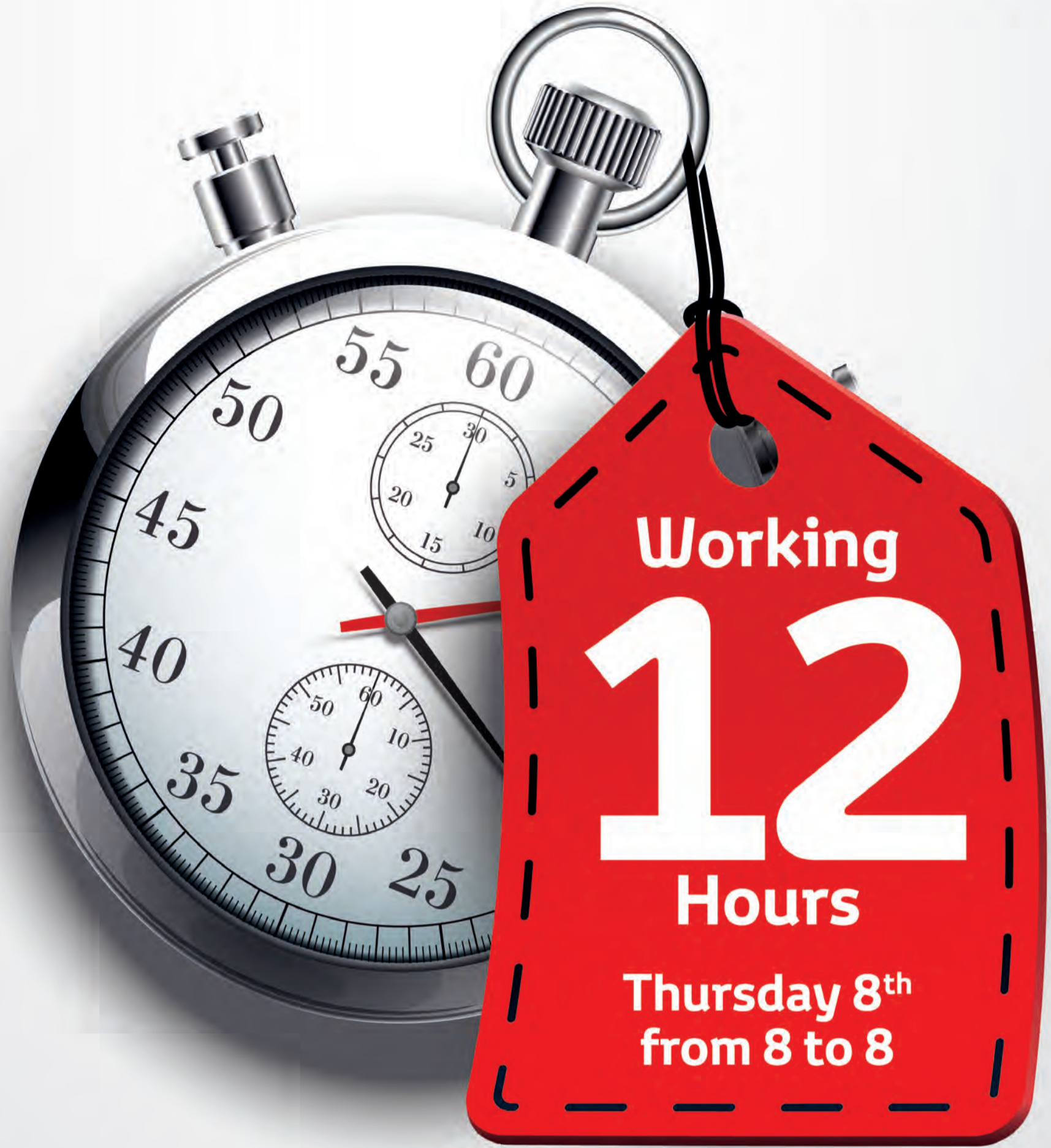
ALEPPO: Syrian Bana Al-Abed, who with the help of her mother had been posting heart-rending tweets in English on life in the besieged eastern districts of Syria's Aleppo, uses a smart-phone to check her Twitter account in her home in east Aleppo. — AFP

messages grew increasingly desperate at the weekend. On Sunday night, Fatemah posted: "We are sure the army is capturing us now. We will see each other another day dear world. Bye." The account fell silent for 24 hours, prompting concerned followers to launch a #WhereIsBana hashtag. An update followed on Monday night, reading: "Under attack. Nowhere to go, every minute feels like death. Pray for us. Goodbye - Fatemah."

Online supporters of President

Bashar Al-Assad have bashed the account and sent Bana and her mother death threats. And in an October interview with Danish broadcaster TV2, Assad alleged that footage posted by Bana was "promoted by the terrorists or their supporters." "It's a game now, a game of propaganda, it's a game of media. You can see anything, and you can be sympathetic with every picture and every video you see. But our mission as a government is to deal with the reality," he said.— AFP

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POTENTIAL FOR VIOLENCE FROM FAKE NEWS TROUBLING

WASHINGTON: The bizarre rumors began with a leaked email referencing Hillary Clinton and sinister interpretations of references to pizza parties. It morphed into fake online news stories about a child sex trafficking ring run by prominent Democrats operating out of a Washington, DC, pizza joint. On Sunday, it culminated in violence when police say a North Carolina man fired an assault rifle inside the Comet Ping Pong restaurant as he attempted to "self-investigate" the conspiracy theory known in the Twitterverse as "Pizzagate."

No one was hurt and the man was arrested. But the shooting alarmed those from neighboring businesses all the way to the White House about the real life dangers of fake news on the internet. One of those people posting on the conspiracy theory is the son of President-elect Donald Trump's proposed national security adviser. On Monday, White House Spokesman Josh Earnest, asked about the shooting, said, "There's no denying the corrosive effect that some of these false reports have had on our political debate, and that's concerning in a political context. It's deeply troubling that some of those false reports could lead to violence."

Edgar Maddison Welch, 28 of Salisbury, North Carolina, was arrested Sunday afternoon outside the popular eatery in an affluent neighborhood of the nation's capital, police said. At his initial appearance Monday in DC Superior Court, Welch was ordered held pending a hearing scheduled for Thursday. The public defender he was assigned didn't immediately respond to an email seeking comment. Court records made public Monday state Welch fired an AR-15 assault rifle multiple times inside the restaurant but later walked out with his hands up and unarmed, leaving his weapons inside.

He told police "he had read online that the Comet restaurant was harboring child sex slaves and that he wanted to see for himself if they were there." He said he "was armed to help rescue them" and "surrendered peacefully when he found no evidence that underage children were being harbored in the restaurant." Welch was charged on multiple counts, including assault with a dangerous weapon. Authorities recovered the AR-15 assault rifle and a handgun from the restaurant, court paperwork said.

'Pizza party'

Police said an additional weapon was recovered from his vehicle. The precise origins of the conspiracy theory Welch said he went to investigate are murky, though it seems to have started gaining momentum in the week before the election. Some elements trace back to hacked emails from Clinton Chief of Staff John Podesta that were released by Wikileaks that refer to pizza parties, with online commentators speculating that "pizza party" is a code word for something more nefarious.

By Nov 3, Comet Ping Pong - so named because patrons can play ping pong on tables in the back of restaurant - had been pulled into the conspiracy. "Let me state unequivocally: These stories are completely and entirely false, and there is no basis in fact to any of them. What happened today demonstrates that promoting false and reckless conspiracy theories comes with consequences," Comet's owner, James Alefantis, said in a statement Sunday night.

At least one person who isn't ready to give up on the conspiracy theory is prominently connected to Trump's transition team. Michael Flynn Jr is an adviser to his father, Michael Flynn, whom Trump

selected to serve as national security adviser. Flynn Jr has sent numerous posts on Twitter about the Pizzagate conspiracy theories. Flynn Jr, who has accompanied his father to presidential transition meetings inside Trump Tower and lists the presidential transition website as part of his Twitter bio, tweeted Sunday night that, "Until #Pizzagate proven to be false, it'll remain a story." Trump's team had no immediate response to questions about the conspiracy theory or the younger Flynn's role in the presidential transition.

On Monday, at an address listed for Welch in Salisbury, a woman drove out as a reporter was approaching and asked him to leave. She then hammered a "no trespassing" sign on a stand by the private driveway. Comet Ping Pong was closed Monday, but neighbors brought flowers and cards to the storefront saying "We support Comet" and "we love you and stand by you." Wiktoria Skrzypinska lives a few blocks from Comet. She said she had heard the rumors about Comet but was shocked to learn that somebody had become so enmeshed in the conspiracy theory to enter the restaurant with an assault rifle. — AP

FRENCH INTERIOR MINISTER CAZENEUVE APPOINTED PM

VALLS QUILTS TO RUN FOR PRESIDENT

PARIS: French Interior Minister Bernard Cazeneuve was appointed as the new prime minister yesterday after Manuel Valls resigned to seek the Socialist nomination in next year's presidential election. Cazeneuve, who has overseen the security forces' reaction to a string of jihadist attacks that have killed more than 230 people in France over the past two years, will take control of the Socialist government until the election in May.

The widely-respected former lawyer was named to the post after President Francois Hollande accepted Valls's resignation yesterday. Cazeneuve, 53, has served in various government roles, including budget minister and minister in charge of European affairs, before becoming interior minister in April 2014. Bruno Le Roux, leader of the Socialists in the lower house of parliament, will take over the

interior portfolio. The mini-reshuffle comes after Valls, who has been prime minister for the past two-and-a-half years, said on Monday he would step down to contest a leftwing primary in January. The 54-year-old quit the government to devote himself to the presidential race, in which polls currently show him trailing in fifth place overall. Announcing his candidacy on Monday, he vowed to take on the conservative Republicans and the far-right National Front led by Marine Le Pen. His announcement came four days after Hollande said he would bow out after a single term, paving the way for his divisive premier to try to become the left's new standard bearer.

Far-right 'at the gates'

"My candidacy is one of reconciliation," Valls said in a speech from his political base in the

gritty Paris suburb of Evry. The far right, which was beaten in Austria's presidential election at the weekend, was "at the gates of power" in France with a nationalist program that would "ruin" the poor, he warned. Polls show Le Pen and conservative candidate Francois Fillon far out in front in the opening round of the election on April 23, with Fillon expected to beat Le Pen in May's second round.

Valls would crash out with 10 percent if he won the nomination-behind Fillon, Le Pen, centrist former economy minister Emmanuel Macron and the Communist-backed Jean-Luc Melenchon, an Ifop-Fiducial poll showed yesterday. On Monday, Valls attacked Fillon, a self-declared Thatcherite, accusing him of rehashing "the old recipes of the 1980s." "We're told that Francois Fillon is the next president of the Republic. Nothing is set in stone," he said defiantly.

Crowded field

Spanish-born Valls, whose family fled Franco's dictatorship to France when he was a teenager, faces an uphill battle to unite his camp. He will go up against seven other candidates in the two-round primary on January 22 and 29, including Arnaud Montebourg, another former economy minister from a leftist Socialist faction. Many on the left see Valls as a rightwinger after he used decrees to force through labor reforms and called for dual-national terror convicts to be stripped of their French nationality. His stern line on secularism and Islam has also turned off many lifelong Socialists. Last summer, he waded into the debate on the Islamic "burkini," declaring the full-body swimsuit "not compatible" with French values. But the blackest mark on his candidacy could be his government's bleak economic record. Le Pen has dismissed him as the unpopular Hollande's "double." When Valls last sought the Socialist nomination five years ago, he garnered only 5.6 percent. Former education minister Benoit Hamon, one of his challengers in the primary, said yesterday that faced with a rising hard right, the Socialists needed to pick someone who represented "a proper left." "It seems to me that he (Valls) cannot embody the future of the left," Hamon said. — AFP

Circumventing the boss?

The daily Sueddeutsche Zeitung said Merkel's lock on re-election as party leader should not be viewed as an indication that there is no dissent. It said that in the background, key members were starting to think beyond her. "That's particularly obvious in terms of refugee policies," it said, noting that "much to Merkel's disappointment, the motion put to the congress has been toughened up by the party's federal chiefs."

These included praising the decision by governments in the Balkans to shut down a route used by asylum seekers—something that had previously been sharply criticized by Merkel. And others want to go further, with CDU deputy chairman Thomas Strobl leading the charge through a demand to ease the deportation process for rejected asylum-seekers. "We can't just put a notice for departure in people's hands and then not follow through with the law," he said, warning it would "substantially erode" public confidence in the rule of law. — AFP



In this file photo, US President Barack Obama hugs Shigeaki Mori, an atomic bomb survivor; creator of the memorial for American WWII POWs killed at Hiroshima, during a ceremony at Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park in Hiroshima, western, Japan. — AP

WORLD LEADERS FACE THE RISKS IN RECONCILING WITH PAST ENEMIES

WASHINGTON: Reconciliation can be tricky. It took 70 years for an American president to visit the site of the US atomic bombing of Hiroshima, and nearly 75 for a Japanese leader to announce he would visit Pearl Harbor, as Prime Minister Shinzo Abe did Monday. Abe is likely to receive a warm reception later this month at the memorial for more than 2,300 Americans who died in the Japanese attack on the Hawaiian naval base. That hasn't always been the case for other world leaders visiting similar sites, particularly when memories are fresher.

Reagan in Bitburg

US President Ronald Reagan and German Chancellor Helmut Kohl stirred a global outcry in May 1985 when the American leader visited a German military cemetery that included the remains of 49 members of Adolf Hitler's Waffen SS troops. Reagan stuck to his promise to visit the cemetery in Bitburg despite a torrent of criticism from Jewish groups, US veterans and others. He added a stop at the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp to his trip. Kohl defended the invitation as a "demonstrative gesture of reconciliation."

Clinton in Vietnam

US President Bill Clinton received a rock-star welcome in Vietnam in November 2000. Clinton was the first American president to visit after the Vietnam War, which ended in 1975 and claimed the lives of more than 3 million Vietnamese and 58,000 American soldiers. Clinton remains popular in Vietnam because the United States normalized relations with its former foe in 1995 while he was president. Relations were completely normalized in May with US President Barack Obama announcing the lifting of a ban on weapons sales to Vietnam during his visit to the country.

Ahmadinejad in Iraq

Iran's hard-line President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad visited Iraq in March 2008, becoming the first leader to travel there after the two bordering nations fought a bloody war that killed 1 million people in the 1980s. His visit came five years after a US-led invasion toppled Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein, who started the 1980s conflict. The influence of Iran in Iraq has grown in the time since, with Iranian-backed Shiite militias now leading the fight in some battlefields against the extremist Islamic State group.

Vucic in Srebrenica

Anger boiled over in July 2015 when Serbian Prime Minister Aleksandar Vucic attended a commemoration 20 years after the slaughter of Muslims in Srebrenica, Bosnia-Herzegovina. Tens of thousands came to mark the anniversary of Europe's worst massacre since World War II, the killing of 8,000 Muslims by Bosnian Serbs. Vucic, once an ultra-nationalist, came to represent Serbia at the commemoration in an apparent gesture of reconciliation. Thousands booed and whistled as he entered the cemetery to lay flowers. Protesters threw water bottles and other objects as he hastily left. His glasses were broken, but there were no serious injuries.

Obama in Hiroshima

US President Barack Obama risked criticism at home when he decided to visit the memorial to the 140,000 killed in the atomic bombing of Hiroshima in World War II. Japanese generally welcomed his visit and praised his speech, which called on humankind to prevent war and pursue a world without nuclear weapons. He didn't apologize for the bombing, and Japan didn't ask for an apology. Just visiting Hiroshima would have been politically difficult, if not impossible, for previous US presidents to do. — AP

MERKEL'S DECISIVE MOMENTS

ESSEN: As German Chancellor Angela seeks the blessing from her party to run for a fourth consecutive term in general elections next year, here are seven pivotal moments in her career.

Spokeswoman to Chancellor

Merkel, the daughter of a pastor, became politically active when opposition to the East German government grew in 1989. She briefly served as a deputy spokeswoman for the first democratically elected East German government, before winning election in 1990 to the reunified German parliament as a member of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) party. Chancellor Helmut Kohl named Merkel minister for women and youth in 1991, but disparaged his youngest cabinet member with the patronizing nickname, "das Maedchen" (the girl). Merkel steadily climbed to the CDU leadership and Kohl's insult came back to haunt him when "the girl" was the only one with the guts to tell him to quit when he got bogged down in a political slush fund scandal. She was elected party chief in 2000 with more than 95 percent of the vote. On November 22, 2005, Merkel became Germany's first woman chancellor and has since won re-election

Nuclear power? Nein danke

Merkel stunned the world when she announced after the Fukushima nuclear meltdown in 2011 that German nuclear reactors would be phased out by 2022. Germany continues to use coal-fired plants until it can ramp up green energy initiatives. The country has invested heavily in solar and wind power, and aims to provide 80 percent of its needs with renewable sources by 2050.

'Madame non'

All eyes turned to Merkel when Greece plunged into a sovereign debt crisis in 2010. She was vilified as a heartless penny-pincher as together with Finance Minister Wolfgang Schaueble, she took a hard line against forgiving Athens' massive debt. She backed three international rescue packages worth more than 300 billion euros (\$320 billion) but only in exchange for deep budget cuts and steep tax increases. As the euro-zone struggled to kickstart growth, Merkel came under intense pressure to boost government spending. — AFP



PARIS: French Prime Minister Manuel Valls (left) and French Interior Minister Bernard Cazeneuve leaving the weekly cabinet meeting at the Elysee presidential Palace in Paris. French Interior Minister Bernard Cazeneuve was appointed as the new prime minister yesterday after Manuel Valls resigned to seek the Socialist nomination in the presidential election. — AFP

GERMAN CHANCELLOR DRAWS BATTLE LINES AHEAD OF 2017

ESSEN: German Chancellor Angela Merkel will outline her battle strategy yesterday to counter a wave of populism that has consumed key allies abroad, as she launches into campaign mode for next year's elections. Merkel, who has led Germany for 11 years, last month confirmed she would run for a fourth term but acknowledged that the election would be "more difficult" than any other she has contested. Party faithful from her centre-right Christian Democratic Union (CDU) gathering for a two-day annual congress in the western city of Essen are expected to overwhelmingly re-elect Merkel as party chief, rallying behind her bid to stay in power.

During the last party vote in 2014, Merkel garnered 96.7 percent of support and this week's ballot will be closely scrutinized for any sign of dissent. "I'm counting on an honest result," she told public broadcaster ARD, as national media suggested that any score below 90 percent would be a slap in the face. Crucially, she will also be grilled on how she plans to stop the populist anti-Islam AfD from further eroding the party's supporter base. The CDU has suffered setbacks in five consecutive state polls as voters punish Merkel for her liberal refugee policy, with more than a million people seeking asylum in Germany last year.

There have been questions about whether the 62-year-old has fresh ideas to offer in a world upended by Brexit, the surprise election of Donald Trump and the departure of Italian Prime Minister following a crushing referendum defeat championed by populists. There is concern within CDU rank and file, because Merkel has said she "will stand again, without saying how she will change her policies in the future", Hans Pistner from the Thuringia regional government told regional broadcaster MDR.

Close the gaps

Merkel's CDU and its Bavarian sister party CSU secured a decisive win of 41.5 percent at the last election in 2013 - its best result since national reunification in 1990, on the back of strong approval for her tough stance on austerity for

debt-stricken EU nations. Three years on, there are rumblings of discontent-even within her own party-following her September 2015 decision to let in refugees fleeing war in mostly-Muslim nations, in a move that has deeply polarized Europe's biggest economy.

Although Merkel has since moved to slow the influx, including through a highly controversial deal with Turkey, the AfD has gained a firm footing as a protest platform for disgruntled voters. The AfD now enjoys around 12 percent support, while at the last general election it fell short of the five-percent threshold to ensure representation. Merkel's supporters will take heart from a recent survey showing that two in three Germans approve of her bid to stand again. But with nine months or more to go before the elections, CDU deputy chair Julia Klöckner said the party must not leave any gaps for the AfD to exploit. "If we only talk about healthcare for refugees, but not about the shortage of doctors in the country, then the mood will sour," she warned in an interview with Spiegel magazine.



ESSEN: German Chancellor Angela Merkel gestures after addressing delegates during her conservative Christian Democratic Union (CDU) party's congress in Essen, western Germany yesterday. German Chancellor Angela Merkel launches into campaign mode for elections taking place in 2017. — AFP

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NUDE SELFIES USED AS COLLATERAL FOR CHINESE LOANS

BEIJING: Hundreds of photos and videos of naked women used as collateral for loans on a Chinese online lending service have leaked onto the web, highlighting regulatory problems in the fast-growing peer-to-peer marketplace. A 10-gigabyte file posted on the internet exposed the personal details of more than 160 young women who were asked to provide the explicit material to secure money through online lending platform Jiedaibao.

Launched by JD Capital in 2015, Jiedaibao allows lenders to operate anonymously but requires borrowers to reveal their real names when making transactions. Loan amounts and interest rates can be customized to meet the needs of users—often people who have a hard time accessing loans through more traditional financial institutions, like banks. Interest on the “nude loans” reached an astonishing 30 percent a week, according to the Global Times

newspaper. Lenders told female borrowers that if they failed to repay the loans, their nude photos would be sent to their families and friends, whose information was also required for some transactions, the article said.

Material in the file put on the web last Wednesday showed some borrowers also promised to repay loans with sexual favors, according to screen captures posted on social media websites. In a statement on its official Twitter-like Weibo account, Jiedaibao said it had tracked down the accounts of several borrowers through photos and ID information circulated online and had frozen the suspected lenders' accounts.

“The ‘nude loans’ deals were mainly initiated and completed offline, and Jiedaibao only played the role of a money transfer platform in the deals,” the statement said. The case is not the first time online P2P businesses have been connected to potentially embar-

assing photos. In November, Alipay, the payment platform of Chinese e-commerce giant Alibaba, was criticized after a set of photos showing female users in seductive poses was leaked on social media. The photos were originally posted in Alipay's newly launched social media feature called Circles, which allows only women to post photos, and had obscene comments from male users.

China has nearly 2,600 platforms described as P2P businesses, according to one industry estimate, with transactions valued at around \$150 billion last year. Beijing has been particularly worried about P2P lending and in August it tightened regulations by setting a borrowing limit of one million yuan for individuals. It also required platforms to supply and verify the information of both borrowers and lenders, and provide credit assessment, financial consulting and conflict resolution services. — AFP



BEIJING: A woman walks past Christmas decorations in Beijing, China yesterday. — AP

TAMIL NADU STATE NAMES JAYALALITHAA'S SUCCESSOR

THOUSANDS MOURN CHARISMATIC LEADER

CHENNAI: The party of Jayalalitha Jayaram, a powerful Indian politician who died on Monday, appointed a loyalist to lead her southern state and keep her supporters together as thousands of them grieved in the streets. Jayalalitha, the five-time chief minister of Tamil Nadu state, ran her AIADMK party with an iron hand and appointed no second line of leadership or successor. An hour after her party announced her death late on Monday after a cardiac arrest, state Finance Minister OP. Panneerselvam was sworn in to lead economically important Tamil Nadu, a base for auto firms Ford Motor Daimler, Hyundai and Nissan and IT firm Cognizant.

Panneerselvam had stood in for Jayalalitha in the past, but made it clear he was not replacing her. He declined to take her place at the head of the cabinet table while she was ill and instead had her picture placed there. His rise to the top job in Tamil Nadu would help allay fears of a power struggle in the AIADMK, built entirely around the cult of Jayalalitha. Tens of thousands of people gathered outside a memorial hall in the state capital, Chennai, where Jayalalitha's body lay draped in the Indian flag.

Many wailed and beat their chests in grief. The funeral was set for later. Widely known as “Ammma” or “Mother,” the film star-turned politician had a cult following and there were fears supporters would react erratically to her death. A crowd had surged toward Apollo Hospital where she lay fighting for her life earlier on Monday on rumors that she had died. “The level of reverence she inspired, few other leaders had,” said a leader of the Congress party, Shashi Tharoor. Jayalalitha had gone into cardiac arrest on Sunday night, the Apollo Hospital said, following her admission with fever and dehydration in September. She was 68. “She was not only our leader, she was our god,” said Paasarai Jeeva, a woman who said she had been camping outside



CHENNAI: Indian army and air force officers carry the body of India's popular politician and former film actress Jayaram Jayalalitha in a glass casket during her funeral procession in Chennai, India yesterday. (Inset) Indian sand artist Sudarsan Pattnaik pays tribute with his sand sculpture of Indian politician and actress Jayalalitha Jayaraman. — AP

the hospital for a week. State authorities ordered seven days of mourning, schools were shut and thousands of police deployed to prevent her supporters from creating public disorder or from harming themselves in grief. In the past, when Jayalalitha faced political problems such as a jail term for corruption, her loyalists

threatened to immolate themselves or lie down in streets for buses to run them over.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi was flying to Chennai to mourn her death along with several other cabinet colleagues. “Jayalalitha ji's connect with the citizens, concern for welfare of the poor, the women and marginalized will always be a

source of inspiration,” Modi said. His ruling Bharatiya Janata Party as well as the Congress, the other national party, have little political presence in Tamil Nadu despite years of efforts to build a base. Jayalalitha's AIADMK and bitter rival DMK are the main political groupings, alternating in power. — Reuters

FEARS OF LOSING HOME, LAND PLAGUE ONE IN FOUR INDIANS

LONDON: About a quarter of homeowners in India, and nearly one in five rural landowners, fear losing their property, in most cases because they do not have documents to prove ownership, according to a new poll. The survey, launched by US polling firm Gallup in London yesterday, set out to test how secure people feel about their homes and land. Conducted over the past six months, the Indian survey is the first of a worldwide, two-year research project looking at perceptions of property ownership and security between different societies.

The poll found six in 10 said they owned their home, while a third said they lived in a home owned by a family member. Despite the high incidence of ownership, the Indian survey showed that insecurity of property rights is widespread, with about one in four owners and nearly half of all renters expressing worry about losing their home. Matters related to land and property make up about two-thirds of all civil cases in India, where tussles over ownership can delay property deals and lead to lengthy court battles.

Insecure land rights leave the urban poor particularly vulnerable as they are often unaware of the rights they do have, cannot afford lawyers and live in fear of being evicted. The study revealed that those who were worried about ownership also reported a higher incidence of health problems, including saying they sometimes did not have enough food. Respondents said the main reason for their insecurity was the lack of documentation, including land titles, followed by disagreements with family members over property ownership.

Insecure rights

India is in the throes of dramatic demographic and cultural change with the urban population expected to grow from 377 million in 2016 to nearly 600 million by 2030. Insecure property rights, say analysts, can threaten to undermine the benefits of India's rapid urbanization. A lack of formal documentation proving ownership can block access to basic services such as sanitation, water and electricity and limit access to financial services such as raising credit against a

home or farm for investment, the report said.

In the developing world, it can also limit access to state help such as food or fertilizer subsidies and services provided by municipal governments such as sanitation and water. In India, more than 14,000 men and women, both owners and tenants in cities and villages, were interviewed face-to-face. The project covered 14 Indian states, including Odisha, Punjab, Rajasthan and West Bengal. Nine other countries will be polled over the next year to build up a definitive picture of how different societies relate to - and feel about - land and property ownership.

Gender gap

The report showed a clear gender gap with women less likely than men to own their land or home. But men and women were equally likely to be worried about losing their home or land. Tenants were twice as likely as owners to worry about losing their homes, with landlords - often afraid of permanently losing possession of their homes - preferring short term contracts. And while about nine out of 10 respondents lived in a home owned by themselves or by a family member, those who owned their own property were more likely to express worry about losing the home than those who lived with other family members. Thirty percent of city residents expressed insecurity, compared to 26 percent of their rural counterparts.

Owners were more likely to visit government offices to update their records, although only half had done so in the past. Of these, owners of agricultural land were far more likely to update land records than those who owned residential land. If people are willing to engage with state authorities on ownership, there are potential resolutions to the problem of insecurity, said the report commissioned by Land Alliance, a Washington-based think tank. “...Government efforts to make it easier, and affordable, for people to register or update property documentation at local levels could have a large impact on reducing people's worry about their property rights,” it said. “This would have benefits for private citizens and the economy as a whole.” — Reuters

INDIA TRANSGENDER WOMEN STILL FACE BIAS DESPITE LAWS

MUMBAI: Transgender women in India face persistent bias that denies them education and jobs despite India having progressive laws for transgender people, according to a leading activist. In a landmark judgment in 2014, India's Supreme Court ruled that transgender people had equal rights under the law, and granted legal status to the third gender. Alongside the right to marry and inherit property, they are also eligible for quotas in jobs and educational institutions. But most of India's estimated 2 million transgender people face discrimination from a young age with transgender women particularly abused, reflecting the entrenched patriarchy in the country, said Laxmi Narayan Tripathi, a founder of the Asia Pacific Transgender Network.

She said many transgender people are thrown out of their homes by their families, lack a formal education and are denied jobs. They are forced into sex work, begging or dancing at weddings to make a living. “We have among the most progressive laws for transgender people: the 2014 judgment gives us the right to choose our gender identity, so if I believe I'm a woman, I'm a woman,” Laxmi said at a panel hosted by the Thomson Reuters Foundation and Asia Society on Monday.

“But people are still biased. That's why no one will hire us, except in the non-profit sector, and we have no choice but to beg or do sex work.” Laxmi, who prefers to go by her first name, was born into an orthodox Brahmin family. She became one of the most flamboyant advocates for transgender people, petitioning to recognize the category on all official documents including passports. Transgender women, known as hijras, have long been considered auspicious in India. They are featured in Hindu mythology, and their bless-

ings are sought at weddings and births, even as abuse and exploitation are common.

Treated as inferior

Transgender people were included in India's census survey of 2011 for the first time. There are 490,000 transgender people in the country, according to official data, a number that activists say is only a fraction of the real number. But there are moves to extend more benefits to the community. The eastern state of Odisha this year became the first to give transgender people welfare benefits such as pension and housing. India is also revising its rehabilitation scheme for bonded laborers to include transgender people.

Laxmi said while the law is supportive, biases against transgender women reflect the entrenched patriarchy in India, where the mistreatment of women has become a major issue in recent years. Indian women face a barrage of threats ranging from child marriage, dowry killings and human trafficking to rape and domestic violence, largely due to deep-rooted attitudes that view them as inferior to men.

“When to be feminine itself is not acceptable, then everything becomes taboo: red lipstick is taboo, being flamboyant is taboo, dressing a certain way is taboo,” said Laxmi, wearing a bright orange saree with chunky jewelry, and her trademark scarlet lipstick and red sindoor on her forehead. “When a woman still becomes powerful, the patriarchy assassinates her character and calls her names.” But the community cannot wait for laws to improve its lot, and must continue to fight for its rights, she said. “No one will bring us our rights to our doorstep; we have to lobby, we have to all be activists. We have to demand and take our rights,” she said. — Reuters

News

in brief

Poland court rejects Polanski extradition

WARSAW: Poland's Supreme Court yesterday rejected a bid to extradite Oscar-winning director Roman Polanski to the United States, where he faces sentencing over a decades-old case of statutory rape. The 83-year-old French-Polish national, who currently lives in France, did not attend the hearing and his lawyers testified in his place, local media reported. Justice Minister Zbigniew Ziobro had appealed to the court in May to overturn a 2015 ruling against extraditing Polanski, saying no one should be above the law. The Supreme Court “is dismissing the appeal,” said Judge Michal Laskowski, definitively ending Poland's part in the 1977 case that continues in the United States. The government move had appeared to be part of what the rightwing Law and Justice (PIS) government, which took office a year ago, touts as a moral revolution in strongly Catholic Poland. Polanski is still wanted in the United States for sentencing over the 1977 statutory rape of Samantha Gailey after a photo shoot in Los Angeles. He was arrested after Gailey, now Geimer, accused him of forcing her to have sex after drugging her.

14 killed in shootout with Mexican police

COATZACOALCOS: Mexican police working with military troops killed 14 suspected criminals in a shootout in the crime-plagued state of Veracruz on Monday, officials said. Authorities have stepped up antidrug patrols in the Gulf coast state, where cartels are responsible for a spike in crime. Officials said police patrolling the region came under fire from a criminal gang hidden behind a small hill in the town of Suchilapan, a mountainous area on the border of Veracruz state and Oaxaca to the south. Marine troops were enlisted after the assault to help flush out the attackers, and an ensuing gunfight resulted in the deaths of the 14 suspected criminals, a government statement said. The village of Suchilapan is along the route frequently used by Central American migrants attempting to make the dangerous crossing through Mexico to the United States. It also has been the scene in recent days of various skirmishes between armed forces and criminal drug gangs, including Mexico's notorious Zetas and the Jalisco New Generation, two of the country's most powerful cartels.



GAZA: A seagull flaps its wings as it sits on the water in the port of Gaza City. — AFP

Hamas forces clash with the hardliners

GAZA: A police officer and a youth were hospitalized yesterday after Hamas forces clashed with hardline Islamists in the Gaza Strip, a medical source and witnesses said. Both men suffered bullet wounds during an attempt by Gaza security forces to arrest two men from a Salafist group, followers of an ultra-conservative form of Islam, a witness said. The young man, believed to be a Salafist, was in serious condition, while the policeman's condition was not life threatening, the medical source said. The witness said a grenade was thrown at security forces raiding a house in Al-Fukhari in the southern Gaza Strip, sparking clashes. Hamas, which rules Gaza, is an Islamist party but is frequently criticized by more conservative Islamists, including hardliners who sympathize with the Islamic State group. The hardliners sporadically fire rockets at Israel, prompting retaliation against Hamas targets. Israel holds Hamas responsible for all rocket fire from Gaza, regardless of who launches it.

Islamist militants hit prison, free prisoners

BAMAKO: Suspected Islamist militants attacked a prison in the town of Niono in central Mali overnight and freed all the prisoners, officials said yesterday. Militants based in northern Mali have staged a series of high-profile attacks since 2015, extending their campaign beyond their desert camps into the central and southern regions of the country and the capital. “Dozens of prisoners escaped. The army was able to catch some and is launching a pursuit,” said Defence Ministry spokesman Abdoulaye Sidibe. Army spokesman Diarran Kone said the attack bore the hallmarks of followers of radical Islamist preacher Amadou Koufa. It was unclear whether there were any suspected jihadists in the prison. Last month, gunmen broke into another prison in southern Mali with the aim of releasing two inmates who had already been moved, authorities said. Islamist groups hijacked a separatist Tuareg rebellion in 2012 to seize towns in Mali's vast desert north.

JAPAN, US BURYING WWII GHOSTS AFTER 70 YEARS

TOKYO: An American president in Hiroshima. A Japanese prime minister at Pearl Harbor. One longtime taboo has already fallen this year, and the other soon will. On Dec 27, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe will visit the Hawaiian US naval base attacked by Japan in 1941. He will be joined by President Barack Obama, who seven months earlier traveled to Hiroshima to pay tribute to the 140,000 people killed there by a US atomic bomb in 1945. The two attacks bookend World War II in the Pacific. The importance of the visits may be mostly symbolic for two countries that, in a remarkable transformation, have grown into close allies in the decades since they faced off in brutal conflict. At the same time, it's significant that it took more than 70 years for US-Japanese relations to get to this point.

The two gestures of reconciliation are in some ways an attempt to sweep out the final ghosts of the war. "Despite the amicable relationship that the two countries have enjoyed since the end of the Pacific War, deep-rooted negative sentiment has remained in both countries," said Narushige Michishita, a security expert at the National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies in Tokyo. "The Obama-Abe joint visit to Pearl Harbor will change this." Several factors have helped both Obama and Abe step in hallowed places their predecessors did not:

Time heals

For young Americans, Pearl Harbor is an event in history textbooks, but Japan is more likely to conjure up images of manga and sushi. Japanese students learn about the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but the message is not to hate America but to prevent such a tragedy from happening again. "The amount of time passed is an important factor," said Tsuneo Watanabe, a senior research fellow at the Sasakawa Peace Foundation in Tokyo. "As survivors become fewer, the event becomes part historical memory," said Toshi Minohara, a US-Japan expert at Kobe University in Japan. To the mix, he added the concern in the US and Japan about China's emergence as a military power in the Pacific. "I think the appearance of a new potential adversary also made this possible," he said.

"The US will have to depend on Japan more and more."

Odd couple

Obama, a liberal Democrat, and Abe, a relatively staunch conservative, seem unlikely partners for this dance. On a 2014 visit to Japan, Obama was described by the Japanese media as "businesslike," in contrast to Abe, who was said to be looking to develop a personal bond with the American leader. Their interests dovetailed over Hiroshima. For Obama, a world without nuclear weapons is a stated if unachieved goal, and Hiroshima was a powerful place to deliver that message one more time in the last year of his presidency.

Abe could bask in the limelight as the Japanese leader who brought an American president to Hiroshima, a visit long hoped for by survivors of the atomic bomb and widely welcomed by the public. At the time, Abe said he had no "specific plan" to visit Pearl Harbor, sidestepping suggestions that reciprocity was called for. However, in announcing his visit to Pearl Harbor on Monday, he revealed that he has been thinking about the importance of a visit and reconciliation for more than a year, and that he and Obama finalized it when they met at a G-20 meeting in Peru last month.

Conservative cred

Some American conservatives and military veterans opposed Obama's visit to Hiroshima, but he rode out the storm. In contrast, Japanese conservatives have been relatively quiet about Abe's planned visit to Pearl Harbor, and even supportive. The right-leaning Sankei newspaper called it "an attempt to end the postwar era" and move beyond "a framework of winners versus losers." It helps that Abe is a conservative himself. He also faces few political challengers after holding onto office for coming on four years, making him the fourth-longest-serving prime minister since World War II. "He gets understanding from his conservative supporters, who give him credit for his ... policies," Watanabe said. "A visit to Pearl Harbor by a liberal leader would have been more difficult." Obama's visit to Hiroshima also helped in a society in which gift-giving and favors should be reciprocal. "In a way, it was only appropriate," Minohara said. — AP



SEOUL: Supporters of South Korean President Park Geun-Hye wave the national flags during a rally against the impeachment of the president outside the ruling Saenuri Party in Seoul yesterday. — AFP

SOUTH KOREA'S PARK DIGS IN, AS TYCOONS DENY SEEKING FAVORS

INDUSTRY TITANS HARANGUED IN SCANDAL PROBE

SEOUL: South Korean President Park Geun-hye, engulfed in an influence peddling scandal, said if she was impeached she would wait for a court to uphold the decision, a party official said yesterday, a sign a political crisis could drag on for months. Park's embattled presidency faces a critical juncture, with parliament expected to hold an impeachment vote on Friday. Even if the motion is passed, it must be upheld by the Constitutional Court, a process that could take at least months.

Separately, South Korea's most prominent corporate chiefs told a parliamentary panel they had not sought favors when they made contributions to two foundations at the heart of the scandal, even as one of them acknowledged it was hard to say "no" to the government. "It's a South Korean reality that if there is a government request, it is difficult for companies to decline," said Huh Chang-soo, who heads the energy-to-retail GS Group and is also chairman of the Federation of Korean Industries, the main lobby group for the conglomerates known as chaebol. Park, 64, is under intense pressure to resign immediately, with big crowds taking to the streets every Saturday calling for her ouster. Her approval rating is at a record low of 4 percent.

She would be the first democratically elected South Korean president not to serve a full five-year term. She is accused of colluding with a friend and a former aide to pressure big business owners to pay into two foundations set up to back policy initiatives. She has denied wrongdoing but apologized for carelessness in her ties with the friend, Choi Soon-

sil. Park met leaders of her Saenuri party and top official Chung Jin-suk later said the president was willing to accept her party's proposal that she step down in April - which has been rejected by the opposition - but gave no indication that she was willing to quit immediately.

"Unless she says she is resigning immediately, whatever she says won't satisfy the public and won't make the opposition drop their impeachment motion," said Kim Man-heum, head of the Korea Academy of Politics and Leadership. Opposition parties need at least 28 members from Park's Saenuri Party for the impeachment bill to pass with a two-thirds majority. At least 29 of them are believed to be planning to vote for the bill, members of a breakaway faction said. Last week, Park offered to step down and asked parliament to decide how and when she should resign, a move opposition parties rejected as a ploy to buy time and avoid impeachment.

Rhee Jong-hoon, a political commentator at iGM Consulting, said Park would fight in the Constitutional Court to overturn an impeachment hearing. "And if the motion is overturned? She will remain in office until her term is finished. Nothing matters after the Constitutional Court rules against the impeachment bill." The heads of conglomerates controlling revenue equivalent to more than half the country's economy were questioned over whether they were pressured by Park or Choi to give money to non-profit foundations, which backed initiatives put forth by Park, in exchange for special treatment.

'Heavy heart'

Samsung Group leader Jay Y Lee, who sat at the centre of the witness table, said Park had asked him during one-on-one meetings for support for boosting cultural and sports-related developments but did not specifically request money. "There are often requests from various parts of society including for culture and sports. We have never contributed seeking quid pro quo. This case was the same," Lee said. The 48-year-old Lee, the third-generation leader of the country's biggest conglomerate who received the lion's share of the panel's often-hectoring questioning, said he was embarrassed by the situation and was appearing with a "heavy heart". Samsung donated 20.4 billion won (\$17.46 million) to the two foundations, the most of any group, and prosecutors raided its offices last month.

The corporate titans ran a gauntlet of media and protesters as they entered the National Assembly for the first such parliamentary hearing featuring such a large group of chaebol bosses. The family-controlled chaebol have long dominated Asia's fourth-largest economy, working closely with the government in a system that helped the country rebuild from the ravages of the 1950-53 Korean War. But the system, critics say, is due for reform, including improved corporate governance and transparency. None of the chaebol has been accused of any wrongdoing in the case, but a protester outside the assembly held a sign saying: "Arrest the chaebol chiefs." — Reuters



PEARL HARBOR, Hawaii: This December, 1941 file photo shows the USS Arizona, sunk and burning furiously. Her forward magazines had exploded when she was hit by a Japanese bomb. — AFP

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Focus

AFGHAN GOVT WOOS ALLIES AGAINST IS

Afghan authorities are appealing to local elders in the remote eastern province of Nuristan to help prevent militants loyal to Islamic State from expanding into new territory. The initiative comes as fighters and their families, scattered in recent months by US and Afghan air strikes and special forces ground operations, seek new safe havens. The mountainous and thickly forested province bordering Pakistan is seen by Afghan authorities as a potential new base for the self-proclaimed offshoot of Islamic State, whose desire to stoke sectarian tensions was underlined this year in a series of high-profile attacks.

With Afghan armed forces and their NATO allies already struggling to cope with the Taliban insurgency across much of the country, the prospect of an expanding Islamic State group has alarmed authorities and the US military. The group, generally known as Daesh in Afghanistan, has so far been largely confined to the eastern province of Nangarhar to the south of Nuristan. There is also clashed with other militant movements including the Taliban, who reject it.

Afghan intelligence officials say an intense campaign of air strikes and raids by Afghan and US special forces in recent months also pushed many Islamic State fighters out of Nangarhar and into neighboring Kunar province, which borders Nuristan. To prevent them moving further north, security officials said they had provided weapons, ammunition and other support to villages in Nuristan, while also tapping the province's particular culture to try to create a barrier against outsiders.

Hafez Abdul Qayum, the provincial governor, has held several meetings with local elders, who enjoy significant powers in a province where central government is weak. On one recent trip, after a two-hour car journey along mountainous dirt roads, he and his entourage walked the final few hundred metres to the meeting place out of respect for local tradition. There he sat down with elders young and old, many of them wearing round, woollen "pakul" hats and sporting beards dyed orange, to share a lengthy meal of seared goat meat and urge his hosts to oppose the new threat.

"Whether it is Taleban or Daesh, they both are the biggest misguided people and destroyers of our religious values," Qayum, himself from Nuristan, told elders in Wama district, close to Pech Valley in Kunar where Islamic State fighters have settled. "Dear brothers, fighting against this menace is our biggest priority."

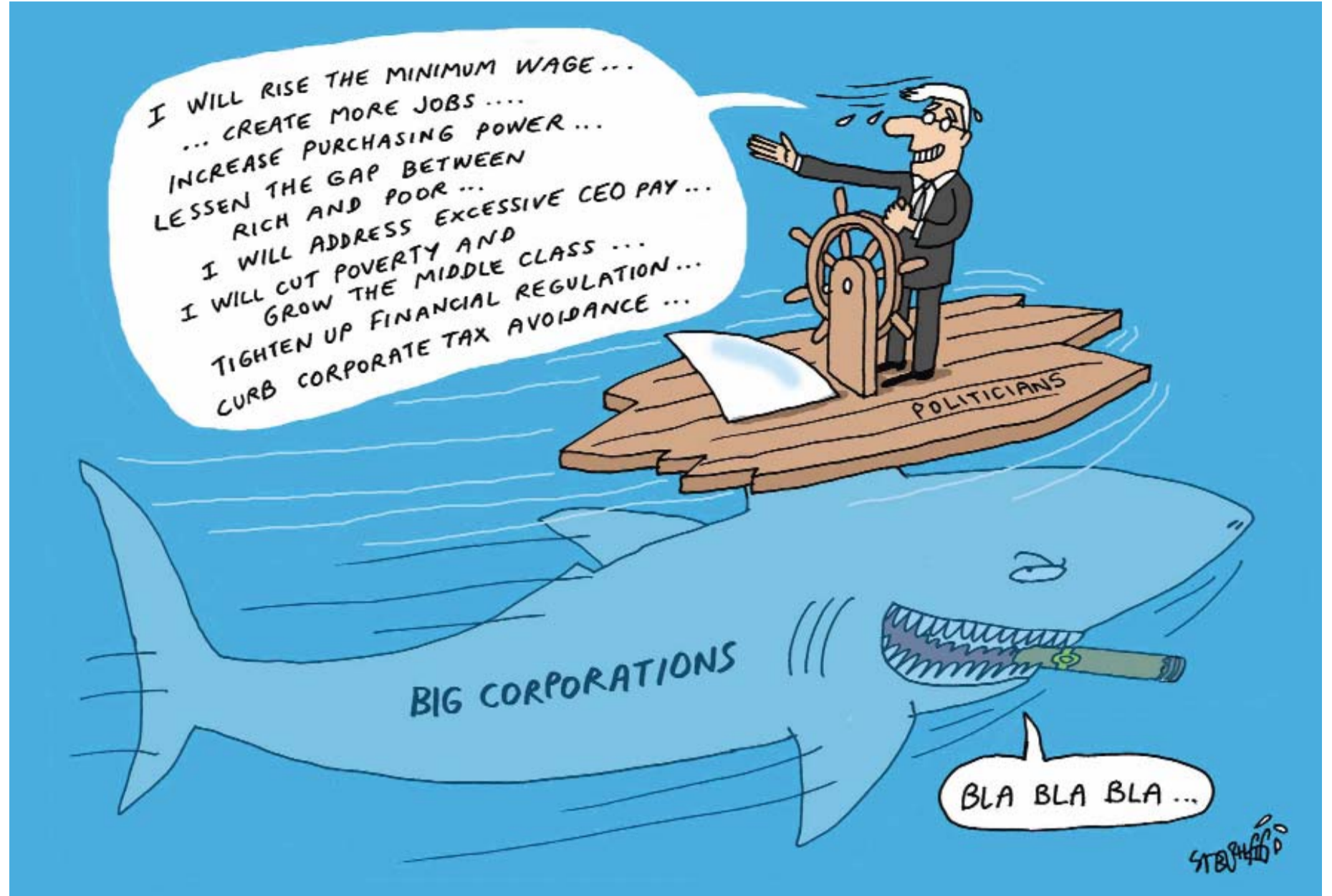
'Valley Of Death'

Such outreach is not unusual in a country where the word of traditional leaders often counts for more than directives from central government. And Nuristan, a province whose name means "the land of light" in Persian, has a history of repelling outsiders, including the Taleban and Al-Qaeda, by refusing them food and shelter and engaging in combat if necessary. But Afghanistan's security forces see Islamic State as a fresh menace, because by targeting the minority Shiite community it risks making a dangerous insurgency led by the Taliban even harder to contain.

Last month, more than 30 people died in a suicide bombing claimed by Islamic State at a Shiite mosque in Kabul. Nuristan is seen as a natural buffer, with its singular culture, rugged mountain ranges and lack of paved roads or electricity. Known as "Kafiristan", or "land of infidels", before its people were converted to Islam in the 19th century, it has an economy partly based on barter and local languages and dialects unrelated to the main languages of Afghanistan, Pashto and Dari. That has made it difficult for the central government to exert control, and only a few thousand lightly armed police and one army unit are stationed there. The real power in Nuristan is widely considered to be the "Qaomi Shura", or local elders' council. "If they say to someone 'die', that person dies. This is the power of the council," said a senior government official in the provincial capital Parun. If elders can be persuaded not to allow Islamic State to settle, security officials believe they will have a better chance of stopping its fighters from crossing from Pech Valley, where the Taleban and Al-Qaeda are also established.

Officials say Islamic State fighters from different countries have found sanctuary in a part of Kunar that includes an area known by US troops as "The Valley of Death", where they have lost dozens of soldiers. Al-Qaeda's presence was underlined in October, when a US airstrike killed Farouq al-Qatari, the movement's top commander in the east. So far, Islamic State's presence is contained, as it finds its place in an area hotly contested by other militant groups, and locals have been warned against giving help. — Reuters

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OIL FIRMS, CARMAKERS DIVERGE IN COSTLY DEBATE

Many carmakers are predicting a significant shift to electric vehicles in the next decade. Advances in battery technology and the growth of autonomous driving and ride sharing - suited to electric vehicles - will power this expansion, they reason. But some oil executives take a different view, predicting electricity will play only a bit part in transport out to 2040 at least. If they are on the wrong side of the argument, it could come at a cost to an industry where new projects often cost billions of dollars to build and need decades of at least moderate crude prices to pay off.

Over half of all crude oil pumped is used for transport. An overly pessimistic outlook for electric cars may lead oil companies to adopt an overly optimistic outlook for oil consumption and price growth, analysts say. ENI SpA Chief Executive Claudio Descalzi is among those who believe the threat posed to the oil industry by electric vehicles is not significant. "Electric cars, they can grow, but I don't think that is a problem (for us)," Descalzi told Reuters on the sidelines of a conference in London last month.

ExxonMobil Corp, the largest western oil producer by market value, and British rival BP Plc publish oil market outlooks to 2035 and 2040 respectively that guide their investment decisions. Both predict that in 2035, less than 10 percent of new cars will be electric vehicles (EVs) or plug-in hybrids - cars with a backup combustion engine for when the battery runs flat. "Our central view in the outlook is the penetration of electric vehicles and electricity more generally is likely to be pretty limited over the next 20 years," Spencer Dale, BP's Chief Economist, said in February.

The carmakers don't produce comparable long-term outlooks for vehicle production but their nearer term predictions for vehicle roll-outs envisage a much faster take up of EVs. Dieter Zetsche, CEO of Mercedes Benz manufacturer Daimler AG, said in September his goal was to have EVs make up between 15 and 25 percent of group global sales by 2025. BMW AG has said it could do the same. Ford CEO Mark Fields said in April that by 2020, 40 percent of models would be electrified.

"For over 100 years the internal combustion engine has been a basic design assumption for our business, for our

industry," Hau Thai-Tang, Ford vice President for Purchasing told analysts at an investor day in September. "This shift to electrification is game changing," he added. For the oil companies, a lot is riding on the accuracy of their demand forecasts, said Alex Griffiths, Group Credit Officer for corporates at credit rating agency Fitch, who produced a report about electric vehicles. "Without that (oil) demand increase, you potentially find that the market gets out of kilter - which is not a good place for the oil industry to be in," he said. To be sure, some in the oil industry are predicting a rapid expansion of EVs and some carmakers are conservative on EV prospects, but they are in a minority. Norway's Statoil, for instance, says electric motors could roll out widely in the next two decades. And Fiat Chrysler Automobiles NV CEO Sergio Marchionne has expressed caution about the uptake of electric cars.

Advances in Technology

Where there is a variance in outlook between the oil and auto industries, it is usually down to different expectations around technological developments and what happens in emerging markets. Carmakers expect batteries to become cheaper and be able to support greater vehicle range than some oil companies have predicted. Oil companies have said regulated caps on vehicle emissions can be most efficiently achieved by improvements in combustion engine efficiency.

But carmakers say it is becoming increasingly expensive to hit emissions targets with combustion technology. BMW Chairman Harald Krueger told investors last year that electric motors were the only way to meet CO2 emissions regulations coming into force in Europe and elsewhere. But an even bigger reason why many in the auto industry believe the future for cars is electric is because of developments in car ride sharing and autonomous vehicles. Thanks largely to the involvement of Silicon Valley companies like Google owner Alphabet Inc., driverless cars have gone in a few years from the stuff of science fiction to a reality.

Many of the big carmakers are developing models and predicting large-scale roll-outs in the 2020s. Indeed, they predict the technology could change their business model from selling vehicles to providing transport as a service.

That would be a big boost for electric engines. Electric cars are expected to remain more expensive than combustion engine vehicles for the foreseeable future but their operating costs are much lower than gasoline.

That extra cost can be quickly recouped if the vehicle is part of an autonomous fleet with a high utilization rate - as ride hailing like Uber Technologies envisage emerging in the next decade. Also, with fewer moving parts, electric cars are cheaper to maintain - another incentive for fleet owners. And perhaps most crucially, driverless technology integrates better with an electric engine than a combustion engine because such technology needs electricity to operate, auto experts say.

"All those sensors and that computer platform, the beauty is on board we've got a lot of capability to power all those systems," Pam Fletcher, General Motors Chief Engineer said at a conference in September. There is no evidence oil companies have factored this change into their calculations. Neither BP nor Exxon's outlooks mentioned autonomous vehicles, although a policy document issued by BP on Monday said driverless cars would be considered in its next outlook due out in early 2017.

Nor were autonomous vehicles mentioned in the transcripts of 44 analyst presentations given in the past year by the seven biggest Western oil companies - Exxon, BP, ENI, Royal Dutch Shell Plc, Chevron, ConocoPhillips and France's Total SA - reviewed by Reuters. The companies said they had not modeled the impact of autonomous vehicles, or they declined to comment. A spokesman for the International Energy Agency, which advises developed nations and their oil companies on energy policies, said it had not yet studied the potential impact of driverless cars on oil demand.

China May Be Key

Oil executives' outlook for oil is also supported by an expectation that increased car ownership in emerging markets can more than make up for any increase in EV penetration. "When we talk of electric cars, we are talking about the OECD," ENI's Descalzi said, referring to the group of 35 largely rich industrialized nations. "More than 1.3 billion (people) have no electricity," he added. — Reuters

RIVAL VOTERS LIVING MILES - AND WORLDS - APART

The city that calls itself "SPAM Town USA" is a two hours' drive from Minneapolis, one of the largest cities in Minnesota. Laying claim to the title is Austin, located along the state's southern rolling plains. The food giant Hormel, the maker of SPAM canned meat, employs one in four people here. This is Trump country. But drive just 65 km northeast, to Rochester, and you find a bustling, growing metro area and surrounding rural county - that voted for Hillary Clinton.

How the two regions, a short distance apart, have diverged politically, is a microcosm of the broader American rift between those thriving in the current economy and those not. Clinton won Minnesota, a Midwestern state that has voted Democratic in all but two presidential elections since 1932, by a slim margin. While densely-populated urban pockets such as Rochester voted for Clinton, geographically much of the state voted for Republican Donald Trump, including Austin.

Kyle Keenan, owner of the Coffee House on Main in downtown Austin, thinks he knows why. "The perception is that he is this person who's going to understand the working class and fix our economy for the manufacturing sector," he said.

Steeple and Wind Farms

Austin is a city of 25,000 people. Arriving by car brings a trio of church steeples into view in the distance. The SPAM Museum is located here. Outside the city, there are wind farms with tall turbines gently spinning in the constant winds of the plains. Aside from food processing, people here work to raise livestock, and grow corn and soybeans. Keenan, whose coffee shop sits on three-block stretch of low-slung buildings with businesses such as Piggy Blue's Bar-B-Que restaurant and Belles and Beaus wedding store, is a Trump skeptic.

But he says he understands the billionaire businessman's appeal for many in his town. "There's something nostalgic about

him, especially for white men, that he's going to bring us back to some safer place where there's some kind of stability, in a world that's changing so fast, with technology taking over," he said. Paul Meyer, a retired blue-collar worker who lives in Austin, said he voted for Trump because Clinton offered "more of the same." Trump, he said, represented "change and hope." "He was saying all the right things that I wanted to hear," Meyer said of Trump. "There were a lot of people who were thinking and saying the same things as I was thinking, and that's why this happened."

'Left behind'

While Austin's economy has newly shown signs of improving, with optimistic forecasts for the next decade, the city's recent past has been lackluster. Job growth has stagnated over the past 10 years, and

the average annual wage here is just under \$44,000 a year, below the national average. "The simple conclusion - and this is consistent with Trump's appeal - is that the people who largely feel that they've been left behind voted for Trump," said David Schultz, a political science professor at Hamline University in St Paul.

By comparison, Rochester feels a world apart. The city is home to the world-renowned Mayo Clinic hospital and one of technology titan IBM's largest facilities. Rochester and its surrounding county voted for Clinton, albeit by a tiny margin of just 598 out of 77,916 votes cast. At Cafe Steam, near the Mayo Clinic, business people mixed with surgeons in scrubs and college students poring over books. On the brick walls of the 1800's building hung stained glass, paintings and papier-mache. The economic and cultural divide this presi-

dential election exposed nationwide is on clear display here.

'Disgraceful'

Chelsey Mingone, a 26-year-old with a graphic art degree, voted for Clinton and had trouble understanding that so many others voted for Trump, whose divisive campaign singled out immigrants and Muslims for attack. "It's embarrassing and disgraceful that our nation would even vote for hatred," she said. "They're trying to upset the system. They see this as a solution to all their problems, but voting for a man who stands for so much hatred and injustice isn't the solution."

In Minnesota - as was the case nationwide - urban regions with diversified economies tended to vote for Clinton, and college-educated workers in these areas, who see themselves as part of the global economy, may struggle to understand why rural voters wanted a change in direction, political experts said. "We really have two political regions in one state now," said Stephen Schier, professor of political science at Carleton College in Minnesota. "In Rochester, you have growing employment in sectors that are really linked into the international economy, like IBM. People are flying from all over the world to get to Mayo. They aren't flying into Austin, though," he said.

That translates into a sizeable income gap: the additional pay workers receive in Rochester could pay for about a half a year's wage of a mid-level food processing worker in Austin. Melvin Yunker, a 71-year-old farmer who raises 8,000 hogs with his wife Sharon on their family property outside Austin, said Trump "wants to bring a lot of our jobs back that have gone overseas." And while many in Austin said that immigration, gun control, abortion and a host of other issues were determining factors in their vote, for most - like Yunker - the bottom line is about jobs. — AFP



Paul Meyer, 64, with his cousins Debra Soderberg, 62, and Susan Hays, 50, all Donald Trump supporters, are seen in Austin, Minnesota on Nov 29, 2016. — AFP



A schoolboy kicks a ball during a sports lesson at a school in Mogadishu yesterday. — AFP

OPPOSITION AGAIN FAILS TO AGREE ON SPEAKER

Continued from Page 1

Meanwhile, a number of newly-elected MPs yesterday visited the National Assembly for the first time and were introduced to the various departments of the Assembly. MP Abdulwahab Al-Babtain said he has gathered signatures of several MPs of demands he will submit to the government to carry out in a bid to lift Kuwait's suspension by international sports organization imposed over a year ago.

A number of MPs however said they support calls to allocate part of the inaugural session on Sunday to debate the sports suspension and to see what measures should be followed by Kuwait to end the freeze. The International Olympic Committee, the world's football body FIFA and other sports federations suspended Kuwait from international sports in October last year for allegedly issuing legislations that violate the international sports charter.

The world sports bodies insist they will end the suspension only when the Kuwaiti government ends its alleged interference in sports. But instead of complying with world sports bodies' requirements, the previous Assembly approved in June a government-sponsored law that boosts government interference, which prompted IOC and FIFA to warn of further action. Several lawmakers urged the government to do what is needed to end the suspension.

Also, opposition lawmakers continue to warn HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah not to include certain ministers in the Cabinet which is being formed. MP Al-Humaidi Al-Subaei said that failing to read the outcome of the election and including controversial figures in the Cabinet will be a clear signal that he is seeking to have explosive relations with the Assembly.

AMIR CALLS FOR CONCERTED RESPONSE...

Continued from Page 1

Defense ties are also expected to be high on the agenda as Britain builds a new naval base in Bahrain. May's two-day visit comes as her government faces mounting domestic criticism that it has not done enough to avoid post-Brexit disruption to British trade, which is currently carried out under EU agreements.

"I will have the opportunity to talk to all six leaders about how we can develop our trade relationship, as well as cooperation on security and defense," May said before arriving in Manama late on Monday. Her office said May will discuss possibilities for post-Brexit free trade arrangements with the GCC states - Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. "As the UK

leaves the EU, we should seize the opportunity to forge a new trade arrangement between the UK and the Gulf," the British premier said.

Ahead of the summit, May yesterday met King Salman, Bahrain's King Hamad, HH the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah and UAE Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum. In October last year, Britain began building a naval base at Mina Salman, outside Manama, its first new permanent base in the Middle East in four decades. May told 300 Royal Navy officers aboard HMS Ocean that she wanted to "step up our defense and security cooperation to keep British citizens safe at home and abroad". Britain's force already stationed in Bahrain was "a clear demonstration of the UK's enduring security commitment to the Gulf", she said. — Agencies

TRUMP ON BOEING'S AIR FORCE ONE CONTRACT: 'CANCEL ORDER!'

NEW YORK/WASHINGTON: US President-elect Donald Trump urged the government yesterday to cancel an order with Boeing Co to develop a revamped Air Force One - one of the most prominent symbols of the US presidency - saying costs were out of control. His bombshell was the latest example of how Trump is using his podium, often via brief Twitter messages, to rattle companies and foreign countries as he seeks to shake up business as usual in Washington. Trump, who takes office on Jan 20, took aim at what he called cost overruns even though the plane is only in development stages.

"Boeing is building a brand new 747 Air Force One for future presidents, but costs are out of control, more than \$4 billion. Cancel order!" Trump said on Twitter. It was not immediately clear what prompted the timing of his complaint. Trump, who stressed during his election campaign that he would use his skills as a businessman to make good deals that benefit American taxpayers, then made a surprise appearance in the lobby of Trump Tower in New York, where he amplified his comments.

"The plane is totally out of control. I think it's ridiculous. I think Boeing is doing a little bit of a number. We want Boeing to make a lot of money but not that much money," he told reporters. Boeing has not yet begun building the two replacements for the current Air Force One planes, which are scheduled to be in service by the 2024 fiscal year, and it was not clear what Trump's source of information was for the cost.

The budgeted costs for the Air Force One replacement program are \$2.87 billion for the fiscal years 2015 through 2021, according to budget documents. A March 2016 report from the Government Accountability Office, a watchdog agency, estimated the total cost of the two 747s, which have to be extensively modified so they can function as an airborne White House, was estimated at \$3.2 billion. Boeing has not yet been awarded the money to build the proposed replacements, and is currently working on engineering and designing the aircraft.

"We are currently under contract for \$170 million to help determine the capabilities of these complex military aircraft that serve the unique requirements of the President of the United States," the company said in a statement. "We look forward to working with the US Air Force on subsequent phases of the program allowing us to deliver the best planes for the president at the best value for the American taxpayer."

Some of the statistics cited by Trump about the plane did not appear to reflect arrangements between Boeing and the Department of Defense, White House spokesman Josh Earnest said. Speaking to reporters, he added that Americans would expect that future presidents should benefit from upgrades to Air Force One. Boeing shares dipped after Trump's tweet and were down around 0.4 percent in the early afternoon. Shares of several other major defense contractors were also lower. Trump, who sold his Boeing shares in June according to a

spokesman, named former long-time Boeing CEO Jim McNerney to a high-profile business advisory council last week. McNerney could not be immediately reached for comment yesterday.

Latest broadside

A New York real estate developer, Trump took aim at big corporations during his campaign, saying that they often harm ordinary Americans by sending jobs abroad. Since winning the Nov 8 election he has taken credit for pushing United Technologies Corp and Ford Motor Co to backtrack on outsourcing plans. Last week, after discussions with Trump, United Technologies Chief Executive Greg Hayes Carrier, agreed to keep 800 of 2,100 jobs at Indiana operations of the company's Carrier unit, instead of moving all the jobs to Mexico as originally planned. The company agreed to keep another 300 jobs at a headquarters operation in the state.

Ford, meanwhile, in November allowed Trump to claim credit for a decision not to move production of a Lincoln sport utility vehicle to Mexico that the automaker had already made. Both Ford and United Technologies said they support Trump's efforts to cut corporate tax rates and overhaul regulations, which could save the companies billions in the long run. But in the short term, his comments on Boeing put defense contractors on notice.

"The chilling effect on industry is huge, if you are a contractor," said Franklin Turner, a partner specializing in government contracts at law firm McCarter & English. "To think that in 140 characters (the length of a Twitter message) the president can cancel a program is ridiculous. There would be a detailed review by legal professionals on the merits of the termination." A Trump spokesman said that his comments about the plane reflected the president-elect's desire to keep down costs across the board, and so save taxpayers' money.

Not a 'vanilla' jumbo jet

The US Air Force, which operates the presidential planes, first announced in Jan 2015 that Boeing's 747-8 would be used to replace the two current planes that transport the US president. Boeing officials were caught off guard by Trump's comments since the company is simply meeting requirements mapped out by the Air Force in consultation with the White House, said defense consultant Loren Thompson, who has close ties to Boeing and other companies.

The cost of the planes is high because of the unique security requirements and communications equipment, Thompson said. "Air Force One has unique mission requirements, including possibly having to operate in a nuclear war," Thompson said. "Of course it's not like buying a vanilla Boeing jumbo jet." US presidents have used Boeing planes since 1943, according to the company's website. — Reuters



People walk along the Neva River at sunset in St Petersburg, Russia, yesterday. The temperature in St Petersburg is -9 C. — AP

SAUDIS CONDEMN 15 TO DEATH FOR SPYING FOR IRAN

RIYADH: A Saudi court yesterday sentenced 15 people to death for spying for the kingdom's rival Iran, local media and a source close to the case said, in a move likely to heighten regional tensions. Their trial opened in February, a month after Riyadh cut diplomatic ties with Tehran over the burning of the Saudi embassy and a consulate by Iranian demonstrators protesting the kingdom's execution of cleric Nimr Al-Nimr. The most serious charge leveled against them was high treason.

Prosecutors also alleged the accused had divulged defense secrets, tried to commit sabotage, to recruit moles in government departments, to send coded information, and supported "riots" in the eastern district of Qatif, Saudi media reported. The 15 were among a group of 32 people tried over the espionage allegations, Alriyadh newspaper said. Some of the defendants were accused of meeting Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

The death sentences will be appealed, said the source close to the case, who cannot be identified due to its sensitivity. Two of the group were acquitted while the rest received jail sentences of between six months

and 25 years. Apart from one Iranian and an Afghan, all of the defendants were Saudis. The source said that one of the two acquitted was a foreigner.

All but one of the accused had been detained since 2013. The region's leading powers are at odds over a range of issues including the wars in Syria and Yemen. Saudi Arabia has also expressed concern over an international agreement that lifted sanctions on Iran in exchange for guarantees it would not pursue a nuclear weapons capability. Riyadh fears the pact will lead to more Iranian "interference" in the region.

With relations at a low, Iranian pilgrims in September - for the first time in nearly three decades - did not attend the annual hajj in Saudi Arabia after the two countries failed to agree on security and logistics. Nimr, the executed cleric whose case sent tensions soaring, was a driving force behind protests that began in 2011 among the Shiite minority, most of whom live in the kingdom's east, which faces Iran across the Gulf. Nimr was convicted of terrorism and executed in January alongside 46 other people - mostly Sunnis - found guilty of the same crime. — AFP

DESPITE THE ACCENT, I FEEL ENGLISH: JENNINGS

MUMBAI: Batsman Keaton Jennings was born and bred in South Africa and captained the Proteas under-19s but insisted yesterday ahead of his expected England debut that he feels "very English".

The 24-year-old opener is tipped to make his international bow for his adopted country in England's do-or-die fourth Test against India, which starts at the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai tomorrow. The tall left-hander was a late call-up for England's two remaining

must-win matches after Haseeb Hameed injured his hand during the third Test and was ruled out of the rest of the series. Jennings said joining up with his new teammates had been "surreal" but that he would relish the opportunity to open the batting with captain Alastair Cook this week if picked.

"At the moment I'm feeling very comfortable and very English, despite my accent," he joked to reporters at a news conference following a training

session in India's financial capital. Jennings, whose mother is English, was born in Johannesburg and went on to captain South Africa at under-19 level.

But after leaving school he moved to England in 2011, committing himself to four years there so he could become eligible to play for the national side.

"The opportunity, the professionalism, I don't know if I can put my exact finger on it but there was a combination of feeling really welcome, feeling loved, feeling pushed as well," he said of

his decision to make himself available for England instead of South Africa.

His impressive scoring for Durham captured the attention of England's selectors and Jennings, who owns a house in the northeast English town, says he feels very much settled in his new life. "I suppose the more time you spend in the country the more you feel local. I'm blessed that they've welcomed me with open arms," he said. England trail 2-0 in the five-match series and anything less than a victory would see

India seal the rubber. Jennings, however, welcomes the pressure. "I have always been taught that pressure is a privilege. It's the sort of a thing my dad tried to infuse into me as a kid," said Jennings, whose father Ray played for South Africa during the apartheid era. "I like to think that I bring positive energy and a smile to the group. I am generally quite a happy guy. We're 2-0 down and it's a tough position. Hopefully we can throw a few jibes and throw some punches back," he added. — AFP



MUMBAI: Indian groundstaff scrub the surface of the pitch after the team training sessions at the Wankhede stadium ahead of the fourth Test cricket match between India and England in Mumbai yesterday. — AFP

ENGLAND BID TO KEEP INDIA SERIES ALIVE

MUMBAI: England are bidding to keep the India series alive with victory in this week's fourth Test in Mumbai but defeat will raise further questions about Alastair Cook's future as captain. The visitors must win at the Wankhede Stadium to stop top-ranked India from sealing the five-Test series with a match to spare following two consecutive defeats.

Virat Kohli's side won by eight wickets in Mohali last week to take an unbeatable 2-0 series lead after victory in Viskhapatnam followed a draw in the first Test at Rajkot.

Anything less than a victory for England would see India exact revenge for their 2012 home series loss to Cook's men and add to uncertainty surrounding the English skipper.

His future as captain has been in doubt since he admitted just before the tour that he could quit at the end of the Test series because he was finding it hard to be apart from his family for long periods. After becoming a father for a second time last month, the 31-year-old left-handed opener said he found the long England tours difficult, while insisting he remained deeply proud of captaining his country. Despite England's travails in India, coach Trevor Bayliss said he expected Cook to be in charge for the Ashes tour at the end of 2017. "He's talking about the next Ashes series and being out in Australia," Bayliss told BBC Sport.

"Sometimes there are little comments made along the way and they get blown out of all proportion. He's certainly up for the fight. I haven't had any discussion with him any other way and that's what we've been working towards," the Australian coach added.

Cook also received the backing of batsman Joe Root who hailed his skipper as a "brilliant leader".

"Hopefully, we get these results we want in the last two games and we can put right what has been quite a frustrating last couple of weeks," Root, 25, told reporters last week. England's chances of salvaging the series were dealt a blow however when teenage batting sensation Haseeb Hameed was ruled out of the remaining two match-

es after injuring his hand during the Mohali match.

UNCAPPED JENNINGS

The 19-year-old's absence could mean a Test debut for opener Keaton Jennings. The 24-year-old South Africa-born left-handed batsman has been called up as Hameed's replacement.

All-rounder Liam Dawson is also in contention for a place after being drafted in to replace left-arm spinner Zafar Ansari, who is struggling with a back injury he sustained in the second Test in Visakhapatnam. England will be boosted by the likely return of fast bowler Stuart Broad who has recovered from a strained tendon in his foot. India are expected to be able to call upon the services of opener Lokesh Rahul who has recovered from the injury that kept him out of the Mohali Test, according to India media reports.

His return threatens the involvement of Karun Nair who endured a disappointing Test debut in Mohali. Wicketkeeper Parthiv Patel, who impressed with both bat and gloves in Mohali after eight years in the Test wilderness, is expected to keep his place as Wriddhiman Saha has yet to recover from a high strain. Former Indian batsman Virender Sehwag expects India to be too strong for England but believes the visitors will not give up the series without a fight. "I think we will win 3-0 as I expect England to show some resistance and that's why I won't predict 4-0," he told the Press Trust of India news agency. The final Test begins in Chennai on December 16.

India (from): Virat Kohli (capt), Murali Vijay, Lokesh Rahul, Cheteshwar Pujara, Ajinkya Rahane, Ravichandran Ashwin, Parthiv Patel, Ravindra Jadeja, Jayant Yadav, Mohammed Shami, Umesh Yadav, Amit Mishra, Bhuvneshwar Kumar.

England (from): Alastair Cook (capt), Joe Root, Jos Buttler, Moeen Ali, Ben Stokes, Jonny Bairstow, Adil Rashid, Chris Woakes, Steven Finn, James Anderson, Jake Ball, Gary Ballance, Gareth Batty, Stuart Broad, Liam Dawson, Ben Duckett, Keaton Jennings. —AFP

WARNER CENTURY AS AUSTRALIA RECLAIM SERIES OVER N ZEALAND

CANBERRA: David Warner slammed his sixth one-day century of the year to lead Australia to a crushing 116-run victory and reclaim the Chappell-Hadlee Trophy series off New Zealand yesterday. Warner smashed 119 off 115 balls to propel the Australians to an imposing 378 for five after being sent into bat. They then bowled out the Black Caps for 262 off 47.2 overs at the bat-friendly Manuka Oval. New Zealand had to win in Canberra to keep alive their hopes of retaining the trophy after losing by 68 runs in the opening game in Sydney on Sunday. Warner led the way in Australia's third-highest ODI total and was supported by skipper Steve Smith's 72 off 76 balls and Travis Head's 57 from 32 balls, while Mitchell Marsh bludgeoned seven sixes in an unbeaten 76 off just 40 balls. The Black Caps made a spirited attempt to chase Australia's hefty total and were 177 for three when Jimmy Neesham fell in the 31st over for 74, ending a 125-run stand with skipper Kane Williamson.

Williamson was dismissed nine overs later for 81 off 80 balls with five fours and two sixes, and with him went New Zealand's faint hopes of reeling in the Australian target.

Williamson's gamble on sending the Australians into bat backfired spectacularly when the home side feasted on a perfect batting wicket. The pugnacious Warner set the tone with his 10th ODI century—the third century in his last five ODI innings and his first against New Zealand. Only three other Australian batsmen have scored more hundreds in ODIs—

Ricky Ponting (30), Mark Waugh (18) and Adam Gilchrist (16). "It was a fantastic wicket and once you keep wickets in hand you can make 100 runs in the last 10 overs," Warner said.

WICKETS TUMBLE

"It was great batting with the skipper (Smith) and running between the wickets. This year is going great," Warner was out to a low catch from Williamson at cover off medium-pacer Colin de Grandhomme in the 37th over, ending a 145-run partnership with Smith. Smith followed up his career-best ODI score of 164 in Sydney with 72. The Australian skipper, who was struck a painful blow in the groin by a de Grandhomme delivery on 56, sliced to Mitchell Santner at deep point. Head hit his second half-century of the series before he was caught off Tim Southee.

Marsh provided late fireworks with some prodigious hitting, including three consecutive sixes off Matt Henry in a lusty cameo. Smith said: "330, 340 runs was probably par. 380 was a big total. You need a lot of things to go right to chase it down." The Black Caps lost both openers by the ninth over, with Tom Latham caught and bowled by Josh Hazlewood for four and Martin Guptill caught behind off Pat Cummins for 45.

Neesham looked in good touch with 74 off 83 balls before he was caught in the deep by Mitchell Starc off Josh Hazlewood in the 31st over. James Faulkner got Colin Munro to hole out on 11 to long-on, where Marsh took a safe catch, and Starc had de Grandhomme caught behind for 12. Williamson was deceived by a Pat Cummins slower ball and found Warner in the covers to leave the Black Caps on 232 for six. Wickets tumbled among the lower order, with Cummins finishing with four for 41 as Australia cruised to victory ahead of Friday's third and final ODI in Melbourne. "Australia is one of the best sides in the world and at home they are the best side in the world," Williamson said. "The 'death' overs really hurt us, and Australia have been showing us how to build partnerships." —AFP



CANBERRA: Australia's batsman Steven Smith (R) plays a shot as New Zealand's wicketkeeper BJ Watling looks on during the second game of the One Day International Cricket series between Australia and New Zealand in Canberra yesterday. — AFP

SCOREBOARD

CANBERRA: Completed scoreboard in the second Chappell-Hadlee Trophy one-day international between Australia and New Zealand at Manuka Oval in Canberra on yesterday.

Australia		New Zealand	
D. Warner c Williamson b de Grandhomme	119	K. Williamson c Warner b Cummins	81
A. Finch b Santner	19	J. Neesham c Starc b Hazlewood	74
S. Smith c Santner b Southee	72	M. Munro c Marsh b Faulkner	11
T. Head c Munro b Southee	57	C. De Grandhomme c Wade b Starc	12
M. Marsh not out	76	M. Santner b Starc	2
M. Wade b Boulton	11	B.J. Watling c Warner b Faulkner	17
G. Bailey not out	0	T. Southee c Bailey b Cummins	2
Extras (lb11, w10, nb3)	24	M. Henry c Faulkner b Cummins	7
Total (5 wickets, 50 overs)	378	T. Boult not out	2
Fall of wickets: 1-68 (Finch), 2-213 (Warner), 3-248 (Smith), 4-319 (Head), 5-357 (Wade)		Extras (lb1, w4)	5
Did not bat: J. Faulkner, P. Cummins, M. Starc, J. Hazlewood		Total (all out, 47.2 overs)	262
Bowling: Henry 10-0-91-0 (2nb, 2w), Boulton 10-0-80-1 (3w), Santner 10-0-47-1 (1w), Southee 10-0-63-2 (2w), De Grandhomme 9-0-74-1 (1nb, 1w), Neesham 1-0-12-0.		Fall of wickets: 1-40 (Latham), 2-52 (Guptill), 3-177 (Neesham), 4-191 (Munro), 5-229 (de Grandhomme), 6-232 (Williamson), 7-236 (Santner), 8-243 (Southee), 9-254 (Henry), 10-262 (Watling)	
		Bowling: Starc 10-0-52-2 (2w), Hazlewood 9-1-42-2 (1w), Cummins 10-0-41-4 (1w), Head 7-0-31-0, Faulkner 8-2-0-69-2, Marsh 3-0-26-0.	
		Result: Australia won by 116 runs	
		Series: Australia 2-0	
		Man of the match: David Warner (AUS)	
New Zealand			
M. Guptill c Wade b Cummins	45		
T. Latham c and b Hazlewood	4		



KIB SPONSORS KUWAITI JET SKI CHAMPION ABDULLAH AL-FADEL

KUWAIT: In a continuation of the Bank's ongoing efforts to support local talents across all areas, Kuwait International Bank (KIB) sponsored Kuwaiti national Jet Ski champion, Abdullah Al-Fadel, who recently took part in the King's Cup World Jet Ski Championship in Thailand, competing against international contenders from more than 30 nations.

On his part, Manager of the Corporate Communications Unit at KIB, Nawaf Najia, congratulated the young champion on winning third place, adding: "Our sponsorship stems from our strong belief in Al-Fadel's talents and abilities, and we are supremely confident that he will continue to garner titles and awards that will raise Kuwait's profile in this arena both regionally and internationally. At KIB we are always committed to supporting social initiatives of all kinds, and we are especially focused on supporting youth initiatives that aim to foster a strong, healthy and well-prepared future generation."

Najia also added: "KIB continues to

devote its resources and efforts to connect with people across the community in Kuwait. Given the popularity of sports amongst youth, this has been a key area that we have been particularly focused on. In addition to supporting and sponsoring local sports initiatives, we also are keen on sponsoring talented Kuwaiti athletes who are taking part in various local and international competitions."

As part of its leading social responsibility program, KIB strives to encourage youth in Kuwait to harness their skills and enhance their capabilities across all personal and professional areas. The Bank is particularly keen on inspiring youth to become more active, aiming to promote the sports culture in Kuwait. Within this vein, sports continues to be one of the biggest platforms under KIB's social responsibility program, as the Bank strongly believes that sports and physical activity are an integral part of a modern, healthy lifestyle, enhancing both physical and mental well-being.





LEXUS RC F TEAMS IMPRESS IN 2016 AUTOBACS SUPER GT SERIES

TOCHIGI PREFECTURE: The Lexus camp lit up with celebrations at the Round 3 of the 2016 AUTOBACS SUPER GT 250km race held at the Motegi Twin Ring in Tochigi Prefecture, Japan. The race was originally scheduled to be run at Autopolis circuit in May. However, due to the aftermath of the Kumamoto earthquakes in April this year, the location and date were changed. The rescheduling saw the Round 3 qualifier and race both held on the same day - a first in the history of SUPER GT.

The reasons to cheer were plenty in the GT500 class of the race as the Lexus line-up of drivers displayed an exhilarating performance, securing positions from the sixth all the way up to the runners-up spot.

Almost clinching the top spot was the No. 39 DENSO KOBELCO SARD Lexus RC F driven by Heikki Kovalainen

and Kohei Hirate, followed by Daisuke Ito and Nick Cassidy who gave their No. 36 au TOM's Lexus RC F just the right amount of push for a podium finish in the third place.

No. 6 WAKO'S 4CR Lexus RC F and No. 19 Weds Sport ADVAN Lexus RC F claimed the fourth and fifth position, with ZENT CERUMO Lexus RC F closing the proceedings for Lexus with a sixth place finish in the exciting race.

It was a display of dominating performance from the Lexus line-up right from the get-go. The No. 39 DENSO KOBELCO SARD Lexus RC F accelerated into the lead at the start of the race, with the No. 36 au TOM's Lexus RC F following its tail in the second position, just ahead of the competitor No. 24.

Spurring a heated battle in the opening laps, an exciting four-way contest unfolded in lap 8 of the race with

title contenders No. 6 WAKO'S 4CR Lexus RC F, No. 19 Weds Sport ADVAN Lexus RC F, and competitor cars No. 12 and No. 100 competing fiercely but unable to break into the lead maintained by the two Lexus teams. The battle continued with little change in positions till the 19th lap summoned a pit stop for most teams.

Leading the race at this point, No. 39 DENSO KOBELCO SARD Lexus RC F headed for the pit stop in the 21st lap where Kohei Hirate handed the wheel to Heikki Kovalainen. Once it was back on the track, it realized that a swifter pit work from au TOM's Lexus team had edged the No. 36 car ahead in the pack, now enjoying an advantageous lead in the race. No. 36 au TOM's Lexus RC F and No. 39 DENSO KOBELCO SARD Lexus RC F fought tooth and nail for the second spot, with Heikki Kovalainen

coming within close distance of inching past Nick Cassidy who was holding the lead. After several attempts, Heikki Kovalainen was finally successful in lap 39 and now looked to overtake the competitor car No. 24 in a bid for the winner's title. While he managed to pull up on the leader's tail in the final lap, No. 24 held off the charge till the final moments of the race and went past the checkered flag. No. 39 DENSO KOBELCO SARD Lexus RC F closed in with an inspiring second place finish, propelling the driver pair Heikki Kovalainen and Kohei Hirate to the top of the season drivers ranking with 61 points. No. 36 au TOM's Lexus RC F celebrated a third spot to round up spectacular twin podium finish for the Lexus camp. Takayuki Yoshitsugu, Chief Representative, Middle East and North Africa Representative Office, Toyota

Motor Corporation, said: "Round three of the championship witnessed a domineering performance from the Lexus RC F teams. It is a moment of tremendous pride and happiness to see two podium finishes, and witness an outstanding performance from the other teams who fought fiercely to earn their spots."

Yoshitsugu added: "The insights from performances on the race track and the feedback from our racers are crucial in our efforts towards building 'ever-better' cars. Participating in motorsports and strengthening our performance in competitive events further enhance skill development in our human resources. The support of racers and fans is instrumental in driving us to greater heights of success. We thank each one for their support and congratulate the racers and our fans throughout the world."



NEWPORT: In this Monday, Oct. 4, 2016 file photo, Europe's Peter Hanson, left, and assistant captain Thomas Bjorn hold the trophy after Europe won the 2010 Ryder Cup golf tournament at the Celtic Manor Resort in Newport, Wales. Bjorn is the first Scandinavian to be appointed captain of Europe's Ryder Cup team. — AP

DENMARK'S BJORN TO CAPTAIN EUROPE AT 2018 RYDER CUP

LONDON: Denmark's Thomas Bjorn will captain the European team at the 2018 Ryder Cup in Paris, Ryder Cup Europe announced yesterday.

Bjorn, 45, vice-captain for four previous Ryder Cups, succeeds Northern Irishman Darren Clarke.

"It's a huge honour for me to be named European captain for the 2018 Ryder Cup in Paris," Bjorn said in a statement on the Ryder Cup website. "This is one of the greatest days in my career." Bjorn, who is Denmark's most successful golfer, has played in three Ryder Cups, finishing on the winning side in 1997, 2002 and 2014, and twice finished second in the British Open.

He was vice-captain of this year's team who lost 17-11 to the United States at Hazletine.

A 15-time European Tour winner, he had been the favourite for the non-playing post, after Ireland's Padraig Harrington said he wanted to play at the event, and was chosen ahead of Scotland's Paul Lawrie. "I have lived and breathed the European Tour for so long and now I will do the same with the Ryder Cup for the next two years," Bjorn

added. "I studied a lot of captains as a player and as a vice-captain and always wondered what that feeling would be like to be the one leading out a team of 12 great players."

"Now it's my turn to do just that and it is an exciting moment for me." Bjorn will be only the fourth man from outside the British Isles to captain Europe after Spanish pair Seve Ballesteros and Jose Maria Olazabal and Germany's Bernhard Langer.

He was chosen by a five-man panel of the three most recent captains—Clarke, Paul McGinley and Olazabal—plus European Tour chief executive Keith Pelley and European Tour tournament committee member Henrik Stenson. The USA's one-sided success in Minnesota in October was their first Ryder Cup triumph since 2008.

The 2018 event will take place at the Paris National from September 28-30. "Thomas is a well-respected man in our game and on the European Tour," Masters champion Danny Willett, a member of Europe's beaten 2016 team, told BBC Radio 5 Live. "From what I saw from him as vice-captain, he will make a fantastic captain." — AFP

FENG LOOKS TO EXTEND DOMINATION IN DUBAI

DUBAI: China's world number four Shanshan Feng will look to extend her domination in the Omega Dubai Ladies Masters, the season-ending championship of the Ladies European Tour, when she seeks a fourth title in last five years. Feng is the highest ranked player in the field, which also boasts of two-time major champion Suzann Pettersen of Norway and England's Charley Hull, a winner on the LPGA Tour a fortnight ago.

However, the thrill of a season-ending championship will be slightly diminished this year, with both Order of Merit and Rookie of the Year awards already decided.

American Beth Allen, who won back-to-back titles in France and Abu Dhabi, leads the Order of Merit with earnings of 311,391 euros and her lead at the top is insurmountable in the half million euro tournament that offers a winning cheque of 75,000 euros.

India's 18-year-old Aditi Ashok, who is having a sensational season, is placed second in the Order of Merit, having won her last two tournaments - the Indian Open and the Qatar Open. Her earnings of 180,415 euros cannot be matched by second-placed Spain's Nuria Llaguer even if she wins on Saturday.

Both Allen and Aditi were expected to

reach Dubai late on Tuesday for the tournament starting Wednesday, as they participated in the final stage of the LPGA Tour Qualifying School in Florida that finished on Sunday. Allen finished inside the top-20 and secured a category 12 card for next year, while Ashok was tied 23rd and will have a category 17 status.

Feng has turned around her game after a poor start to the season. She won the bronze medal in the Rio Olympic Games, and thereafter, she hasn't finished outside the top-10 in her last seven starts.

And Feng said she was keeping her goals modest, as she does at every tournament. "Top-five. It's like I said earlier, I never set a goal that will really put me under a lot of pressure. Going for a top-five is something I feel quite comfortable doing it, so I think that's maybe my goal right now," said the trail-blazing 27-year-old Chinese, who won the tournament last year by a whopping 12 shots after shooting 21-under par.

The tournament also features Cheyenne Woods, niece of 14-time major champion Tiger Woods, who made his comeback to tournament golf after nearly 16 months of injury lay-off. — AFP

KLAY THOMPSON SCORES 60 FOR WARRIORS IN ROUT OF PACERS

OAKLAND: Klay Thompson had 60 points, an NBA season high and the most by a Golden State player in more than 42 years, as the Warriors whipped the Indiana Pacers 142-106 on Monday night. Thompson scored 40 by halftime in just 18-plus minutes. He had a career-best 60 points through three quarters and called it a night, sitting down with 1:22 left in the period as fans jumped to their feet for an extended ovation. Thompson joined Hall of Famers Wilt Chamberlain, Rick Barry and Joe Fuks as the only Warriors to score 60 points in a game. Barry was the last to do so, going off for 64 on March 26, 1974, against Portland. Thompson shot 21 for 33 and 8 of 14 on 3-pointers - 15 of 22 with five 3s in the first two quarters and converted 10 of 11 free throws in 29 minutes. Kevin Durant added 20 points, eight rebounds and four assists for Golden State in another display of impressive passing. The Warriors' 15 first-quarter assists matched a club record and they wound up with 45 total - two off the franchise mark they set Nov. 24 against the Lakers.

THUNDER 102, HAWKS 99

Russell Westbrook extended his streak of triple-doubles to six games, leading Oklahoma City over skidding Atlanta. Westbrook scored 32 points, grabbed 13 rebounds and dished out 12 assists, giving him the NBA's longest streak of triple-doubles since Michael Jordan had seven in a row in 1989. Westbrook's run has sparked a six-game winning streak by the Thunder. He has reached double figures in all three categories in half of the Thunder's 22 games. By contrast, Jordan had 15 triple-doubles for the entire 1988-89 season. Despite a poor start shooting, Westbrook already had 15 points and 11 rebounds when he picked up his 10th assist with 6:20 left in the third quarter. Atlanta rallied down the stretch, but Westbrook closed it out for the Thunder. He finished with 27 second-half points to send the Hawks to their seventh straight loss and 10th defeat in the last 11 games. It's the longest losing streak for the Hawks since they dropped eight in a row in February 2014.

CAVALIERS 116, RAPTORS 112

LeBron James scored 34 points and Cleveland overcame an injury to J.R. Smith to snap their three-game losing streak with a victory over Toronto. Smith injured his left knee in the first quarter after landing on a jump shot and hobbled to the dressing room in considerable pain. He did not return, and the Cavaliers said X-rays taken at the arena were negative and that the guard would return to Cleveland on Tuesday for further examination. DeMar DeRozan had 31 points and Kyle Lowry added 24 for Toronto, which had its six-game winning streak snapped. The win was the Cavaliers' third straight this season against the Raptors, the team they beat in last season's Eastern Conference finals. It also prevented Toronto from leapfrogging Cleveland into first place in the conference. Kevin Love had 28 points and 14 rebounds. Kyrie Irving added 24 points, his career-high 10th straight game with at least 20.

ROCKETS 107, CELTICS 106

James Harden scored 37 points and Al Horford missed a shot just before the buzzer, allowing Houston to hold off Boston. The game was tied before Harden scored five straight points to make it 107-102 with less than a minute remaining. Avery Bradley made a jump shot and Harden received a flagrant 1 foul for elbowing Marcus Smart in the face. Smart made both free throws before Isaiah Thomas missed a layup. But Houston knocked the ball out of bounds with 5.2 seconds left, giving Boston one last chance. Horford drove into the lane, but his shot rolled off the rim and Harden grabbed it to secure the victory. Horford had 21 points and Thomas added 20 for the Celtics. It was the ninth 30-point game this season for Harden, who also had eight assists and seven rebounds.

SPURS 97, BUCKS 96

LaMarcus Aldridge was credited for the go-ahead basket with 21.2 seconds left after Giannis Antetokounmpo was whistled for goaltending, completing San Antonio's rally from 15 points

down against Milwaukee. The Bucks had one last shot to retake the lead, but Mirza Teletovic missed an open 3-pointer from the right corner with 3.9 seconds left. Aldridge secured the rebound and the Spurs ran out the clock. San Antonio extended its season-opening road winning streak to 12 games. Aldridge had 18 points. Kawhi Leonard finished with 22 points and nine boards. Jabari Parker had 23 points, picking up the slack for much of the fourth quarter for the Bucks with Antetokounmpo on the bench with five fouls. Antetokounmpo finished with 22 points and 11 rebounds.

TRAIL BLAZERS 112, BULLS 110

Damian Lillard had 30 points and seven assists, CJ McCollum scored 24 and Portland beat Chicago for its third consecutive victory. Allen Crabbe added 17 points for the Trail Blazers, who opened a five-game trip with their fourth win in five games. Maurice Harkless had 11 and Evan Turner finished with 10, providing a nice boost in the fourth quarter. Dwyane Wade scored 34 points for the Bulls, and Jimmy Butler finished with 26 points, seven rebounds and five assists. Chicago played without point guard Rajon Rondo, suspended one game for conduct detrimental to the team. There was no public indication from the Bulls on what triggered Rondo's suspension. He is expected to return Tuesday night in Detroit.

GRIZZLIES 110, PELICANS 108, 2OT

Marc Gasol had 28 points, including a tying 3-pointer with 7 seconds left in regulation, to go with 11 rebounds and 11 assists, and Memphis outlasted New Orleans in double overtime. Gasol blocked two shots, including one by Terrence Jones that could have given the Pelicans the lead in the final seconds of the first overtime. And the Spaniard's 17-foot jumper with 1:16 left in the second OT wound up being the winning basket. Troy Daniels hit seven 3s and finished with 29 points for Memphis, including a tying 3 with 15 seconds left in the first overtime. Anthony Davis had 28 points and 17 rebounds for New Orleans. Langston Galloway hit six 3s and scored a season-high 26 points, but missed a corner 3 that could have won it as the second extra period ended. Tony Allen had 19 points, 14 rebounds and three steals for the Grizzlies, who have won three straight despite having a handful of regulars injured.

HORNETS 109, MAVERICKS 101

Kemba Walker scored 19 points, Nicolas Batum had 14 points and 15 rebounds, and Charlotte came back to defeat Dallas. The Hornets took

advantage of a knee injury to Mavericks center Andrew Bogut late in the first quarter to dominate the paint and the boards in rallying from an 11-point, third-quarter deficit. Marco Belinelli scored 12 of his 16 points in the second half, including the team's first two 3-pointers after the Hornets missed their first 14 from long range. Six Hornets scored in double figures. Harrison Barnes scored 29 points for Dallas, and Deron Williams had his first double-double of the season with 15 points and 13 assists.

JAZZ 107, LAKERS 101

Gordon Hayward scored 23 points and Utah overcame the absence of ill coach Quin Snyder to beat Los Angeles for its sixth win in seven games. Lou Williams had 38 points, six rebounds and seven assists for the Lakers, who rallied in the fourth quarter and nearly stole a victory despite finishing their eighth loss in 11 games without five injured regulars. Rodney Hood scored 16 points and hit two difficult shots in the waning minutes to keep the Jazz on track to win their only road game in a nine-game stretch. Veteran assistant Igor Kokoskov ran the Jazz for Snyder, who fell ill earlier in the day and decided he couldn't coach shortly before game time. Utah's bus also got stuck in traffic and arrived late at Staples Center. Two nights after scoring 40 points in Memphis, Williams put together the first back-to-back 30-point games of his 12-year NBA career.

NUGGETS 106, 76ERS 98

Danilo Gallinari scored 24 points and Will Barton had 22, including a big 3-pointer late, to lead Denver over Philadelphia. Jamal Murray added 22 points for the Nuggets, who won for the second time in seven games. Ersan Ilyasova, Sergio Rodriguez and Dario Saric all had 17 points for the 76ers, who culminated a four-game homestand with their seventh straight defeat.

WIZARDS 118, NETS 113

John Wall scored 25 points, including 11 in the fourth quarter, as Washington rallied to beat Brooklyn. Bradley Beal and Otto Porter Jr. had 18 points apiece and Markieff Morris added 16 for the Wizards. Brook Lopez scored 25 and Sean Kilpatrick had 21 for the Nets. Beal's 3-pointer gave the Wizards a 107-106 lead with 3:27 left, and Wall scored five consecutive points to up the advantage to 112-106. Brooklyn pulled to 116-113 with 39 seconds left and had a chance to tie. But then Beal stole the ball from Joe Harris, the Nets' 22nd and final turnover of the game. The Wizards trailed by 16 in the first half and 66-51 at halftime before scoring the first 13 points of the third quarter. — AP



OAKLAND: Golden State Warriors' Klay Thompson, left, lays up a shot against Indiana Pacers' Kevin Seraphin (1) during the third quarter of an NBA basketball game Monday, in Oakland, Calif. — AP

SEVERAL BRITISH CLUBS HUSHED UP ABUSE: LAWYER

LONDON: There are claims "several" British football clubs have used gagging orders to silence victims of sexual abuse at the hands of youth coaches, a lawyer working with victims has said. Chelsea have apologised to former player Gary Johnson, who was abused by late chief scout Eddie Heath, after waiving a confidentiality clause in a 50,000 pounds (\$63,850, 59,230 euros) agreement they made with him. Lawyer Edward Smethurst, who helped set up the Offside Trust for abuse victims, said players forced to sign non-disclosure agreements in return for compensation were coming forward "all the time". "Certainly, the allegations have been made by victims that confidentiality clauses have been used in rela-

tion to other clubs, but I'm not in a position to independently verify this," he was quoted as saying by British newspapers yesterday. "It's unfolding as we speak. It's a number. It's several, (but) less than five." The Offside Trust, set up by abuse victims Andy Woodward, Steve Walters and Chris Unsworth, launched in Manchester on Monday. Since Woodward came forward three weeks ago to reveal he was abused by convicted paedophile Barry Bennell during his time at Crewe Alexandra, a wave of allegations has swept through British football. Eighteen British police forces are investigating claims of sexual abuse spanning four decades and lines of inquiry are reportedly being pursued at

55 clubs. Queens Park Rangers are the latest club to have been touched by the scandal, the London side revealing they have been made aware of allegations against former chief scout Chris Gieler, who died in 2004. "The club takes these allegations very seriously and will cooperate fully in any forthcoming investigation," the second-tier club said in a statement. "Any form of abuse has no place in football or society."

'HIGHEST LEVELS'
Smethurst, who is based in Manchester, said the same names were being repeated by abuse victims and some alleged abusers were still working at the highest levels of the sport. "There are specific allegations

against specific individuals, many of whom have been rumoured to be involved for a long time, some of whom still work in the senior echelons of football, and it's extremely worrying," he said. "There are certain names who are coming in who do come up repeatedly." England's Football Association announced on Tuesday that a new lawyer has been placed in charge of its internal review of the scandal. Barrister Clive Sheldon has replaced Kate Gallafent "in the light of the increased scope of the review" and "with respect to her other professional commitments". Sheldon's previous work includes a number of investigatory reviews involving matters of child protection and safeguarding. The FA also revealed the

terms of reference for its review, which will "commence immediately" but has no fixed deadline. "The precise number of players, alleged abusers and clubs as yet is unknown," the FA said in a statement. "The FA has determined that it is necessary to instruct external leading counsel to conduct a review into what if anything the FA and clubs knew about these allegations at the relevant time (and) what action was taken or should have taken place." "The FA continues to work closely with the relevant authorities and respects the ongoing investigation by the police being coordinated by Operation Hydrant into childhood sexual abuse in football." — AFP

RECORD-BREAKING NIGHT AWAITS AS MADRID HOSTS DORTMUND

MADRID: It could be a night of records at Santiago Bernabeu Stadium today. In addition to trying to win their Champions League group, Real Madrid and Borussia Dortmund will also be looking to make history when they meet in their final Group F match. One draw and Madrid will equal the club's longest unbeaten run of 34 games in all competitions. One goal and Dortmund will match the most goals ever scored in the tournament's group stage - 20. On a personal level, Cristiano Ronaldo can become the first player to score 100 times in European competitions if he is able to score twice. Madrid is in position to equal the unbeaten record set under coach Leo Beenhakker in the late 1980s. It would then be five short of Barcelona's Spanish record of 39 consecutive games without a loss, set last year. Madrid hasn't been defeated since

worst mark since joining the Spanish club. **Here's a look at the groups playing today:**

GROUP E
Monaco has secured first place and Bayer Leverkusen is guaranteed second, but Tottenham needs at least a draw against CSKA Moscow at Wembley Stadium to finish third and earn a spot in the Europa League. "We haven't won yet at Wembley, we want to finish with a win and give something back to the fans," Tottenham midfielder Christian Eriksen said. The English side routed Swansea 5-0 in the Premier League this weekend to rebound from two consecutive losses. Leverkusen will be without injured midfielder Kevin Kampl for the home match against Monaco. "We would like to finish the group undefeated, which would be a first for us," Bayer coach Roger Schmidt said.

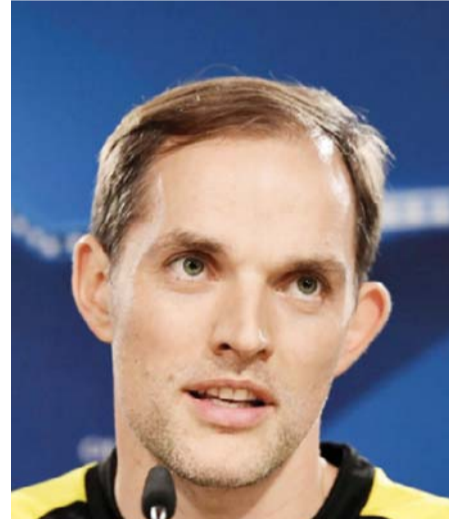
GROUP F
Madrid hosts Dortmund trailing the German side by two points, so only a victory will secure first place in the group. But the defending champions arrive boosted by an eight-game winning streak at the Bernabeu in the European competition. Madrid has won 28 of their last 32 home matches in the tournament, with the only loss coming against Schalke in the 2014-15 season. Dortmund will be without Mario Goetze because of a minor injury. "Winning the group would top off this outstanding opening round," Dortmund sporting director Michael Zorc said. "It would be the icing on the cake." In the other match, Sporting Lisbon needs at least a draw at Legia Warsaw to secure third place and a spot in the Europa League.

GROUP G
FC Porto has to beat Leicester to advance without depending on other results, but winning hasn't been easy for the Portuguese side recently. The last-minute victory over Sporting Braga in the Portuguese league on Saturday was the team's first since Nov. 2. Porto is second in the group, behind already qualified Leicester. It loses the head-to-head tiebreaker to FC Copenhagen on away goals, so if it fails to win and Copenhagen defeats Club Brugge - which has yet to win a point - the Portuguese side will be eliminated.

GROUP H
Lyon needs to beat Sevilla at home by a two-goal margin to advance and leave France with three teams in the last 16 for the first time. PSG and Monaco have already qualified. "Few thought we would still be alive ahead of the last game," Lyon coach Bruno Genesio said. "We now have a final to play and to win." Juventus are already advanced and a win against Dinamo Zagreb will secure first place. — AP



BOSTON: Boston Bruins right wing David Pastrnak, right, shoots his game-winning goal over Florida Panthers goalie Roberto Luongo (1) during the overtime period of an NHL hockey game in Boston, Monday. The Bruins won 4-3. At right is Panthers defenseman Michael Matheson. — AP



MADRID: Dortmund's head coach Thomas Tuchel gives a press conference at the Santiago Bernabeu stadium in Madrid yesterday, on the eve of the UEFA Champions League football match Real Madrid CF vs Borussia Dortmund. — AFP

April at Wolfsburg in the quarterfinals of last season's Champions League. Dortmund has a chance to become the fourth club to score 20 goals in the group stage. And if it scores two or more goals, it will surpass the mark set by Madrid in 2013-14, Barcelona in 2011-12 and Manchester United in 1998-99. Dortmund scored at least once in every group game so far, and it has a shot at the record thanks mostly to routs against Legia Warsaw - 6-0 in Poland and 8-4 in Germany. Ronaldo's 100th goal has eluded him for some time - he hasn't scored in Champions League play since a 2-2 draw at Dortmund in September. Madrid scored 10 goals in the three matches since then, but none came from Ronaldo. The Portugal forward has averaged a goal per game in the Champions League while playing with Madrid, with 80 goals from as many matches. He has scored only two in this season's group stage, his



LONDON: Tottenham Hotspur's Argentine manager Mauricio Pochettino (3L) tackles English striker Harry Kane and English defender Kieran Trippier during a training session at Tottenham Hotspur's Enfield Training Centre, north-east of London, yesterday. — AFP

PASTRNAK'S PRETTY GOAL GIVES BRUINS 4-3 WIN OVER PANTHERS

BOSTON: David Pastrnak scored his second goal of the game 2:23 into overtime and the Boston Bruins continued their recent success against the Florida Panthers with a 4-3 victory on Monday night. Pastrnak got his team-leading 15th goal by cutting in from the left wing, shifting around goaltender Roberto Luongo and tucking in the game-winner. David Backes and Tim Schaller also scored for the Bruins, who are 15-2-1 in their last 18 games against the Panthers. Tuukka Rask stopped 27 shots to raise his record to 14-4-1 this season and 17-3-1 in his career against Florida. Jaromir Jagr had a goal for the Panthers, the 754th of his career, and Luongo finished with 32 saves. Florida's Jason Demers slipped a shot under Rask, tying it with 1:29 to play, after the Bruins had moved ahead when Backes tipped in Ryan Spooner's shot for the go-ahead goal with 6:52 remaining. Aleksander Barkov also scored for the Panthers.

NHL results/standings

Boston 4, Florida 3 (OT); Pittsburgh 8, Ottawa 5; Washington 3, Buffalo 2 (OT); Columbus 4, Arizona 1.

Western Conference							Eastern Conference						
Central Division							Atlantic Division						
W	L	OTL	GF	GA	PTS	W	L	OTL	GF	GA	PTS		
Chicago	16	8	3	74	68	35	Montreal	17	6	2	74	56	
St. Louis	14	7	4	69	70	32							
Minnesota	12	8	4	66	51	28							
Winnipeg	13	13	2	74	81	28							
Nashville	11	9	4	71	66	26							
Dallas	10	10	6	66	85	26							
Columbus	9	13	1	49	69	19							
Pacific Division							Metropolitan Division						
San Jose	15	9	1	60	51	31	NY Rangers	17	8	1	95	65	
Edmonton	14	10	3	80	70	31	Pittsburgh	16	7	3	88	80	
Anaheim	12	9	5	67	67	29	Columbus	15	5	4	77	53	
Los Angeles	13	10	2	66	66	28	Washington	14	7	3	61	55	
Calgary	13	13	2	71	82	28	Philadelphia	14	10	3	87	85	
Vancouver	11	12	2	58	75	24	New Jersey	11	7	6	63	66	
Arizona	8	12	4	57	76	20	Carolina	10	10	5	58	65	
							NY Islanders	9	10	5	62	71	

Note: Overtime losses (OTL) are worth one point in the standings and are not included in the loss column (L)

CAPITALS 3, SABRES 2, OT
Marcus Johansson scored the tying goal late in the third period and got the winner midway through overtime to lift Washington past Buffalo. The goals were Johansson's third and fourth in his last five games. He has 11 for the season. Jay Beagle added the Capitals' first even-strength goal in three games, as Washington snapped a three-game losing skid. Braden Holtby made 31 saves in the victory, the Capitals second over the Sabres in an 11-day stretch. Kyle Okposo scored his team-leading eighth goal of the season to give the Sabres the lead in the second period. Zemus Girgensons also scored early for Buffalo, and Robin Lehner made 30 stops for the visitors.

BLUE JACKETS 4, COYOTES 1
Sam Gagner had two goals and two assists to help Columbus beat Arizona for the second time in three days. Nick Foligno and Zach Werensky also scored for the Blue Jackets, who won for the fourth straight time and ninth of their last 12. Columbus picked up its 500th win in franchise history in sweeping the two-game season series with the Coyotes. Sergei Bobrovsky stopped 17 shots for Columbus. Arizona backup goaltender Louis Domingue had 30 saves, two days after the Blue Jackets hammered starter Mike Smith with a franchise-record 60 shots in a 3-2 shootout victory in Phoenix. Arizona struck first 9:28 into the game when Alex Goligoski fed a pass on a power play to Tobias Reider, who slammed it past Bobrovsky's glove side from between the circles.

PENGUINS 8, SENATORS 5
Bryan Rust had his first career hat trick, Sidney Crosby added his NHL-leading 17th goal and Pittsburgh raced past Ottawa. Evgeni Malkin and Phil Kessel each had a goal and two assists for the Penguins, and Matt Cullen and Justin Schultz also scored. Pittsburgh scored six times over the final 32 minutes after spotting the Senators a 4-2 lead. Matt Murray made 17 saves after coming in for an ineffective Marc-Andre Fleury in the second period. Pittsburgh has won three straight overall and improved to 7-0-2 in its last nine against the Senators. Matt Stone had a goal and two assists for Ottawa. Erik Karlsson, Mike Hoffman, Mark Stone and Dion Phaneuf also scored for as the Senators lost in regulation for just the second time in its last eight games.—AP

PORTO, SEVILLA HUNT FINAL KNOCKOUT BERTHS

PARIS: While Real Madrid and Borussia Dortmund grapple for top spot in Group F, twice former winners Porto and Sevilla look to clinch the two remaining spots in the Champions League last 16 today. Portuguese giants Porto, European champions in 1987 and 2004, host Leicester City in their final group stage match wary of FC Copenhagen pipping them to second in Group G. Despite a woeful defence of their Premier League crown, Leicester are guaranteed to finish top of their section in Europe and avoid the likes of Barcelona and Atletico Madrid in the next round. And the Foxes could well decide which team joins them in the knockout phase with Copenhagen, third in the group, trailing Porto by two points ahead of a trip to pointless Club Brugge. Porto halted a run of five straight draws courtesy of teenager Rui Pedro's 95th-minute winner over Braga at the weekend, ending a club record run of 520 minutes without a goal. "What matters is that we won three points and we are going to try to take advantage of this to continue to grow and believe," said Porto coach Nuno Espirito Santo. "I believe the results haven't been showing what we do." Porto will secure their passage to the last 16 with victory over Leicester, but anything less will open the door for Copenhagen, who have a head-to-head advantage over the Portuguese on away goals. "We kept a clean sheet, and now we just have to go Brugge and get a victory and then hope that Leicester do their job and beat Porto," said Copenhagen's Swedish international Erik Johansson after last month's 0-0 home draw against Porto. Copenhagen, unbeaten domestically this term, stretched their lead in Denmark to 11 points on Saturday after securing an eighth

successive win with a 1-0 defeat of Randers.

LYON PLOT SEVILLA SCALP
Three-time reigning Europa League champions Sevilla are favourites to advance alongside Juventus in Group H, with Lyon needing to beat the Spaniards by at least two goals at Parc OL. Lyon's preparations were overshadowed by the ugly scenes that prompted Saturday's game at Metz to be called off after just 31 minutes with goalkeeper Anthony Lopes targeted by firecrackers thrown by home supporters. The Portugal international, 26, was taken to hospital after suffering "traumatic hearing loss" in both ears but is expected to make a full recovery with no lasting damage. His status for today's fixture is very much in doubt, but Lyon will draw encouragement knowing Sevilla-without manager Jorge Sampaoli due to a touchline ban-have lost on all three previous trips to France. Sevilla's troubles away from home resurged in a 2-1 defeat at Granada over the weekend, with captain Vicente Iborra lamenting a sub-par performance. "It's clear it wasn't our best match and you pay for that," said Iborra. "I think we were a bit distracted by the Lyon game and now that we're here we must make the most of it and achieve qualification." Sevilla may welcome back Samir Nasri from injury, while Juventus, a point clear at the top, will be expected to cement first place with group makeweights Dinamo Zagreb rounding out their fruitless campaign in Turin. Dortmund are one shy of the 20-goal group stage record-achieved by three sides including Manchester United's treble-winning side in 1998-99 as well as the Real team that landed 'La Decima' in 2014 — ahead of their visit to the Santiago Bernabeu.—AFP

NAPOLI BEAT BENFICA, BOTH TEAMS GO THROUGH

LISBON: Jose Callejon and Dries Mertens sent Napoli into the last 16 of the Champions League with a 2-1 win at Benfica yesterday while the Portuguese champions scraped through after rivals Besiktas were thumped by Dynamo Kiev. Callejon broke clear and dinked the ball over Benfica goalkeeper Ederson in the 60th minute and substitute Mertens sealed a convincing win for the Serie A side in the Group B match with a superb individual effort.

Raul Jimenez pulled back a late goal for a disappointing Benfica who were rescued by previously winless Dynamo Kiev as the Ukrainians thrashed Besiktas 6-0 in the other group game. Napoli topped the group with 11 points followed by Benfica on eight and Besiktas one behind on seven. Dynamo, already eliminated, finished with five points. Benfica, unbeaten at home in all competitions since they lost to Porto last February, started the game needing a

win while Napoli needed a draw to qualify without depending on the Besiktas result. However, a Besiktas defeat meant both sides would go through whatever happened in Lisbon and the match lost its edge as the Turkish champions went 3-0 down after little more than half an hour. Napoli were the more dangerous side and Manolo Gabbiadini had a goal disallowed for offside while Ederson made good saves to deny Callejon and then Gabbiadini.

Jimenez had Benfica's best first-half effort when he forced his way past two Napoli defenders but his shot was saved by Pepe Reina, one of the few moments in which the hosts threatened. Gabbiadini had a shot deflected wide by Luisao at the start of the second half then Lorenzo Insigne sent Callejon clear but the former Real Madrid forward put his shot high and wide. The Spaniard made amends on the hour, however, when a Mertens flick

again put him in the clear and this time he made no mistake. Benfica lost their composure and Mertens struck in the 79th minute, collecting the ball on the edge of the area before jinking his way past two defenders and firing a low shot in off the post. Benfica fans began leaving the Stadium of Light and many missed their team's consolation goal when Raul Albiol gifted the ball to Jimenez who easily beat Reina. —AP

BESIKTAS OUT OF CHAMPIONS LEAGUE IN 6-0 LOSS TO DYNAMO

KIEV: They had been the Champions League's kings of the late surprise earlier in the season, but Besiktas had no answer to a 6-0 onslaught from Dynamo Kiev as it was eliminated from the competition yesterday. The game was all but over by halftime in Ukraine, with Besiktas four goals down, and the Turkish champions finished with nine men following two red cards. Besiktas showed no sign of the never-say-die spirit that had characterized the team's Champions League campaign, with a late win over Napoli and a 3-3 draw from being 3-0 down against Benfica last time out. Instead, it slumped to a heavy defeat in a mostly empty stadium against a Dynamo team that was already sure to finish last in Group B, but that recorded its biggest Champions League win. Its previous mark was 4-0, after victories in 1997 and 2000. Besiktas needed a win to go through thanks to group winner Napoli's 2-1 victory at Benfica. Dynamo's star winger Andriy Yarmolenko started the night's torment for Besiktas with smart footwork on the byline and a cross to the far post for Artyom

Besedin to score the ninth-minute opener. Besiktas looked lively for the next 20 minutes until defender Andreas Beck was dismissed for a collision with Derlis Gonzalez, who was through on goal for Dynamo. Yarmolenko scored the resulting penalty and Vitaliy Buyalskiy soon made it 3-0 with a lobbed effort after a Besiktas defensive mix-up. A deflected shot from Gonzalez provided Dynamo's fourth in first-half stoppage time, and Serhiy Sydorchuk added the fifth in the 60th with a shot on the rebound, shortly after Besiktas striker Vincent Aboubakar was red-carded for a second offense. Junior Moraes made it 6-0 before Dynamo twice hit the woodwork. The win could prove a morale-booster for Dynamo, with the team's struggles in Europe being mirrored by troubles at home, with the Ukrainian champion 10 points off league leader Shakhtar Donetsk. Eliminated from the Champions League, Besiktas will take its place in the Europa League after finishing third in its group. —AP



MANCHESTER: Manchester City's Nolito, right, and Celtic's goalkeeper Craig Gordon challenge for the ball during the Champions League group C soccer match between Manchester City and Celtic at the Etihad stadium in Manchester, England, yesterday. — AP

ARSENAL ROUTS BASEL 4-1 TO WIN CHAMPIONS LEAGUE GROUP

BASEL: Arsenal easily beat Basel 4-1 to finish top of its Champions League group yesterday, powered by a hat trick from little-used forward Lucas Perez. Getting a rare start, the Spanish forward gave Arsenal a three-goal lead by the 47th minute as the visitors coasted to victory. Mesut Ozil's delightful assist let Alex Iwobi score in the 53rd before Basel substitute Seydou Doumbia struck a consolation goal in the 78th. Arsenal unexpectedly finished atop Group A, rising above Paris Saint-Germain which drew 2-2 at home to winless Ludogorets Razgrad. As a group winner, Arsenal is seeded in Monday's draw for the Round of 16, hoping to avoid a seventh straight exit at that stage. Arsenal will avoid the likes of Barcelona and Atletico Madrid but the pot of unseeded teams is stronger than usual.

The hat trick goal was more impressive, as Lucas Perez advanced into the path of the ball 15 meters (yards) out to shoot right-footed across the dive of goalkeeper Tomas Vaclik. Ozil's visionary assist was the key to Arsenal's fourth. A fast, direct break saw the Germany playmaker surge into the Basel penalty area and deceive defenders who expected him to shoot by clipping a reverse pass for Iwobi to score easily from close range. — AP

IHEANACHO UP TO SPEED AS MAN CITY, CELTIC DRAW

MANCHESTER: Manchester City striker Kelechi Iheanacho made a successful start to his spell as Sergio Aguero's stand-in by earning his team a 1-1 Champions League draw with Celtic yesterday. Aguero's four-game ban for getting sent off in Saturday's 3-1 loss to Chelsea means Iheanacho can look forward to a run of games in manager Pep Guardiola's first XI. The 20-year-old Nigeria striker took his chance with an eighth-minute goal that cancelled out Celtic's opener, ironically scored by 19-year-old City loanee Patrick Roberts. City had already secured a place in the last 16 and were guaranteed to finish below Group C winners Barcelona, while fourth-place Celtic already knew they had missed out on a Europa League berth. Roberts's goal means City have recorded just one clean sheet in their last 16 matches, but after the trauma of the loss to Chelsea, in which Fernandinho also saw red, this was a welcome return to normality. With nothing riding on the game, Guardiola gave some playing time to young defenders

Pablo Maffeo and Tosin Adarabioyo, but it was another City youngster who was the first to show. Roberts, loaned to Celtic by City in February, embarrassed his parent club's defence, slipping past Gael Clichy from the right and sticking a left-foot shot past goalkeeper Willy Caballero. Celtic had conceded the lead three times in September's 3-3 draw at Celtic Park and history was to repeat itself here as City levelled within four minutes. Nolito slid a pass down the inside-left channel for Iheanacho and he showed composure to guide a firm shot past Craig Gordon. **CITY PENALTY APPEAL** The sense that Guardiola was treating the game as an experiment was emphasised by his casual dress-skinny jeans and sneakers-as well as by City's novel 3-5-2 shape. The system featured Pablo Zabaleta in midfield and he almost created a second goal with a sweeping pass that Iheanacho put wide. Gordon was also required to palm away an improvised back-heel from Iheanacho, with

Nolito's follow-up blocked. But City looked patchy at the back and Moussa Dembele, scorer of a brace at Celtic Park, twice got in behind in the early stages. Freed in turn by a sloppy Fernando back-pass and a neat James Forrest through ball, he was thwarted both times by Caballero, blazing wastefully wide of an open goal on the second occasion. Despite losing Forrest to injury, Celtic made a bright start to the second half, with his replacement, Gary Mackay-Steven, curling a shot into Caballero's gloves. Guardiola introduced Jesus Navas for Maffeo and the winger teed up Nolito to turn the ball up at the back post, only for an offside flag to curtail the Spain international's celebrations. Celtic threatened twice as the game approached its latter stages, with Leigh Griffiths shooting wide and Caballero thwarting Mackay-Steven. Leroy Sane curled a free-kick narrowly wide at the other end and might have won his side a late penalty with a cross that struck Jozo Simunovic's hand, but Slovenian referee Slavko Vincic shook his head. —AFP

Live Matches on TV
(Local Timings)

UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Tottenham Hotspur v Moscow	22:45
beIN SPORTS 2 HD	
Leverkusen v Monaco	22:45
beIN SPORTS 5 HD	
Legia Warszawa v Sporting	22:45
beIN SPORTS 7 HD	
Real Madrid v Dortmund	22:45
beIN SPORTS 1 HD	
Club Brugge v Copenhagen	22:45
beIN SPORTS 8 HD	
Porto v Leicester	22:45
beIN SPORTS 9 HD	
Juventus v Dinamo Zagreb	22:45
beIN SPORTS 4 HD	
Lyonnais v Sevilla	22:45
beIN SPORTS 6 HD	



BASEL: Basel's Marc Janko, center, in close action with Arsenal during their Champions League Group stage Group A soccer match between Switzerland's FC Basel 1893 and England's Arsenal FC in the St. Jakob-Park stadium in Basel, Switzerland, yesterday. — AP

NY CITY FORWARD VILLA NAMED LEAGUE MVP

NEW YORK: New York City forward David Villa was named Major League Soccer's most valuable player yesterday after leading the club to its first playoff appearance in just its second year in the league. The former-Barcelona striker, who also finished runner-up for the MLS Golden Boot with 23 goals, beat off competition from Bradley Wright-Phillips and Sacha Kljestan of crosstown rivals New York Red Bulls. Toronto FC's Sebastian Giovinco, the 2015 MVP, finished fourth in the running for the award, which is voted on by players, club management and media. Former Spain striker Villa was a key part of New York City's incredible turnaround as the team claimed a postseason spot after finishing 17th in 2015. The first player signed by NYCFC, Villa finished the regular season in tremendous form, scoring six goals in his last four appearances, with the team winning three of those contests en route to clinching a playoff spot. NYCFC finished the season second in the Eastern Conference with a total of 54 points and a 15-10-9 record. — Reuters



NEW YORK: David Villa of New York City FC poses for a photo with the 2016 Landon Donovan MLS MVP trophy and his children (L-R) Luca Villa Gonzalez, Olaya Villa Gonzalez, and Zaida Villa Gonzalez and his wife, Patricia Gonzalez, at Spring Studios yesterday in New York City. — AFP

ROSTOV ADVANCES TO EUROPA LEAGUE

EINDHOVEN: FC Rostov earned a place in the Europa League by holding PSV Eindhoven to a 0-0 draw in Group D of the Champions League yesterday. With both teams already out of contention for a spot in the knockout stage of the Champions League, Rostov only needed the draw to get into Europe's second-tier competition and rarely threatened PSV. Neither side had an attempt on target until Sardar Azmoun shook off Daniel Schwaab in the 67th minute and fired a shot straight at Jeroen Zoet in the PSV goal.

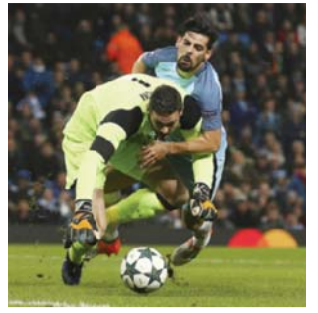
PSV only threatened late after coach Phillip Cocu brought on three attacking substitutes. Steven Bergwijn finally got PSV's first shot on goal in the 75th, and Bart Ramselaar came close to stealing the three points in the 86th but his shot was cleared off the goal line by Vladimir Granat. The Dutch champion finished its Champions League campaign with just two points. "We fought today and it wasn't enough," said PSV captain Luuk de Jong. — AP

Sports

Warner century as
Australia reclaim
series over New
Zealand



Iheanacho up to
speed as Man City,
Celtic draw



WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 7, 2016

KLAY THOMPSON SCORES 60 FOR WARRIORS IN ROUT OF PACERS Page 17



MUNICH: Atletico Madrid's Montenegrin defender Stefan Savic and Bayern Munich's German defender Mats Hummels vie for the ball during the UEFA Champions League group D football match between FC Bayern Munich and Atletico Madrid in Munich, southern Germany, yesterday. — AFP

LEWANDOWSKI SEALS BAYERN WIN OVER ATLETICO

MUNICH: A Robert Lewandowski free-kick sealed Bayern Munich's 1-0 win over Atletico Madrid yesterday in the Champions League with both teams already through to the knock-out stage.

Despite the result at Munich's bitterly cold Allianz Arena, Atletico go into the draw for the last 16 as Group D winners with Bayern second.

Having been knocked out in the semi-finals by Atletico last season, Bayern avenged their 1-0 defeat in Madrid in September and extended their record streak in Champions League to 15 wins at home.

But Lewandowski's superb first-half strike was the difference. "He's been hitting those in training all season," said Bayern's Germany defender Mats Hummels.

"We allowed them a couple of big chances early on and then nothing after that. "We did a good job and the most important thing is that he has things in hand defensively."

Atletico, who were close to full strength, suffered their first defeat in the group stages this season having been the only team to win all of their previous five.

It denied them a club record of a perfect six. Bayern coach Carlo Ancelotti switched from the 4-2-3-1 formation, which won 3-1 at Mainz in the Bundesliga, with a 4-3-3 formation, surprisingly leaving Thomas Mueller on the bench.

Lewandowski played either side of Arjen Robben and Douglas Costa on the wings with Thiago Alcantara,

Arturo Vidal and teenage Portugal international Renato Sanches in midfield.

Diego Simeone's Atletico made a bright start with Yannick Carrasco, who scored when the hosts won 1-0 in Madrid in September, twice forcing Bayern goalkeeper Manuel Neuer into action.

Bayern took the lead when Poland's Lewandowski majestically floated his free-kick over the wall from the edge of the box and into the top corner on 28 minutes.

It was from almost exactly the same position Lewandowski scored from in Friday's 3-1 win at Mainz, but Madrid goalkeeper Jan Oblak was powerless to stop it. It was Lewandowski's 24th goal in 24 appearances for club and country this season.

In celebration, the 28-year-old shoved the matchball under his playing shirt and stuck his thumb in his mouth amidst rumours in the Polish media that his wife Anna is pregnant.

Atletico's defence closed down the Bayern attack after the break with Sanches twice unable to get a clean shot away from good positions due to Madrid shirts blocking him. The hosts starved Atletico of the ball with Bayern enjoying just under 75 percent possession.

Thiago squandered a golden chance to add a second on 78 minutes.

Costa whipped in a pin-point cross, but the Spain international's half volley from five metres out flew over the bar with the goal at his mercy. — AFP



BARCELONA: Barcelona's Lionel Messi smiles during the Champions League, Group C, soccer match between FC Barcelona and Borussia Moenchengladbach at the Camp Nou stadium in Barcelona, Spain, yesterday. — AP

BARCA WINS BUT MESSI FALLS SHORT OF RONALDO'S RECORD

BARCELONA: Lionel Messi opened the scoring in Barcelona's 4-0 win over Borussia Moenchengladbach yesterday, but fell short of matching Cristiano Ronaldo's goal record in the group stage of the Champions League.

Messi struck his 10th group-stage goal this season, one less than the 11 netted by Ronaldo with Real Madrid last season to set the record. Arda Turan scored a hat trick for Barcelona, which had already secured first place in Group C. Moenchengladbach finished third and will play in the Europa League next season. All positions had already been decided ahead of Tuesday's final round. Manchester City drew 1-1 with Celtic in England in the other match of the group. Barcelona finished with 15 points, six more than Man City. Moenchengladbach ended with five

points and winless Celtic with three.

Messi scored in the 16th minute at Camp Nou after a one-two with Turan inside the Moenchengladbach area. The Argentine slid behind the defenders and fired home a low left-foot shot after receiving Turan's return pass. Messi had a great chance to match Ronaldo's record in the 73rd, but his close-range header was brilliantly saved on the goal line by goalkeeper Yann Sommer. Turan scored in the 50th, 53rd and 67th minutes to help the Catalan club end a three-game winless streak. It conceded a 90th-minute equalizer in a 1-1 home draw against Real Madrid in the Spanish league on Saturday. Barcelona was without forward Neymar and midfielder Ivan Rakitic because of suspensions.

Coach Luis Enrique also rested striker Luis

Suarez, giving a chance to recently signed forward Paco Alcacer, who has been criticized by Barcelona fans for his lackluster performances. Ronaldo last year became the first player to reach double figures in the six games of the group stage. Messi played in only five matches for Barcelona this season, but he twice scored hat tricks - in the home games against Celtic and Manchester City. He also netted once against City in Manchester and twice against Celtic in Glasgow.

Ronaldo today will try to become the first player to score 100 goals in European competitions. He is two short of the milestone heading into the game against Borussia Dortmund at the Santiago Bernabeu Stadium. Messi now has 93 goals overall in the Champions League, two less than Ronaldo. — AP

PSG FAILS TO SECURE TOP SPOT AFTER 2-2 DRAW WITH LUDOGORETS

PARIS: Mistakes cost Paris Saint-Germain dearly as it missed out on top spot in Group A following a 2-2 home draw with Ludogorets in the Champions League yesterday.

PSG needed a home win to guarantee first place and faced an unheralded Bulgarian side that had not won any of the previous five group games. Instead, the draw meant PSG qualifies in second - two points behind Arsenal, which won 4-1 away to Swiss side Basel. Dutch forward Virgil Misidjan scored in the 15th minute and Brazilian forward Wanderson made it 2-1 in the 68th, shortly after Edinson Cavani had leveled for PSG. Winger Angel Di Maria saved face for PSG in the second minute of injury time with a scuffed shot, and Cavani was desperately close to grabbing the winner in the dying seconds.

That would have been harsh on Ludogorets. PSG's shortcomings at the back are still glaringly evident for a team hoping to be among the contenders to win Europe's biggest club trophy.

Following a mistake by midfielder Thiago Motta, Misidjan headed the Bulgarian league

leaders ahead and PSG's players were jeered off the field at halftime. Cavani grabbed the equalizer in the 61st with an overhead kick from close range after Ludogorets had failed to clear Di Maria's cross from the right. It was Cavani's sixth goal of the campaign so far and the Uruguayan striker appears full of confidence.

The defense is not, having leaked goals in a 3-0 loss away to Montpellier in the French league last weekend.

Brazil defender Marquinhos clumsily lost possession when receiving a throw-in. He turned his back on play, allowing Brazilian forward Jonathan Cafu to steal the ball off him and burst down the left, before pulling it back to countryman Wanderson to finish with a low drive under the body of goalkeeper Alphonse Areola. PSG beat Basel 3-0 in its previous home game but it was far more difficult than the result suggested, with Basel missing several chances. This time, Ludogorets punished PSG's mistakes to secure third place and a spot in the Europa League. — AP



PARIS: Ludogorets' Virgil Misidjan, right, scores his team opening goal as PSG's Blaise Matuidi, left, looks on, during the Champions League Group A soccer match between Paris Saint Germain and Ludogorets yesterday. — AP



Ooredoo celebrates International Volunteers Day

FLYDUBAI CERTIFIES ITS 100TH BATCH OF CABIN CREW



DUBAI: Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al Maktoum (center), president of the Dubai Civil Aviation Authority and Chairman of the Emirates group, inspects planes at the Middle East and North Africa Business Aviation Association (MEBAA) show yesterday. — AFP

ALGHANIM INDUSTRIES, SLIM CHICKENS SIGN PARTNERSHIP

- AGREEMENT TO DEVELOP SLIM CHICKENS MIDDLE EASTERN PRESENCE
- MENA-REGION SLIM CHICKENS LOCATIONS TO OPEN IN EARLY 2017

KUWAIT: Slim Chickens, a leader in the "better chicken" segment of fast-casual restaurants, will continue expansion of its fresh chicken concept for the first time outside of the United States through a partnership with Alghanim Industries, one of the largest privately owned companies in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). The two companies announced yesterday that they have entered into a master franchise agreement that will enable Alghanim Industries to introduce the Slim Chickens brand and dining experience across the MENA region.

Alghanim Industries, based in Kuwait City, Kuwait, owns and operates more than 30 businesses in 40 countries across the MENA, Turkey, India and South East Asia. Since its founding more than a century ago, consumer-oriented businesses have grounded the company. Today,



Alghanim Industries Chairman Kutayba Alghanim

its growing portfolio of 300 brands includes a number of US partners, including General Motors, Ford, Mars, Whirlpool, Wendy's and American Express.

Founded in 2003 in Fayetteville, Arkansas, Slim Chickens is committed to providing a "Life Changing Chicken" experience in its sector of the restaurant industry, with a focus on high quality, fresh chicken. The down-home Southern brand features hand-breaded and grilled chicken tenders and wings paired with handmade dipping sauces - there are 10 in all to render exceptional flavor that continues to earn admiration from guests and food critics alike.

Brand rollout

The first MENA-region Slim Chickens restaurant is expected to open in Kuwait in March 2017. This will be followed by a rapid brand roll-



Tom Gordon and Omar Alghanim signing the contract.

out across the entire region. Alghanim Industries Chairman Kutayba Alghanim pointed out: "We are committed to expanding our portfolio by partnering with one of the most pioneering, value-based consumer companies in the world, and we look forward to introducing the Slim Chickens concept to consumers across the Middle East." The Chairman added: "Alghanim Industries has a proud track record of developing successful businesses with huge growth potential that meet the needs of the region's expanding consumer base."

"Through our partnerships over the last few years, we've gained a deep understanding of consumers' expectations for food and beverage offerings in the MENA region," said Alghanim Industries CEO Omar Alghanim. "Slim Chickens is one of the fastest growing brands in the United States and we have no doubt that it will enjoy the same success in the Middle East. Alghanim Industries and Slim Chickens share key values: Both have strong community ties, an uncompromising approach to quality and strive, constantly, to exceed customers' expectations. We couldn't be more excited to help develop the Slim Chickens brand internationally, and open the first store outside of the US market in our region."

Slim Chickens CEO Tom Gordon also spoke of the two companies' shared values, and pioneering ways: "Alghanim Industries' legacy of providing high-caliber customer service and first-class products made this a one-of-a-kind opportunity for our brand," he said. "Over the past months we've learned about the company, the people and the values shared between our two organizations, and our alignment couldn't be closer."

Southern hospitality
 "We are truly thrilled and honored to partner with Alghanim Industries, and we look forward to working with the entire Alghanim Industries team to bring our fresh, hand crafted recipes and southern hospitality and service to the Middle East," Tom Gordon added. "Slim Chickens is about honest food, social meals, and a commitment to local communities. This partnership will allow us to expand that vision and voice in a new and expansive capacity, and connect with valued guests throughout the MENA region."
 Alghanim Industries is actively expanding its



Tom Gordon and Omar Alghanim

Food & Beverage (F&B) portfolio, which began in 2013 with its franchise agreement with UK-based Costa Coffee, the second largest coffeehouse chain in the world. In 2015, Alghanim Industries acquired the rights to develop US-based Wendy's restaurants across the MENA region - the deal included all existing locations in the United Arab Emirates, and provided for further expansion into Kuwait in 2016 and Saudi Arabia in 2017. Slim Chickens is Alghanim Industries' latest addition to its rapidly growing F&B portfolio.

Alghanim Industries is one of the oldest and largest, privately-owned companies in the MENA

region. Founded over a century ago, in Kuwait, the company today employs more than 14,000 people in 30 businesses across 40 countries in the Middle East, North Africa, Eastern Europe and Asia. Alghanim Industries is a market leader in almost every major sector of its operations, which include: engineering, retail, automotive sales and service, insulation and pre-engineered steel building structures, logistics and warehousing, fast moving consumer goods, food & beverage, oil & gas, office automation, advertising, insurance, consumer credit and travel.

The company is actively growing its brand portfolio, with a focus on top-tier global partners. Among them: Avis, British Airways, British Petroleum, Cathay Pacific, Daewoo, Honda, Saint-Gobain and Toshiba. Additionally, Alghanim Industries has created a number of successful regional businesses, including X-cite (consumer electronics), and Safat Home (lifestyle and home furniture).

Slim Chickens

Slim Chickens opened in 2003 in Fayetteville, Arkansas, with a focus on culinary excellence in a fast-casual setting. Guests can always expect fresh chicken tenders and wings cooked to order and served with handmade dipping sauces made from scratch. With more than 40 locations today and a fanatical following in 10 states, our eternally cool brand is leading the "better chicken" segment, and intends to grow to 600 restaurants nationwide over the next decade. Slim Chickens is proving that Southern hospitality is not just for the South: Everyone, everywhere, appreciates honest food and socializing with friends and neighbors.



One of the latest Slim Chickens stores in the USA.

DUBAI'S IMG PLANS ANOTHER RECORD INDOOR THEME PARK

DUBAI: Dubai's IMG Worlds plans to build the world's largest indoor theme park, based on children's TV and gaming characters, only months after another of its new resorts claimed the record for size. Located in Dubai, IMG Worlds of Legends will feature eight property partnerships with global names such as Nickelodeon, Mattel and Pokemon, making the multi-billion dollar project one of the biggest global licensing deals of its kind.

After years of few entertainment options in the Gulf, the vacuum is being filled as IMG Worlds and other theme parks and attractions pop up in Dubai and Abu Dhabi. Even Saudi Arabia, the region's most conservative country, is set for three new parks. Sources told Reuters that Dubai-based parent company Ilyas & Mustafa Galadari Group (IMG) was working with JP Morgan Chase & Co, EFG Hermes and Goldman Sachs on a possible initial public offering (IPO) for 2017 as the park operator expands.

One of the sources said the plans could involve selling around 30 percent of the company and that it was exploring whether to list on the Dubai Financial Market or London. Lennard Otto, chief executive of IMG Worlds, would not be drawn on any possible IPO, saying it was "merely a rumour." "Are we open to a lot of different financing options? Yes, we are and we have kept a lot of channels open and once there is something concrete we will go out and announce that," he said.

Spread across more than 2 million square feet and featuring a retractable roof, IMG Worlds of Legends will be adjacent to IMG's Worlds of Adventure, which opened in August and stretches over some 1.5 million square feet. The new park was likely to attract around 4 million visitors annually, roughly the same number as the existing park expects to draw. Around half of those visitors would be residents of the United Arab Emirates, with the others expected to be tourists, including those from Gulf states, the Indian subcontinent, China, Britain and Germany, Otto said. There was no confirmed timetable for the building of the park.

Part of the funding for its building would come from profits from IMG Worlds of Adventure, with the remainder funded from a syndicated loan, Otto said.

Abu Dhabi Islamic Bank in 2014 arranged a 1.2 billion dirham (\$327 million) syndicated Islamic loan for the building of that other park, which also included participation from UAE's Al Hilal Bank, Commercial Bank International, Noor Bank and Sharjah Islamic Bank. Some of those banks were likely to participate in the financing for the new park, he said. — Reuters

US TRADE DEFICIT WIDENS FROM 3-YEAR LOW PRODUCTIVITY UP 3.1% IN THIRD QUARTER

WASHINGTON: The US trade deficit climbed in October from its lowest monthly level in nearly three years. Imports of consumer goods such as medicine, cell phones and clothing increased, while exports of soybeans, gold and artwork tumbled which fueled the monthly widening of the trade gap.

The Commerce Department said yesterday that the deficit rose to \$42.6 billion in October, up 17.8 percent from September. The \$36.2 billion trade deficit in September was the lowest since December 2013.

Reducing the trade deficit has become a primary focus of President-elect Donald Trump. Trump cites the trade imbalance as evidence that the United States has to signed misguided trade agreements that have hurt US economic growth and cost jobs. In the wake of an agreement last week to keep 800 jobs at the Carrier furnace factory in Indianapolis from going to Mexico, Trump has promised to lower corporate tax rates to preserve factory jobs inside the United States, while threatening harsh penalties for companies that produce goods overseas to save on labor costs. On Twitter, Trump warned that he will impose a 35 percent tariff on the goods imported by companies that outsource production.

So far this year, the trade deficit is running 2.1 percent below its 2015 levels. The United States has been exporting more food but fewer industrial supplies, oilfield equipment, autos and consumer goods. But the country has also cut back on imports of steel, oil, aircraft, computer accessories and televisions, among other goods, leading to a narrowing of the overall trade deficit.

A larger trade deficit acts as a drag on growth because it means America is buying more from foreign countries than it is selling. But the pace of exports picked up during the July-September quarter, contributing a solid 1.2 percentage points to annualized growth of 3.2 percent during the quarter. The goods trade deficit with China contracted to \$31.1 billion in October and is running 6.2 percent below last year's level, although it remains the leading contributor to America's trade gap. The deficit with the European Union rose 29.2 percent to \$13.1 billion. The imbalance with Mexico climbed 18.1 percent to \$6.2 billion.

Productivity

The productivity of American workers rose in the July-September quarter at the fastest pace in two years while labor costs slowed after a big jump in the spring. Productivity increased in the third quarter at a 3.1 percent rate, the Labor Department reported yesterday. That fol-



OAKLAND: A sailboat makes its way past the container ship MSC Ivana as she is unloaded at the Port of Oakland in Oakland, California. The Commerce Department reported on the US trade gap for October yesterday. — AP

lowed three quarterly declines and was the best showing since a 4.2 percent increase in the third quarter of 2014. Labor costs edged up at a 0.7 percent rate in the third quarter following a much faster 6.2 percent jump in the second quarter. The productivity figure was unchanged from an initial estimate a month ago while the 0.7 percent rise in unit labor costs was slightly higher than an initial estimate of a 0.3 percent gain.

The rebound in productivity was expected to be temporary. Economists believe the jump in productivity in the summer will be short-lived. They are forecasting that productivity will return to the anemic gains seen over the past nine years. Since 2007, annual productivity increases have averaged just 1.3 percent. That is just have the 2.6 percent average gains turned in from 2000 through 2007 when the country was benefiting from the increased efficiency from greater integration of computers and the internet into the workplace. Productivity, the amount of output per hour of work, is the key factor that supports rising living standards. Rising productivity means

increased output which allows employers to boost wages without triggering higher inflation. The revised estimates for productivity and output follow the government's revisions to the gross domestic product, the economy's total output of goods and services, last week. The revision boosted GDP growth in the third quarter to 3.2 percent, up from an initial estimate of 2.9 percent.

Productivity growth has been weak since the Great Recession. The 1.3 percent average gain from 2007 through 2015 compares to 2.6 percent from 2000 to 2007 and a 2.2 percent average from 1947 through 2015. Federal Reserve Chair Janet Yellen has pointed to the slowdown in productivity growth as a key challenge facing the country.

Economists believe that businesses need to start focusing more on raising the efficiency of their existing workforce rather than just hiring more workers to meet demand. Analysts expect companies to put more emphasis on increasing productivity as the labor market hits full employment and the pool of available qualified workers diminishes. — AP

QATAR TO SPEND \$13BN ON 'MEGA PROJECTS' IN 2017

DOHA: Qatar will invest up to \$13 billion in major infrastructure projects next year despite a slump in revenues resulting from low energy prices, the Gulf state's finance minister said yesterday.

Ali Shareef Al-Emadi predicted growth of 3.4 percent in 2017, in line with an International Monetary Fund estimate and up from a projected 3.2 percent this year. "Increasing the investment in mega projects reiterates the country's commitment to achieving its goals," Emadi told delegates at a Euromoney conference in Doha.

"It is expected that on new projects in 2017, spending will be up to 46 billion

Qatari riyals (\$13 billion, 12 billion euros)," The minister added that the 2022 World Cup host had already spent almost 375 billion riyals (\$98 billion dollars, 95.6 billion euros) on large-scale projects.

Most of the investment in the next few years will be in construction and transport as the country gears up to host football's showpiece tournament.

Speaking at the same conference, Qatar National Bank's chief executive officer, Ali Ahmed Al-Kuwari, said construction would account for 45 percent of investment between 2015 and 2018, and transport almost 30 percent. — AFP

OPEC, NON-OPEC COUNTRIES TO DISCUSS OIL CUTS: RUSSIA

MOSCOW: Russia yesterday said it will take part in a meeting of OPEC and non-OPEC members as oil prices wobbled on doubts over the impact of an output cut deal. Energy Minister Alexander Novak will attend the meeting in Vienna on Saturday expected to nail down details on implementing the agreement reached last week.

After months of disagreement, OPEC members on November 30 hammered out a deal to cut oil output for the first time in eight years. Moscow-which is not a member of the oil cartel-has said it is ready to reduce crude output by 300,000 barrels a day in the first half of 2017.

The OPEC agreement ended weeks of uncertainty and volatility on crude markets as the key players bickered over who would shoulder the biggest burden of the cuts. Oil prices shot up on the announcement, which was more ambitious than many analysts had expected.

Prices reached a 16-month high late Monday on the back of an announcement by OPEC of the meeting with non-members but that quickly dipped overnight as the lustre of OPEC's decision to cut production faded. Yesterday at 1345 GMT, US benchmark West Texas Intermediate was down \$1.06 on the day at \$50.73, while Brent North Sea crude had dropped 93 cents to \$54.01.

'Reality bites'

With crude prices above \$50 dollars, US shale oil producers are dusting off dormant oil rigs as they gear up to raise production which could lessen the impact of any OPEC cuts. "The price action speaks to me of a market that lacks conviction and momen-

tum," said OANDA senior market analyst Jeffrey Halley. "As reality bites in a world awash with oil, producing countries will have to show some meaningful backbone on compliance, for probably the first time ever, to achieve the meaningful rally in oil prices that they so desire." Some analysts say that last week's deal will likely be finalised at Saturday's meeting but doubts over its implementation remain.

"Reports that the group once again increased output in November will raise fresh skepticism," analysts from Accendo Markets said. Commerzbank analyst Carsten Fritsch said that with Saudi Arabia trying to defend its market share, "it is hard to imagine how OPEC will convince non-OPEC producers to cut production".

Novak has called on Russia's oil companies to slash output to comply with the decision. Deputy Energy Minister Kirill Molodtsov told Russian news agencies that the country's oil companies would convene Wednesday for a meeting. By cutting 300,000 barrels a day, Russia will produce some 10.9 million barrels a day—a figure higher than when Russia had attempted to agree on a production freeze with OPEC members in the spring.

Emily Stromquist of Eurasia Group said Russia's commitment to slashing its production "should be viewed with skepticism." After the first quarter of 2017, "Russia is likely to assume a flexible interpretation of its engagement and deliver only a portion of this 300,000 bpd cut in the best case scenario," Stromquist said. The slide in oil prices and Western sanctions over Moscow's role in the Ukraine crisis have pummeled the Russian economy. — AFP

PATRIOTIC TURKS OFFERING FREE FISH, TOMBSTONES AND HAIRCUTS TO PROP UP LIRA

ISTANBUL: Free haircuts, scientific funding, fish and tombstones are among the incentives being offered to Turks who answer President Tayyip Erdogan's call to convert their dollars to lira.

Casting recent weakness in the Turkish currency as a plot by outside powers to destroy the economy, Erdogan has urged Turks to convert any dollars "under their pillows" into lira, and called on businesses to do more transactions in local currency. "Since the crisis operation is being carried out through foreign currency, we must use our own currency wherever we can," Erdogan said in a speech on Saturday,

when he was opening a shopping centre in Istanbul. "It is now time to take hold of our economy, just as we took hold of our freedom on July 15," he said, referring to a coup attempt that failed. More than 240 people were killed.

Some shopkeepers and traders have responded by offering free goods and services to anyone with proof they sold dollars. Sabahattin Bas, chairman of Borsa Gold, a jeweller and gold seller in Istanbul's historic Grand Bazaar, said he was only accepting liras, to fight what he called a renewed attack on Turkey by Western powers who had backed the failed coup. — Reuters

Al-Tijari Received the 2016 GCC-CSR Award for Private Sector Corporation

For the past five years "Hawwen Alaihom" campaign continued to truly translate Commercial Bank of Kuwait's innovative humanitarian and philanthropic activities for lending support and help to road cleaners and construction workers at their work locations. Since its launch, Al-Tijari has not only distributed gifts and necessary requirements to this segment - that should gain all respect and appreciation - but also shared them the joy of happy occasions. Today, "Hawwen Alaihom" campaign contributed in naming Commercial Bank of Kuwait as the best performing corporate social responsibility (CSR) entity in the Gulf region by the GCC Council of Ministers of Labor & Social Affairs.

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OOREDOO CELEBRATES INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEERS DAY

CELEBRATION IN COOPERATION WITH MINISTRY OF STATE FOR YOUTH AFFAIRS

KUWAIT: Ooredoo, the fastest network in Kuwait in 2016, celebrated the International Volunteer Day in cooperation with the Ministry of State for Youth Affairs last Monday evening at the Amricani Cultural Center. This is the first event after the two entities signed a memorandum of understanding to join efforts in supporting Kuwaiti youth and to support the youth and their efforts.

The event was attended by a number of high ranking officials from the Ministry of State for Youth Affairs and the Ministry of Education including the Undersecretary of the Ministry of State for Youth Affairs Sheikha Al-Zain Al-Sabah and the Undersecretary of the Ministry of State for Youth Affairs Mishaal Al-Subaai and Assistant Undersecretary for Education Development and General Manager of Night-time Educational Clubs, Faisal Al-Maqsid. Ooredoo was represented by Corporate Communications Senior Director



Mijbil Alayoub and his team.

A number of distinguished entities and volunteers were awarded for their contribution to volunteerism throughout the year

such as The Proteges, Ghaliyah Tech, Ata'a Hub, Spread the Passion, Ox Adventure, Noori Charitable Association, Huawei, Refood and other entities specialized in volunteerism. Social media influencers were also awarded including Abdulla Al-Jasser (Abodka), Mohammed Mirza and a number of Ooredoo employees such as Yousef Al-Hammar and Mishari Al-Fadhli. The event also included a round table discussion in the area of volunteerism with the participation of Yousef Al-Shallal, Senior Manager Corporate Social Responsibility and Sponsorships at Ooredoo Kuwait.

Commenting on the event, Mijbil Alayoub, Senior Director of Corporate Communications at Ooredoo Kuwait said "We're happy to be participating in such an event that focuses on youth and their efforts. Our social responsibility strategy places great emphasis on youth, and we took it upon ourselves in the past to raise awareness about the importance of volun-

teering when we started our volunteer program two years ago. The program succeeded in attracting hundreds of young men and women in Kuwait who were eager to find volunteering opportunities."

Alayoub added: "We have experienced this zeal and enthusiasm for giving and vol-



unteering in our youth, and we strongly believe that youth in Kuwait have big ambition, and it is our role to support them. Our corporate social responsibility agenda focuses on supporting youth in different fields, throughout the year."

Ooredoo has previously launched an extensive series of activities, especially throughout the month of Ramadan, which included a tent designated for giving out iftar meals for workers in Kuwait City. The

tent was located across Ooredoo's head office in Soor Street, Kuwait City. Meals were served at the tent daily, and the distribution was operated by the volunteer groups affiliated with the Ooredoo Volunteer Program.

The company highlighted its goal to encourage giving back to the community and to raise people's awareness about the importance of philanthropy and charity. Ooredoo believes that through these experiences, it will contribute to shaping a better generation of youth, who believe in giving unconditionally and volunteering to create change. Prior to the event, workshops were held last Sunday at the Abdulla Al-Salem Center for the Development of Future Leaders. The workshops were organized by Ooredoo, in cooperation with the Ministry of Youth. The workshops focused on the importance of the youth in the area of volunteering and its vitality for the future of our beloved Kuwait.



THE NEW MERCEDES-AMG GLE 43 4MATIC COUPE ARRIVES IN KUWAIT



KUWAIT: Mercedes-AMG's attractive entry level sports model has arrived in Kuwait. Available at Abdul Rahman Albisher and Zaid Alkazemi Company, the authorised general distributor for Mercedes-Benz in Kuwait, the GLE 43 AMG 4MATIC CoupÉ is the third vehicle in this new line (the 43 series model) which offers an attractive entry point into the world of AMG performance.

With hallmark characteristics including the enhanced engine output by Mercedes-AMG and higher torque of the 3.0-litre biturbo engine, specific AMG suspension, Sports Direct-Steer system, nine-stage automatic transmission 9G-TRONIC and permanent all-wheel drive 4MATIC with rear-biased torque distribution of 40:60; the new V6 top model of the GLE series facilitates an impressive driving performance.

"Agile and sporty, the new GLE 43 AMG 4MATIC CoupÉ creates a highly emotive and appealing drive, with immediate and direct implementation of all driving commands. With acceleration, handling and top speed on par with those of sports saloons, Mercedes-AMG have taken yet another step towards making sports car technology accessible to a wider segment of the market," said Michael Ruehle, Chief Executive Officer, A.R. Albisher and Z. Alkazemi Company.

With a newly developed set-up for the drive system and suspension, the visual appearance is backed up by the technology. Together with the further developed DYNAMIC SELECT dynamic handling control, the SUV CoupÉ with up to five transmission modes offers multiple, completely different driving experiences - from superior comfort to exhilaratingly sporty - which can be changed depending on the driving situation.

The interventions occur via numerous parameters such as throttle response, load development, switch points, shift speed,

chassis, steering, engine sound or instrumentation. "Sport" and "Sport Plus" turn the GLE 43 AMG 4MATIC CoupÉ into a sporty, dynamic vehicle with pronounced longitudinal and transverse dynamics for plenty of fun at the wheel on winding stretches of road. The "Comfort" setting places an emphasis on relaxed, effortlessly superior cruising, plus an energy-efficient driving power, while "Slippery" mode optimises the handling on surfaces with low friction coefficients such as snow or ice. In addition, "Individual" mode enables the driver to programme and store personal preferences in the individual setting parameters, regardless of the engine variant.



Driving performance takes an entirely new shape in the GLE 43 CoupÉ, delivering the thrust of an AMG-enhanced biturbo V-6 via a sport-tuned chassis and drivetrain, and supported by an AMG sports exhaust system which controls the entire acoustic repertoire of the powerful racing sports car. Standard equipment for the Mercedes-AMG GLE 43 CoupÉ includes adaptive break, attention assist, collision prevention assist plus and AMG performance 4 MATIC designed to provide a thrilling driving pleasure.

Decidedly sporty design

The sportily striking AMG exterior design makes the enhanced performance discernible at first glance: the two chromed twin tailpipe trims and the black-painted, high-sheen (21-inch) 5-spoke light-alloy wheels, bi-turbo 4MATIC lettering on front wings, 43 Series specific AMG specific front and rear aprons, AMG logo on the right in

the upper radiator louvre and powerful and efficient 3.0 litre bi-turbo engine enhanced by Mercedes-AMG ensure a clear differentiation. The interior of the GLE 43 AMG 4MATIC CoupÉ is enhanced by the nappa leather sports steering wheel with its flattened bottom section, as well as the trim parts in light



longitudinal-grain aluminium and brushed stainless steel sports pedals with rubber studs. Sporty round dials on the instrument cluster, including a 280 km/h speedometer scale, signal pure dynamism even while the car is at a standstill. The sporty interior comprises elements from the AMG line interior.

A perfect combination

Depending on the drive program, the nine-stage automatic transmission 9G-TRONIC changes gears with high agility and responsiveness and effortless calm. The potential of the new transmission is exploited to the full, offering an impressively high shift speed and perfect transitions for ener-

getic sprinting, as well as gentle, barely perceptible gear shifting for enjoyable travelling. The transmission's large kingpin inclination enables cruising with the lowest engine speed during relaxed driving, which simultaneously ensures optimum efficiency.

The AMG development engineers have

POLITICAL RISK COULD PROMPT MORE ECB ACTION: ANALYST

FRANKFURT AM MAIN: The European Central Bank will offer further support tomorrow to a still-fragile eurozone recovery, analysts said, against a background of uncertainty over US President-elect Donald Trump, Brexit and political risks in Europe. Italians' rejection of constitutional reforms in a Sunday referendum did not roil markets as some observers had feared, but means that worries over one of Europe's weak spots will be prolonged-and will likely push the ECB to maintain its mass bond-buying program at this week's meeting.

"We don't have increased market uncertainty, but we have political uncertainty," ING Diba bank economist Carsten Brzeski told AFP. Growth and inflation remain on a slow upward path across the 19-nation eurozone, he pointed out. But doubts about Italy's ability to overhaul its economy and fears of anti-euro populists making gains in the next parliamentary elections will join other concerns dogging policymakers as they gather in Frankfurt for the last governing council meeting of 2016. "Geopolitical uncertainty has become the major source of uncertainty for the months to come," central bank president Mario Draghi warned MEPs in Brussels last week.

In the US, Trump's bombastic Twitter sallies on trade and relations with China have rattled observers in recent days. Britain's objectives for a deal with the EU after its June vote to quit the bloc remain opaque.

And 2017 will bring elections in heavyweight eurozone members France and Germany overshadowed by swelling populist forces. "So much uncertainty will be used by the ECB to extend quantitative easing," Brzeski said, referring to the bank's massive bond-buying program. "The Italian referendum is just a small part of it."

Reliant on ECB

A mammoth package of unconventional monetary policy launched by the ECB in March pushed inflation in the eurozone to 0.6 percent by November-the highest level since April 2014 but still far short of the bank's target of just below 2.0 percent.

Policymakers insist that its cheap loans to banks, ultra-low interest rates and 80-billion-euro (\$85 billion) monthly bond purchases have stimulated growth and inflation. But Draghi last month acknowledged that what growth there is remains "highly reliant" on ECB support. Jump market reactions to a Bloomberg News report in October that the bank might begin "tapering" or winding down, QE mean the ECB is unlikely to broach the possibility on Thursday, Natixis bank economist Johannes Gareis told AFP. He expects Draghi to extend the asset-purchasing programme at the same rate for a further six months. "The bond markets are extremely nervous," ING Diba's Brzeski agreed. Hinting at tapering "runs the risk that this leads to another self-off and that interest rates go up," throttling the economic recovery by making access to credit more difficult, he said.

The next move

Beyond extending quantitative easing, the ECB may adjust its self-imposed rules about the bonds it is allowed to buy. Feared shortages of eligible bonds have yet to bite, but changing the parameters "would stress the ECB's ability to act", Gareis said. Currently, the ECB cannot buy more than 33 percent of any issuer's bonds, cannot buy bonds with a yield below the interest rate banks pay on deposits (currently -0.4 percent), and must buy bonds in proportion to a country's share of the eurozone's gross domestic product. —AFP

FLYDUBAI CERTIFIES ITS 100TH BATCH OF CABIN CREW

KUWAIT: flydubai has announced the successful graduation of its 100th batch of certified Cabin Crew members from the flydubai Training Centre. The batch of 27 candidates will join flydubai's community of 1,650 Cabin Crew members who represent more than 100 nationalities.

The graduates of the training program received their certificates from Ghaith Al-Ghaith, Chief Executive Officer for flydubai, Jilly Sims, Senior Vice President, In-Flight Services for flydubai and Carolyn O'Brien, flydubai's Cabin Crew Training Manager.

Speaking at the ceremony, Ghaith Al-Ghaith said: "Over the past eight years, flydubai has trained thousands of Cabin Crew who have applied their learning to make flying a pleasant experience for the millions of passengers who travel with us each year. I would like to congratulate each graduate on their achievement and the highly skilled and

professional trainers who have helped us reach this important milestone."

The five-week program trains candidates in a wide range of subjects, including customer service, medical care, safety and security. Candidates must pass all of their practical and theoretical exams, along with their assessments, to complete the training course and graduate as a flydubai Cabin Crew member.

Carolyn O'Brien added: "This is a unique training program that focuses on imparting skills and knowledge critical to passenger assistance, in-flight safety applications, in-flight medical care, aviation security and emergency response. I am confident that our newly graduated batch will join their colleagues in being high performing Cabin Crew members within the flydubai family."

flydubai's training facilities were opened in 2010 and are located at Dubai Airport Freezone and flydubai's head-



quarters. The facilities offer graduates a realistic learning environment through a variety of cabin and training simulators

along with a team of highly qualified trainers. If you would like to become a flydubai Cabin Crew member, please vis-

it our careers page. Dubai-based flydubai strives to remove barriers to travel and enhance connectivity between different cultures across its ever-expanding network. Since launching its operations in 2009, flydubai has:

- * Created a network of 90 destinations in 44 countries, with 19 new routes launched in 2015.

- * Opened up 59 routes that did not previously have direct air links to Dubai or were not served by a UAE national carrier from Dubai.

- * Operates a single fleet type of Next-Generation Boeing 737-800 aircraft and will take delivery of more than 100 aircraft by the end of 2023.

In addition, flydubai's agility and flexibility as a young airline has enhanced Dubai's economic development, in line with the Government of Dubai's vision, by creating trade and tourism flows in previously underserved markets.

WIN BIG WITH RENAULT AL-BABTAIN'S 'SHAKE & WIN' CAMPAIGN

KUWAIT: Abdulmohsen Abdulaziz Al-Babtain Co, the authorized dealer for Renault vehicles in the state of Kuwait, has announced the official launch of its first consumer mobile application, My_Renault. On the occasion of the launch, Renault Al Babtain has kicked off an exciting campaign titled 'Shake & Win' for its esteemed customers and Renault brand enthusiasts which includes fantastic prizes.

Through My_Renault, the customer becomes an exclusive member that facilitates easier contact with service advisors, access to your vehicle's information & handbooks, personalized service offers & discounts, monitoring the service progress of your vehicle, and reading useful articles & watching videos that will enrich your experience on how to maintain your Renault Vehicle. The "Shake & Win" campaign is running from November 27th till January 10th 2017. The interactive campaign is open to all Renault owners in the GCC &

Egypt region with 25 winners in total and winners to be announced every week over the period of 6 weeks. To take part and win fantastic prizes, participants are required to download My_Renault app, login to their personal account and simply shake their device to enter the raffle draw and win prizes including an accessories pack worth 400 Euros or one year of free service *terms & conditions apply, and the most exciting MEGA prize a brand new Renault Captur. The grand winner will be announced on January 20th, 2017. The "Shake & Win" campaign is part of the many initiatives Renault has invested in developing and launching next level digital technologies which offers its customers rewarding experience.

My_Renault app travels with the customer anywhere & the benefit and services designed especially for him are only a click away. My_Renault app is here to make customers' life a little bit easier by putting everything they need in one place.



NISSAN AL-BABTAIN CONTINUES TO GIVE TOP OFFERS ON ITS VEHICLES

WINNING OFFER BY ALL MEANS



KUWAIT: Abdulmohsen Abdulaziz Al-Babtain Co (AABC), the authorized agent of Nissan in the State of Kuwait continues to make owning a Nissan vehicle even better and better with special offers and cash prizes upon the purchase on a selected range of Nissan vehicles at its showrooms.

When purchasing the vehicle, customers will enjoy the chance to win a wide range of prizes that consist of up to 2,000 Kuwaiti Dinars instant cash, up to 2,000 free liters of fuel, free service

package up to two years and free registration and third party insurance.

Customers can avail the offer till it ends at both Nissan showrooms in Al-Rai and Al-Ahmadi. Nissan Al-Babtain is committed to continuously give its customers the best after-sale services and keep giving them exceptional offers throughout the year.

Through these promotions, Nissan Al-Babtain aims to strengthen the trust of clients in the

brand and to maintain its leading position in the local and regional automotive market.

It is also keen to systematically keep in contact with them, which is best expressed in the after sales service, especially that Nissan Al-Babtain, which is one of the leading companies in Kuwait and the region, believes that its role is not limited to car sales only thus it goes beyond it as part of its goal of providing all kinds of comfort for its clients.

AL MULLA EXCHANGE LAUNCHES INSTANT CREDIT TO ACCOUNTS WITH BANK OF CEYLON

KUWAIT: Al Mulla Exchange, the leading global money transfer in Kuwait has announced that their service has gone real time by offering instant credit to all Bank of Ceylon accounts and immediate cash pick up service across all BOC branches.

Now Sri Lankans, living in Kuwait and who have an account in Bank of Ceylon, can avail API online web service (Server to Server) to send money real time to their loved ones with this facility available with Al Mulla Exchange. This facility ensures that customers get their credit in their accounts when they sent money at any point of time with seamless credit within seconds. The SMS feedback information is also relayed instantly ensuring that the money has reached the accounts within a few seconds. Both dollar and rupee accounts are covered in this product enhancement.

BOC has a network over 627 branches connected online and a ATM network over 551 in numbers, serve the people 365 days 24 hours in all 25 districts of the country.

Rakesh Joshi, General Manager of Al Mulla Exchange had this to say regarding the launch of the new service "Al Mulla

Exchange continually endeavors to surpass customer expectations, by bringing them newer products and better services, all of which have resulted in an overall improved offering to the customer, which is an aim we share with Bank of Ceylon. Customers get a sense of satisfaction and security, when their money is transferred real time. This new convenience will further enhance their happiness." Al Mulla Exchange goes beyond the ordinary norms of remittance. With their motto 'Beating customer expectations, not just meeting them' Al Mulla Exchange has kept customer always in the center of their technological innovation and improvements with regards to the remittances. Al Mulla Exchange also has a loyalty point system which is quite unique. Apart from getting loyalty points for every transactions being done, there are loyalty points being awarded for doing transactions early, referring a friend, association loyalty points etc. A customer of Al Mulla Exchange not only gets his transaction credited within split seconds but also has value added benefits like loyalty points, free insurance coverage, free events etc which add to their overall experience.

IN BLOW TO UK, EU REJECTS LEEWAY FOR FINANCIAL TRADERS FROM TAX AVOIDANCE RULES

BRUSSELS: Most European Union finance ministers yesterday rejected a British-backed plan to exempt financial traders from new rules aimed at tackling practices used by multinationals to reduce their tax bills. The move is a blow to Britain's giant financial services industry and a sign that relations with EU partners are souring following June's Brexit referendum vote to leave the bloc.

With a perceived inaction on tax avoidance helping fuel the growth of anti-establishment parties across Europe, EU finance ministers were keen to reach an agreement on Tuesday on tackling so-called hybrid mismatches. These are differences in national tax rules which allow multinationals to claim

double tax deductions or dodge taxes on dividends. But the compromise collapsed at a meeting in Brussels after the Slovak presidency of the EU introduced exemptions for financial traders, a move strongly supported by Britain. "We have a problem," France's Finance Minister Michel Sapin said during a public session of the meeting.

He said it was impossible to agree on the "exemption required by Britain for operators of the financial sector", calling it a new loophole through which to avoid the rules. Under a compromise proposal presented to ministers on Tuesday, securities traders would have been exempted from the new rules. — Reuters

HOW NEW FORD TECHNOLOGY CAN MAKE YOUR CAR WORK LIKE A GIANT PAIR OF NOISE-CANCELLING HEADPHONES



KUWAIT: Whether used for minimizing background noise on a business flight, or silencing the babble of commuters on a train, noise-cancelling headphones have made journeys more serene and enjoyable for millions. Now, Ford has applied the same thinking to its cars.

Ford's Active Noise Control uses three microphones, strategically placed in the cabin, to detect undesirable noises from the engine and transmission.

The system counteracts those noises with opposing sound waves from the audio system - without affecting volume levels of music and conversation. Driver and vehicle behaviour is recorded and anticipated, for example when a driver is accelerating in a lower gear.

"Whether listening to a favourite playlist, tuning into a much-loved station, or simply enjoying a respite from the demands of modern life, the experience of sound - and just as importantly silence - can be a fundamental part of an enjoyable car journey," said Ziyad Dallalah, Chief Resident Engineer, Ford Middle East & Africa. "The all-new Ford Edge with Active Noise Control offers drivers enhanced levels of comfort, and

fewer distractions." Active Noise Control is part of a range of standard innovations for the upscale all-new Ford Edge Sport that enhance sound quality. The technology is also available as an option on the new Titanium Edge models. Another example of refinement is acoustic glass that can improve the sound-proofing qualities of the windshield and front windows.

With a special acoustic layer that is thinner than a human hair, acoustic glass reduces the intrusion of wind noise caused by air flow around the window pillars.

"Noise can lead to distraction and stress," added Dallalah. "By removing unwanted powertrain noise, Ford is helping customers to complete their journey calmly and in comfort."

All-new upscale Ford Edge

The stylish and sophisticated all-new Ford Edge is offered with a total of three engine options, two of which are new powerplants - a standard twin-scroll 2.0-litre EcoBoost four-cylinder with 253 PS and 378 Nm of torque, and a 2.7-litre EcoBoost V6 with 340 PS and 542 Nm of torque. A normally aspirated 3.5-litre V6 engine

with 283 PS and 340 Nm of torque is also offered. All equipped with dual exhaust and a six-speed automatic transmission. The all-new Edge also features Ford's Intelligent All-Wheel Drive technology as standard, delivering a seamless transition of torque between all four wheels to provide a more secure footing on the road.

All-new Edge offers new Ford technologies, including Adaptive Steering, Front Wide-View Camera, and segment-first Pre-Collision Assist with Pedestrian Detection.

The all-new Edge interior has been designed to deliver a luxurious occupant experience with high-quality materials throughout, including soft-touch trims on the dashboard and centre console, high-gloss piano black surrounds on the switch bezels and a satin silver metal finish for the door handles, air vent bezels, glovebox trim and steering wheel detailing.

To explore the All-New Ford Edge lineup, please visit the Alghanim Auto New Vehicle Showroom in the Shuwaikh Industrial Area, opposite from the Classical Car Museum and Sirbb Circuit. Working hours are 9AM to 10PM from Saturday to Thursday.

'SPY' TOYS FACE COMPLAINTS FROM EU, US WATCHDOGS

BRUSSELS: EU and US consumer watchdogs announced yesterday they are filing complaints against a clutch of smart toys that can "spy" on children and their homes, for allegedly breaching privacy and data protection laws. The complaints target smart toys My Friend Cayla, i-QUE Intelligent Robot and Hello Barbie, according to the European Consumer Organisation BEUC and US groups like the Electronic Privacy Information Center (EPIC).

Complaints are being filed with French and other European authorities as well as the US Federal Trade Commission. Internet-connected Cayla and i-QUE, manufactured by Los Angeles-based Genesis Toys, hook up with a user via a phone or tablet while Hello Barbie links to the internet through Wi-Fi, said the consultancy Bouvet on behalf of the

Norwegian Consumer Council. Hello Barbie is not sold in Europe.

"By purpose and design, these toys record and collect the private conversations of young children without any limitations on collection, use, or disclosure of this personal information," EPIC and other US watchdogs said in their complaint, which they say "concerns toys that spy." "The toys subject young children to ongoing surveillance and are deployed in homes across the United States without any meaningful data protection standards," they said.

"They pose an imminent and immediate threat to the safety and security of children in the United States," they added. BEUC, citing the study commissioned by the Norwegian Consumer Council,

expressed security concerns. "With simple steps, anyone can take control of the toys through a mobile phone. This makes it possible to talk and listen through the toy without having physical access to the toy," it added.

It alleged the terms breach the EU Unfair Contract Terms Directive and the EU Data Protection Directive and possibly the Toy Safety Directive. "Anything the child tells the doll is transferred to the US-based company Nuance Communications, who specialises in speech recognition technologies," it said. "The company reserves the right to share this information with other third parties, and to use speech data for a wide variety of purposes," it said. "The toys are embedded with pre-programmed phrases, where they endorse dif-

ferent commercial products," BEUC said.

EPIC and the other US groups like The Campaign for a Commercial Free Childhood urged the trade commission to investigate the collection, use and disclosure of the data. They called for the body to halt Genesis' alleged failure to give enough notice of its information practices and stop its retention and use of children's personal information. They also asked the commission to halt Genesis' failure to use "reasonable security measures" for bluetooth connections for Cayla and i-Que. They urged the body to investigate and prevent US-based Nuance from using children's speech data to improve products and services sold to military, government and law enforcement agencies. — AFP

TECH COMPANIES MOVE TO TARGET TERRORIST PROPAGANDA ONLINE

WASHINGTON: Facebook, Microsoft, Twitter and YouTube are joining forces to more quickly identify the worst terrorist propaganda and prevent it from spreading online. The new program announced Monday would create a database of unique digital "fingerprints" to help automatically identify videos or images the companies could remove.

The move by the technology companies, which is expected to begin in early 2017, aims to assuage government concerns - and derail proposed new federal legislation - over social media content that is seen as increasingly driving terrorist recruitment and radicalization, while also balancing free-speech issues.

Technical details were being worked out, but Microsoft pioneered similar technology to detect, report and remove child pornography through such a database in 2009. Unlike those images, which are plainly illegal under US law, questions about whether an image or video promotes terrorism can be more subjective, depending on national laws and the rules of a particular company's service.

Tool of radicalization

Social media has increasingly become a tool for recruiting and radicalization by the Islamic State group and others. Its use by terror groups and supporters has added to the threat from so-called lone-wolf attacks and decreased the time from "flash to bang" - or radicalization to violence - with little or no time for law enforcement to follow evidentiary trails before an attack.

Under the new partnership, the companies promised to share among themselves "the most extreme and egregious terrorist images and videos we have removed from our services - content most likely to violate all our respective companies' content policies," according to a joint announcement Monday evening.

When such content is shared internally, the other participating companies will be notified and can use the digital fingerprints to quickly identify the same content on their own services to judge whether it violates their rules. If so, companies can delete the material and possibly disable the account, as appropriate.

Most social media services explicitly do not allow content that supports violent action or illegal activities. Twitter, for example, says users "may not promote violence against or directly attack or threaten other people on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, religious affiliation, age, dis-

ability or disease." "We really are going after the most obvious serious content that is shared online - that is, the kind of recruitment videos and beheading videos more likely to be against all our content policies," said Sally Aldous, a Facebook spokeswoman.

The White House praised the joint effort. "The administration believes that the innovative private sector is uniquely positioned to help limit terrorist recruitment and radicalization online," said National Security Council spokesman Carl Woog. "Today's announcement is yet another example of tech communities taking action to prevent terrorists from using these platforms in ways their creators never intended." The new program caps a year of efforts to tamp down on social media's use by terrorist groups.

Lawmakers last year introduced legislation that would require social media companies to report any online terrorist activity they became aware of to law enforcement. The bill by Sens. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif, and Richard Burr, R-NC, was criticized for not defining "terrorist activity," which could have drowned government agencies in reports. The bill was opposed by the Internet Association, which represents 37 internet companies, including Facebook, Snapchat, Google, LinkedIn, Reddit, Twitter, Yahoo and others.

Partial automation

The bill came days after Syed Farook and his wife, Tashfeen Malik, went on a shooting attack in San Bernardino, California, killing 14 people and injuring 21 others. A Facebook post on Malik's page around the time of the attack included a pledge of allegiance to the leader of the Islamic State group. Facebook found the post - which was under an alias - the day after the attack. The company removed the profile from public view and informed law enforcement. Such a proactive effort had previously been uncommon.

Twitter moved toward partial automation in late 2015, using unspecified "proprietary spam-fighting tools" to find accounts that might be violating its terms of service and promoting terrorism. The material still required review by a team at Twitter before the accounts could be disabled. "Since the middle of 2015, we have suspended more than 360,000 accounts for violating Twitter's policy on violent threats and the promotion of terrorism," said Sinead McSweeney, Twitter's vice president of public policy. "A large proportion of these accounts have been removed by technical means, including our proprietary spam-fighting tools." — AP



TAKE DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION OUT OF THE BOARDROOM, AVAYA TO INDUSTRY LEADERS

DUBAI: Digital transformation (DX) projects will fail if they aren't embraced at all levels of the organization, Avaya, a global leader in business communications software, systems and services, told delegates today at the Avaya ENGAGE event in Dubai. The four-day event is bringing together senior executives, industry leaders, technology innovators and key decision makers from different industry sectors to help them achieve their digital transformation objectives.

With organizations globally facing challenges to evolve digitally and move agilely in today's competitive markets, CEOs are increasingly putting digital transformation and customer engagement at the top of their corporate agendas. However, as many as 84% of DX projects fail to achieve their objectives, according to research, with many organizations failing to secure the required levels of "buy-in" from their workforce, partners and customers.

"In today's digital business world, just about every organization, company and industry sector has access to digital technologies - the gap now is between the "haves" and the "have mores": those organizations that are using their digital capabilities more effectively to innovate and transform their operations. We are seeing a new digital divide: the DX divide," Nidal Abou-Ltaif, President, Europe, Middle East & Africa and Asia Pacific, Avaya, told delegates in his keynote presentation today at Avaya ENGAGE.

Organizations need to ensure that DX projects are supported by the workforce, and that the workers have the right training, tools and technologies to properly implement them, Abou-Ltaif said. DX projects also need to deliver the differentiated experiences that customers are looking for, and that will encourage them to do more business with an organization. Companies also need to understand that DX projects are extremely complex, involving change at all levels of the organization. Accordingly, organizations need to be aware that these can't be delivered alone, or by a single vendor, requiring them to create an open environment to drive innovation. Abou-Ltaif highlighted in his keynote, companies that are succeeding in their DX objectives:

Emirates NBD: This bank is leading the regional banking sector for innovation, with a customer-centric strategy that places delivering superior customer experience at the heart of all DX initiatives. Emirates NBD is committed to the digitization of banking in the UAE by delivering innovative solutions for customers' everyday banking

processes, making it the leading digital bank in the Middle East. The bank has also successfully embraced technologies like analytics and artificial intelligence (AI) to create the blueprint for banking in the future.

dnata: One of the world's largest air services providers and a member of Emirates Group, dnata has embarked on a DX project with Avaya to transform its customer experience. Avaya Private Cloud Services (APCS) is helping to create a seamless, personalized experience for dnata customers and partners and across every communication platform in the customer journey, as dnata continues to lead the transformation of the travel experience

58 - well ahead of our competitors - demonstrates the depth of our commitment to delivering the right customer experience," Abou-Ltaif concluded.

Avaya ENGAGE, taking place now at Atlantis the Palm, Dubai, has brought together more than 1,500 senior Avaya executives, industry leaders, technology innovators and key decision makers, from more than 70 countries. Bringing together Avaya customers and partners from across the Asia-Pacific, Europe, Middle East and Africa (AMEA) regions under the same roof for the first time ever, Avaya ENGAGE is delivering invaluable insight into key technology trends and the opportunities they represent.



Nidal Abou Ltaif, Avaya Engage

industry globally. "Organizations need to democratize digital transformation: a top-down from the boardroom approach won't work if it doesn't engage the people it is supposed to help. DX projects should be: user-defined, bringing together customers, employees, and partners; and platform-driven, with organizations creating an ecosystem for innovation. Avaya is committed to helping organizations achieve their DX objectives, and we are working closely with many customers across different industry verticals to help them achieve their goals. Our industry-leading Net Promoter Score of

Visitors to Avaya ENGAGE will be able to learn more about Avaya's successful transition into a software and services-led company, while improving operating performance. In October, the company reported preliminary fourth-quarter results that exceeded guidance, with year-on-year growth in Contact Center, Network and Cloud & Managed Services, and adjusted EBITDA as a percentage of revenue of nearly 30 percent - a company record. FY16 also represented the most innovative year in Avaya's history, featuring 16 product and solution launches, many of which are being showcased at Avaya ENGAGE.



NEW YORK: A Facebook logo is displayed on the screen of an iPad. — AP

DRIVERLESS CARS SCOOT AROUND NISSAN PLANT, TOWING VEHICLES

YOKOSUKA: Nissan Motor Co is testing self-driving cars at one of its plants in Japan that can tow vehicles on a trailer to the wharf for loading on transport ships. The Japanese automaker thinks the technology will, in the long run, save costs and boost efficiency. The tests also can add to knowledge needed to take such autonomous driving onto public roads. Nissan executive Haruhiko Yoshimura said the automaker hoped to use the technology throughout the Oppama plant by 2019, and in overseas plants in the future.

During a demonstration yesterday, a Leaf car with no one inside scooted along the road, pulling a trailer with three other Leafs on it, stopped properly for other vehicles, and then veered into a parking lot. But one vehicle ran into trouble, refused to move and was not able to take part in the demonstration. Kazuhiro Doi, a Nissan vice president, acknowledged such glitches showed a challenge unique to the technology. "If there are drivers, they can take action," he said. "Mechanical operations are all there is in a driverless car."

Nissan, which makes the March subcompact,

Infiniti luxury models and the Leaf electric car, now has just two of the self-driving Leaf cars. For all the vehicles produced at the Oppama plant to be towed in a driverless way, five more such vehicles are needed, according to Nissan. People still

had to get inside each of the towed vehicles to drive them to the proper wharf, but Nissan hopes that as self-driving technology advances cars will drive themselves into the ships, up the plank on their own. — AP



YOKOHAMA: Nissan Motor Co's "Leaf", with no one inside, pulls a trailer with three other Leafs on it, during a demonstration of the automaker's Intelligent Vehicle Towing system at Nissan Oppama plant. — AP

CHINA USERS COMPLAINING OF COMBUSTIBLE IPHONES

SHANGHAI: Several Chinese iPhone users have claimed that their handsets caught fire or exploded, according to a Shanghai consumer watchdog which called on tech giant Apple to address the complaints. Fresh on the heels of Samsung's worldwide Galaxy Note 7 safety fiasco, the state-run Shanghai Consumer Council said it had received eight reports in recent months of iPhones that spontaneously combust while being used or charged. The report, seen on the council's website, was posted Friday.

It quoted one woman as saying her iPhone 6s Plus exploded in August, shattering the screen and leaving the battery and back of the phone blackened. Apple provided the woman with a new iPhone but did not address the cause of the incident, the report said. "Apple should be responsible for consumers" and deal with complaints in a timely manner, the council said. "A large amount of consumer complaints

are not solved effectively."

The council said it has received a six-fold surge in total complaints against Apple in the past two months, including sudden shutdowns of the iPhone 6 and 6s even though batteries still have enough power. The council did not make clear where the complaining iPhone users were located. Apple last month offered to change iPhone 6s batteries for Chinese users who complained of what the company called "accidental shutdowns."

The offer was effective for handsets made between September-October, 2015. At the time iPhone insisted the shutdowns did not constitute a safety problem. AFP was unable to immediately obtain a response from Apple in China over the consumer watchdog report. Samsung suffered a severe blow over its Galaxy Note 7's woes. The huge South Korean electronics manufacturer was forced to recall some 2.5 million units. — AFP

INDONESIA EXPANDS ITS PEATLANDS PROTECTION

JAKARTA: Indonesia has extended legal protection for its wetlands and peat bogs by expanding a ban on the conversion of these carbon-rich swamps into plantations. The move, if properly enforced, could drastically reduce Indonesia's sizeable carbon footprint and prevent a repeat of the annual forest fires that plague the region, conservationists say. A moratorium on new conversions of certain peatland areas has been in place since 2011 in Indonesia. But this latest revision—signed into law by

President Joko Widodo, and issued Monday—clarifies and expands the law, ensuring that all peatlands are covered and that companies must restore areas they have degraded.

"We want to avoid any misinterpretation of the existing regulation, which gives the impression that land-clearing is still allowed," environment ministry spokesman Djati Witjaksono Hadi told AFP Tuesday. Peatlands take thousands of years to form as layers of dense wet plant material com-

compact into dense carbon stores. When these ancient swamps are drained or cleared by fire to make way for commercial plantations—such as for palm oil or pulp wood—that carbon is released into the atmosphere. Conservationists hailed the strengthened moratorium as a win for climate change. "This regulation will be a major contribution to the Paris climate agreement," said the World Resources Institute's Nirarta Samadhi, referring to a binding agreement on reducing emissions.

Norway—which pledged in 2010 to pay Indonesia up to \$1 billion if it preserved its rain forests—committed \$25 million to restore peatlands in the wake of the announcement.

The moratorium could also help prevent the outbreak of deadly smog from forest fires that shrouds the region every year, causing widespread illness. Peatlands are moist and unlikely to ignite unless drained.

Hadi said the new regulation provided clearer guidance, ensuring no burning or

draining was permitted. Fires deliberately lit in 2015 across Indonesia's forests and peatlands were the worst in nearly two decades.

Research from Harvard and Columbia universities in the US estimate the crisis caused more than 100,000 premature deaths in Indonesia and neighboring countries. The World Bank put the economic impact at \$16 billion—twice Indonesia's clean-up bill in the wake of the devastating 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami. — AFP

SEX, LICE AND PUBIC SHAVING: NEW STUDY HIGHLIGHTS RISKS

PARIS: People who shave, wax, or trim their pubic hair are at higher risk of sexually-transmitted infections (STIs), but less likely to get lice, a study suggested yesterday. A survey of more than 7,500 Americans aged 18 to 65, found that pubic groomers had an 80 percent higher STI risk than people who leave their nether regions hairy.

For certain infections, including herpes and chlamydia, the risk was highest among those who groomed most frequently and "intensely", the researchers found. The study merely observed a correlation between grooming and STIs, and cannot conclude that one causes the other. But the authors speculated that shaving or waxing may cause "microtears" in the skin, creating easy access for viruses.

Sharing tools such as razors may also be a risk, they said, citing a case of HIV transmission between brothers using the same blade. "As a third possible explanation for our findings, individuals who groom may be more likely to engage in risky sexual behaviors than those who do not groom," said the study published in the journal Sexually Transmitted Infections. Pubic hair grooming, it explained, "is correlated with an increased number of lifetime sexual partners and is viewed as a preparatory act to sexual engagement".

For the research, 7,580 people completed a questionnaire on their intimate hair-control, sex lives and STI history. Seventy-four percent of respondents were pubic hair groomers — 66 percent of men and 84 percent of women. The trial participants were divided into "extreme groomers" who removed all pubic hair more than 11 times a year, high-frequency groomers who trimmed daily or weekly, low-frequency groomers, and non-groomers.

'Genital normalcy'?

The main methods used were razors, scissors and wax. Men mostly used an electric razor and women a manual one. One in five of both genders used scissors. Groomers, the study found, were younger overall and reported a larger number of annual and total lifetime sexual partners—even more so for extreme groomers. They also had more frequent weekly and daily sex than people who prefer to go "au naturel" down there.

A greater proportion of groomers, 14 percent, reported having had an STI during their lifetime, than non-groomers at eight percent, the study found. For extreme groomers, the percentage was 18 percent. STIs included herpes, syphilis, human papillomavirus (HPV), chlamydia, HIV, gonorrhoea and a skin virus called Molluscum contagiosum, or MCV. Such infections can have serious long-term consequences such as infertility, certain cancers and higher rates of HIV transmission. On the other end of the spectrum, the team found, low-intensity groomers had a higher risk of pubic lice infestation.

This suggested "grooming might make it harder for lice to breed successfully," the team said in a statement. Better understanding the relationship between pubic hair grooming and STIs may help single out "high-risk individuals" for safe-sex education, the team said.

They may also be advised to dehair less frequently or severely, or to delay sex after grooming to allow time for the skin to heal. Pubic hair grooming has become a common phenomenon worldwide, with popular media changing people's definition of attractiveness, cleanliness and "genital normalcy", said the study. — AFP



NEW DELHI: In this Friday, Nov 11, 2016, photo, a pollution meter shows a perfect 10 as visitors to the Paharpur business centre, one of the Delhi's greenest office, sit in the lobby. — AP

INDIANS LOOKING FOR SOLUTIONS WHEN TOXIC POLLUTION SOARS

'WE'VE STARTED TO GET THROUGH TO THE MIDDLE CLASS'

NEW DELHI: The truth of New Delhi's toxic air finally hit home for Rakhi Singh when her 3-year-old son began to cough constantly early this year. She bought air purifiers for her home. When a thick, gray haze turned the view outside her home into a scene from a bad science fiction film last month, she bought pollution masks. "Having a kid made the reality of the city's pollution hit me harder," she said.

The news that the Indian capital is one of the dirtiest cities in the world is three years old. But the awareness that it's toxic enough to leave its citizens chronically ill and requires long-term lifestyle changes is relatively nascent. The first week of November, when a thick blanket of toxic haze covered the city, did much to hasten that awareness. And with the awareness came a brisk uptick in the sale of air purifiers and pollution masks. As the noise and smoke from millions of firecrackers from the Hindu festival of Diwali died down, the city woke up Nov 1 to soaring levels of PM2.5 - pollution particles so tiny they can get deeply embedded in the lungs. Levels in the Indian capital averaged well over 900 micrograms per cubic meter, more than 36 times the level the WHO considers acceptable and 15 times the Indian norm.

Air purifiers

Manufacturers and importers of air purifiers and pollution masks say late 2016 is the first time they've had a serious number of Indian families inquiring about and buying their prod-

ucts. "It's only in 2016 that we've started to get through to the middle class," said Barun Aggarwal, who heads Breathe Easy, a company that assesses homes and offices in New Delhi for pollution and provides solutions such as air purifiers and indoor plants.

When Aggarwal started his business in 2013, he had no customers for months. Later that year the World Health Organization report describing Delhi as the world's dirtiest city was released. "In the last four months (of 2013) we finally managed maybe 50 customers," he said, adding that those first customers were almost entirely foreigners living in the Indian capital who came from cities with much cleaner air. This year he expects to hit close to 5,000 customers, with more local residents looking for solutions, Aggarwal said.

Other businesses show similar numbers. SmartAir, a company that started selling low-cost air purifiers in China in 2013, set up shop in India in early 2015 and sold 1,000 pieces of its basic do-it-yourself model that year. This year it sold about 500 pieces in the first week of November alone. Hundreds of people queued up outside the Vogmask store in a posh shopping area to spend as much as 2,000 rupees (\$29) on high-end pollution masks manufactured by the California-based company.

Year round problem

When the Indian capital topped the pollution charts in 2013, the city's first response was

almost defiant. There was a belief that pollution only sickened the city's expatriate population. "There was a strong defiance. I'm born and brought up in Delhi. This doesn't affect me," was how people saw the pollution problem, said Jay Kannaiyan, head of SmartAir in India.

"This year, that's gone out the door. Middle-class, even lower-middle-class Indians are looking at air purifiers," he added. But while awareness is growing, New Delhi's response to air pollution isn't very consistent. Air pollution is a year-round problem in the Indian capital, but it's only when the cold winter makes toxic air visible that people respond.

On days when the air so awful that one can see and taste it, the parks are empty and those who cannot afford pollution masks tie handkerchiefs or scarves across their faces. The week after Diwali, when the city saw its most shocking pollution spike in years, the SmartAir office and shop in south Delhi was open all night, with long lines outside the store. But on other days, when the sun shines and the haze lifts, most people forget about pollution. The masks vanish and the face coverings come off, even though pollution is often still way above government and WHO norms. "When the media stops talking about it and people see sunshine they start thinking it's OK. It's really not. It's terrible," says Singh. "Right now it's a completely a panic-driven market," says Kannaiyan. "People are only buying when it's so horrendous that they can't see their own hand in front of them." — AP



In this photograph taken on September 9, 2016, boathouse dwellers wash their charpoys and clothes on the banks of the Manchar lake, a 223 square kilometre natural water reservoir in southern Pakistan. — AFP

PARADISE LOST: HOW TOXIC WATER KILLED PAKISTAN'S LARGEST LAKE

MANCHAR LAKE: For generations the Mohanna tribe have lived, loved, worked, and played on Pakistan's Manchar Lake; their floating settlement serving their needs from birth to death. But an unrelenting flow of toxic wastewater is pouring into the lake—a byproduct of industrialization and aggressive agricultural practices upstream — and has slowly rendered it inhospitable, poisoning the water and almost everything in it. For fishermen such as Mohammed Yusuf, life on the lake is becoming intolerable.

"When we were young, our lives were very good. Every kind of fish was available. Our earnings were good," he told AFP. "When my father would go fishing he would bring back over a hundred kilos of fish. Now the situation has changed. The fish is extinct because of the bad water," he added. The wooden, flat-bottomed barge he lives in with his mother, wife, and their nine children, has ornate carvings but it has seen better days.

Now Yusuf barely catches enough fish to feed his family, let alone be able to save the money he needs to maintain his boat. He estimates they have just five years before it is beyond repair, fearing he will soon have to leave the place where he was born. And yet their whole life is packed into this floating home: Clothes and linen are stacked in the stern, kitchenware and food under the prow. Cooking is done down in the hold, on a little earthen hearth fed by the stems of aquatic plants. "If it is hot we sleep on the roof, in the winter we sleep inside the boat on the floor," said Yusuf.

Two cradles swing as the breeze softens the heat: the larger for his child born on board some 40 days ago, the smaller one for the Koran, a dignified place for the Holy Book to avoid desecration. Neighboring boathouses are anchored a few dozen meters away. Children wade or swim in the shallows while adults navigate the water in narrow wooden canoes, which they skillfully push with a pole. "We have been living this way for generations," explained the fisherman.

The size of Manchar Lake, one of the largest fresh water reserves in Pakistan, varies

depending on rainfall. It can measure more than 250 square kilometers after the annual monsoon. In the 1970s a series of drains and canals were built to carry sewage to the lake from several major cities in Sindh province, as well as industrial wastewater, and overflow from rice paddies full of pesticides and fertilizers. The system, known as the Right Bank Outfall Drain (RBOD), also dumps into the lake vast quantities of brackish water drained from the right bank of the Indus to make the surrounding land arable.

Meanwhile, mountain torrents supplying fresh water have declined. So too has the flow of the Indus itself into the lake, due to the building of dams and greater irrigation, explains Mustafa Mirani of the Pakistani Fishermen Forum, which campaigns for the protection and conservation of the lake.

As far back as the 1990s, assessments found the land and the water was being destroyed by a toxic mix of saline, chemicals and sewage, explains the activist, who grew up on the lake. It was then proposed to reroute the RBOD to empty into the Arabian Sea further south. But the plan has been suspended for years due to lack of funds, and dirty water continues to flow into the lake untreated and unabated.

The water is no longer drinkable. The pollution has killed off flora and fauna and it has become impossible to grow vegetables in the toxic silt. Migrating birds, which once came in their thousands to rest among the reeds on the lake, are now rarely seen. Fish stock has also plummeted. In the 1970s, more than 15,000 tons were netted each year compared with 2,000-3,800 tons in recent years, according to the Sindh Fisheries Department.

The number of the Mohanna tribe living around the lake has halved in the last 25 years, according to Mirani. "When I was growing I saw some 400 boats and that many families on them. All of them, eating, sleeping, marrying, all would take place on the boats," he recalled. "Now, because of poverty, they can't mend or repair their boats. So gradually all these boats are vanishing." — AFP

GERMAN COURT TO RULE ON NUCLEAR COMPENSATION

KARLSRUHE: A German court is set to rule on whether three big energy suppliers are entitled to billions of euros in compensation over the country's decision to phase out nuclear power in the wake of the 2011 Fukushima disaster. German electricity giants E.ON and RWE and Sweden's Vattenfall have argued that the government-ordered shutdown of the country's nuclear plants amounts to an "expropriation" of their assets.

They have asked the Constitutional Court in the southwestern city of Karlsruhe to award them some 20 billion euros (\$21 billion) in damages, according to media reports. Chancellor Angela Merkel's government decided after Japan's 2011 Fukushima reactor meltdowns to halt operations of Germany's eight oldest nuclear plants and to shutter the other nine by 2022.

The move marked a sharp reversal for Merkel. She had earlier overturned a phase-out ordered by a previous government in 2002 and extended the lifespan of Germany's nuclear fleet until 2036. The chief of Germany's biggest power company E.ON, Johannes Teysen, told the court in March that while the companies respected the political choice to give up on nuclear energy, they should not have to foot the bill alone.

"We cannot simply accept that parliament disregarded constitutional requirements by providing for no compensation," he said at the time. "For our shareholders—including many small stock holders who have their savings and pensions invested with us—this creates a significant financial loss which under current law will not be compensated for."

Leverage

The firms have complained that the losses came at a time when they are already struggling in the face of low wholesale electricity prices and compe-



KARLSRUHE: The first senate of Germany's Constitutional Court with its members (L-R) Yvonne Ott, Susanne Baer, Johannes Masing, Michael Eichberger, Ferdinand Kirchhof (chairman), Wilhelm Schluckebier, Andreas Paulus and Gabriele Britz give their judgment on compensation over nuclear phase-out. — AFP

tion from heavily subsidized renewable as part of Germany's shift to clean energy such as wind, solar and biomass. Critics however have countered that the big energy companies benefited from massive state subsidies when the nuclear plants first went into operation. At the same court hearing in March, Environment Minister Barbara Hendricks defended the government's position, saying that the Fukushima catastrophe had "necessitated a reassessment of the risks associated with nuclear energy". Observers said the outcome of the case

was difficult to predict, complicated by the fact that judges would also have to rule on whether Vattenfall's complaint was even admissible in a German court given that it is a Swedish company.

The verdict could have an impact on separate negotiations between the government and nuclear plant operators on managing the country's atomic waste disposal. Under a draft law approved in October, the firms Vattenfall, E.ON, RWE and EnBW would have to contribute 23.5 billion euros to a state fund for the storage of nuclear waste by 2022. — AFP

News

in Brief

Egypt says international organs network arrested

CAIRO: Egyptian authorities announced Tuesday the arrest of 25 members of an international network allegedly trafficking in human organs, including university professors and doctors. "Today at dawn, the largest international network for trading human organs has been captured," the country's Administrative Control Authority said in a statement on its website. The network "is made up of Egyptians and Arabs taking advantage of some of the citizens' difficult economic conditions so that they buy their human organs and sell it for large sums of money," it said. The authority, which is responsible for tracking corruption cases in state institutions, said 25 people were arrested including university professors, doctors, medical workers, owners of medical centres, intermediaries and brokers. They were found in possession of "millions of dollars and gold bullion", it said. Ten medical centers and laboratories had been searched and the authorities had found documents related to the charge and computers with trading information. Egypt's parliament passed a law in 2010 banning commercial trade in organs as well as transplants between Egyptians and foreigners, except in cases of husband and wife. A World Health Organisation coordinator at the time, Luc Noel, named Egypt that year as one of the top five countries in illegal organ trade. The law aimed to regulate organ transplants in a bid to curb illegal trafficking and tourism for such operations.

Korea expands cull to contain bird flu

SEOUL: South Korea yesterday said it was expanding a cull of chickens and ducks to try to contain a damaging bird flu outbreak. The H5N6 virus was first confirmed on November 18 at a farm in central South Korea and has since spread to farms around the country, with the total number of cases now standing at 28. The agriculture ministry said in a statement that it has culled more than 4.4 million birds and would slaughter another 2.7 million. Health authorities agreed to issue a so-called "standstill" order to restrict workers at poultry farms from moving around the country if the virus continues to spread, the ministry said in a statement. There have been no cases of human infections from H5N6 in South Korea, although between 2014 and April 2016, the virus killed six people in China, according to the South's Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The World Health Organization warned earlier this year that the strain "has caused severe infection in humans" but added "until now human infections with the virus seem to be sporadic with no ongoing human to human transmission".

Sick abandoned as Kenyan doctors' strike continues

NAIROBI: Sick Kenyans were turned away from hospitals, and patients left stranded in their wards as a crippling strike by doctors and nurses demanding pay rises entered a second day yesterday. Several patients are reported to have died as a result of lack of care in public hospitals, many of which are completely unstaffed. Kenyans have been directed to private clinics that are unaffordable to the majority of the population. "We have had a lot of patients leaving our facility because we have no services offered due to the ongoing strike," said David Mukabi, the superintendent in charge of Busia hospital in western Kenya. He said a 24-year-old patient had died on Monday night as a result of the stayaway. Meanwhile two women died at the Port Victoria Hospital in western Budalangi. "Two patients died last night ... because of the strike because there was no one to attend to them," said an official at the hospital. Local media reported tales of patients suffering burns or in labour left stranded in front of hospitals. At one hospital in western Kenya a security guard had to help a woman give birth, while in another an orphaned child was left alone in an empty ward with no parents to organise her transfer, The Standard daily reported.

RHODE ISLAND SCHOOL OF DESIGN WORKS WITH NASA ON MARS SUIT

BETTER, MORE AGILE SUITS A REQUIREMENT FOR MARS MISSION

PROVIDENCE: When scientists are trying to figure out how to live in near-isolation in a dome to simulate a Mars mission, the last thing they'll need is an ill-fitting space suit - so one of the nation's top design schools has come to the rescue. Staff members and students at the Rhode Island School of Design have come up with a new, adjustable suit that closely resembles an actual space suit.

Real space suits are designed to work in zero gravity, meaning they're too expensive and too heavy to use at the NASA-funded Mars simulation mission in Hawaii. The simulated space suits that are used instead wear out quickly and aren't all that comfortable. They're small and provide poor ventilation. The new suit, unveiled Monday in Providence, is expected to be tested during the next Mars simulation mission in 2017 in Hawaii. A yearlong Mars simulation mission ended in August. It was the fourth HI-SEAS, or Hawaii Space Exploration Analog and Simulation. NASA funded the study, run through the University of Hawaii. Andrzej Stewart was the chief engineering officer on that mission. At 6 feet 2, Stewart couldn't zip up the simulated suits, so he wore a hazmat suit instead, which he said was easy to wear but not very realistic.

The entire crew saw a need for a better suit, said Sheyna Gifford, the mission's space doctor. A realistic suit is important, so crew members can see what experiments they can do and what tools they can use while wearing it, and how the habitat should be designed to accommodate it, she said. "What we're aiming for is the best possible simulation, to inform NASA about what we learned on that simulation so they can succeed in the real thing," she said.

Future missions

At RISD (often spoken as "RIZ-dee") on Monday, Stewart donned the new suit to see how it fit, how he moved in it and how well the ventilation and radio communications worked. Gifford was an observer, along with a NASA spacesuit engineer who will provide feedback to ensure that the design best resembles the architecture of suits NASA may use for future exploration missions. It was the suit's first rigorous test. Stewart said that the ventilation kept him cool and that the suit restricted his movement like a real suit would.

"It's great to finally be able to put on a full suit and be able to walk around, be able to move in it," Stewart said. "It makes me feel a lot more like an astronaut." The white suit is made of heavy-duty nylon fabric; carbon fiber that forms a hard shell for the upper torso area; and foam that replicates the pressurization of an actual suit. It comes in 16 pieces; components can be replaced or resized easily to fit the short and the tall. It weighs about 50 pounds.

Work began after Gifford told Michael Lye, the adjunct faculty member who coordinates projects between the school and NASA, about the opportunity to make a more realistic suit. Gifford said the new suit is great, especially its modularity, because it will fit whomever is on the crew, though the exterior ventilation tubes will have to go inside the suit so they don't get caught on something or crushed. The suit, the only one RISD made, will be shipped to HI-SEAS, Lye said. The materials for the suit cost about \$10,000, paid for with grants from the HI-SEAS program and the Rhode Island Space Grant Consortium, Lye said. Students in the industrial design and apparel design programs worked on it. RISD is one of the country's top art and design schools and has a large industrial design department. It has worked with NASA before, including on a project to design space gloves. — AP



PROVIDENCE: In this Monday, Dec 5, 2016 photo, Andrzej Stewart, the chief engineering officer on a year-long Mars simulation mission that ended in August, puts on a new space suit at the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD). — AP

ASIAN COUNTRIES DOMINATE, SCIENCE TEACHING CRITICIZED IN PISA SURVEY

PARIS: Asian countries dominated the top places in the latest PISA survey that measures skills among high school students released yesterday, but the report criticized the teaching of science in many countries. The survey of 72 countries and economies found that the quality of science lessons was more important than equipment or even staffing levels. And it confirmed earlier findings that loading students down with homework was rarely the key to success in science.

Singapore came top of the table for its teaching of science, reading and mathematics. Its students scored an average of 556 points, compared with the average among Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries of 493. Where once Finland led the way in educational excellence, Singapore is now the example to other countries, the report said.

"Everyone used to go to Finland. Now you have to go to Singapore to see what they are doing," OECD Chief of Staff Gabriela Ramos told reporters ahead of the report's launch. Nearly a quarter of all students in Singapore (24 percent) also scored in the top two categories in science tests, compared with just eight percent across the OECD countries.

The five top-performing countries in the PISA tests, which were carried out in 2015, were Singapore, Japan, Estonia, Taiwan and Finland. The report found however that around six percent of students in

OECD countries, many of them in Europe, reported they did not get regular science lessons.

These students scored significantly lower in the tests. Schools that did not offer dedicated science lessons tend to be in poorer areas of countries, the report noted. The problem was particularly bad in Austria, Belgium, Croatia, France, Germany, Slovakia and Taiwan.

Homework not the answer

The results also suggested that the key to success in science teaching, even more than well-equipped and well-staffed departments, was how much time was spent teaching the subject. Those teachers who actually demonstrated scientific ideas and who adapted their teaching to meet students' needs produced better results, the report said.

That tended to happen in smaller classes, and students who received this kind of teaching were more likely to go on to a science-related career, it added. "Students score five points higher in science for every additional hour spent per week in regular science lessons, after accounting for socioeconomic status," the report noted.

But the results also suggested that the study needed to be done in school, not at home. "School systems where students spend more time learning after school, by doing homework, receiving additional instruction or in private study, tend to perform less well in science," said the report.

Last month, parents in Spain staged a strike to protest the amount of homework schools were handing out. Spain scored 493 points in the latest PISA tests corresponding exactly to the OECD average.

Perhaps predictably, head teachers told the researchers that truancy was one problem that hindered student learning the most. But another significant factor they reported was staff resisting change. Bullying and students' use of alcohol or illegal drugs were reported as far less significant.

Asian countries dominate

Asian countries dominated the top 10 of the PISA table, with Japan recording the second-highest average score behind Singapore. Macao, Hong Kong and the mainland Chinese territories that were tested also featured in the top 10, as did Taiwan and Vietnam. But the top-ranked European country, Estonia, took third place. The only other European country in the top 10 was Finland, in fifth.

Canada was seventh on the list, well ahead of the United States, which ranked 25th among OECD countries. PISA, the Programme for International Student Assessment, was devised by the OECD to measure countries' performance in teaching 15-year-olds the core subjects. PISA tests are carried out every three years and in 2015 they covered all 35 OECD countries and 37 partner countries and economies. — AFP

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ACK in World Inter Universities Championship in Rome

The Australian College of Kuwait (ACK) participated in the Second "World Inter Universities Championship - EuroRoma 2016" held in Rome, Italy. The tournament witnessed participation from all over Europe, Africa, the Middle East, Asia, North and South American the four day championship with approximately 2,500 university students.

For the consecutive second year, ACK was the only university participating from Kuwait and it was represented by its male football team, female futsal team and the table tennis team. The male football team made it to the semi-finals and played against universities from Bratislava, Madrid, Rome and Ireland. The female team played against Roma Tre University and two universities from France, suc-

cessfully reaching the quarter-finals. As for the table tennis team, they played against Kazakhstan, China, United Arab Emirates and Italian representatives making it to the semi-finals. ACK congratulates all its athletes while encouraging them to participate in sports and health-related activities, which is sure to benefit them in their pursuit of achieving their academic and non-academic goals.

Invitation to attend the PSA Winter football Festival

The annual PSA Everton Winter Football Festival will take place at Bayan, Block 7, Street 302, next to Abdullah Al-Rujaib High School on Saturday 10th December 2016, 8.30am - 2.30pm. All players from the PSA Everton Centre of Excellence, Coaching Courses, Everton Girls, Hilton, Durrar Club, Riggae, Franco Program, French School are invited to participate along with other invited school and academy teams. All games will be either 5/6 or 7 a side. Over 1000 players and spectators will be attending the event during the day along with sponsors and contributors, for what is the largest annual youth football event in Kuwait.

PSA Coaches will organize the Festival fixture schedule on the day and officiate the games with the aim of full participation, fun, sportsmanship and enjoyment for all - every player will receive a Festival Award. There will be lots of stalls, refreshments, games and activities throughout the day for everyone to enjoy. We would like to invite you to join HE the British Ambassador between 10-11am

Timings for the football games are as follows:

- 08.30 to 10.30 Players aged 3-4 years (Group 1), 5-6 years (Group 2) and 7-8 years (Group 3)
- FOLLOWED BY PRESENTATIONS AT 10.30**
- 10.30 to 12.30 Players aged 9-11 years (Group 4) and Girls
- FOLLOWED BY PRESENTATIONS AT 12.30**
- 12.30 to 14.30 Players aged 12-16 years (Group 5)
- FOLLOWED BY PRESENTATIONS 14.30**



INDIAN SCHOOLS' 'MEGA ARTS FEST' A SPECTACULAR EVENT

The Indian Schools' Mega Arts Fest is a manifestation of master talents in Kuwait.

Never before in the history of Indian schools in Kuwait had such opportunities to express and expose the hidden talents of the young minds. So, for the first time, the Indian Community School Kuwait organized Mega Arts Fest, with more than 80 different types of items in various categories in two days, three venues, six stages from 8 am to 8 pm with participation of more than 2,000 students from all the Indian Schools in Kuwait. This was an epoch-making event in the Middle East.

The inauguration of Mega Arts Fest began with the recitation of the traditional Islamic prayer and prayer song followed by the rendering of the national anthem of Kuwait and Britain. Dr V Binumon, Principal and Senior Administrator of ICSK welcomed the guests followed by the lighting of the lamp. In the inaugural address by the Chief Guest, Matthew James Lodge, Ambassador of Britain to Kuwait, gave an inspiring speech. The address by guest of honour Sudha Chandran, film actress and dancer was an eye-opener for the listeners. She was magnanimous enough to show few dance steps to our students. They did benefit from her expertise. The words of special guest Maryam Abdul Rahman Dashti, Dept of Middle & High School, Ministry of Private Education, Kuwait, too was an energizer. Representing the Organizing Committee, Agnello A S Fernandes,

Joint Secretary, Board of Trustees, ICSK addressed the gathering.

Although Gurupranam is not a new concept for Indians, in the Gulf region it was considered to be a novelty. From 21 schools 20 principals took part in the Gurupranam. They were honored with 'ponnada', covering the individual with linen cloth signifying high thinking and simple living. There were off-stage and on stage programs. Off-stage items were conducted well in advance and the results were kept ready. The two days of competitions were the highlights of the mega art fest.

During the valedictory ceremony, the welcome song was sung by the Swaranjali, the ICSK choir. The welcome address given by Dr V.

Binumon, Principal ICSK & Senior Administrator which was followed by the lighting of the lamp by Sunil Jain, Ambassador of India to Kuwait and Padmashri Dr Resul Pookutty, winner of Oscar Award and Golden Reel Award, the special guest of the day. Jain in his inaugural speech showered praises on ICSK for organizing the event in such magnitude. The words of wisdom from Pookutty made everyone to think and re-think the value of education.

Pookutty kindly consented to give away about 600 prizes for Category 1, 2 and 3 (individual and group). Kala Prathiba and Kala Tilak (in each category) were given 4gm of gold and a crystal trophy. Cultural events presented on stage by ICSK students mesmerized the audi-



ence prior to the distribution of prizes for Category 4 and 5 (Individual and group) and the Kalathilak and Kalaparthiba, special awards for Categories 1,2,3,4,5 and the distribution of the overall trophy. Live concert by Stephen Devassy, a gold medalist from The London School of Music, picked up the momentum to give it a befitting finale to the Mega Arts Fest. With the vote of thanks proposed by Rajesh Nair, Principal, ICSK Amman Branch brought the Mega Art Fest 2016, to the close. The following winners in different categories were declared to be the Kala Prathiba and Kala Tilak of Mega Art Fest 2016.

In category -5 Muhammed Basil Habeeb of ICSK Senior and Parvathy Sudeer Nair of United Indian School declared to be the winners of Kalaparthiba and Kalathilak.

Under category-4 Abel Chris of ICSK -Senior

claimed the Kalaparthiba while Aishwarya Shaji of FAIPS PVT.School became the Kalathilak.

Milan Abraham Mathew of ICSK -Khaitan and Batul Rokadiya of Salmiya Indian Model School declared to be the Kalaparthiba and Kalathilak respectively. The winners of Kalaparthiba in category -1&2 were Aibel Praveen Panampally, FAIPS Pvt. School and Aaron Varghese James, ICSK - Junior respectively.

Nakshatra Neeraja Binu, and Reine Mary John, both from Indian Educational School declared to be the winners of Kalathilak in category 1&2. School wise points position as follows: ICSK Senior secured 186 points under category 5 and FAIPS Private School 102 points under 4 category. In category 3 ICSK Amman scored 94 points and in category-2 Indian Educational School 56 points. In category -1 Indian Educational School secured 42 points.



Dr Sarabhai to visit Kuwait to attend Nandhanam event

Padma Bhushan Dr Mallika V Sarabhai, one of India's leading choreographers, dancers and activists, who has specialized in using arts for social change and transformation, will visit Kuwait as the guest of honor to attend the fourth 'Aranggram', event organized by Nandhanam Kuwait. She will deliver an inspirational speech to the art lovers on different aspects of Indian culture and the versatile role of Indian art forms at the event. Nandhanam Kuwait, a socio-cultural organization promoting India's rich culture and values in Kuwait, is conducting its fourth "Aranggram", a student's debut on-stage dance performance, at the American International School, Maidan Hawalli - Kuwait on Friday, December 30, 2016.

Bhavans achieves remarkable feat in the ICSK mega arts fest

When flairs flamboyantly flaunted at the six venues of ICSK Mega Fest, Indian Educational School, (Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Kuwait) emerged victorious bagging two 'Kalathilakam' (the acme of artistic talents) awards to its credit. The ICSK Mega Arts Fest was organized by the Indian Community School, Kuwait to encourage and applaud the amazingly talented students of Indian Schools in Kuwait.

More than 2000 contestants from as many as 21 Indian schools in Kuwait proudly partook in the biggest art fest of the academic year 2016-2017 in various contests. The contests comprised 80 categories of artistic, literary, oratory, dramatic, music, and performing arts events.

Bhavanites proved their might and mettle yet again with an astonishing array of achievements in almost all the realms of the Art Fest. More than 20 Bhavanites were crowned and accolades were bestowed upon them during the prize distribution ceremony held on December 2, 2016 which was indeed a spectacle to behold. The inspiring presence of the Oscar Award winner Razool Pookutty added luster to the occasion. The concluding segment of the Arts Fest was inaugurated by Mr Sunil Jain, the honorable Ambassador of India to Kuwait.

Reine Mary John and Nakshatra Neeraja Binu of Bhavans Kuwait bagged the 'Kalathilakam' awards of categories 1 and 2 respectively. The amazing duo amassed prizes in very many off and onstage events. Bhavanites also won many prizes in the literary contests like Extempore Speech, Poetry Writing, Essay Writing, Poetry Recitation, Story Writing, and also in artistic and cultural events like Water Coloring, Classical Music, Light Music as well as many others.





Fantasy World celebrates 20-year anniversary with its best friends

Fantasy World celebrated its 20-year anniversary with their best friends, the customers of Kuwait. The brand held the celebrations in two of its most popular stores, Al Rai and The Avenues. One surprise that Fantasy World had in store was Frank Truong, an internationally renowned iPad magician who came all the way from France to further energize the entertaining celebration.

Speaking on this opportunity is Fantasy World's Retail Director Mr Harvey Dulku said, "Fantasy World's presence in Kuwait would not have been possible if it was not for the local community's embrace and support throughout years. This celebration was held to honor our customers, share with them the joy that they helped to grow and ultimately thank them for being our best friends for 20 years."

Fantasy World started operations in 1996 with its first store located at Al Rai. Since then, the brand has developed in various ways to offer the local market with the most original and best quality toys available in the world, a feature that emphasizes the brand's

core values: Kids Deserve the Best!

Additionally, commenting on the event, Burhan Kazi, Fantasy World's Marketing Specialist, said, "This celebration is a tribute to our customers, Fantasy World's best friends, thanking them for their support during the past two decades. We greatly appreciate the continuous support of every community in Kuwait as they helped spread the joy Fantasy World aimed to share with everyone in the country. For that, we are still committed to making playtime for our best friends a fun and memorable time. Frank Truong, a famous magician come from France specially for the celebration utilized modern technology such as an iPad in his acts, amazed the audience with his performance during the festival. We would like to thank Frank for making Fantasy World's celebration a truly memorable one."

It is noteworthy to mention that Fantasy World continues to introduce diverse toys to the local market including ones that have an educational basis. Twenty years ago, the once children who enjoyed shopping for new toys

at Fantasy World have now grown up to be young adults and are now interested in the newest exciting gadgets in the market. That is why Fantasy World has created EDGE, a new department in Fantasy World's stores that caters to adult gifting ideas.

The Edge department, by Fantasy World, stands for Eclectic Designer Gifting Excitements, it is the hub for the most innovative, tech gadgets and unique gifting items targeted for adults. Fantasy World is known to be a trendsetter and market leader due to the international product range it offers. The Edge concept was developed to maintain the excitement of the adult siblings and parents by giving them an experience of the most unique gifting ideas, and offering them product ranges hand-picked from around the world which is not easily accessible in the local market.

Products offered in this division are very unique, some technological-wonders, and some state of the art and they ensure the gift giver is remembered by the uniqueness of the



product they have chosen to gift. The Edge products are hand-picked from around the world keeping in mind the tastes of Kuwait.

Customers are invited to visit any of Fantasy World's stores in Kuwait to explore and experience new toys available at Al Rai, Bustan Mall, The Avenues and Souq Sharq. Voice any

inquiries and concerns by visiting Fantasy World's website (www.fantasyworldtoys.com) social media platforms on Facebook ([fantasyworldtoyskuwait](https://www.facebook.com/fantasyworldtoyskuwait)), Instagram ([fantasyworldtoys](https://www.instagram.com/fantasyworldtoys)) and YouTube ([fantasyworldkuwait](https://www.youtube.com/fantasyworldkuwait)).



GUST representatives win best diplomat awards at BUMUN

Gulf University for science and technology (GUST) participated in Bahrain University Model United Nations (BUMUN) held in Bahrain on the 26th and 27th of November. The trip was sponsored by the Office of Student Life (OSL). GUST managed to win two out of the five awards within an assembly of 88 participants from 30 different universities.

Thousands of middle school, high school, and college students, across the country and around the world annually participate in Model United Nations, which involves substantial researching, public speaking, debating, and writing skills, as well as critical thinking, teamwork, and leadership abilities. Model United Nations, also known as Model UN or MUN, is an extra-curricular activity in which students typically role-play delegates to the United Nations and simulate UN committees. At the end of most conferences, outstanding delegates in each committee are recognized and given an award.

The distinguished students, Mubarak Alenzi and Rakan Al Mutairi, were able to outperform other delegates and win two awards. Mubarak Al Anezi, MUN delegate of Luxembourg said, "MUN is a very valuable experience, it has developed my personality immensely, the way I view politics and of course the importance of the United Nations in maintaining an organized system in discussing important matters."

The Office of Student Life, represented by its head, Ms. Anwar Al Sabah played a key role in this participation as they have organized and contacted the trip in accordance with the



Ministry of Youth Affairs in Bahrain. They have also conducted interviews to choose the participants who will represent GUST in this event.

The GUST delegation consisted of four students, Mubarak Al Anezi, Rakan Al Mutairi, Fahad Al Ayoub, Sara Sallam, and Supervised by Dr Ali Dashti. The delegates were appointed to countries at random which left them with Luxembourg, Mexico, Egypt and South Africa. MUN discusses two topics every year, and this year's topics were Cyber Warfare and developing

Weapons Technology. Participants get a month in advance to prepare for the topics.

This MUN conference was the 12th organized by Bahrain, and was also GUST's first participation in the event. GUST continuously encourages its students in partaking in such opportunities to represent the university. This comes from its belief that activities which implement knowledge gained beyond the classroom provide students with unique experiences that aid them in excelling in their career path.

ABK CLOSES IN CELEBRATION OF PROPHET'S BIRTHDAY

On the occasion of Prophet Mohammad's (PBUH) Birthday, ABK would like to announce that it's branches will be closed for business on Thursday 8th December 2016. The Bank will resume business as usual on Sunday 11th December 2016. ABK's online service and Call Center will be available 24 hours a day during the holiday and can be reached by contacting an ABK service agent via Ahlan Ahli at 1899899.



The Lighthouse Church Kuwait invites one and all to the Christmas Choir "My heart longs for Christmas".

Day 1: December 9
Time: 11:00 am and 12:30 pm services in Lighthouse

Day 2: December 11
Time: 6: 00 pm service in Sanctuary and Parish Hall.

Address: Al Qibla Area, Al Shuhada street, next street to National Assembly

NSS KUWAIT ORGANIZING FREE MEDICAL CHECKUP

Nair Service Society (NSS), Kuwait is organizing a Free Medical Checkup camp in association with Indian Doctors Forum (IDF), Kuwait Heart Foundation (KHF) & Indian Dentists Alliance (IDAK) Kuwait on 16th December 2016, Friday at United Indian School, Abbasiya from 7.30 am till 1.00 pm.

The service of almost 30 eminent doctors from IDF & IDAK including specialists in different fields like Cardiology, Diabetes, ENT, Gynecology, General Medicine, Pediatrics, Orthopedic, Skin, Dental and Vision is the peculiarity of the camp. Also there will be provision for different free diagnostic tests including Cholesterol detection, Blood test, Vision test, Sugar test etc.

The free medical checkup camp is intended for the benefit of all Indian Community members. NSS, Kuwait is inviting all the esteemed members and all those who are interested to avail themselves of the facility. Please note that registration for the medical camp will be done on a 'first come first serve basis' and hence all are requested to register their names at the earliest to ensure that they get the benefit of the services made available in the medical camp. The registration form is available in our website www.nsskuwait.com

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 e-mail: info@kuwaittimes.net



KNCC PROGRAMME FROM THURSDAY TO WEDNESDAY (01/12/2016 TO 07/12/2016)

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MUHALAB-2 ALLIED ARRIVAL TROLLS ARRIVAL ALLIED ARRIVAL	11:45 AM 2:15 PM 4:45 PM 7:00 PM 9:30 PM 11:45 PM	MARINA-1 ALLIED DEAR ZINDAGI -Hindi TROLLS LION ALLIED LION	12:15 PM 2:30 PM 5:30 PM 7:30 PM 10:00 PM 12:30 AM	360°-2 I AM NOT A SERIAL KILLER I AM NOT A SERIAL KILLER I AM NOT A SERIAL KILLER I AM NOT A SERIAL KILLER I AM NOT A SERIAL KILLER I AM NOT A SERIAL KILLER	1:15 PM 3:30 PM 5:45 PM 8:00 PM 10:15 PM 12:30 AM
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FANAR-1 ITALIAN RACE ITALIAN RACE ITALIAN RACE ITALIAN RACE ITALIAN RACE	11:45 AM 2:15 PM 4:45 PM 7:30 PM 10:00 PM 12:30 AM	MARINA-3 UNDERWORLD: BLOOD WARS UNDERWORLD: BLOOD WARS UNDERWORLD: BLOOD WARS UNDERWORLD: BLOOD WARS UNDERWORLD: BLOOD WARS UNDERWORLD: BLOOD WARS	12:00 PM 2:00 PM 4:15 PM 6:15 PM 8:15 PM 10:15 PM 12:15 AM	AL-KOUT.1 UNDERWORLD: BLOOD WARS UNDERWORLD: BLOOD WARS UNDERWORLD: BLOOD WARS UNDERWORLD: BLOOD WARS UNDERWORLD: BLOOD WARS UNDERWORLD: BLOOD WARS	12:45 PM 2:45 PM 4:45 PM 6:45 PM 8:45 PM 10:45 PM 12:45 AM
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FOR RENT

New building in Jabriya Super Deluxe for rent Suitable for Companies, Institutions, Offices or Persons. 3 bedrooms and 2 bathrooms, open kitchen, sitting area, total area 120 m2. Each flat has 1 parking space.

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SITUATION VACANT

Driver needed for Kuwaiti family part-time or full-time. Contact: 60623330 (C 5245) 2-12-2016

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Fakhruddin holder of Indian Passport No. K-3650949 & Civil ID No. 281112702289 has changed my name from Hakim Fakhruddin Ikhlis to Hakimuddin Gakher hereinafter in all my dealings and documents, I will be known by name of Hakimuddin Gakher. (C 5244) 2-12-2016

SITUATION WANTED

Purchase Manager experience 20 years from Jordan, seeking job in one of the leading construction co. Contact: 99061637 (C 5241) 27-11-2016

FOR SALE

For sell new white faux fur (artificial) coat size M and pre owned like new black leather coat size M made in Turkey Tel. No: 55020291 3-12-2016


PRAYER TIMINGS

Fajr:	05:05
Shorook	06:28
Duhr:	11:39
Asr:	14:31
Maghrib:	16:49
Isha:	18:11



Directorate General of Civil Aviation Home Page (www.kuwait-airport.com.kw)

DIAL161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION



Flight Schedule

Arrival Flights on Wednesday 7/12/2016				Departure Flights on Wednesday 7/12/2016			
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	Airlines	Flt	Route	Time
JZR	539	Cairo	00:40	MSR	127	Sharjah	15:50
KAC	102	London	00:55	KAC	575	Sharm el-Sheikh	15:50
THY	772	Istanbul	00:55	KAC	154	Istanbul	15:55
FDK	803	Damascus	01:00	SAW	705	Damascus	16:00
QTR	1086	Doha	01:15	SVA	504	Madinah	16:00
THY	764	Istanbul	01:50	QTR	1072	Doha	16:10
PGT	858	Istanbul	02:00	FDB	051	Dubai	16:25
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	02:05	JZR	787	Riyadh	16:25
MSC	405	Sohag	02:30	JZR	357	Mashhad	16:25
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:30	KAC	662	Abu Dhabi	16:35
UAE	853	Dubai	02:30	RJA	640	Amman	16:55
OMA	643	Muscat	02:55	KAC	118	New York	17:00
KKK	6506	Istanbul	02:55	SVA	510	Riyadh	17:15
FDB	069	Dubai	03:05	GFA	215	Bahrain	17:30
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:10	JZR	777	Jeddah	17:45
KAC	204	Lahore	07:15	UAE	875	Dubai	18:00
FDB	053	Dubai	07:45	FDB	063	Dubai	18:10
KAC	302	Mumbai	08:20	JZR	177	Dubai	18:20
UAE	855	Dubai	08:40	KAC	502	Beirut	18:20
KAC	382	Delhi	08:45	MSR	620	Cairo	18:30
KAC	362	Colombo	09:05	JZR	483	Istanbul	18:40
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:05	QTR	1080	Doha	18:50
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	09:05	AAG	144	IQA	19:00
KAC	352	Kochi	09:10	KAC	512	Mashhad	19:20
QTR	1070	Doha	09:30	ABY	123	Sharjah	19:25
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40	GFA	217	Bahrain	19:30
IRC	6511	ABD	09:55	KAC	778	Riyadh	19:35
MSC	415	Sohag	10:15	KAC	674	Dubai	19:45
IRA	665	Shiraz	10:40	FDB	057	Dubai	19:50
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40	KAC	620	Doha	19:50
KAC	774	Riyadh	11:05	KAC	104	London	19:50
AXB	889	Mangalore/Bahrain	11:10	KNE	381	Taif	19:55
IRM	1188	Mashhad	11:15	KAC	694	Muscat	20:00
JZR	165	Dubai	11:30	OMA	647	Muscat	20:10
IRC	526	Mashhad	11:40	QTR	1088	Doha	20:35
MEA	404	Beirut	11:55	KAC	562	Amman	20:40
SYR	341	Damascus	12:00	MSR	606	Luxor	20:45
IAW	157	Al Najaf	12:00	FDB	5053	Dubai	20:50
KAC	744	Dammam	12:10	JAI	572	Mumbai	20:55
JZR	561	Sohag	12:40	KAC	172	Frankfurt	21:15
FDB	075	Dubai	12:50	KAC	786	Jeddah	21:15
UAE	871	Dubai	12:50	MEA	402	Beirut	21:20
MSR	610	Cairo	13:00	ETD	307	Abu Dhabi	21:20
CLX	792	Luxembourg	13:15	ALK	229	Colombo	21:25
KAC	614	Bahrain	13:30	UAE	859	Dubai	21:40
SVA	9347	Jeddah	13:35	GFA	219	Bahrain	21:45
KAC	564	Amman	13:40	QTR	1082	Doha	22:00
KAC	788	Jeddah	13:45	JZR	125	Bahrain	22:05
KAC	514	Tehran	13:55	ETD	309	Abu Dhabi	22:15
KNE	231	Riyadh	13:55	AIC	975	Chennai/Goa	22:25
QTR	1078	Doha	14:10	JZR	241	Amman	22:45
SVA	500	Jeddah	14:15	JZR	185	Dubai	23:15
FDB	059	Dubai	14:20	PIA	239	Sialkot	23:40
KAC	414	Bangkok	14:35	FDB	071	Dubai	23:45
GFA	221	Bahrain	14:40	BBC	043	Dhaka	23:50
IRC	6521	Lamerd	14:40	JAI	574	Mumbai	23:50
KAC	542	Cairo	14:45	KAC	162	Geneva	23:55
KAC	672	Dubai	14:50				
KNE	529	Jeddah	14:55				
KNE	683	Madinah	15:05				
ETD	303	Abu Dhabi	15:15				
OMA	645	Muscat	15:35				
UAE	857	Dubai	15:45				

CROSSWORD 1453



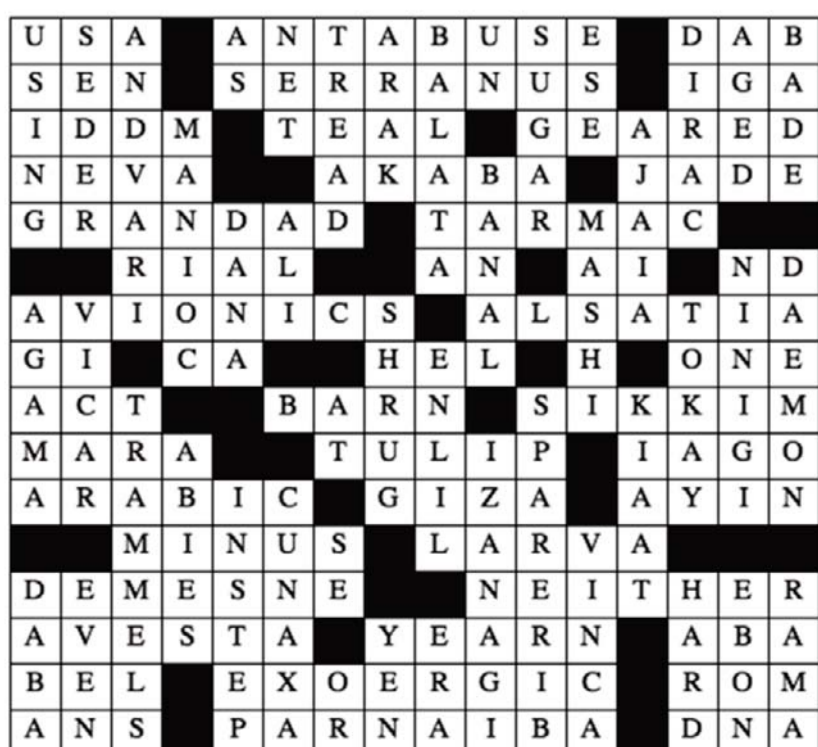
ACROSS

1. Having undesirable or negative qualities.
4. Lacking or showing a lack of what is fitting and considerate in dealing with others.
12. The compass point that is one point west of due south.
15. Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
16. Pain during urination.
17. Concerning those not members of the clergy.
18. A major waterfall in southern Africa.
19. A general direction in which something tends to move.
20. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
21. Experiencing or showing sorrow or unhappiness.
22. Any of various coarse shrubby plants of the genus *Iva* with small greenish flowers.
24. Red Asian weaverbirds often kept as cage birds.
26. Strike with disgust or revulsion.
28. Written on a typewriter.
29. A trivalent metallic element of the rare earth group.
31. (Akkadian) God of wisdom.
33. (Sumerian) Consort of Dumuzi (Tammuz).
37. Flightless New Zealand rail of thievish disposition having short wings each with a spur used in fighting.
41. Clean or orderly.
42. Weaken mentally or morally.
45. Formerly a large constellation in the southern hemisphere between Canis Major and the Southern Cross.
46. Having high moral qualities.
49. Artists or writers whose ideas are ahead of their time.
50. A group of African language in the Niger-Congo group spoken from the Ivory Coast east to Nigeria.
51. A short high tone produced as a signal or warning.
53. Located within the hull or nearest the midline of a vessel or aircraft.
57. An oral antifungal drug (trade name Lamisil) used to treat cases of fungal nail disease.
59. Dress or groom with elaborate care.
61. The phenomenon of resistance to motion through a fluid.
62. American novelist (1909-1955).
65. A young woman making her debut into society.
67. Capital of Armenia.
71. A member of the Manchu speaking people of Mongolian race of Manchuria.
74. United States film maker (1897-1991).
76. A constellation in the southern hemisphere near Telescopium and Norma.
77. Gone by.
78. Showing empathy or ready comprehension of others' states.
80. Automatic data processing in which data acquisition and other stages or processing are integrated into a coherent system.
81. Goddess of the dead and queen of the underworld.
82. A river in northeastern Brazil that flows generally northward to the Atlantic Ocean.
83. Inflammation of the urethra of unknown cause.

DOWN

1. Informal or slang terms for mentally irregular.
2. Largest known toad species.
3. (Irish) Chief god of the Tuatha De Danann.
4. Eurasian perennial bulbous herbs.
5. An anti-TNF compound (trade name Arava) that is given orally.
6. A heavy odorless colorless gas formed during respiration and by the decomposition of organic substances.
7. (astronomy) A measure of time defined by Earth's orbital motion.
8. Of a leaf shape.
9. Of or belonging to an enemy.
10. Small genus of Old World herbs usually included in genus *Brassica*.
11. Make unhappy.
12. Speaking a Slavic language.
13. A small cake leavened with yeast.
14. English poet who introduced the sonnet form to English literature (1503-1542).
23. A silvery ductile metallic element found primarily in bauxite.
25. A city in southern Turkey on the Seyhan River.
27. Relating to or resembling or made of or adorned with pearls or mother-of-pearl.
30. The state or quality of being widely honored and acclaimed.
32. One of the five major classes of immunoglobulins.
34. An uneasy state.
35. A syllabic script used in writing Sanskrit and Hindi.
36. (music) Characterized by avoidance of traditional Western tonality.
38. Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
39. An official prosecutor for a judicial district.
40. Far away from home or one's usual surroundings.
43. Of or relating to the velum.
44. The fifth day of the week.
47. A ductile gray metallic element of the lanthanide series.
48. A cut of pork ribs with much of the meat trimmed off.
52. A Chad language spoken south of Lake Chad.
54. An organization of countries formed in 1961 to agree on a common policy for the sale of petroleum.
55. A state in New England.
56. A doctor's degree in dental medicine.
58. 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.
60. Wood of a pecan tree.
63. A measuring instrument for measuring and indicating a quantity or for testing conformity with a standard.
64. An organic compound that contains a hydroxyl group bonded to a carbon atom which in turn is doubly bonded to another carbon atom.
66. A Chad language spoken south of Lake Chad.
68. Characteristic of false pride.
69. Acute lung injury characterized by coughing and rales.
70. Chevrotaun somewhat larger than the kan-chil.
72. (informal) Informed about the latest trends.
73. A benevolent aspect of Devi.
75. The 21st letter of the Greek alphabet.
79. A soft yellowish-white trivalent metallic element of the rare earth group.

Yesterday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Being able to communicate and get your message across to others is essential now. Your timing should be good for this and those around you will appreciate your effort on their behalf. You may be lecturing today. Getting your message clearly across to others is a talent about which few can boast. Not to worry-people will understand just what you mean. Let's not start any new projects on the home front just now. Spend some time tidying up and enjoying the surroundings. Too much clutter at this time can cause confusion and be quite messy when trying to entertain a guest. Speaking of a guest, you may be surprised by a friend from the past this evening. You will enjoy pulling out the old picture albums and reminiscing.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Your emotional orientation today is towards taking care of business. You just want to get things accomplished. It is exciting just knowing about all the new technical fun things that are coming out this next year. Shopping recently, you are constantly surprised at the wonderful technical discoveries. A friend needs advice about a contract and you know just how to help. This should only be a defining of property rights and you would be wise to send this person running to the courthouse in their city to review the laws with this regard. Money is a powerful force in our lives and our relationships; clarifying issues ahead of time frees one to move forward with a relationship. After such a busy day, you will want to put your feet up and relax.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Your mood this morning is one of wanting to be more private and staying at home. This is probably not the best time to make career or vocational decisions or for giving practical advice to those around you. However, if you are working, you will be pleased to find this a relatively fast moving day. Your ability to use words in a positive way helps you to be successful. Talking should be quite expressive, as your mind will be quite clear and natural. Ideas come flowing to you with ease. This afternoon you look forward to being with those you love and you head home with that same positive thinking. There is power in the tongue and you are aware of the need that others want your appraisal. Acting may be an option as a new play writer is requesting tryouts.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Circumstances may inspire appreciation and enjoyment of your life situation. Your system of values may deepen, providing you with a better sense of discrimination and good taste. Purchasing, selecting colors, etc., are at a high. Today a co-worker peer may be asking you to help with choices of clothing for an upcoming event. You may not have the time to actually point out and suggest but you do have time to write down a few stores that will work with this person and the style or type of clothes that would look good on this person's particular frame. Continued success on the career level may point to your relinquishing some of your ideas about plans. A loving friend that lives out of town may visit this evening.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

You should find this a good time, when your efforts really pay off and things seem to run smoothly. Now you have the ability for sustained work that allows you to coordinate and organize like never before and you bring to close uncompleted tasks. Those that you find nearest and dearest to your heart, like lovers and children, are emphasized at this time. Feeling appreciated and admired for your gifts and talents is a powerful need. Taking chances can bring large rewards. Being in a position to communicate with groups and society in general is a result of your demonstrated ability to understand and be sensitive to others' needs. It is party time soon and you will find this evening a great time to prepare for an upcoming party.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

You get busy with duties and tasks at work. There could be some very important matters that require your attention. At some time this day you may be guiding a young person. Some in-depth discussions find you at your mental best. Your analytical abilities are at a high point. Expect some practical job-related thoughts as you interact with others. The ability to communicate with superiors or describe what you see is strengthened. Later today you may decide on some new ways to proceed with plans that influence a loved one in positive ways. Having a big understanding of conceptual and spiritual ideas and knowing just how to present them to others goes a long way in increasing your popularity, especially in social circles.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Financial expertise and a practical turn of mind are qualities that take on greater importance in your life. A wheeler-dealer attitude and a knack of knowing how to put people, ideas and things together efficiently are quite profitable. Playing the role of the originator is also rewarding. Others will discover just how practical you are when it comes to working with you. You seem to have a built in radar detector that helps you to act without haste or emotion. You may be called upon to utilize your natural abilities. Feeling the need to be respected is important to you and you appreciate acknowledgment. Work, achievement and ambition are the things that mean a lot to you now. Re-mail wrongly addressed snail-mail to your city postmaster.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Taking care of business comes first this morning and you have a lot of incentive to get through your work as quickly as possible. A big wedding or some other celebration is being planned and you cannot wait to be included and helpful. All the family will be involved in helping to make this a great event. There is time this afternoon to run a few errands, including picking up small children from whatever daycare is required. You spend a great deal of time on the phone later this evening and may even help in planning the food or entertainment for this wedding event. You may spend time looking through magazines or articles that will help to guide you. The old has become boring and it is high time to upgrade your ideas.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

You capitalize on team or group efforts in the workplace and may become a group leader by the choice of many. Teaching and guiding others delight you. You enjoy providing a service and solving the little problems that are easily overlooked. Impatience was a problem in youth and it amuses you to see impatience surface in the young. You are helpful when it comes to being a leader and today calls for your ability to add your calming ways to a heated conversation. You seem to have gained the patience of job. When someone wants to know your plans for this next birth year, it may spur you into some serious thinking. Pat yourself on the back-you've done well so far and future plans are sure to be successful.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Luck fortifies your bank account just now. A large investment is better than several small ones at this time. You spread cheer among your co-workers today. Include a new co-worker in a new project; you will be happy with the outcome. Finding a solution to a difficult situation may take most of your attention later this afternoon. There could be some question over a friend of a child. You are very good at sizing up a situation and coming up with the truth and knowing what to do. Now is the time to concentrate and listen and come to the decision you know you should make. There is never enough time to do everything you set out to accomplish. Today however, there is enough time to do the most important things. Make a list and do the most important things first.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Frustrations could be easy to find today, but you will not take long to rise above any difficulties. You break free of any restrictions, whether they are self-imposed or otherwise-you quickly move forward. Higher-ups are watching and are pleased at your progress. Trying to figure out how to organize projects and people could very likely become a topic of special interest just now. This evening your cooperation in a group is important. This time, however, you may not have to create the event-just go with the flow. Take the time to build on these times and create activities with your loved ones that can be remembered for a long time to come. During difficult times, good memories are imperative. It is in the giving that we receive.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Your management abilities are in full swing-as usual. Remembering people's names can be very difficult and word association seems to help when there are people to manage. You will have the opportunity to deal with difficult people today and you do very well. You are very patient and may find yourself working very well with the elderly. Of course, dealing with children also takes patience and discipline and although you won't have to do this today, again, you do very well. If you are feeling bored in your current job, you could always put in for management. It is possible for you to eventually purchase a franchise and this is most certainly something you could consider for the future. Enjoy a meal away from home tonight.

WORD SEARCH

Marine Life

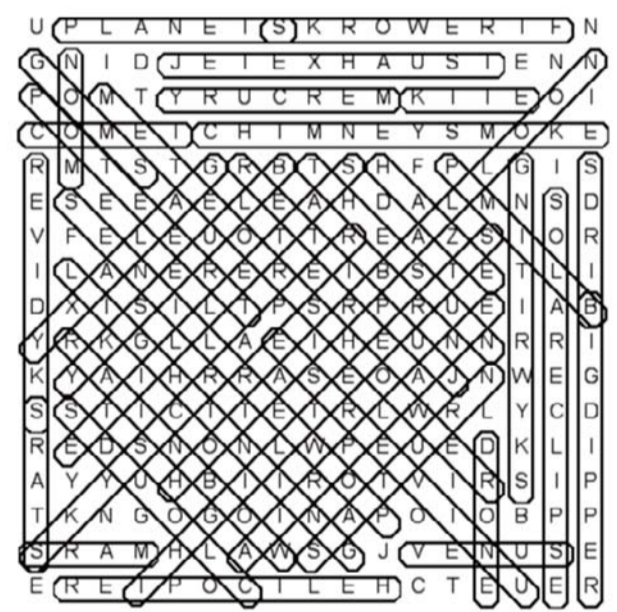
Find and circle all of the listed words that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell the name of a sea animal.



- | | | |
|-----------|-----------|------------|
| ANCHOVY | MANATEE | SEA TURTLE |
| BARRACUDA | MARLIN | SEALS |
| CLAM | OCTOPUS | SHELLFISH |
| CLOWNFISH | OYSTER | SHRIMP |
| COD | PENQUIN | SPONGE |
| CRAB | PORPOISE | SQUID |
| DOLPHIN | PRAWN | STARFISH |
| HALIBUT | SARDINE | STINGRAY |
| JELLYFISH | SCALLOP | TUNA |
| LAMPREY | SEA LION | WALRUS |
| LOBSTER | SEA OTTER | WHALE |

Yesterday Solution

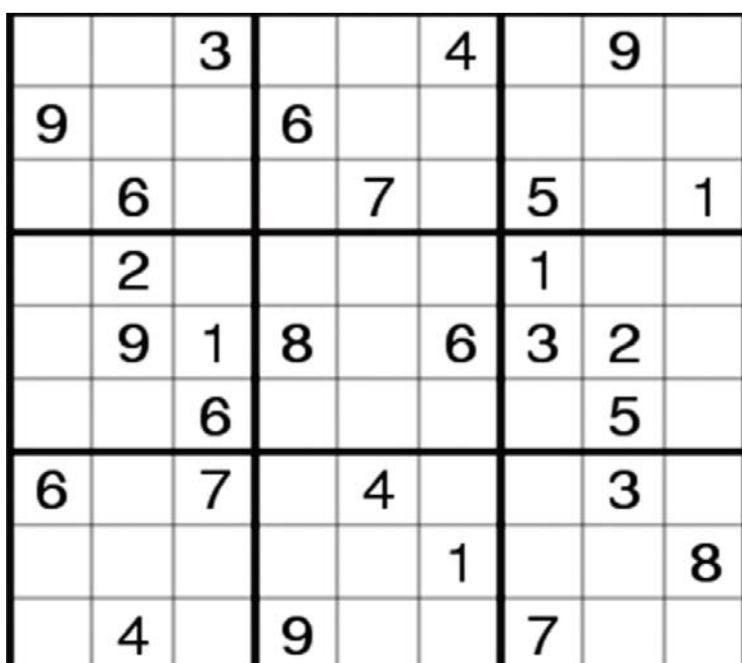
Look Up!



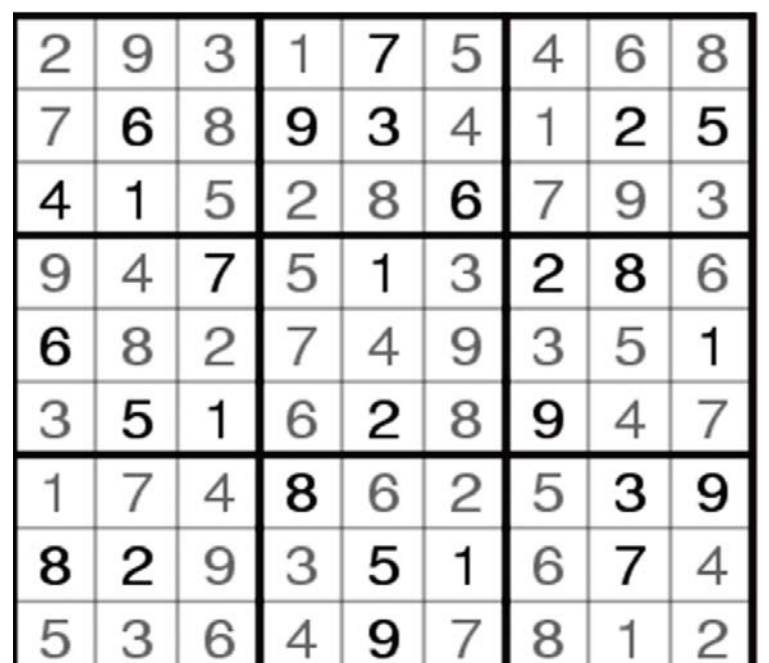
- | | | | |
|---------------|-----------------|---------------|---------------|
| AIRPLANE | GALAXY | METEOR SHOWER | SMOG |
| BIG DIPPER | HAZE | MOON | SOLAR ECLIPSE |
| BIRDS | HELICOPTER | PLANETS | STARS |
| BLIMP | HOT AIR BALLOON | POWER LINES | STREET LIGHT |
| BLUE SKY | JET EXHAUST | RAINBOW | THE SUN |
| CHIMNEY SMOKE | JUPITER | SATELLITE | TREETOP |
| CLOUDS | KITE | SATURN | UNIVERSE |
| COMET | LIGHTNING | SKYDIVER | VENUS |
| DRONE | MARS | SKYSCRAPER | |
| FIREWORKS | MERCURY | SKYWRITING | |

The hidden message is: UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECT

Daily SuDoku



Yesterday's Solution



Roman Polanski: A life marked by horror and scandal

Like his own films, the life of Oscar-winning director Roman Polanski has been haunted by horror, violence and scandal, turning him into one of the world's most visible fugitives from justice. In the latest twist to a child sex case dating back nearly four decades, Poland's Supreme Court yesterday rejected a bid to extradite the 83-year-old Polish-French filmmaker to the United States.

Polanski pleaded guilty in 1977 to unlawful sex with a 13-year-old girl in Hollywood, but fled the US before sentencing. His work has earned applause from critics and audiences alike, winning eight Academy Awards on 27 nominations. But his admission that he had unlawful sex with 13-year-old Samantha Gailey after plying her with alcohol and pills, and his subsequent flight from justice, fuelled a torrent of disgusted criticism. Polanski has since been engaged in a decades-long cat-and-mouse game with US officials seeking his extradition for trial, before a global audience split between continuing outrage and forgiveness for his acts. When Poland's Supreme Court dismissed the appeal yesterday, definitively ending the nation's part in the case, Polanski's lawyer Jerzy Stachowicz told reporters: "We hope one day it will be over in the United States."

Nazi Poland and tragedy in LA

Polanski was born in Paris in 1933 to Polish Jewish parents, who later brought the family back to their native country. He was eight when the Nazis arrested his parents in Krakow's Jewish ghetto sending them to concentration camps from which his mother never returned. He fled the ghetto and roamed the countryside, trying to survive, helped by Catholic Polish families, in a country occupied by German troops. The experience lent a gripping autobiographical authenticity to his 2002 movie "The Pianist", the tale of a young Jewish man trying to evade the Nazis in occupied Warsaw.

His youthful observation of the human capacity for cruelty shaped Polanski's psychologically wrought work from the start. His 1962 feature debut in Poland, "Knife in the Water", was an erotic thriller about a couple inviting a switchblade-toting hitchhiker onto their yacht. While panned at home, it earned praise in the West, and was nominated for the Best Foreign Film Oscar. That reception prompted Polanski to move to England—the first of many self-imposed exiles that nurtured a sense of alienation resonating throughout his work—where he made "Repulsion" (1965), "Cul-de-Sac" (1966), and "The Fearless Vampire Killers" (1967). Lured to Hollywood in 1968, Polanski shot his first big international hit, "Rosemary's Baby", starring

Mia Farrow as an expecting mother carrying the devil's spawn. But tragedy shattered Polanski's life again the following year when his heavily-pregnant wife, the model and actress Sharon Tate, and four friends were brutally slaughtered in the director's mansion by cult leader Charles Manson and his followers.



This file photo taken on March 01, 2014 shows French-Polish director Roman Polanski posing with his trophy during a photocall after being awarded with the Best Director award for his film 'La Venus a la Fourrure (Venus in Fur)' during the 39th edition of the Cesar awards ceremony in Paris on February 28, 2014.

Devastated, Polanski left for Europe, then returned to achieve arguably his greatest triumph in 1974 with "Chinatown"—an atmospheric film noir starring Jack Nicholson nominated for 11 Oscars, and still considered a Hollywood classic.

Running from the law

In 1977 Polanski was arrested after Gailey, now known as Samantha Geimer, charged that he forced her to have sex after drugging her. The initial felony counts were reduced to unlaw-

ful sexual intercourse charges as part of a guilty plea bargain that saw Polanski serve 42 days in detention while undergoing psychiatric evaluation. In 1978, convinced the judge was preparing to ignore the deal and hand him a heavy jail sentence, Polanski fled for France, beginning his new life as a fugi-

any other. Geimer herself called for the charges to be dropped, complaining that in dogging Polanski for so long, antagonists had made him her co-victim in a case she wanted to put behind her.

"The publicity was so traumatic and so horrible that his pun-



This file photo taken on March 28, 2012 shows French-Polish filmmaker Roman Polanski (front center) delivering a speech during a meeting at the Academie des Beaux-Arts (French Academy of Fine Arts), part of the Institut de France, on March 28, 2012 in Paris. — AFP

Although he avoided returning to the US—not even to accept the Oscar for "The Pianist"—Polanski jostled with Justice Department authorities for years after.

In 2009 he was arrested in Switzerland by local authorities acting on Washington's extradition request. Polanski spent 10 months under house arrest before Switzerland decided not to respect the US order, amid a din of international debate over whether he was a victim of vindictive US officials obsessed with decades-old allegations, or a criminal who should be tried like

ishment was secondary to just getting this whole thing to stop," Geimer told CNN in 2003. Despite that view, Washington filed a request with Poland in January to extradite Polanski while shooting a film there. A court in the city of Krakow ruled against the demand in 2015. Then yesterday, the Supreme Court rejected an appeal filed by the government. "We did not find a flagrant violation of the law," Judge Michal Laskowski said. — AFP



Actor Matt Damon gestures in front of Chinese fans as he arrives at a red carpet event for the movie 'The Great Wall' at a hotel in Beijing, yesterday. — AP

MATT DAMON DEFENDS ROLE IN 'GREAT WALL' AGAINST CHARGE OF 'WHITEWASHING'

Hollywood actor Matt Damon yesterday defended his starring role in upcoming Hollywood film "The Great Wall", saying that accusations of "whitewashing", or the use of Caucasian stars over actors of other ethnicities, were unfounded. "Zhang Yimou called me and asked me to be in his movie," Damon said in Beijing, referring to the film's director who joined him on a panel. Damon, also joined by co-star Andy Lau, said he would be "mortified" if he felt the accusations were merited. Critics decried the decision to cast Damon for the fantasy film set in ancient China.

Damon said the issue was "very important" but drew a distinction between the practice and his role in "The Great Wall". "When I think of 'whitewashing' I think Chuck Connors playing Geronimo, that's whitewashing and that's unacceptable," he said, referring to a Caucasian actor who played the Native American chief Geronimo in a 1962 Western. Zhang, the acclaimed director behind "Hero" and "House of Flying Daggers", said the accusations were "unfair"

to Damon. "Once you've seen the film you'll see it's not like that," he said.

"It's a group of people, a group of heroes, and as it's set to the backdrop of a Chinese story so there are lots of Chinese heroes." "The Great Wall", out in China in this month and in the United States in February, features Zhang's trademarks of martial arts and saturated filters, and is centered around the mysterious origins of The Great Wall of China and what the wall's original purpose was. Strict censorship laws have prevented many Hollywood films from being released in mainland China. To counter that, US studios are co-producing big budget movies with Chinese investors. Hong Kong actor Andy Lau, an Asian super-star, said it remained to be seen whether Zhang's "mission" to bring Chinese culture to the West through film would succeed. "It might not be that successful in foreign markets, and I don't know whether people in our Chinese market will appreciate this style, but I think this is a new direction," he said. — Reuters

Chan starring in Carnahan's 'Five Against a Bullet'

Jackie Chan has signed on to star in Joe Carnahan's action movie "Five Against a Bullet" as one of the bodyguards. Lorenzo di Bonaventura is producing the project through this Di Bonaventura Pictures for Sony along with Suretone Pictures, Jordan Schur through Mimran Schur Pictures and Chan. Carnahan came on to the project in 2014 to direct and re-write Alex Litvak's script, set in a small Mexican town under attack by the drug cartel. The story centers on five the world-weary bodyguards who are signed on to protect a Mexican politician after his father is murdered by a cartel, ahead of an election. Bruce Willis was attached several years ago to star in "Five Against a Bullet" but is no longer on the project. Carnahan is currently attached only as the writer.

Hong Kong-based Chan has been acting since the late 1960s and has credits on more than 150 films. Chan's upcoming movies include "Railroad Tigers," "Bleeding Steel" and "The Foreigner." In September, Well Go USA Entertainment acquired his martial-arts comedy "Railroad Tigers" for distribution in English-language territories including North America, the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand. The film is tentatively scheduled to open later this month in China. Carnahan's credits include "Narc," "Smokin' Aces," "The Grey" and "Stretch." Di Bonaventura is best known for the Transformers and G.I. Joe franchises. He was also a producer on "Deepwater Horizon" and New Line's upcoming shark tentpole "Meg." — Reuters



Jackie Chan



In this photograph, Ambassador of France Alexandre Ziegler, (left), creative director Sanya Dhir, (second left), Bollywood actress Vaani Kapoor (second right) and actor Ranveer Singh pose during a promotional event for the forthcoming movie 'Befikre' in New Delhi. — AFP

France bets on Bollywood to lure Indian tourists

As France contends with a drop in tourist numbers following a series of deadly attacks, the government is hoping that a new Bollywood romantic comedy can help it lure Indian visitors. From the golden beaches of the Cote D'Azur to the roof of the Paris opera house and the historic bridges of the Seine, the blockbuster movie "Befikre"—"Carefree" in English—is filled with picture postcard scenes of France. The makers of the blockbuster movie, which hits Indian screens on Friday, say it is the first Bollywood production to be shot entirely on the French mainland.

For French ambassador to India Alexandre Ziegler the new movie, which features Bollywood star Ranveer Singh and Vaani Kapoor, is worth "all the marketing campaigns in the world." "In a country like India, the impact of movies on the dreams people have of visiting an unknown place and on the desire to discover is absolutely huge," Ziegler told AFP. "It is without doubt the biggest influence over travel today for the Indian middle classes." Top tourist hotspots around the world have recently focused on Chinese visitors, but are increasingly setting their sights on neighboring India.

The country's burgeoning middle class is travelling abroad in growing numbers, with 50 million forecast to do so by 2020, up from just 20 million in 2014. Last year 524,000 Indians travelled to France, a figure dwarfed by the number of Chinese and Japanese visitors but which is growing rapidly. Sophie

Lacressonniere, marketing director of the promotional agency Atout France, says the Indian client base is also "resilient to security fears", a key factor in the wake of recent attacks in France.

Other European countries have already enjoyed the Bollywood effect—the number of Indians visiting Spain doubled in 2012 after the release of the hit road movie "You Won't Get This Life Again, parts of which were shot there. Switzerland meanwhile has long loomed large in the imaginations of Indian travellers. Its snow-capped peaks and quiet rural villages were immortalized in the cult films of the Bollywood director Yash Chopra, who died in 2012. All of which meant the French authorities pulled out all the stops when they were first contacted by the makers of "Befikre" last year.

As with most Indian movies, the schedule was tight and the crew spent around 50 days shooting in France in the spring. Lacressonniere says she is now working with French operators to try to organise tours that take in the places where the film was shot. A model of Ranveer Singh will make its debut at Paris's Grevin wax museum next year, and more Bollywood projects are said to be in the pipeline. Ambassador Ziegler believes that in the future France may even get as many Indian visitors as Chinese -- 1.7 million of whom travelled there in 2014. — AFP

Jessica Williams, Cate Blanchett star in Sundance premieres

Former "Daily Show" correspondent Jessica Williams flexes her dramatic chops, Cate Blanchett pays homage to great 20th century artists and "Silicon Valley" star Kumail Nanjiani tells a very personal story in some of the films premiering at the 2017 Sundance Film Festival. Festival programmers announced their selections for the documentary and narrative premiere sections Monday, which has launched films like "Boyhood," "Manchester by the Sea" and "O.J.: Made in America."

As with many years, the Sundance premiere slate can be a place for well-known comedians to take a stab at more dramatic and serious roles. In what's expected to be one of the breakout films and performances of the festival, comedian Jessica Williams stars in Jim Strouse's "The Incredible Jessica James," about a New York playwright recovering from a breakup and finding solace in a recent divorce. Nanjiani is another who might surprise audiences in "The Big Sick," which he co-wrote with his wife Emily V Gordon and is based on their own courtship. He stars alongside Zoe Kazan in the Michael Showalter-directed pic.

The Festival also has films featuring veteran stars in different kinds of roles. Shirley MacLaine stars in "The Last Word," about a retired businesswoman who strikes up an



In this June 15, 2016, file photo, Cate Blanchett arrives at the Women In Film 2016 Crystal And Lucy Awards at the Beverly Hilton in Beverly Hills, Calif.

unlikely friendship with a journalist (Amanda Seyfried) after writing her own obituary. Festival founder Robert Redford, too, is in Charlie McDowell's "The Discovery," about a world where the afterlife has been proven. Jason Segel and



In this May 21, 2016, file photo, Jessica Williams attends the 75th Annual Peabody Awards Ceremony in New York. — AP photos

Rooney Mara also star. Cate Blanchett re-enacts artistic statements of Dadaists, Lars von Trier and everyone in between in "Manifesto"; Michelle Pfeiffer and Kiefer Sutherland co-star in the drama "Where is Kyra"; and

"Avengers" Jeremy Renner and Elizabeth Olsen re-team in the FBI crime thriller "Wind River," the directorial debut of "Hell or High Water" writer Taylor Sheridan.

"Bessie" director Dee Rees is also poised to be a standout with "Mudbound," a racial drama set in the post-WWII South and starring Carey Mulligan, Jason Clarke, Jason Mitchell and Mary J. Blige. "It's quite topical to this time even though it's a period piece," said Festival Director John Cooper. Among the documentaries premiering are a look at the Oklahoma City bombing from Barak Goodman; Stanley Nelson's examination of black colleges and universities, "Tell Them We Are Rising"; and Barbara Kopple's account of a champion diver who announces he is transgender, "This Is Everything: Gigi Gorgeous." "The beauty of independent film is it's not a copycat world, unlike some of the Hollywood stuff where they follow trends," said Programming Director Trevor Groth. "Independent film has always been about originality and choice and something different." The 2017 Sundance Film Festival runs from Jan 19 through Jan 29. — AP



This file shows US singer Lady Gaga poses on the red carpet upon arrival to attend the British Fashion Awards 2016 in London. — AFP

MUSIC & MOVIES

Lady Gaga reveals battle with post-traumatic stress disorder

Pop icon Lady Gaga has revealed an ongoing battle with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), part of the emotional fallout from having been raped as a teenager. The singer-songwriter made the revelation during a television interview on Monday at a New York homeless shelter for gay and lesbian (LGBT) youth. "I told the kids today that I suffer from a mental illness—I suffer from PTSD," said Gaga, speaking to NBC television's "Today Show" program. Two years earlier, the

singer revealed on television she had been raped at age 19, an experience that left her traumatized. A gay icon who has long championed the rights of sexual minorities, Gaga, now 30, urged the youths at the Ali Forney Center shelter to find the courage to face their problems. "I don't have the same kinds of issues that you have, but I have a mental illness, and I struggle with that mental illness every day," she said. "I need my mantra to help keep me relaxed. You are brave. You are coura-

geous." The visit marked the first time the "Born This Way" singer has spoken of having PTSD, although in the past she has revealed battling depression and anxiety. On Twitter, Lady Gaga thanked the shelter residents for "sharing your stories, trauma & pain", and added: "Today I shared one my deepest secrets w/ the world. Secrets keep you sick w/ shame." — AFP

Mel Harris: 'Thirtysomething' stars remain 'close' friends

Almost 30 years since "thirtysomething" went off the air, the now 50-something cast of the drama about a group of American baby boomers remain friends. Mel Harris, who played Hope Steadman on the show, says she and cast mates Ken Olin, Timothy Busfield, Patricia Wettig, Polly Draper, Melanie Mayron and Peter Horton bonded while making the show, which aired on ABC from 1987 through 1991. "We were also there for each other as co-workers, as friends and that bond has continued outside of it. Do we have dinner every Friday night together? No, which would be a hoot, but I would say every few years we get together. We see each other."



In this frame grab from video shot on Nov 28, 2016, actress Mel Harris is interviewed in New York. — AP

Harris says she just recently ran into Olin in Vancouver, Canada, where she's filming the Hulu series, "Shut Eye." "We went to dinner. It was just lovely." The new series, which begins streaming on Dec. 7, is about fake fortune teller Charlie Haverford, played by Jeffrey Donovan ("Burn Notice"), who starts having real visions after suffering a severe head trauma. Harris plays Nadine Davies, a wealthy socialite and one of Haverford's marks. "It's her second bout with psychics," Harris says. "They're very good at getting her to trust them in the face of, 'Oh, I've already been burned once,' and in the course of the journey when she realizes that maybe she can't trust them. It's an awakening event for Nadine Davies."

The role marks the first regular one in almost a decade for Harris who in recent years has been focusing on fixing up old houses and working on TV pilots with her writing partner and husband Bob Brush. She decided to take on "Shut Eye" after Brush took a break from writing pilots to work on a book. Harris says she's not sure yet if she'll continue acting when her writing partner frees up but says for the moment she's having fun. "Otherwise, I wouldn't do it thirty-something years later." — AP



Bob Dylan and Eric Clapton

Dylan, Clapton

manuscripts to go on auction

Original manuscripts of classic songs by Bob Dylan and Eric Clapton will go on auction as part of a collection of rock memorabilia, Sotheby's said Monday. The auction house estimated that the two manuscripts would fetch \$50,000 to \$70,000 each when they go on sale Saturday in New York. The collection includes the manuscript of "Layla," one of rock's best-known songs of unrequited love, which Clapton wrote in 1970 about Pattie Harrison—then the wife of his friend, Beatle George Harrison. She would later marry Clapton before they eventually divorced after nine years.

Clapton wrote the opening lyrics to "Layla," which was loosely inspired by the tale of the Persian Romantic poet Nizami Ganjavi, on the stationery of the Thunderbird Motel in

Miami Beach. Sotheby's will also auction the original typescript of "This Wheel's on Fire," one of the best-known songs from Dylan's 1967 sessions with Canadian folk rockers The Band around Woodstock, New York.

"This Wheel's on Fire," which the future Nobel laureate wrote with The Band's Rick Danko, went on to appear on the 1975 album "The Basement Tapes." Among other items up for auction is a set of seven portraits that Dylan and fellow folk rocker Joan Baez sketched of themselves and each other. Dylan and Baez, who had been lovers, drew the sketches in 1963 on stops at a coffeehouse in Woodstock on their motorcycle trips. Sotheby's estimated that the set would sell for \$30,000 to \$50,000. — AFP



Childish Gambino

New Zealand man latest to claim Prince as father

A New Zealand man is the latest person to say he is pop icon Prince's heir after a judge dismissed a series of other claims, court documents showed Monday. A lawyer for the administrator in charge of Prince's estate agreed to arrange genetic testing on Max Stacey McCormack, but made no secret of his doubts about the claim. McCormack, from Invercargill on New Zealand's southern tip, submitted as evidence a photo of a person who had a "mild physical resemblance" to Prince but did not appear to be the "Purple Rain" star, said David Crosby, who represents Bremer Trust.

"We must admit that we are somewhat skeptical of your claim, given our understanding that (Prince) was completing high school in Minnesota in 1976, as opposed to living in New Zealand for several months," Crosby said in response to McCormack's account, made under oath. In a letter filed with a Minnesota court, Crosby said it was nevertheless theoretically possible that McCormack's mother had sex with Prince. He gave the New Zealander and his mother until December 12 to arrange DNA tests. Little is known about the new claimant. A 2007 article in the newspaper The Southland Times said McCormack, then 30, was in court for allegedly injuring a woman's eye with a machete.

Prince died on April 21 from an accidental painkiller overdose and left no will, setting off a flurry of claims from people seeking to inherit his multimillion-dollar estate and vast song catalog. A judge last week dismissed a claim from Carlin Williams, an imprisoned rapper who said his mother had sex with Prince in a Kansas City hotel. Williams, who has rapped about killing his alleged father, failed a DNA test and the judge, Kevin Eide, formally

excluded him as an heir after a dispute about his request for a new examination. Others who have come forward to claim Prince's estate include a woman who said she had secretly married Prince in Las Vegas and a man in California who said the musician quietly promised him \$1 billion. Prince left behind a sister and five half-siblings but no recognized child or spouse. — AFP



This file photo shows Musician Prince presenting the winner for Record of the Year to Gotye and Kimbra on stage. — AFP

Review

Childish Gambino

gets immersed in the Funk

It's OK not to "get" Childish Gambino's third studio album "Awaken, My Love!" With its lush soundscapes and sparse lyrics, one can only gather that the funk-drenched latest release from the multi-talented Donald Glover is a collection that is to be felt first and understood second - if understanding is possible at all. Outstanding first single "Me and Your Mama" and equally arresting follow-up track "Redbone" are the easiest to digest of the 11-song set. Twinkling chimes and a haunting chorus give way to fiery electric guitar and crashing drums on the former, while Gambino coos and cries out in his falsetto across the swaggering production of the latter.

Both were produced by Gambino's longtime collaborator and Swedish music composer Ludwig Goransson, who has a hand in the majority of the tracks. But Gambino and Goransson's latest project together is nothing like the previous albums and mixtapes. The cartoonish production and silly wordplay are gone. Instead of rapping, Gambino sings from the gut, sounding like Rick James on the spine-tingling

"Zombies," featuring up-and-coming singer-rapper Kari Faux. "They can smell your money, and they want your soul," Gambino sings, in a warning that could easily be about the music industry or Hollywood - the "Atlanta" show creator and music artist knows both.

His voice is ghoulish on the uplifting Parliament-Funkadelic-inspired "Have Some Love" and desperate on the chaotic "Riot," which includes in its credits members of the legendary funk collective. Gambino channels an easier 70s vibe on "Baby Boy." (Think: Sly and the Family Stone.) "Little hands, little feet, tiny heart, tiny beat," he sings before pleading, "don't take him away." It's easy to get lost in the music, with one psychedelic-tinged track washing into another. That is, with the exception of the beachy, annoyingly catchy and slightly out of place "California." Gambino pushes the limits of his sound on "Awaken, My Love!" and while it's not all smooth sailing, it's a trippy ride worth taking. — AP

VANESSA REDGRAVE MAKES DIRECTING DEBUT WITH REFUGEE FILM

Actress Vanessa Redgrave makes her directing debut in London yesterday with a film about refugees, featuring fellow stage stars Ralph Fiennes and Emma Thompson. "Sea Sorrow" recounts life for refugees fleeing European war zones throughout the last century and aims to have an impact on viewers. "We all get tired, we've got to be reminded of the deeper things that make it worthwhile to live and to help others, and that's really why we made this film," Redgrave, 79, told the Press Association. The Oscar-winning actress filmed "Sea Sorrow" in countries including France, Greece, Italy and Lebanon, beginning the project after an image of a Syrian boy washed up on a Turkish beach went viral.

"First and foremost it was my horror at the fact so many refugees were dying who should have been given safe passage, and could have been given safe passage," she said. "I thought of it before but when the little boy Alan Kurdi was found washed up, that was the moment that said 'get going, get started.'" Nearly 12,000 people have died or gone missing crossing the Mediterranean Sea since the start of 2014, according to figures from the UN refugee agency. After a peak of more than one million sea arrivals in Europe in 2015, so far this year more than 350,000 people have made the crossing.

Redgrave also drew on 20th-century experiences for her film, featuring Lord Alfred Dubs who earlier this year campaigned to have more child refugees brought to Britain. The Labor politician was a child refugee him-

self, brought to the UK under the "Kindertransport" program which helped children flee Nazi persecution. "Sea Sorrow", which will be screened at London's Hammersmith Town Hall, was produced by Redgrave and her son Carlo Nero, who said it had particular significance at Christmas. "We have to remember that the Christmas celebration in the religious sense is about persecution and a family of refugees in the Middle East—that is the story and it is our story," he said. — AFP



Vanessa Redgrave

Calling "A Kid" a nice family drama may sound faintly damning, but the fact is the film is just that, a solidly crafted story about a man discovering that his late father, Jean, had another family, told with the right dose of emotion, without sex, and with a finish designed to leave a warm and quasi-tearful glow. In lesser hands, "A Kid" would have tipped into bland sentimentality, but Philippe Lioret ("Welcome") is a master at weaving narratives that balance a sufficient degree of psychological depth with good old-fashioned storytelling know-how. Though the midsection is weak, the movie compensates with a well-played ending that makes it a natural for mainstream Francophone art houses, not to mention Euro satcast rotation and in-flight entertainment.

At 33, Mathieu (Pierre Deladonchamps, "Stranger by the Lake") appears vaguely unsatisfied with his life as a dog-food sales executive in Paris. His relationship with ex-wife Carine (Romane Portail) is good, he's an involved dad to son Valentin (Timothy Vom Dorp), yet he seems to be treading water. Then he gets word that the father he never knew has died in Canada, leaving two other adult sons, and he decides to go to Montreal to meet the family he was unaware existed. Mathieu's sole contact is the person who broke the news by phone, his father's friend Pierre (Gabriel Arcand). At the airport Pierre appears demonstrably annoyed that Mathieu made the journey, urging him to keep his existence a secret from half-brothers Benjamin (Patrick Hivon) and Samuel (Pierre-Yves Cardinal). It's all very perplexing to Mathieu, whose mother died eight years earlier sticking to her story that she'd had a one-night stand and never revealing even his father's name.

Making matters more complicated, Jean drowned in a lake and his body hasn't been found. Benjamin and Samuel head north to the site in the hopes of finding their father's remains; Pierre reluctantly agrees to bring Mathieu along provided he doesn't tell the brothers that he's the half-sibling they don't know about. Here's where the script sags a bit, as tensions between Benjamin and Samuel feel forced (money and religion come into play), and their interactions could have been better played. More meaningful and considerably more satisfy-

ing are scenes with Mathieu at Pierre's home, where Pierre's wife Angie (Marie-Therese Fortin) and their daughter Bettina (Catherine de Léan) offer insight into Jean and his family while extending warmth and understanding to the slightly bewildered Frenchman.

Violent ways

Lioret sets up Pierre's family dynamics as an antidote of sorts to Jean's more fractured household, but in keeping with the helmer's quietly unassuming style, he reveals that loving families come in all forms, and that surfaces rarely offer views into what lies beneath. "A Kid," very loosely adapted from a novel by Jean-Paul Dubois, plays with these notions in a straightforward yet layered manner, contrasting forms of fatherhood without passing judgment. The film also juxtaposes Mathieu's French laissez-faire outlook with the Canadians' more unyielding mindset, in which secrets are allowed to stew and bubble over in sometimes violent ways. That said, there are barely any true fireworks here, just the kind of gradual understanding that comes with hard-won maturity.

Deladonchamps plays a seemingly more conventional character than in recent films, but Mathieu is never less than an interesting figure, decent and kind without being wishy-washy. That's a good summation for the whole film: handsomely made, gently told, and revealing depths that weren't so apparent from the beginning. — Reuters



'A Kid'

Film Review

AWARDS



US model Gigi Hadid (right) poses with her award, alongside the award's presenter Donatella Versace, after being named winner of the International Model award during the British Fashion Awards 2016.



Model Gigi Hadid poses for photographers with her new International Model of the Year award.



Jaden Smith poses for photographers with his new fashion Icon Award. — AP/AFP photos

GIGI HADID crowned model of year at Fashion Awards



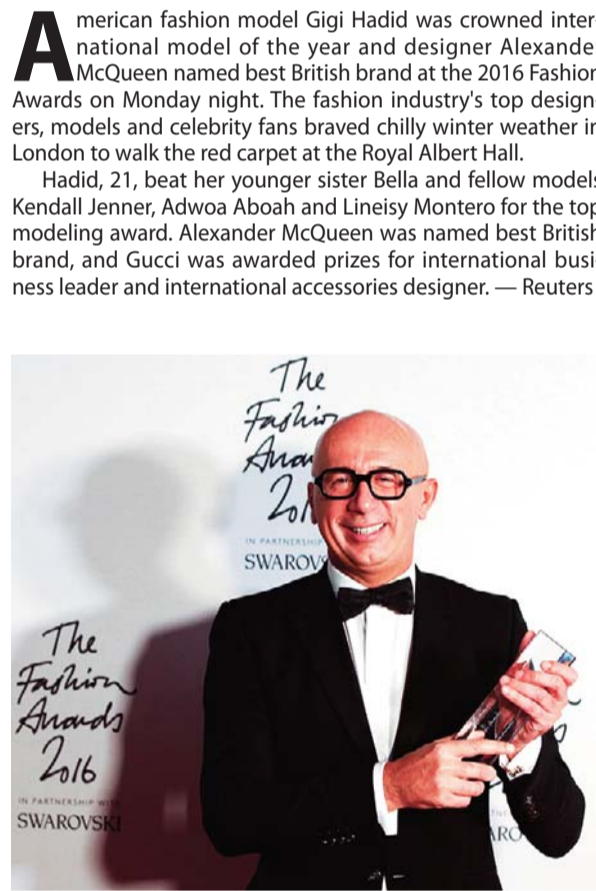
British fashion designer Molly Goddard poses with her award after being named winner of the British Emerging Talent award.



Designer Demna Gvasalia of fashion house Balenciaga poses with his award after being named winner of the International Ready-to-Wear Designer award.



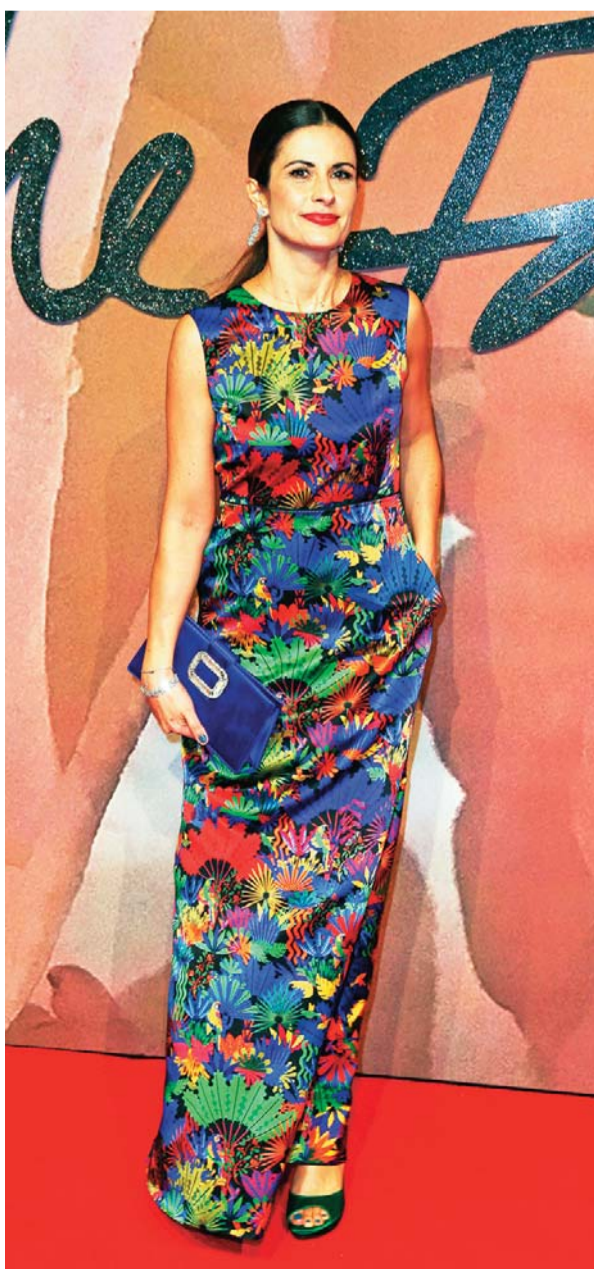
Fashion designer Simone Rocha poses with her award after being named winner of the British Womenswear Designer award.



President and CEO of Gucci, Marco Bizzarri, poses with his award after being named winner of the International Business Leader award.



Alexander McQueen fashion designer Sarah Burton (left), poses with her award alongside the award's presenter British model Naomi Campbell, after Alexander McQueen was named winner of the British Brand award.



Italian producer and wife of Colin Firth, Livia Giuggioli.



Photographer Bruce Weber (right) poses with his award after being named winner of the Isabella Blow Award for Fashion Creator award, alongside award presenter David Bailey.



Fashion designer Ralph Lauren (left) and his wife Ricky Anne Loew-Ber pose for pictures on the red carpet upon arrival to attend the British Fashion Awards 2016.



CEO of Vetements, Guram Gvasalia, poses with their award after the company was named winner of the International Urban Luxury Brand award.

AWARDS



Lady Gaga



CEO of Burberry Christopher Bailey



Designer Alessandro Michele poses with his award after being named winner of the International Accessories Designer award.

Winners

British Emerging Talent
Molly Goddard

Swarovski Award For Positive Change
Franca Sozzani

British Menswear Designer
Craig Green for Craig Green

British Womenswear Designer
Simone Rocha for Simone Rocha

Isabella Blow Award For Fashion Creator
Bruce Weber

Special Recognition Award
British Vogue

British Brand
Alexander McQueen

International Business Leader
Marco Bizzarri for Gucci

International Urban Luxury Brand
Vetements

New Fashion Icons Award
Jaden and Willow Smith

International Model
Gigi Hadid

International Accessories Designer
Alessandro Michele for Gucci

International Ready-To-Wear Designer
Demna Gvasalia for Balenciaga

Outstanding Achievement
Ralph Lauren



British Vogue Editor-in-chief, Alexandra Shulman, poses with her award after being named winner of the Special Recognition award celebrating 100 years of British Vogue, alongside award presenter photographer Mario Testino.



Winnie Harlow



Austrian businesswoman Nadja Swarovski



British actress Jenna Coleman



US model Karlie Kloss



Czech model Eva Herzigova



British model Adwoa Aboah



Fashion designer Craig Green poses with his award after being named winner of the British Menswear Designer award.



British model Naomi Campbell



Scottish-born fashion designer Charles Jeffrey (left) and a model pose for a photo.



British model David Gandy



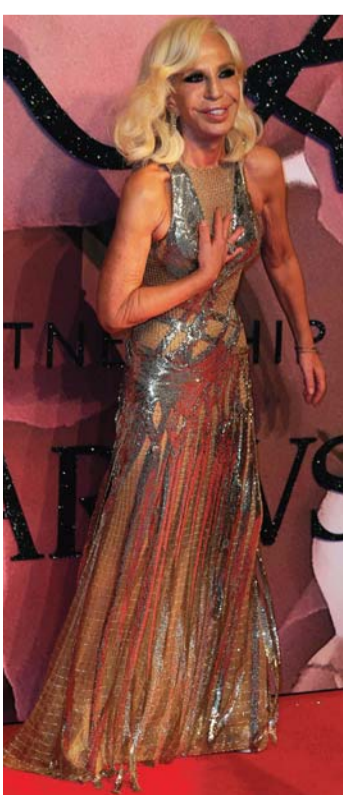
Australian-born Fashion Model Jordan Barrett



US singer Nicole Scherzinger



US singer Marilyn Manson



Designer Donatella Versace



Actress Salma Hayek



British model Daisy Lowe



British model Kate Moss

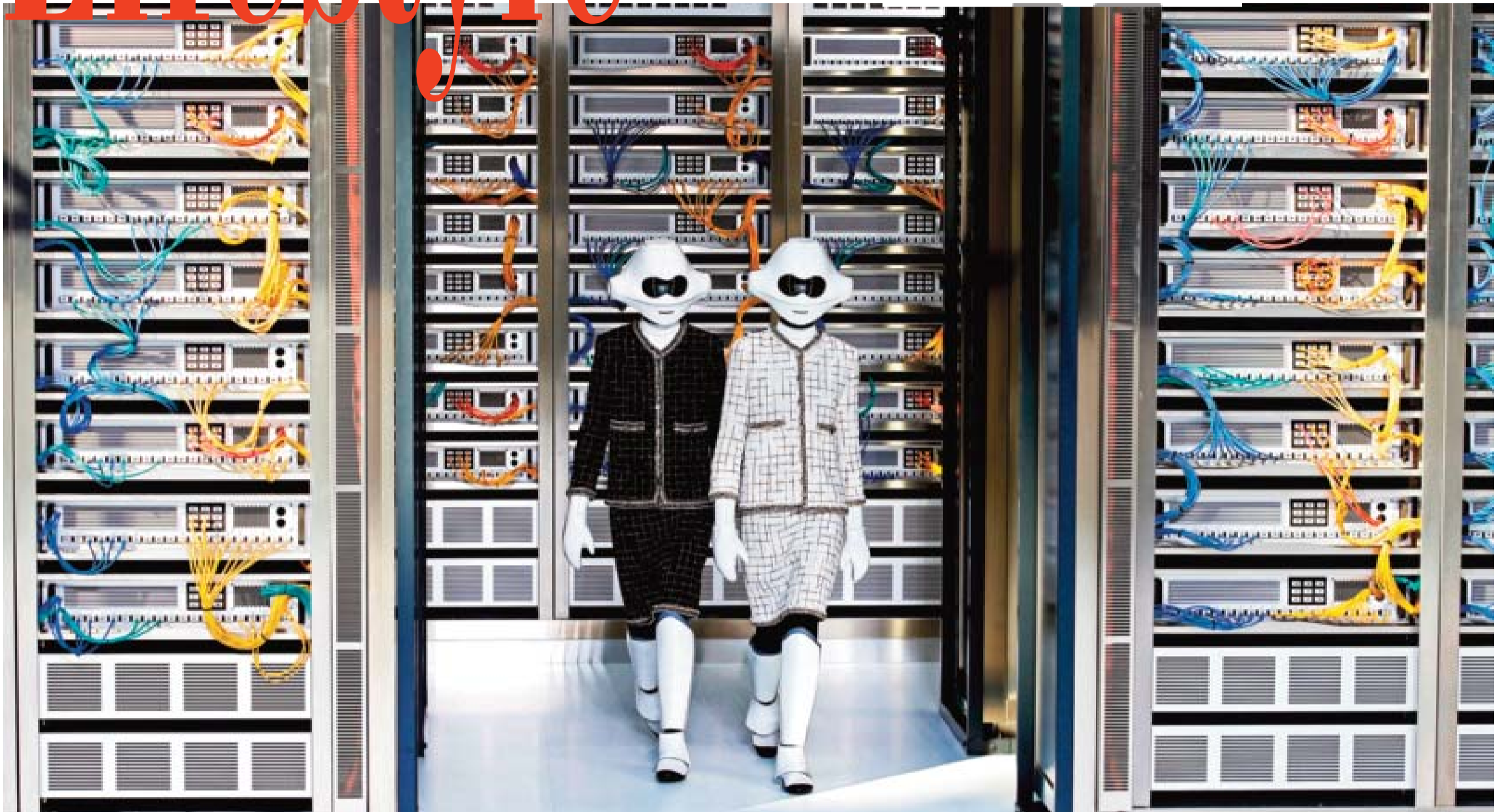


British model Erin O'Connor



Founder of 'Self-Portrait' Han Chong

Gigi Hadid crowned model of year at Fashion Awards



File photo shows models wearing a creation for Chanel's Spring-Summer 2017 ready-to-wear fashion collection presented in Paris on Oct 4, 2016. — AP

Iceland plays the tourism card, for better for worse

An island of ice and lava battered by the Arctic winds, Iceland's dramatic and pristine landscape is attracting a growing number of tourists, not all of whom are respectful of the fragile ecosystem. Along with hikers, nature lovers, reality TV starlets and fans of the series "Game of Thrones" which was partially filmed in Iceland, 1.3 million tourists visited the country in 2015, a number expected to rise to 1.8 million this year. Long a destination that appealed only to the earliest ecotourists and fans of the eccentric singer Bjork, this small nation of 330,000 inhabitants is now reaping the benefits of a thriving tourism sector.

Since the 2008 collapse of Iceland's financial system, tourism has become a pillar of the economy, accounting for seven percent of gross domestic product in 2015. But why are tourists thronging to this remote island, described so darkly in the recent wave of "Ice-lit" crime novels? "It's a place of fire and ice. You can see different things everywhere: geysers, glaciers, volcanoes. Things that you don't normally see in other places in the world," says Marcelle Lindopp, a 28-year-old

Brazilian thrilled by her stay despite a glacial rain lashing her face. "It's the experience of a lifetime, really."

A strange beauty

One has only to drive a few kilometers beyond Reykjavik's city limits to be seized by the beauty and strangeness of the Icelandic panorama. Here, the rocky mountains give way to verdant tundra dotted with horses and sheep. Majestic waterfalls break the monotony of the volcanic rocks. A little further away, near the sea, the cliffs seem to impress even the puffins. Off the coast, bolder visitors can go whale watching, which tourism professionals hope will eventually sound the death knell for commercial whaling. Taking refuge inside a souvenir shop to escape the wind and rain, Jimmy Hart, a 49-year-old Irishman, who visited "Geysir", the hot spring that erupts high into the sky and which has given its name to the famous geysers.

"It's wonderful," he tells AFP. "An amazing experience." "We were at the Blue Lagoon yesterday and it was even bet-

ter than I thought. A beautiful place." In this geothermal bath, visitors can bask in water between 35 and 39 degrees Celsius (95 and 102 Fahrenheit) while enjoying a majestic view of the volcanic hills.

Bieber impact

But does Iceland have the means to fulfill its ambitions? The director of the Icelandic Tourism Research Center, Gudrun Gunnarsdottir, rejects the idea that tourism has exploded out of control with unpredictable consequences. The tourism boom "totally affects the Icelandic community" and "is both positive and negative," she insists. Justin Bieber is one example.

In 2015, the Canadian star shot a music video in the country, which instantly became a huge hit. But the singer, idolized by young fans, ended up sparking an outcry after he nonchalantly ignored the particularities of Iceland's nature and forgetting that it can also be perilous. Bieber swam among the icebergs-risking hypothermia and the danger of detaching blocks of ice and trampled volcanic foam, a protected

species which will take years to recover. Social media went wild and the local tourism office had to release a statement urging tourists to behave more respectfully.

'Protecting nature'

In general, "Icelanders are not as positive as they were one or two years ago" about tourism, says Grimur Saemundsen, chairman of the Icelandic Travel Industry Association (SAF), while acknowledging that tourism has been helping the nation recover from economic collapse. "It has been very good for the economy but tourism has to be controlled way more... Until now the focus has been on quantity and not quality," laments Linda, who runs a boutique selling Icelandic products in central Reykjavik. "We need to invest in general infrastructure... we need to focus on protecting the nature," Saemundsen says. — AFP



Derek Hough as Coryn Collins, foreground left, and Maddie Baillio as Tracy Turnblad, foreground right, during a rehearsal for the musical "Hairspray Live!"



This image released by NBC shows, from left, Maddie Baillio as Tracy Turnblad, Jennifer Hudson as Motormouth Maybelle and Harvey Fierstein as Edna Turnblad during a rehearsal for "Hairspray Live!"



This image released by NBC shows Garrett Clayton as Link Larkin, center left, and Derek Hough as Coryn Collins, center right, during a rehearsal of "Hairspray Live!" — AP photos

You can't stop the beat with 'Hairspray Live!' telecast

In the steadily escalating battle of the TV musicals, NBC's "Hairspray Live!" is the most ambitious contender yet. It's got a deep bench of stars, including Kristin Chenoweth, Jennifer Hudson, Ariana Grande and Martin Short. It boasts strong themes of racial equality, tolerance and self-acceptance. And it has the outsized, joyful talents of Harvey Fierstein as writer and actor, reprising his Tony Award-winning role as Edna Turnblad.

Executive producer Neil Meron also counts the TV musical's timing as a bonus, calling it impeccable despite its 1960s setting and roots in John Waters' 1988 film and, more directly, in the 2002-09 Broadway musical with Fierstein. "People already were excited about it, but after the election they were saying, 'Boy, do we need this now,'" Meron said recently on a Universal Studios set as the cast rehearsed "I Can Hear the Bells" for Wednesday's telecast (8-11 pm EST). With the country in a "divisive place," he said, viewers are eager for entertainment "that can be really healing."

Whites-only rule

"Hairspray Live!" is set in 1962 Baltimore, where "The Corny Collins Show" is TV's hot dance program and the focus of teen Tracy Turnblad's dreams. When she's chosen to perform and gains instant celebrity, the plus-sized dynamo uses it to fight the show's whites-only rule. Tracy is played by Maddie Baillio, 20, of League City, Texas, a college student plucked from more

than 1,300 hopefuls in an open-casting call for her first professional role. Short plays husband to Fierstein's supportive wife and mother.

The cast includes Derek Hough as Collins; Grande as Tracy's pal Penny; Hudson as record-store owner Motormouth Maybelle; Ephraim Sykes as her son, Seaweed; Chenoweth and Dove Cameron as mean mom-daughter duo Velma and Amber Von Tussle, and Garrett Clayton as Link, Tracy's squeeze. Two former "Hairspray" Tracys, Ricki Lake (the movie) and Marissa Jaret Winokur (the play), are set for cameo appearances.

Among the catchy songs sure to rattle around in viewers' brains for days: "Good Morning Baltimore" and "You Can't Stop the Beat." The production is big (55 cast members, 600 costumes, 18 sets) and sprawling, designed to shift between the confines of two Universal Studios soundstages and a variety of backlot locations. It's also got an element of risk, following other recent musicals that aired live to ramp up the excitement factor (and keep viewers tuning into broadcast networks and commercials).

The TV musical competition is both intra- and intermural: The bar for "Hairspray Live!" was set at varying heights by NBC's "Sound of Music," "Peter Pan" and "The Wiz" broadcasts. "The Wiz" aired live in 2015, as did this year's "Grease" on competitor Fox, and "Hairspray" plucked its pair of directors, Kenny Leon and Alex Rudzinski, from those respective telecasts. Jerry

Mitchell, who choreographed the Broadway musical, also is aboard.

Top themselves

The "Hairspray" producers have "certainly upped the ante," said Hough. "The people who are part of this, including some who worked on 'Grease' as well, they want to try to top themselves." Exactly, said Meron, who is producing "Hairspray Live!" with Craig Zadan. The partners also produced the 2007 movie version of the stage musical, with Nikki Blonsky as Tracy and John Travolta as Edna. While "Grease" made creative use of backlot locations, Meron said the "Hairspray" plan is to spend more of the show, about 40 percent, outdoors on the lot.

That will include mundane facades transformed into a colorful Baltimore downtown, one that happens to be in sight of the clock tower featured in "Back to the Future." Neon signs advertise businesses including Waters Plumbing, a bow to the story's free-thinking originator, and Divine Pet Food. That honors the original film's Edna, the late Divine (Harris Glenn Milstead), who set the template for a male to own the role.

As with "The Wiz," which starred newcomer Shanice Williams, "Hairspray" is rolling the dice with Baillio. But Fierstein says it's no gamble. She "has a voice that is just wonderful. ... She's excited about life. She's excited to do this," he told a teleconference, adding, "it's given me a whole new light to have

this terrific new young star." Fierstein showed plenty of spark on the set recently, interrupting an interview to playfully admonish a group of boisterous cast members on break.

Own performance

"Don't make me come over there!" he shouted. Turning serious, the stage veteran said the demands of the TV musical, including learning to remain aware of multiple cameras, have proved a challenge. "In the theater, I'm in charge of telling the audience where to look and what's important. Here, you need to very much give up all control" except over one's own performance, Fierstein said. Director Leon explained that the production "is not theater, it's not TV, it's not a film - it's a hybrid of all of that. That's half the problem, understanding that. So we have to take this team of actors, get them in the same world, and present it in a way so that the viewers at home feel they are the live audience." What they'll discover in "Hairspray," said Baillio, are themes that are as relevant as ever. "One of the things I love about Tracy is her body positivity, and that she sees everyone as equal and believes everyone should be dancing together on 'The Corny Collins Show' and in life," said the sophomore at Marymount Manhattan College in New York. "It's bold to say, but I hope it changes opinions." — AP