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LONDON, UK: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah delivers a speech at the 4th Annual Syrian Donors Conference held in London yesterday. — AFP



JOGGERS BEWARE: CAR THIEVES ARE TARGETING YOU

By Nawara Fattahova

Visitors to Kuwait's parks, walking tracks and other public spaces should be careful when leaving their vehicles unattended with valuables inside such as mobile phones, wallets, purses or cash, even for a few minutes. Hundreds of cases of thefts from cars are reported each year in Kuwait and a growing number are targeting cars left at parks and walking tracks.

Abeer, 30, lost her purse with her wallet and other belongings left inside her vehicle when she went for a walk by the seaside. She was shocked that some had broken into her car but without breaking any window, saying she was sure she had locked the doors.

"I parked my car in the public parking lot near the Scientific

Center to go for a short walk with my friend, children and maid. As I was wearing a jacket, I only took my mobile and some money and left the wallet and the purse with a few other things in the car and even covered them with a plastic bag. It seems the thief used a slim jim (a device used for unlocking a car) to open the doors and steal the bag," she told Kuwait Times.

About a month earlier, Emily lost her belongings after leaving her bag in the car that was parked in the same place near the seaside, when she went jogging. The lot is dark and is not monitored, so it's ideal for thieves. "I think I locked my vehicle. I didn't want to carry my purse when going for a short time jogging, so I left it in the car. When I came back after less than an hour, I didn't find my purse. This will be a lesson for me not to leave my bag

in the car in the future, no matter for how long I'm leaving the vehicle," Emily rued.

Almost daily, reports of vehicle break-ins are recorded in Kuwait and quite often thieves steal cash or other valuables. Another place vehicles are often targeted are mosques, where worshippers are often gone for a specified period of time and thieves can easily break into cars while they are in the mosque for prayers.

Last year, the Ministry of Interior arrested a gang specialized in robbing vehicles, but the thefts continue unabated. Some of the most popular places where these car robberies take place are parking lots near walking paths in areas such as Mishref, Rumaithiya and Sabah Al Salem, and the seaside Corniche in Salmiya.

Also, people have reported their vehicles have been broken into in the public parking lot near Mubarakiya.

It's clear that thieves are aware that these parking lots are not under surveillance, so they feel safe robbing the vehicles, believing they won't get caught.

So never leave valuables unattended in your vehicle, and never leave your car with the engine running even while going to the baqala for a minute, as many cases of cars being driven off by thieves have also been reported.

Local Spotlight

CHARCOAL KILLS!



By Muna Al-Fuzai

muna@kuwaittimes.net

Last week crowned charcoal as the leading cause for deaths in Kuwait. Several people were found dead or in a coma due to carbon monoxide poisoning. I honestly fail to understand why anyone would burn charcoal in their rooms and go to sleep! It is simple - charcoal kills, and should only be used in open places. How difficult is that?

I tried to speak to some people who have witnessed such cases and it seems they now know how dangerous this plan can be. But it's too late for those who died last week. They did not decide to commit suicide in this way, but it is often due to ignorance, poverty and a lack of other means of heating. So they did not intentionally end their lives in this way.

Certainly, the recurrence of such incidents in a small community like Kuwait is puzzling. A citizen reported that two of his workers at his farm died from inhaling carbon monoxide inside their room. The victims, along with a third worker, had lit charcoal in a brazier in an attempt to stay warm during the night. Then they fell asleep. Two of them were found dead the next day, while a third remains in critical condition. If those workers had a decent source of heating or an electric heater, they wouldn't have been forced to use charcoal.

Last week, a father lost his son in the same way. The young man went with his colleagues on a road trip in the desert, and seeking warmth at night, they lit coal and slept in a tent. The next morning, he was unresponsive and admitted to hospital in a coma. He died a few days later. Now the father is in grief over the loss of his son, but I keep thinking what might lead anyone to stay in the desert in such cold weather for any reason. Frankly, I cannot comprehend such actions.

Another couple suffocated due to a charcoal fire. Both are in coma now. The woman, who was pregnant, lost her unborn child, who died in the womb. It's really a sad ending. The question remains: Did those people know about the seriousness of burning charcoal in closed spaces, or is it ignorance? Despite repeated warnings by the Interior Ministry on this subject, this situation keeps happening. Until this cold wave is over, we will witness more people dying.

I repeat: Charcoal kills, so watch out!

New Year

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79

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49

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75

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LONDON: (L to R) UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, Norwegian Prime Minister Erna Solberg, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, the Amir of Kuwait, Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and British Prime Minister David Cameron attend the 'Supporting Syria & The Region' donor conference at the QEII centre in central London yesterday. World leaders gather in London on Thursday to try to raise \$9 billion (8.3 billion euros) for the millions of Syrians hit by the country's civil war and a refugee crisis spanning Europe and the Middle East. — AFP

KUWAIT TO GIVE \$300 MILLION AID FOR SYRIANS

LONDON: His Highness the Amir met with world leaders yesterday and pledged \$300 million from Kuwait at the Syrian donors conference in London. The Amir met with UK Premier David Cameron, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu, Norwegian Prime Minister Erna Solberg and UN chief Ban Ki Moon yesterday as well as Charles, Prince of Wales and Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif.

During the conference, Amir announced a Kuwaiti contribution of \$300 million for aiding Syrian people for a three-year period hoping such an initiative would help in alleviating their hardships. Addressing the conference that kicked off yesterday, he stated, "I am pleased to announce today the State of Kuwait contribution, at the official and grass-root levels, of \$300 million (to be disbursed) in three years in support of Syria, hoping that we will be able to realize the aspired objectives and helping our brothers in soothing their injuries."

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah stressed that the political solution in Syria is the only option for putting an end to the deterioration of the country's humanitarian disaster.

"We emphasize that the humanitarian disaster can be solved only through reaching a political solution aiming to halt the bloodshed and restore stability in our world," the Amir said during his speech yesterday. "We are pinning our hope on the UN Security Council Resolution 2254 which could combat this disaster and address it. We hope that a political solution could be reached to end the suffering of the whole people and help the world get rid of its destructive repercussions," His Highness the Amir said. He added that "we look forward, in this context, that the UN-brokered Geneva meetings could achieve the desired results."

"Due to the ongoing catastrophe, we urge here the international community to continue providing

generous aid for the Syrian people to alleviate their humanitarian suffering and overcome the painful circumstances they are suffering from," the Amir noted.

The Amir said that "we ought to consider new philosophy to provide support for refugees and internally displaced peoples through adopting programs and plans offering education for children to maintain their rights and help them face burdens of life." Education can enable children to plan for their future and protect them from adopting any destructive ideas, the Amir, said, stressing the necessity of approving programs for offering better health services so as to immunize them against epidemics and diseases. Providing special programs are also needed to secure opportunities for children to help them avoid acts which may pose a grave threat to their future, and repercussions of unemployment, HH Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmed pointed out.

He said the big numbers of internally displaced people that "we have recently noticed reflect the severity of suffering and aggravation, by double, of the crisis and its repercussions, facing those brothers." "The London's "Supporting Syria and the Region" Conference was held after Kuwait had hosted three conferences at this level over the last three years, during which participating countries made pledges totaling about \$7.3 billion," the Amir added. The Amir stated that the sums "contributed to meeting required needs and helped in alleviating suffering of the Syrian people who are facing a major humanitarian disaster, in our contemporary world, with the crisis entering its sixth year."

The disaster has not affected "only our region, but also other continents, including Europe which received large numbers of refugees seeking security and a dignified life," the Amir added, indicating that some terrorist organizations emerged from the hotbeds of tension, moved to some European countries so as to launch some criminal acts.— Kuna (See Page 14)



LONDON: His Highness the Amir met with British heir apparent, Charles, Prince of Wales in London yesterday. — KUNA

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- Free Camera Bag.
- One Economy class ticket Kuwait - Dubai - Kuwait

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- Free Camera Bag.
- One Economy class ticket Kuwait- Bahrain- Kuwait

Fifth prize

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- Free Camera Bag.
- One Economy class ticket Kuwait - Bahrain - Kuwait

Sixth prize

- Canon Camera PowerShot G15.
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All photos should be submitted at the Kuwait Times newspaper before 17th of March 2016.

Rules & Conditions:

- The competition is open to individuals of all ages.
 - The submitted photos should be taken by the participant.
 - Every participant is allowed to submit maximum five entries.
 - The photos can be black and white or colour size 40X30 cm.
 - All entries should be provided a hard copy and Soft Copy on a CD (in high resolution) with photo of the participant needs to be included in the CD.
 - The original coupon should be attached to the back of each photo and should include a complete information about the participant.
- The coupons are advertised at Kuwait Times and Al Anba newspapers during the period of competition.
- All submitted photos will become property of Kuwait Times newspaper and can be used for different purposes.
 - The winners will be chosen by a panel of judges.
 - All photos must be original and should not be doctored with any design program, such as Photoshop.

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Taking art to the public

Sketchbook Diwaniya invites public to sketch, draw and live art in daily life

Story and photos by Athoob Al-Shuaibi

In a cafe in the heart of Kuwait City, the ambient music is the kind of music to wrap up the day with. The low lighting is comfortable to the eye. There, one evening, the big square table isn't covered with food. Instead its littered with candles, sketchbooks, charcoal, pencils, colored pens and even iPads. People gathered round the table talk in low voices, concentrating on the sketchbooks in front of them.

In the last few years, Kuwait has experienced a sort of artistic and cultural renaissance, including especially with more and more public art events where anyone can join in. The art community is reaching what politicians couldn't achieve, going beyond borders using creativity as a tool to bring long relationship and a rapprochement to all. People from different nationalities, cultural backgrounds and ages have, finally, realized that they do not need their names to make the news nor to get recognized by museums and art galleries to become artists.

Social hubs, cafes and public parks have opened their doors to home dozens of art

groups to practice their hobbies and to show off their talents. "I had this idea of creating a public event that was not centered around consumption but involves enrichment. Usually, people are in their private bubbles when in public space and I wanted to create a platform, where people who share a similar passion in art can meet and share peaceful creative moments together. I share my work through the social media and I have many virtual friends I wanted to meet them. So, I saw this wonderful table in Poele cafe and spoke to the owners about the idea of making a sketch diwaniya (a reception hall for gathering between relatives, neighbors and friends), and they loved it so we started," explains architect, designer and artist Waleed Shaalan.

The 'Sketch Diwaniya' is one of many such 'artists gatherings' now happening in Kuwait. A young group of architects launched a gathering focused on Kuwait's historical buildings, Draw Kuwait. A popular art cafe and workshop space, Artspace Cafe also hosts artists gatherings and there's also a monthly gathering for designers called Design Diwan. Bazaars and festivals that include public art performances like



the recent Alwan Festival or Art Night Out as well as graffiti art events also attract a growing number of followings. Local art museums or galleries are also holding more family or public days.

"Culture is not only an end product it's a process, and usually, artist are introverts. I

hope to make the process an extroverted activity where people can experience art as a process and engage with the artists and maybe become one. Art is not for the elite and should be liberated from gallerias and museums. It should be part of our lives where we live," explained Shaalan.

Don't let the leftovers give a wrong impression. Floss Regularly

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“Visitors feed them chips, bread, peanuts and even plastic bags... This can make them sick and even lead to their deaths.”

Overfeeding at

Kuwait Zoo



By FatenOmar

Zoos around the world prohibit visitors from feeding the animals lest they be harmed, yet

this is roundly ignored in Kuwait. Despite signs and repeated efforts by zoo staff to warn visitors against feeding the animals, the practice continues. The animals at Kuwait's

zoo - especially after high visitor numbers on the weekends - can often become sick from eating too many snacks, chips, cookies, nuts and other items meant for human

consumption. Parents will often feed animals themselves or let their children do so in the spirit of having fun. The harm to the zoo animals, however, is immeasurable.

“We mean no harm. My son only wants to have fun and feed the monkeys - it's not a big deal,” Egyptian visitor Abu Ahmad told Kuwait Times while his son was feeding the simians after jumping the fence. “The animals seem hun-

gry. If they are feeding them, why do they eat again?” he argued.

Animals well cared for

Obaid Al-Azmi, a veterinarian at the zoo, told Kuwait Times that the zoo's animals are healthy and feeding well, but the bad behavior of some visitors could make the animals' health worse.

“Every animal needs a different type of food. The food given at the





zoo is special and similar to what animals feed on in the wild. Animals get all vaccinations and their nourishment is the top priority for our animal nutritionists. But visitors feed them chips, bread, peanuts and even plastic bags. Animals may also get infected with human diseases when visitors give them food. This can make them sick and even lead to their deaths," cautioned Azmi.

Visitors behaving badly

Azmi said parents behave worse than their children, and do not care for the safety of the animals or their children. "An ostrich died recently because it swallowed some coins. A few years ago, I saw a man stub his cigarette on the giraffe's tongue, while a child threw fireworks inside the monkeys' cage. Parents even made their children ride on the turtle's shell!" he recalled.

Some people blame the vendors selling snacks at the zoo, but Azmi said that the peanuts, chips, and chocolates sold are supposed to be for human consumption and not for animals, because the zoo has clear signs warning against feeding the animals. Sometimes, people bring in foods like bread or lettuce from outside.

About controlling this behavior, Azmi told Kuwait Times that the zoo has many animals, so they cannot get security guards for every cage, especially on Fridays.

Even if they did, parents always get angry and fight with the poor guards if they try to prevent their children from "having fun". So the zoo management found that the best solution was to install more railings to prevent visitors from reaching the animals.



Nutrition vs accessibility

About animal nutrition, Azmi said: "Animals are not picky - they eat anything, but first we have to offer the food gradually. We had a problem with our leopard after visitors tried to feed it live rabbits, but it fled.

These are zoo animals - they are not used to hunt their food." He said artificial feeding can result in dietary vitamin and mineral deficiencies. "It can also lead to animals aggressively seeking out food from people, sometimes resulting in injuries, and can also cause diarrhea. Diarrhea is what we face every Friday after visiting hours," he explained.

A few days ago, Azmi tried to save an elf goat, but it died. When an autopsy was conducted, plastic bags were found in its stomach. After their deaths, a Korean taxidermist embalms the animals, which are displayed at the visitor center of the zoo for educational purposes.

Azmi took Kuwait Times on a tour inside the building where workers prepare the animals' food, on which the zoo spends KD 144,000. "We have an entire building for chopping and preparing food by nutrition specialists, using the finest meats, fresh vegetables and fruits. We have also room for grain storage," he said.

On a parting note, Azmi said visitors must remember two very important things. "Do not feed the animals - just have fun watching them. And do not tease them, because provoking them causes mental stress. Other behaviors by visitors like spitting and smoking can prove dangerous, as these acts adversely affect the health of the zoo animals," he advised.





Pinoy Arabia FM Team

Mobile apps a new trend for Pinoy radio lovers

By Ben Garcia

This reporter started as a radio announcer in the year 2000 at the Ministry of Information in Kuwait. Compared to now and those years, the approach was absolutely different. During my time at the ministry, conventional equipment was a familiar sight in the studios. The Internet had just started to emerge, and mobile phones were in their infancy. In fact, it was a melange of old and new technology in broadcasting.

As an announcer, I still remember the traditional letters via snail mail flooding into the studio from our listeners. Although electronic mail at that time was slowly picking up, 'emails' were still considered as tools used by a privileged few, since the Internet at that time was not as affordable as now. For example, domestic helpers could not afford an Internet connection at that time, except maybe through Internet cafes.

So it was a luxury for many - rather than spending money on something they didn't understand much, many would settle on a much easier and conventional way. Sending mail through the post was a very familiar activity for many at that time, and delivery took a week to a month. This was the case till 2004. As for my radio program at that time, I received tens if not hundreds of letters daily from listeners. I still have some of them with me as they are part of my memories and a proof of the final throes of the snail mail system. Most of the letters I received as radio announcer at that time were greetings and dedications to mostly friends and loved ones throughout Kuwait, but also many from the Philippines. Senders usually talked about their struggles in life and troubles they encountered as housemaids.

As we were starting, floppy disks were commonplace. Those were eventually replaced with CDs, then eventually with USB flash drives. Over the radio, we were playing songs and music through 'reel players' with technical and sound engineers at the ready - those were replaced too.

Internet radio

The Pinoy radio station which we launched in Kuwait in March 2000 at the Ministry of Information was created by virtue of an Amiri decree. It airs two hours daily on medium and shortwave band over Radio Kuwait. While problems of OFWs were almost similar a few years back, new technologies appear to have transformed many things

Most of the letters I received as radio announcer at that time were greetings and dedications to mostly friends and loved ones throughout Kuwait, but also many from the Philippines.



dramatically. It transformed not just the way we use the equipment available, but the way listeners have adapted to the changes of time - and as the saying goes, the rest is history.

In an instant, problems and requests can be easily shared through social media, using Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Mobile apps like Viber, Skype and WhatsApp are now fully utilized and the Internet has become a cheap means of entertainment. Messages and communications are now sent in an instant. Social media has emerged as the ultimate entertainment tool for many.

The form of radio we traditionally know has also evolved quickly. Although traditional AM/FM radio frequencies still exist in all countries of the world, many listeners nowadays have shifted their loyalties to mobile radio apps. This can be attributed to mobility and easily access anywhere in the world.

In 2014, Marina FM 88.8 introduced Filipino Internet radio powered by Android and iOS through mobile phone applications. Marina FM treats its listeners not just through its traditional radio frequency, but in this Internet age, they also connect their listeners through live streaming programs via Internet and mobile radio. Marina FM 88.8 has created a separate app for Filipino listeners - Pinoy Arabia FM. Unlike conventional radio which airs through traditional frequencies or transmitters in specific countries, Internet radio can be heard anywhere and any place at any time, as long as you have an Internet connection at home or at your workplace.

The mobile apps can be downloaded from Google Play for Android and the App Store for iPhone. These are stand-alone radio apps (meaning they are not connected to any radio frequency), and their programs are similar if not more dynamic and interactive compared to traditional radio. Pinoy Arabia FM airs daily from Marina FM and plays Filipino/foreign music 24/7, with news and information programs.

"A smartphone is necessary to connect to Pinoy Arabia FM mobile app, and who doesn't have one in this age anyway?" said Randy Mendoza, Pinoy Arabia Team Leader. "Most people in Kuwait are now comfortably using smartphones, thanks to telecommunication companies in Kuwait and throughout the world that maintain customer loyalty by offering rewarding packages of Internet connections and smartphones for you to enjoy. Such packages help connect us to the Internet any time of the day, and enjoy listening to our programs," he added.

KUWAIT AIRWAYS RETIRES 1,350 KUWAITI NATIONALS

DUBAI: Loss-making Kuwait Airways has let go of 1,350 Kuwaiti nationals during the last two years, part of a plan to cut costs and return to profit by 2019, the chief executive of the state-owned carrier said yesterday. The airline has struggled to recover from Iraq's 1990-91 invasion of Kuwait. Complex bureaucratic procedures have further sidelined it from the boom in Gulf aviation over the last two decades.

Staff cuts of nationals are extremely rare in Kuwait, which redistributes significant oil wealth to citizens through high-paying jobs with state entities and social welfare programs. The number of people employed by the airline, however, is one of the main drawbacks to its turnaround plan, industry experts say. "Since two years, almost 1,600 people left the airline, taking the golden handshake," said Chief Executive Abdullah Al-Sarhan, referring to redundancy packages.

The airline, however, obtained

special government approval to call back into service 250 of the retired pilots, crew and engineers, due to shortages created by the aviation boom in the region, he said. It currently

employs 5,800 people. Kuwait Airways is still reviewing a plan to let go of 1,000 non-Kuwaiti staff under a plan first announced in 2014, Sarhan added.

Profitability

Kuwait Airways has posted losses each year bar one since the Iraqi invasion, which saw aircraft and parts stolen, and since 2012, the govern-

ment has strived to improve the airline's finances. Sarhan said the turnaround measures were starting to bear fruit, noting that Kuwait Airways would post a narrower 2015 loss. The carrier posted a KD 33 million (\$109.2 million) loss in 2014, versus KD 67 million the year before. "We have an initial target of three years from now to be positive, so we're talking about 2018-2019," he said.

The turnaround measures included converting Kuwait Airways to an independent, albeit state-owned company and allowing it to circumvent the audit bureau, which enabled the carrier to order new planes for the first time since the Iraqi invasion. The government is also funding a new fleet, and Kuwait Airways ordered 35 Boeing and Airbus aircraft in 2014, and also agreed to lease 12 Airbus aircraft. The airline also plans to review its flight routes, and cut out unprofitable ones while boosting flights on more popular segments. —Reuters



KUWAIT'S OIL PRICE WEAK WITH POSSIBLE RISE IN Q2

KUWAIT: The price of oil will continue to be weak in the upcoming months with a possible rise in the second quarter of 2016, said oil analyst Ali Al-Shatti yesterday. Al-Shatti said that the oil market might be able to accommodate the resumption of Iranian oil production in the coming months, noting that such thing will be verified soon. The current status quo of the market is a direct result of the surplus in production especially from Russia, said Al-Shatti, adding that there were current efforts by OPEC and independent oil producers to find a balance between supply and demand.

Regarding expectations for the oil prices, Al-Shatti said that the average price for the Brent mix is expected to hit \$37 per barrel near to the Kuwaiti oil expected price of \$30 pb. He stressed that the stability of the crude oil price was an essential factor in benefiting both producers and consumers, adding that the stability will encourage more investments in the oil sector. However, production levels from Iran, the US, China, and Russia as well as the exchange rate of the US dollar and other factors will play a determining role in painting the picture for the oil price which is expected to make sort of recovery within this year, the analyst said. —KUNA

KUWAIT MP ABUL TARGETS EXPATS' SALARIES, BENEFITS

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: MP Abdullah Abul called on Finance Minister yesterday to cut generous benefits offered to some expatriate employees in many government ministries and departments to help reduce budget deficit. The lawmaker said that many expatriate employees in government departments and state-owned authorities are granted benefits like comprehensive health insurance for them and their families, allowances for housing, furniture and air tickets for their families, in addition to cars, education for their children at foreign schools and other benefits.

The lawmaker said a reduction to these benefits will certainly help save some of sizeable expenditures in the government efforts to finance the budget deficit which resulted from the drop in oil prices. Abul demanded a list of all expatriates employed by government departments and authorities working in the insurance, investment, financial and others.

The list should include the monthly and annual cost of the employees and the value of monthly and annual wages of the expatriate employees. He also demanded a detailed list of the benefits those employees receive from their government employers. The lawmaker asked the minister if the ministry of finance had previously asked the government departments to cut the generous benefits provided to expatriates.

Meanwhile MP Abdulhameed Dashti called on the government to ensure the participation of citizens in at least 50 per-



MP Abdullah Abul

cent of new projects with the investor taking 26 percent and the government keeping the remaining 24 percent. The lawmaker said that the government should use state reserves to pay for the citizens' participation in those projects through Initial Public Offering (IPO).

'ALMAHOUD'... A SYMBOL OF OLD KUWAITI GLAMOUR

KUWAIT: "To all who don the "Mahoud", you have kept me awake while others slumbered, after this calm comes anxiety." Those were the words serenaded by Gulf and Kuwaiti voices, in description of a garment worn by brides on their wedding. "Almahoud" is a type of head garment, hand-made for the fairer sex to wear on their wedding, an occasion marked by sheer jubilation, where entire neighborhoods worked tirelessly to ensure that this joyous day would go on without a glitch.

As customs would have it, the engagement, a process no less significant than the wedding itself, is organized by the groom's family. Kuwaiti brides were renowned for

their beauty, clad in glittering apparel made from the most superior fabrics, in addition to jewelry including rings and bracelets. Then, a bride would not feel complete without the ever conspicuous "Almahoud."

"Almahoud", which is typically worn as a piece that draped over the head, was distinct for its sentimental value, as famed poet Abdullah Al-Hatem had glorified the garment in one of his poems. Riyadh Mohammad Al-Baghli, whose family have long toiled in the tailor industry, spoke about the details behind the famous Kuwaiti headdress. "Almahoud", Al-Baghli described, was a black fabric sewn using golden and silver stitches,

made from silk. The tailoring process, as it relates to the "Almahoud", would actually differ depending on the season, he noted.

As for the price of these beloved garments, Al-Baghli said that they were typically purchased for 150 to 200 Indian Rupees, Kuwait's pre-independence currency, an amount afforded by only the most affluent, he pointed out. Al-Mahoud was a prominent feature of Kuwaiti weddings well into the early 1950s, only to fade away with the passing of time. Sadu House, a historic art museum in Kuwait city, is said to be the only place with remnants of what had once been an emblem of Kuwaiti pride. —KUNA



KUWAIT: Wafra firemen rushed to the scene where a car crashed in residential Sabah Al-Ahmad area. Two persons were injured and one was found dead.

SHOOTING INSIDE HOTEL

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Interior Ministry operations received a call about a person inside a Bidaa area hotel shooting at random. Meanwhile, the suspect who was placed under arrest appeared to be abnormal. In another development, Jahra detectives are looking for an unknown person who stormed a restaurant in Jahra at dawn yesterday with a firearm and a knife, but failed in his robbery and then escaped.

Smuggling attempts foiled
Airport customs foiled two attempts to smuggle marijuana in to the country. An Asian was caught with 4 kg of marijuana hidden in plastic boxes. Few hours later, a maid was caught with another kilo of marijuana she attempted

to smuggle into the country.

'Iphone 6' stolen
An Egyptian telephone salesman told Jahra police that an unknown person came into the store and asked for an 'Iphone 6' - then he took it and ran away. The Egyptian ran after him, but the suspect got into his car and drove towards the Egyptian in an attempt to run him over.

Campaign on cafes
Municipality Public Relations Department said that Jahra emergency team launched a campaign on cafes that 'use areas for commercial purposes' before obtaining the necessary licenses in Sulaibiya. They said that five encroachments were removed.



Crime

Report

Fishermen attacked by 'pirates'
KUWAIT: Three Egyptian fishermen were injured when they were intercepted by two boats with eight men on board near Kubbar island and threatened them with arms. The Egyptians resisted the men, most of whom later escaped. One, who jumped into the boat of the Egyptian fishermen, was caught and later found to be Iranian. The Egyptians radioed the Coast Guard who rushed to the location and took them to Amiri hospital and the Iranian was taken to Sharq police station.

Citizen swindled over driver
A citizen in his 30s complained against another man for swindling him out of KD 980 when he promised to transfer the residency for his driver, but disappeared after getting the money. The citizen filed his complaint at Adan area police station. Detectives are investigating.

Fintas fight under control
Ahmadi police brought a fight between four men in Fintas under control, caused by staring. All four are citizens and were taken to Fintas police station for further legal action.

Girls under the influence
Two minor girls were arrested by police under the influence of drugs in Sharq area, and both had drugs with them. The two below 19-year-old citizens were sent to Drugs Control General Department. Meanwhile, Hawally detectives arrested an ex-convict citizen, wanted to serve a five-year jail sentence. Detectives learned about the whereabouts of the suspect in Kabd area, they went there and arrested him after attempting to escape.

MODERATE WEATHER IN DAYTIME, COLD IN EVENING

KUWAIT: A moderate weather during the day and cold at night is predicted for Kuwait in the upcoming days, acting director of the Meteorological Department Samie Al-Othman said yesterday. The extreme cold weather will decrease fairly, where a moderate temperature and sunny weather will be during the daylight hours and remain cool at night in some areas, Al-Othman said. Maximum temperature recorded yesterday ranged between 19-21 degrees, where the weather will be cold and drop in temperature between 6-8 degrees. Today Al-Othman predicted a sunny weather with a maximum temperature between 21-23 degrees, and a cold weather at night where the temperature will be between 7-9 degrees, and on Saturday it will be between 23-25 daytime and between 9-11 degrees at night. — KUNA

MINISTRY INKS 2 DEALS

KUWAIT: Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs Dr Ali Al-Omair signed yesterday two agreements to renovate the Fifth Ring Road and overhaul a water transfer pipeline, both totaling KD 154 million. A statement by the Public Works Ministry said the first agreement will aim at rebuilding the Fifth Ring Road, including maintenance reaching all the way to western side of the road, with a total value of KD 108 million. The deal also focuses on establishing and completing vital bridges in addition to providing other services on the roads' sides. The second agreement stipulates establishing and maintaining the water pipeline for transfer and treatment in the main control center, dubbed DMC, all the way to Al-Wafra pumping station, with a total value of KD 46 million. — KUNA

JAHRA HOSPITAL HOLDS FIRST PEDIATRIC CONFERENCE

KUWAIT: Al-Jahra Hospital is organizing the first international pediatric conference and exhibition in Kuwait. The event will kick off today at 2:30 pm in Salwa Sabah Al-Ahmad Hall, located by the Marina Hotel in Salmiya, under the patronage of Al-Jahra Governor Lieutenant General (Ret) Fahad Al-Ameer, a health official announced yesterday.

The two-day event, themed "Updates in common pediatric diseases", will bring together regional and international senior medical professionals, scholars, and officials, who are active in the field pediatric diseases, to present and discuss the most up-to-date scientific discoveries and practices in the varied fields of pediatric diseases, in addition to participation by state and private sectors from Kuwait, GCC, Arab, and world countries, Dr Fahad Al-Enezi, Head of the pediatric department at Al-Jahra hospital, stated to KUNA.

The scientific forum will include plenary sessions, oral presentations, and interactive debate sessions to give participants the chance to share the latest experiences and

advancements in the pediatric diseases field, Dr Al-Anezi, who is also the chairman of the event's organizing committee, said, adding that hands-on training workshops on pediatric and neonatal critical ultrasound will also be held during the conference. Pediatric experts will discuss a number of important topics and updates on pediatric diseases, including pulmonology, immunology, emergency, endocrinology, neonatology, gastroenterology, medication, neurology, hematology, genitourinary, and cardiology, he mentioned. — KUNA

Kuwait Times and Al-Anbaa's Photography Competition

Sponsored by Burgan Bank, Zain, Nasser Al-Sayer Company, Official Canon dealers in Kuwait Held at Holiday Inn - Salmiya

The 10th Photography Competition, organized exclusively by Kuwait Times in cooperation with Al-Anbaa newspaper, kicked off on January 5, 2016 and runs through March 17, 2016. Adnan Saad, Kuwait Times Deputy General Manager and the competition's organizer, said in that regard that the competition takes place annually, adding that this year's event will carry the theme 'Kuwait in our Eyes.'

The competition is open for participants from all ages, Saad said, adding that participants will have the opportunity to capture images through their camera lenses that reflect the cultural, social, civilized and heritage aspects of the society. Furthermore, it allows people to capture images reflecting social and cultural activities and celebrations during the month of February, as well as celebrations of the 10th anniversary of His Highness the Amir's ascension to power, and the selection of Kuwait as a Capital of Islamic Culture for 2016.

The Sabah Al-Ahmad Heritage Village also offers several folklore and musical activities held during February, offering photographers the chance to capture beautiful pictures that can qualify them to win one of the competition's valuable prizes.

There are several basic ideas for the snapshot can be built using the camera. For example, inspiration can be derived from the Kuwaiti environment, the sea or even the faces around us. Selecting the right picture qualifies the photographer to winning this year's competition.

The competition also seeks motivating and improving the skills of photographers, both professional and amateur, as well as highlighting photography as a tool to improve and document artistic skills, in addition to focusing on the creative and skillful contributions of Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti participants.

Each participant can submit a maximum of



five works; each with a maximum size of 30X cm. The works must be owned by the participant, as he or she would lose the right to obtain the prize if proven otherwise. You can also benefit from the special offer presented by 'Albumi' company to print high resolution pictures for your photos in a special price during the duration of the competition. Pictures carrying texts, signatures or which were modified will be disqualified. The judging panel's decisions are final and cannot be challenged. Further, all pictures submitted by participants will be considered property of the competition's organizers, who retain the right to use them in any way they deem proper without reference to their owners.

You do not have to be a professional photographer or use a professional camera to participate; you can submit pictures taken by a phone's camera or any other camera, as long as the picture carries elements of creativity inspired by the environment.

The awards will be distributed during a ceremony which takes place at Holiday Inn – Salmiya, the official host of the competition. The competition is sponsored for the third year by Burgan Bank as a main sponsor, in cooperation with Zain. Nasser Al-Sayer Company, the official dealers of Canon cameras in Kuwait is also participating by presenting valuable prizes. All winners will be invited to attend the awarding ceremony which takes place at Holiday Inn – Salmiya. The winning pictures will be selected by a judging panel comprising of specialists in the

art of photography. Their selection will be based on creativity and artistic effects pertaining with lighting and composition, which can contribute in delivering the message in an influential and fascinating way, through a distinguished picture that shows Kuwait in our eyes.



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International

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Billions pledged for Syria at London donors conference

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Trump, Cruz at loggerheads as Republican race gets personal

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Watchtowers, walls, rise as Turkey seals border against IS

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GAZA: A Palestinian man looks out over destruction in part of Gaza City's Al-Tufah neighborhood in this file photo. — AFP

WEST BANK UNREST SIMMERS

GAZA, ISRAEL ON EDGE

GAZA: Struck in an Israeli air raid in the 2014 Gaza war, Mohammed's home was only recently rebuilt but he remains undaunted by the prospect of another showdown with the Jewish state. "I'm not afraid of Israel," the 35-year-old father of six said while seated on floor cushions in his home in the Zeitoun neighborhood of Gaza City, his children occasionally peeking their heads in the door. The member of the leftist Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) said preparations for another war have included rebuilding attack tunnels destroyed by Israel two years ago.

As a wave of Palestinian stabbings, shootings and car-rammings have shaken the West Bank and Israel, the Gaza Strip has remained relatively calm. But increasingly belligerent rhetoric from both Israel and Hamas, the Islamist group that rules Gaza, along with the reconstruction of tunnels the Jewish state says could be used to attack it, have renewed fears of yet another conflict in the enclave still recovering from the 2014 war. In many ways, another confrontation with the Israeli military would be the last thing the Gaza Strip needs—there have been three since 2008. Around 100,000 people are still displaced and the unemployment rate is among the world's highest.

An Israeli blockade has been in place for nearly

a decade, tightly restricting the movement of goods and the 1.8 million Gazans. Beyond that, a more radical strain of Islam has taken root, with Hamas seeking to limit the influence of Salafist jihadists who sympathize with the Islamic State group and who have claimed responsibility for recent rocket fire toward Israel. All of it deeply concerns those involved in rebuilding Gaza. Robert Piper, the UN's deputy special coordinator for the Middle East peace process, told AFP after a recent visit that it "remains on a frankly disastrous trajectory of de-development and radicalization, as far as I can tell".

Underground heroes

The deadly January 26 collapse of a tunnel belonging to Hamas's armed wing, the Ezzedine al-Qassam Brigades, as well as another on February 2 drew fresh scrutiny of the movement's intentions. The tunnels have been used to store weapons and stage attacks in the past, with Hamas officials saying they are necessary to defend against Israel's firepower. In 2006, a group of militants entered Israel through a tunnel, seized Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit and smuggled him back to Gaza, resulting five years later in a prisoner exchange that saw more than 1,000 walk out of

Israeli jails. Last month's collapse killed seven Hamas militants who were hailed as heroes, with Ismail Haniya, Hamas's chief in the enclave, giving a speech at their funeral at Gaza City's main mosque. "East of Gaza City, underground heroes build tunnels" along the Israeli border, while west of the city they are "testing rockets every day", said Haniya. A Hamas official later called them "defensive tunnels for the protection of our people in the face of any Israeli aggression". Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu responded with his own threats. "If we are attacked from tunnels from the Gaza Strip, we will take very strong action against Hamas, much stronger" than in 2014, he said.

Violence since October has already killed 26 Israelis and 164 Palestinians. Most of the Palestinians were killed while carrying out attacks, while others were shot dead during clashes and demonstrations. While violent protests have broken out along the Gaza border, with a number of Gazans shot dead by Israeli forces during clashes, the strip has so far played only a limited role in the unrest. Some analysts say Hamas would prefer to rebuild rather than face another war. But it cannot remain completely on the sidelines during what many Palestinians are calling a new "intifada", or uprising, in the West Bank.

'Started with stones'

It must also contend with pressure from Salafists, though the threat has so far been seen as limited. Among the narrow streets of Shati refugee camp near the Gazan shoreline, a man claiming to lead a Salafist group said he could see himself travelling to Syria or Iraq to fight with the Islamic State. Sporting a thick beard and an olive green jacket, he told AFP he believed Hamas's version of Islam was not pure enough and that he was among those who had split from Al-Qassam Brigades to join the Salafists.

"Our jihad is to have Allah's religion on the ground," he said. The militant said Salafists had fired rockets at Israel in defiance of a truce that ended the 2014 war in revenge for Hamas's arrest of its members. Hamas was said to have arrested around 100 of them last year. But for those like Mohammed, the Gazan who has finally moved back into his home, the enemy is Israel. He said he received a warning phone call from the Israeli military before his home was hit in 2014 that gave him minutes to evacuate the family. "We started with stones," he said defiantly, referring to the first intifada in 1987-1993. "Now we have rockets. As long as Israel stays on my land, the resistance will continue." — AFP

KOSOVO'S FM RECEIVED DEATH THREAT FROM IS

PRISTINA: Kosovo's foreign minister and former premier Hashim Thaci says he received a death threat purportedly from the leader of the Islamic State organization over his opposition to the extremist group. "It was a death threat against me and my family," Thaci said in an interview on Wednesday. A Pristina news website this week reported details of a letter addressed to then-prime minister Thaci in late 2014, allegedly signed by IS chief Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, calling on him to abandon Kosovo's alignment with the West or face "great revenge".

Thaci, who is now front-runner to become president of Muslim-majority Kosovo this year, confirmed that he had received a threatening letter from Baghdadi, saying he would "not step back or retreat from any threats" in tackling Islamic fundamentalism. About 300 of Kosovo's 1.8 million people have joined the jihadists' frontlines in Iraq and Syria in recent years—the highest proportion of any European country's population.

But there are now fewer than 70 still fighting, according to Kosovo's government, which has made high-profile arrests of recruiters and returnee fighters and strengthened legislation against them. On a recent visit to Pristina, US Secretary of State John Kerry said Kosovo had "set a powerful example" for the region but added: "It's obvious that more needs to be done." Thaci rose to prominence as political leader of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), a pro-independence ethnic Albanian guerilla group, during the 1998-1999 war against



PRISTINA: Kosovo's Foreign Minister and former premier Hashim Thaci speaks during an interview with AFP in Pristina yesterday. Thaci said he received a death threat purportedly from the leader of the Islamic State organization over his opposition to the extremist group. — AFP

Slobodan Milosevic's Serbian forces.

Milosevic's army withdrew from the southern province after an 11-week bombing campaign by NATO, and in 2008 it was Thaci who declared Kosovo's independence from Belgrade. More than 100 countries have recognized Kosovo's sovereignty, but not Serbia or its big ally Russia. Thaci's image has been tarnished by a 2011 Council of Europe report that alleged he led an organized crime network during and after the war involved in assassinations and the trafficking of drugs and human organs, amongst other accusations—charges he strongly denies.

A new EU-backed court to try alleged

war crimes committed by members of the KLA is due to open in The Hague this year. "My life was threatened by Milosevic and now by IS... With the same allies that I won the battle against Milosevic, I will win the battle with IS," Thaci said on the sidelines of the Gernia Hill regional security conference in Pristina. The 47-year-old said Kosovo "identifies with Euro-Atlantic values". Kosovo hopes to join the European Union, and Thaci warned that delays to Balkan countries' integration with the bloc were "opening more room" for Russia, Islamic fundamentalism and nationalism to operate in the region. — AFP

SOUTH SUDAN BILL LIMITS FOREIGN AID WORKERS AMID HUMANITARIAN CRISIS

JUBA: South Sudan lawmakers have passed a controversial bill restricting numbers of foreign aid workers, sparking fears it will hinder efforts to help millions in need in the war-torn young nation. The Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) bill, passed by parliament on Wednesday, means no more than a fifth of aid workers can be from abroad, a level many humanitarians believe is simply not viable. Aid agencies must "ensure that not less than 80 percent of the employees are South Sudanese nationals at all managerial, middle and junior levels," the bill read, according to a copy seen by AFP Thursday. It must still be signed by the president to pass into law.

Aid workers contacted by AFP asked not to be named following the bill. They said there was also concern at a clause making the issuing of a "false statement" about the bill punishable by up to three years in prison, as well as a possible 50,000 South Sudan pound fine, over \$2,000 or 1,790 euros at current rates. Aid agencies already employ large numbers of South Sudanese—often far higher than the 80 percent level now required—but not at senior levels or among technical specialists. Civil war began in December 2013 when President Salva Kiir accused his former deputy Riek Machar of planning a coup, setting off a cycle of retaliatory killings that have split the poverty-stricken, landlocked country along ethnic lines. Tens of thousands have died in two years of war, more than 2.3 million people have been driven from their homes and 3.9 million South Sudanese face severe food shortages. East Africa's IGAD bloc last week called on rival forces to allow food into conflict zones on the brink of famine, where aid workers have warned tens of thousands may be dying of starvation. United Nations aid agencies, as well as the International Committee of the Red Cross, are exempt from the bill. A similar bill was passed in May 2015, but was later sent back to parliament.

Increasingly aid dependent

Foreign agencies often provide the only source of healthcare for vast areas of the country. At least 34 aid workers have been killed since the war began, and have repeatedly complained of harassment, surveillance and threats of expulsion. Fighting continues despite an August peace deal, and the conflict now involves multiple militia forces who pay little heed to paper peace deals, driven by local agendas or revenge attacks. As part of that peace deal, warring sides agreed to support an "enabling" environment for aid agencies. — AFP

Kuwait Times

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LONDON: German Chancellor Angela Merkel shakes hands with Prime Minister David Cameron, (right) at the 'Supporting Syria and the Region' conference at the Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre in London yesterday. —AP

BILLIONS PLEDGED FOR SYRIA AT LONDON DONORS CONFERENCE

GERMANY, UK, NORWAY THE LEAD WAY, PROMISE \$5.5 BN

LONDON: Donor nations pledged yesterday to give billions of dollars in aid to Syrians as world leaders gathered for a conference in London to tackle the world's worst humanitarian crisis after the breakdown of peace talks the day before. With Syria's five-year-old civil war raging and peace talks in Geneva halted after just a few days, the conference will try to address the needs of some 6 million people displaced within Syria and more than 4 million refugees in other countries. "The situation is not sustainable. We cannot go on like this. There is no military solution. Only political dialogue will rescue the Syrian people from their intolerable suffering," UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon told the meeting.

United Nations agencies are appealing for \$7.73 billion to cope with the disaster this year, plus \$1.2 billion needed to fund national response plans by countries in the region. Conference co-hosts Britain, Norway and Germany were the first to announce their pledges. Britain promised an extra 1.2 billion pounds (\$1.76 billion) by 2020, raising its total commitment to 2.3 billion pounds. Norway pledged \$1.17 billion

over the next four years, while Germany said it would give 2.3 billion euros (\$2.57 billion) by 2018. The almost five-year-old conflict has killed an estimated 250,000 people and driven millions into Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey and beyond.

For European nations, improving the humanitarian situation in Syria and neighboring countries is crucial to reducing incentives for Syrians to travel to Europe, where a large refugee influx has put many countries under severe strain. "The German government is convinced that the refugee movements can be solved by fighting their reason for leaving. London is a major step to come closer to this aim," German Chancellor Angela Merkel told reporters at the conference. A UN envoy halted his attempts to conduct Syrian peace talks on Wednesday after the Syrian army, backed by Russian air strikes, advanced against rebel forces north of Aleppo, choking opposition supply lines from Turkey to the city.

Arriving at the London conference, US Secretary of State John Kerry said Russia had a responsibility to live up to its UN commitment to allow access to humanitarian aid and to cease attacks

on Syrian civilians. Kerry said he had spoken to his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov and the pair had agreed on the need to discuss how to achieve a ceasefire in Syria. US and Russian support for opposing sides in the war, which has drawn in regional states and enabled the spread of Islamic State insurgents, means a local conflict has become an increasingly fraught global standoff.

Merkel told the conference that all parties were responsible for achieving a ceasefire, but especially Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad. Ban said it was disturbing that the first steps in the Geneva peace talks had been undermined by a lack of sufficient humanitarian access and by a sudden increase in aerial bombing and military activity on the ground. "The coming days should be used to get back to the table, not to secure more gains on the battlefield," he said. The conference will focus particularly on the need to provide an education for displaced Syrian children and job opportunities for adults, reflecting growing recognition that the fallout from the Syrian war will be very long-term. —Reuters

SYRIA PEACE TALKS STALL AS REGIME FORCES ADVANCE

LONDON: The US demanded Russia immediately halt its bombing campaign in Syria yesterday after a bitter breakdown in peace talks exposed the deep rift between world powers aiming to end the five-year conflict. On the ground in Syria meanwhile President Bashar Al-Assad's forces made a breakthrough, entering two Shiite villages that had been under siege by rebels after also advancing around the second city Aleppo. Syria's state news agency SANA reported "mass celebrations" in the streets of Nubol and Zahraa as people welcomed army troops and celebrated the breaking of the siege. Peace talks in Geneva were suspended Wednesday until February 25, with UN special envoy Staffan de Mistura saying "more work" was needed.

The talks had been tipped as the most important push so far to end Syria's bloody conflict, which has killed more than 260,000 people and forced half the country's people from their homes. But French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius accused Damascus and Russia of "torpedoing the peace efforts" in Geneva with the offensive. Russia has been launching air strikes in Syria which it says are targeted at "terrorist organizations" such as the Islamic State group. Fabius added that world powers would hold "in-depth consultations" on their actions at the aid conference in London.

US Secretary of State John Kerry warned Moscow to halt its bombing of the Syrian opposition in what he said was a "robust" phone call with Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov. "We discussed, and we agreed, that we need to discuss how to implement the ceasefire," he added. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said the temporary pause in the talks showed "just how deep, how difficult the divisions are." At the start of the conference in London, co-host British Prime Minister David Cameron urged a political transition away from Assad in Syria "however difficult that may be."

'Crisis will grow'

The suspension of the talks came as donors gathered in the British capital aiming to raise billions of dollars in aid for Syria and to help its neighbors cope with millions of people that have taken refuge on their soil. Ahead of the talks, Britain pledged £1.2 billion in aid to be spent between 2016 and 2020 on what Cameron called "the world's biggest humanitarian crisis." German Chancellor Angela Merkel, under growing pressure over her open door policy for refugees amid Europe's biggest such crisis since World War II, pledged 2.3 billion euros.

Some 4.6 million Syrians have fled to nearby countries—Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq and Egypt—while hundreds of thousands have journeyed to Europe. Jordan's King Abdullah II told the conference his country of around 6.5 million people had "reached our limit" after taking nearly 1.3 million refugees. Lebanon's education minister Elias Bou Saab told BBC radio that his nation of four million people had taken 1.5 million Syrian refugees. "We have been dealing with an ongoing earthquake for the past 4 years," he added. "This crisis is going to grow, especially after what we heard yesterday when they postponed the peace negotiations."

As well as drumming up aid, the conference will aim to allow more refugees to work in their host countries and boost education. In an editorial in the Guardian newspaper, Cameron warned that a shortfall in UN funding for Syria "is fatally holding back the humanitarian effort." "Last year, across the whole international community, only half of the money requested by the UN was raised," he said. The UN is appealing for nearly eight billion dollars, while regional governments are seeking an extra \$1.2 billion. Organizers have already agreed that participants should at least "double" their contributions from 2015, when they raised \$3.3 billion.

Talks deadlocked

De Mistura's brief at the Geneva discussions was to coax both sides into six months of indirect "proximity talks" envisioned under a November roadmap, but problems plagued his efforts from the start. The opposition High Negotiations Committee (HNC) arrived several days late and reluctantly insisting on immediate steps to allow aid to get through to besieged cities, a halt to the bombardment of civilians and the release of thousands of prisoners. Riad Hijab, HNC chief coordinator, said late Wednesday the group "will not return until the humanitarian demands are met or (we) see something on the ground." They were set to hold a final meeting before leaving Geneva, a source close to the opposition said. —AFP

AUSTRALIA CHURCHES TO OFFER SANCTUARY TO ASYLUM-SEEKERS

SYDNEY: Australian church leaders yesterday said they would offer sanctuary to asylum-seekers facing removal to a remote Pacific detention camp, vowing to defy the government's harsh immigration rules.

The asylum-seekers, who were brought to Australia from Nauru mostly for medical reasons, number more than 260 and include 37 babies born in the country and 54 other children, advocates said.

The Anglican Dean of Brisbane, the Very Reverend Peter Catt, said the churches were reinventing the "ancient concept of sanctuary" by opening facilities such as St John's Cathedral in Brisbane to the asylum-seekers. Catt told the Australian Broadcasting Corporation the concept of sanctuary was not

tested under law, "but my hunch is that if the authorities chose to enter the church and take people away, it would probably be a legal action".

He added: "So this is really a moral stand and it wouldn't be a good look, I don't think, for someone to enter a church and to drag people away." Asylum-seekers, including children, who try to reach Australia by boat are sent to off-shore detention centres in Papua New Guinea and Nauru, where they can be held indefinitely while refugee applications are processed. They are blocked from being resettled in Australia even if found to be genuine refugees. Many of the asylum-seekers brought to Australia from Nauru are being held at Wickham Point, a secure facility near Darwin in northern Australia. —AFP

TRUMP, CRUZ AT LOGGERHEADS

REPUBLICAN RACE GETS PERSONAL

NEW YORK: Donald Trump launched a full-blown attack on Republican arch-rival Ted Cruz on Wednesday, accusing him of stealing victory in Iowa as the Texas senator bit back, rubbishing the mogul's presidential credentials and questioning his sanity. Fighting back from second place in the Iowa caucus this week, Trump lashed out on Twitter, telling his six million followers that the evangelical conservative had only won the first vote of the 2016 election by fraud.

"Ted Cruz didn't win Iowa, he stole it. That is why all of the polls were so wrong and why he got far more votes than anticipated. Bad!" Trump wrote. Cruz fired back a salvo several hours later. "Yet another #Trumpertantrum... @realDonaldTrump very angry w/the people of Iowa. They actually looked at his record," he wrote on his Twitter account. Trump slammed Cruz for putting out a statement from Iowa saying that a fellow candidate, retired neurosurgeon Ben Carson, was quitting the race, and "lying" to thousands of voters about Trump's policies. "Based on the fraud committed by Senator Ted Cruz during the Iowa Caucus, either a new election should take place or Cruz results nullified," Trump wrote.

On the campaign trail in New Hampshire, Cruz looked to capitalize on his momentum against the New York billionaire, who leads Republican polls in the Granite State. "I wake up every day and laugh at the latest thing Donald has tweeted. Because he's losing it," said Cruz. "We need a commander in chief, not a twitterer in chief. We need someone with judgment and the temperament to keep this country safe. I don't know anyone who would be comfortable with someone who behaves this way having his finger on the button." Trump has run a media blitzkrieg campaign, dishing out insults against his political rivals, Mexicans, women and Muslims, sucking the television air time away from every other candidate in the race.

Iowa loser

But his Iowa tally-in second place at just above 24 percent, marginally ahead of Senator Marco Rubio in the first vote raises serious questions about whether showmanship has a winning strategy. A second hiccup, at the New Hampshire primary next Tuesday, would spell political disaster for the reality television star. Cruz won 27.7 per-



PORTSMOUTH, NH: People applaud while listening to Republican presidential candidate Sen Marco Rubio during a campaign town hall event at the Frank Jones Center yesterday in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. Rubio is hoping to gather momentum in New Hampshire after placing third in Monday's Iowa caucuses, finishing one percentage point behind Donald Trump and four points behind the leader, Sen Ted Cruz (R-TX). — AFP

cent of the vote in the Republican caucus in Iowa, staking his claim to be the new standard bearer of the right. Rubio, whose star has risen in recent weeks, took more than 23

percent, anointing him as the Republican establishment candidate of choice best placed to defeat presumed Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton. — AFP

US MILITARY'S F-35 STILL DOGGED WITH 'DEFICIENCIES'

WASHINGTON: The US military's futuristic F-35 fighter jet remains dogged by dangerous problems sure to further complicate what is already the most expensive weapons project in history, a Pentagon report says. The plane, which boasts a version that can take off and land vertically, is supposed to form the backbone of the military's future fighter fleet, ensuring US dominance in the skies for years to come with radar-evading technology.

The military has already taken delivery of dozens of the planes, but new batches continue to be refined and tested. In the latest blow to the program, engineers uncovered a slew of flaws during extensive testing of the newest versions of the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter, the Pentagon report found, adding to a litany of issues including software bugs, technical glitches and cost overruns.

Perhaps the most damning section of the report is an investigation into the F-35's eject system. Engineers found that pilots who weighed less than 136 pounds (62 kilos) risked being killed by it. "Testing showed that the ejection seat rotates backwards after ejection. This results in the pilot's neck becoming extended, as the head moves behind the shoulders in a 'chin up' position," the report states. It also revealed that one version of the stealth fighter made for the Marine Corps found "deficiencies and limited combat capability."

And an Air Force variant had "inherited deficiencies," the report states, noting that the issues could delay the Air Force F-35's release date past the scheduled year-end deadline. The Pentagon has budgeted nearly \$400 billion for a total of 2,443 F-35 aircraft. Nine international partners including Britain, Canada and Turkey are helping pay for the jet's development and are buying hundreds more of the jets, which are manufactured by Lockheed Martin.

But the program has faced numerous setbacks, including a mysterious engine fire in 2014 that led commanders to ground planes until the problem could be resolved.

Pentagon officials have acknowledged that a decision at the outset to start building the jet before testing was finished has caused difficulties. As a result, glitches have forced repeated repairs and redesign work, slowing down production and raising costs. Following the document's release on Monday, Lieutenant General Chris Bogdan, who is the F-35 program's executive officer, released an upbeat statement saying the report contained "no surprises." "All of the issues mentioned are well-known to (us), the US services, international partners and our industry team," he said, adding that the report "points out the progress being made by the program." — AFP

US EYES WAYS TO TOUGHEN FIGHT AGAINST DOMESTIC EXTREMISTS

MILITANT GROUPS PRESENT 'CLEAR AND PRESENT DANGER'

WASHINGTON: The US Justice Department is considering legal changes to combat what it sees as a rising threat from domestic anti-government extremists, senior officials told Reuters, even as it steps up efforts to stop Islamic State-inspired attacks at home. Extremist groups motivated by a range of US-born philosophies present a "clear and present danger," John Carlin, the Justice Department's chief of national security, told Reuters in an interview. "Based on recent reports and the cases we are seeing, it seems like we're in a heightened environment."

Over the past year, the Justice Department has brought charges against domestic extremist suspects accused of attempting to bomb US military bases, kill police officers and fire bomb a school and other buildings in a predominantly Muslim town in New York state. But federal prosecutors tackling domestic extremists still lack an important legal tool they have used extensively in dozens of prosecutions against Islamic State-inspired suspects: a law that prohibits supporting designated terrorist groups. Carlin and other Justice Department officials declined to say if they would ask Congress for a comparable domestic extremist statute, or comment on what other changes they might pursue to toughen the fight against anti-government extremists.

The US State Department designates international terrorist organizations to which it is illegal to provide "material support." No domestic groups have that designation, helping to create a disparity in charges faced by international extremist suspects compared to domestic ones. A Reuters analysis of more than 100 federal cases found that domestic terrorism sus-

pects collectively have faced less severe charges than those accused of acting on behalf of Islamic State since prosecutors began targeting that group in early 2014.

Over the past two years, 27 defendants have been charged with plotting or inciting attacks within the United States in the name of Islamic State. They have faced charges that carried a median prison sentence of 53 years - half of the defendants faced more, and half faced less. In the same period, 27 adherents of US-based anti-government ideologies have been charged with similar activity. They faced charges that carried a median prison sentence of 20 years. Carlin said his counterterrorism team, including a recently hired counsel, is taking a "thoughtful look at the nature and scope of the domestic terrorism threat" and helping to analyze "potential legal improvements and enhancements to better combat those threats."

The counsel, who was appointed last October and has not been named publicly, will identify cases being prosecuted at the state level that "could arguably meet the federal definition of domestic terrorism," a Justice Department official said. That would give the department a direct role in more domestic extremism cases. Recognizing that domestic threats were "rapidly evolving, and had the potential to grow," the department in March 2015 rated disrupting such terrorists as a key component of its broader counter-terrorism efforts, officials said.

The threat pendulum

The Justice Department aggressively pursued domestic extremists after Timothy McVeigh bombed a federal building in Oklahoma City in 1995, killing 168

people. The government shifted its focus to international terrorism after al Qaeda killed nearly 3,000 Americans on Sept 11, 2001. But in recent years anti-government activists, like those who occupied a wildlife preserve in eastern Oregon last month, have regained prominence.

As law enforcement experts confront domestic militia groups, "sovereign citizens" who do not recognize government authority, and other anti-government extremists, they also face a heightened threat from Islamic extremists like the couple who carried out the Dec. 2 shootings in San Bernardino, California. "A new development we're seeing is that when it comes to ISIL investigations, the flash-to-bang time from radicalization to action appears to be happening faster than with other types of terrorists," said Michael Steinbach, the head of the FBI's Counterterrorism Division.

As a result, government agents are quick to investigate people who appear sympathetic toward Islamic State, current and former officials say. But some say the government has been overzealous in its pursuit of Islamic State suspects. Similar actions by extremist suspects have yielded sharply disparate sentences. Eight Islamic State-related defendants have been sentenced so far, to prison terms that range from three to 20 years, the Reuters review found. Over the same period, 18 domestic extremists have been sentenced to terms from one day to 12 years. Prosecutors say Harlem Suarez, 23, of Key West, Florida, tried to buy a bomb last year from an undercover FBI agent as he plotted attacks on behalf of Islamic State. He faces a possible sentence of life in prison and has pleaded not guilty. — Reuters



BANGALORE: Indian pedestrians gather near the burnt-out shell of a vehicle at a local police station in Bangalore. India police arrested five people yesterday over an enraged mob's attack on a Tanzanian student who was beaten, her shirt ripped off and car set ablaze in the city of Bangalore. — AFP

INDIAN MOB BEATS, PARTLY STRIPS TANZANIAN STUDENT

INDIA FOREIGN MINISTER BRANDS THE ATTACK 'SHAMEFUL'

BANGALORE: India police arrested five people yesterday over an enraged mob's attack on a Tanzanian student who was beaten, her shirt ripped off and car set ablaze in the city of Bangalore. India Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj branded the attack "shameful" and demanded swift justice for those responsible, as she moved to defuse any diplomatic tensions over the

incident. "We are deeply pained over the shameful incident with a Tanzanian girl in Bengaluru," Sushma tweeted late Wednesday, referring to the southern tech hub which is also home to a large foreign student population.

"I have asked the (state's) chief minister to ensure safety and security of all foreign students and stringent punishment for the guilty." The mob attacked

the 21-year-old and her male friends on Sunday night in apparent revenge for a road accident in which a Sudanese driver ran over a local woman who died. The student said in a complaint lodged with police on Wednesday that the rioting mob attacked her car as they drove near the scene of the accident less than an hour later.

"Our car was set ablaze. They tugged at my t-shirt and it tore, leaving me without anything. They continued to thrash us and we ran for our lives," she was quoted by the Times of India in her complaint saying. "My friends and I hopped onto a bus. The driver didn't move and the other passengers threw us out. A passerby who also offered me his T-shirt was also thrashed." Bangalore police commissioner N S Megharikh said five people have been arrested over the attack which he said was a "road rage incident" and not racially motivated. "We have arrested the five accused this morning after interrogating them on Wednesday night," Megharikh said.

But Tanzanian High Commissioner John W H Kijazi said India and African nations needed to work together to halt such incidents which "are occurring time and again". "It's not a once in a while event, they come several times in a year," he told the NDTV network yesterday. Police have come under fire for allegedly failing to stop the attack after the student said she pleaded with an officer for help, stressing that she was Tanzanian and knew nothing of the accident. "He told us 'you all look alike and should get the black man who ran over a woman in the area'," she alleged in her complaint. — AFP

INDIA GATHERS NAVIES IN SHOW OF MARITIME MIGHT

NEW DELHI: India kicked off a major display of maritime might yesterday, with ships from 50 navies converging on the country's east coast, as New Delhi seeks to boost its leadership in the region. Ninety ships including from the US, French, British and Chinese navies are taking part in the international fleet review in the Bay of Bengal—a ceremonial inspection and parade of boats and crews. Indian Navy chief Robin K. Dhowan, who is hosting the event, said the review would increase naval cooperation, with the "safety, stability and the security" of the oceans a "collective responsibility".

"What you see, all the ships there, is all about cooperation, it is how to interact with each other and how to work together to make the global commons safe and secure," Dhowan told the NDTV network. India is working to show maritime leadership, after rival Beijing has asserted growing strategic influence in recent years

in the Indian Ocean region, as it seeks to secure its trading routes. "This is a forum that demonstrates India's willingness to be a leading power," analyst Samir Saran, from the Delhi-based Observer Research Foundation thinktank said.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi is expected on the weekend to inspect the ships taking part off the port of Visakhapatnam, only the second international review held by India and running over five days. Modi has sought to reassert India's leadership role in its own backyard since taking office in May 2014, visiting neighbors including Sri Lanka, a midway point on one of the world's busiest shipping lanes. A string of foreign naval chiefs are expected to hold talks as part of the review. US chief of naval operations Admiral John Richardson was among those expected to meet Indian security officials to deepen maritime cooperation, the Indian Navy said. — AFP

AFGHAN CHIEF EXECUTIVE EXPECTS TALKS WITH TALEBAN 'IN MONTHS' DIVISIONS EMERGE AFTER MULLAH OMAR'S DEATH

NEW DELHI: Afghanistan expects to restart peace talks with the Taliban within six months, chief executive Abdullah Abdullah said yesterday, pinning hopes on factions within the Islamist militant group he said might be ready to give up violence. Talks between Kabul and the Afghan Taliban have been on hold since efforts collapsed last year after it became known that Mullah Mohammad Omar, the movement's founder and leader, had been dead for two years, throwing the group into disarray.

Abdullah said that Omar's death had left the Taliban deeply divided, making peace negotiations complicated, but there was reason to hope that talks to end 15 years of bloodshed in the South Asian country could resume. "There might be groups among the Taliban who might be willing to talk and give up violence," Abdullah told Reuters in an interview in New Delhi, where he held talks with Indian leaders on bilateral issues.

"It should be sooner than six months," Abdullah said, when asked when he expected talks with the Taliban to begin. He said there had been some contact between Taliban factions willing to give up violence and Afghan security agencies, but he declined to give further details. His comments came ahead of a meeting between four powers - the United States, China, Pakistan and Afghanistan - in Islamabad on Feb. 6 to lay the ground for talks that Afghan President Ashraf Ghani's government wants to conduct with the insurgent group.

China had a role to play in the Afghan peace process because of the challenge it faced in its Xinjiang province from the East Turkestan Islamic Movement, which was also fighting alongside the Taliban in Afghanistan, Abdullah said. Equally important were Beijing's close ties with Pakistan, Abdullah added, because that could help coax the Taliban to the negotiating table. The Afghan Taliban leadership, now headed by Mullah Akhtar Mansour, has long sheltered in Pakistan from where they have waged a deadly insurgency.

Extended foreign troop presence

China, Pakistan and the United States had agreed to use their influence to facilitate talks with the Taliban, Abdullah said. The countries are discussing issues including where to hold talks with Taliban factions who decide to come to the table and what to do about those who stay away, he added. Any talks with the Taliban will be led by the Afghans, he said. "How it moves forward and what it takes, nobody can judge at this stage," Abdullah said. Despite the ongoing effort to restart negotiations, the Taliban have ramped up their campaign of violence across Afghanistan from the start of the year, with suicide attacks and territorial gains in southern Helmand province. Last month they reiterated their demand for the release of political prisoners as a condition to rejoin talks. They have also asked to be removed from a UN blacklist under which senior leaders cannot travel freely and their assets are frozen. Abdullah said he expected US forces to remain in Afghanistan beyond 2016 in some form and that an extended presence was necessary to support the government.

A Pentagon report released in December said the security situation in Afghanistan deteriorated in the second half of 2015, with Taliban militants staging more attacks and inflicting far more casualties on Afghan forces. The outlook prompted US President Barack Obama to announce in October that he would maintain a force of 9,800 troops in Afghanistan through most of 2016, instead of drawing down to an embassy-based presence by 2017. "The reality is that there is this number of troops and they are doing an effective job in support of our institutions, in equipping, in assisting, in training," Abdullah said. "My perception is that the presence will continue beyond 2016 in one form or another, and that is needed." — Reuters

CHINA PUNISHES AND DEMOTES 'DISLOYAL' SICHUAN GOVERNOR

BEIJING: The governor of China's Sichuan province has been stripped of his official positions and demoted, state media said yesterday. An inspection by the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection found Wei Hong committed "serious violations of discipline" the official Xinhua news service said, using a euphemism for corruption, and was "disloyal and dishonest to the Party". "He attempted to subvert the investigation and refused to confess, seriously violating the Party political and organizational code of conduct," Xinhua said, adding that he had "interfered with judicial activities". As a consequence, he was stripped of the governorship and his role as the vice-secretary of the Communist Party's office in Sichuan. The announcement comes as part of a high-profile crackdown on corruption led by President Xi Jinping that has deposed several senior officials, notably former security chief Zhou Yongkang. One of Zhou's power bases was Sichuan, in China's southwest with a population of some 80 million. A number of senior officials there have been investigated in recent years.

Ex-cop charged

In another development, a former regional police chief in China has been indicted with murder and multiple other offences, the country's top prosecution agency said, with his victim reportedly a girlfriend more than three decades his junior. Zhao Liping, 64, has been charged with murder, bribery and possession of firearms and explosives, the Supreme People's Procuratorate said in a statement.

Zhao headed the police in Inner Mongolia for seven years until he retired in 2012, and was also a deputy head of the northern region's government. He was detained last year in Chifeng on suspicion of killing a 28-year-old woman with whom he "had an intimate relationship" because she wanted to expose his wrongdoings, Chinese media said earlier. The woman reportedly survived Zhao's first two shots and fled before he chased her down in a car and shot her in the head. Many fallen Chinese officials have been found to have mistresses, and corruption investigations have often been triggered by allegations from spurned or angry women.

Liu Tienan, a former top Chinese economic planning official, was convicted of bribery and jailed for life after his mistress gave incriminating information to a journalist who posted online her accusations of shady business deals, fake academic credentials and death threats. The Supreme People's Procuratorate said in a statement Wednesday that Zhao was suspected of "intentionally causing the death of one person" and "taking advantage of his position as head of the Inner Mongolia police to seek gains for and illegally accepted enormous amount of money from others". He also kept guns, ammunition and explosives in violation of the law, it said.—Agencies

SRI LANKA LIFTS UNOFFICIAL BAN ON TAMIL NATIONAL ANTHEM

COLOMBO: A Tamil-language version of Sri Lanka's national anthem was performed at the country's independence ceremony yesterday, lifting an unofficial ban in another step toward post-civil war ethnic reconciliation. Schoolchildren sang the anthem in Sinhalese, from the ethnic majority group, and the minority Tamil language at the ceremony marking the 68th anniversary of independence from Britain. The move, despite opposition from Sinhalese nationalists, is an effort to reach out to Tamils after rebels from the ethnic minority fought a nearly 26-year war for a separate homeland until their crushing defeat in 2009.

President Maithripala Sirisena says he will unite the nation, a process which has not been given prominence since independence. Sirisena's hard-line predecessor Mahinda Rajapaksa was accused of further alienating the Tamil community by his post-war triumphalism. He had imposed an unofficial ban on the Tamil version of the national anthem. In his speech yesterday, Sirisena said his political opponents were trying to create fear among the armed forces that fought the war that they will be penalized for rights abuses. He pledged to promote ethnic reconciliation while safeguarding the country's sovereignty and respect of the military.—AP



KATHMANDU: A young Nepalese Hindu priest comes out of a temple after offering prayers in Kathmandu, Nepal. Hinduism is the major religion of Nepal with over 80 percent people identifying themselves as Hindus according to a 2011 census.—AP

ISOLATED NEPALESE PM COULD BE TOPPLED BY CONSTITUTION CRISIS

NEPALI CONGRESS COULD TRIGGER POLITICAL CHANGE

KATHMANDU: An unwieldy coalition of lawmakers trying to implement Nepal's first democratic constitution is finding common cause with protesting minority groups, isolating Prime Minister KP Oli and increasing the risk his government could fall this spring. Oli, of the leftist Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist), promised to resolve simmering tensions in the southern plains and lift a blockade of the Indian border when he was voted in to power almost four months ago.

Yet sporadic violence, in which more than 50 people have died since August, continues in the Himalayan nation with police shooting dead three demonstrators last month. Protest leaders say the heavy-handed police tactics show the government is not sincere about finding a solution, while in Kathmandu residents have to choose between queuing for hours for fuel and gas and paying exorbitant prices on the black market. "There are reports that corruption is rising and the government is not able to meet expectations of the people," said Dinanath Sharma, a spokesman for the Maoist party that props up Oli's fragile coalition.

Oli, 63, heads a fractious cabinet with

no less than six deputy premiers - one a royalist bent on reinstating the monarchy and another the leader of a party representing minority Madhesi who has yet to sign the constitution. Relations with India have deteriorated further since New Delhi tried and failed last September to delay the promulgation of the constitution so that dissenters - many with family ties across the border - could be brought on board. Oli's hostile rhetoric has annoyed New Delhi, said a former diplomat, even as increased cooperation between Indian and Nepali officials has eased the impact of the blockade in recent weeks.

India has sympathized with the protest movement, hosting a briefing by Madhesi and other leaders last week, amid talk on the New Delhi cocktail circuit that Oli's days in power may be numbered. "Madhes is a colony of the ruling class. We are living under apartheid," Vijay K. Karna, a Madhesi protest leader, said in New Delhi. He described Oli as "the main problem" in efforts to reach a constitutional compromise. Bishnu Rimal, Oli's political adviser, sees no immediate threat to the government that could last until elections due in 2018. "There is no possibility

of the government falling soon or of any other person forming a new one," Rimal told Reuters.

Congress and changing guard

Following a winter lull, Madhesi leaders are under pressure to revive their campaign for a unified plains province that has hampered efforts to recover from two devastating earthquakes last year. The party to watch is the opposition Nepali Congress, the largest in parliament, which will elect a president at its general convention in March. The party - which has ties to both India and southern Nepal will then face a choice between joining a government of national unity or attempting to capture power by dislodging Oli, according to a local level Congress leader. Senior Congress leaders contacted by Reuters played down speculation they would oust Oli, although a central committee member said Congress was best placed to mediate between ruling "ultra nationalists" and the protesters. Maoist spokesman Sharma said the party was not considering leaving the coalition yet. "But we'll discuss with the prime minister about our concerns seriously," he said. "He must change his ways." —Reuters

BODY PARTS IN BANGKOK RIVER 'BELONG TO SPANISH NATIONAL'

BANGKOK: Thai police yesterday said multiple body parts found floating in Bangkok's main river belong to a Spanish businessman who was likely kidnapped and extorted before he was murdered. The gruesome case has dominated Thai media coverage in recent days with television networks airing grim footage of officers hauling human appendages out of the city's Chao Praya river. The first body part was discovered on Sunday with six additional finds since then at different locations along the river.

General Panya Maman, the officer leading the murder

investigation, told reporters yesterday the victim was a Spanish businessman who entered Thailand on January 19. "I am convinced that within next 48 hours this case will be resolved and that all perpetrators are foreign gangsters - although we suspect that some Thai nationals may have had knowledge (of the crime)," he said. An official at the Spanish embassy said they had yet to receive confirmation of the victim's identity. AFP is withholding the man's name until his family is notified. Panya said the murder likely took place between January 25 and 27.—AFP

IRAQ TO TAKE IS OFFLINE TO SILENCE PROPAGANDA

IS USES SATELLITE, MICROWAVE FOR INTERNET

DUBAI: Iraq is trying to persuade satellite firms to halt Internet services in areas under Islamic State's rule, seeking to deal a major blow to the group's potent propaganda machine which relies heavily on social media to inspire its followers to wage jihad. Social media apps like Twitter and Telegram are scrambling to limit Islamic State's cyber-activities. So far that has proven to be a cat-and-mouse-game, with the group re-emerging through other accounts with videos showing beheadings and extolling the virtues of living in a caliphate.

For Iraq then, the key is to stop the militant group from accessing the web at all - a feat, which if achieved, could sever a significant part of a propaganda campaign that has inspired deadly attacks in the West. Mobile networks are largely inoperable in the Islamic

\$2,000-\$3,000 at a sprawling electronics market near the university.

The official said Iraq was in talks with satellite companies covering Iraq to halt Internet services to IS-controlled areas, adding that he had received "positive signals" from them, but "the process is complicated and needs more time and procedures." Abu Dhabi state-owned Yahsat, both a satellite owner and provider of end-user connectivity through its consumer broadband brand YahClick, is the only company so far to cooperate with the ministry's request, the official said. Highlighting the complicated task, Reuters traced an IP address of an Islamic State fighter in Raqqa, the group's de facto capital in Syria, which showed he was accessing the Internet using YahClick.

Yahsat would not directly comment on

transmit their location and so should be traceable. But no one in the industry seems willing to take on the responsibility to vet users. Wafa and rival Bentley Walker, who buy satellite capacity and sell V-sat units, say they are unaware of who is ultimately using their services. Wafa, which has about 2,500 V-sat units in Iraq, said in online adverts it could deliver to any Iraqi city including Mosul. "The re-sellers are the people who know the clients and where the end users are located," said Kamal Arjundas, assistant director at the company.

Customers of Bentley Walker can still use its services even if the V-sat unit is in an area beyond state control, said sales manager Neil Denyer. As of July last year, the firm said its service covered over 1,500 sites in northern Iraq. The company says it is Europe's largest re-seller of satellite Internet equipment. It sells its own FreedomSat brand and those of other companies such as YahClick. Denyer declined to identify the company's Iraqi partners, citing political and commercial concerns, and later did not respond when asked whether Islamic State could be using his company's products and services. Wafa's Arjundas also declined to identify its Iraqi partners and did not respond when asked about the militant group.

'Two hops to Mosul'

Even if Iraq cuts off Islamic State from satellite Internet, the group can remain online through illegal networks set up by businessmen in towns such as Kirkuk, Arbil and Duhok. These entrepreneurs buy data capacity from fixed broadband providers, passing through many middlemen first. They connect this to microwave dishes, which have a range of about 40 kilometers to eventually reach end users in IS-controlled areas, said the three industry sources.

"It's two hops via microwave dishes to Mosul," said the third industry source. "Their activities have very little chance of being detected. If you can buy a certain amount of capacity for \$100 in Arbil and sell it on for \$500, it's good business." Baghdad and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) that rules over an autonomous area of northern Iraq have banned the sale of Internet capacity that could end up in Islamic State hands, but it is hard to enforce. There are many microwave dishes pointing in all directions in Iraq. The vast networks that mostly provide Internet connectivity to civilian homes and businesses make it difficult to establish who is using them.

"If you close one (of the businesses) down, they reappear under another disguise in a matter of days. They're very difficult to identify," said the first industry source. "It would take enormous resources, knowledge and competency which Baghdad or the KRG don't have," said the third source. A moral quandary is whether IS-held areas should be denied Internet access thereby cutting off civilians living there, said Raffaello Pantucci, of Britain's Royal United Services Institute think-tank. Some have used the Internet to relate the abuses they have suffered. "Would cutting off such communications have a major impact in disrupting and degrading Islamic State's operations, or would it mostly just make the lives of people living under Islamic State even more difficult?" —Reuters



RAMADI: A member of Iraq's elite counter-terrorism service sits in a vehicle after being wounded in fighting the Islamic State group's jihadists in the Al-Sajariyah area, east of the city of Ramadi. —AFP

State-held swathes of Iraq, areas which also have little fixed-line broadband infrastructure. Militants instead use satellite dishes to connect to the web, or illicit microwave dishes that hook them into broadband networks in government-held areas, three telecoms industry sources said.

There are many challenges for the Iraqi authorities: within the satellite Internet industry, no one assumes responsibility for identifying and vetting end users, the territory under Islamic State's often shifts, and a complex web of middlemen makes it tough to pinpoint who is selling militants Internet capacity. The group has control over or operates in parts of western Iraq and northern and central Syria which have a population of up to 5 million people, according to the International Institute for Strategic Studies, most of them in Iraq.

To connect to the web via a satellite, all that is required is a V-sat terminal - a small dish receiver and a modem - and an Internet subscription. Islamic State uses "the V-sat system to access the Internet in areas it controls," an Iraqi communications ministry official told Reuters. "What's still difficult for us is controlling V-sat receivers which connect directly to satellites providing Internet services that cover Iraq." In the IS-held northern city of Mosul, V-sat units can be bought for about

whether Islamic State had used its services, but said it complied with all laws and regulations. It has no official presence in Syria.

The company, among the biggest providers of satellite Internet in Iraq, relies on local agents to sell YahClick; three are listed on its website for Iraq, but other companies also sell the brand there. "Anybody can become a reseller. It's very informal and wholesalers probably want to keep it that way," said the second industry source, who like the others declined to be named because they are not authorized to speak publicly.

Who is responsible?

Satellites owners such as Britain's Avanti, France's Eutelsat and Yahsat cover most of the Middle East. These sell capacity to other companies, such as Abu Dhabi's Wafa Technical Systems and Britain's Bentley Walker, which then use this capacity to sell services and equipment to businesses and consumers. Like Yahsat, these firms rely on in-country partners to distribute and sell their products. "In common with all satellite operators, Avanti does not maintain identity or accurate location detail on end user customers," a company spokesman said, adding the firm complied with all laws and regulations where it operates.

V-sat units, which are potentially portable,

WALLS, WATCHTOWERS RISE AS TURKEY SEALS BORDER AGAINST IS

ELBEYLI: Slabs of concrete wall have sprung up and military patrols have intensified, but local people say this stretch of Turkey's border facing Syrian territory under Islamic State control is still far from water-tight. Ankara is under intense pressure from its NATO allies to seal off the 70 km strip that stretches from just east of the Turkish town of Kilis to Karkamis, long a conduit for fighters, smuggled goods and war materiel. Beyond a string of tiny villages nestled in undulating fig and olive groves lies the last stretch of Syrian territory on Turkey's southern frontier that Islamic State militants still hold, following advances by rival Kurdish rebels. European governments fear that their own citizens who have fought with the jihadists could still cross back into Turkey before heading home to stage attacks.

Likewise, the United States believes Turkey, which has NATO's second largest army, must close the frontier if Islamic State is to be defeated in Syria. Soldiers patrol in armored vehicles along a border delineated in some places by little more than razor-wire fence. Additional watchtowers and huts have appeared in recent months, and three-metre (10 foot)-high concrete slabs are being erected along some of the most vulnerable sections. But the efforts by a nation which had long been criticized for failing to do more to prevent the passage of foreign fighters appear to have come too late to stop Islamic State networks developing inside Turkey.

Washington and Ankara have been discussing for months how to seal this stretch of border. Senior US officials said last month they would offer Turkey technology including surveillance balloons and anti-tunneling equipment. Border security is now undoubtedly tighter but, for those wanting to sneak over, not absolute - and help remains available for a price. "It's difficult, but not impossible," said Ismail, a 37-year old who described himself as a trader, smoking a cigarette in a tea house near the village of Akinci. "Let's say you want to cross. You tell me where and when and I can call people who will make it happen," he said. "But you would have to pay more."

The military's own figures suggest attempts to cross into Islamic State-held Syrian territory have continued, showing 121 people tried over the past 10 days alone. Almost half were children, and at least a dozen were foreigners. Nevertheless, it is cracking down on those trying to spirit people over the border. "The security is very tight now, soldiers give the smugglers no respite," said Abbas, 51, a farmer near the Turkish border town of Elbeyli, as two soldiers carrying rifles passed by his house, walking towards their outpost a few hundred metres away.

Last year, Abbas was so alarmed by the numbers of people crossing illicitly into Syria under his nose that he emailed a government bureau, set up years ago for citizens to register complaints, queries and concerns. It receives more than a million inquiries a year and Abbas said he never heard back. "It was literally a flood of people here," he said, describing how some in his village made a fortune shuttling people back and forth to the border fence, often doing a dozen trips a night, until the flow largely stopped about a month ago. Several residents in other border villages and towns confirmed security had been tightened, but emphasized that did not mean the two-way traffic had dried up.

Killings in Turkey

Turkey launched what it called a "synchronized war on terror" last July, opening up its Incirlik air base to countries in the US-led coalition bombing Islamic State. Most of its own air strikes, however, have been against Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) militants battling for Kurdish autonomy in its southeast. Turkish tanks and artillery bombarded Islamic State positions in Syria and Iraq in the days after a suicide bomber blew himself up among groups of tourists in the heart of Istanbul last month, killing 10 Germans.

The security forces have also stepped up raids against Islamic State in cities across Turkey, detaining more than 1,000 alleged members and uncovering urban cells. "We have never allowed Islamic State to use our territory to cross into Syria and we will not allow them ... We see Islamic State as an extremely serious threat and we don't want them on our border," a senior government official told Reuters. —Reuters

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Lifestyle

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An Iranian model poses upon his arrival for a screening during the 34th edition of the Fajr Film Festival on February 3, 2015 at Milad Tower in Tehran. The festival runs until February 10, 2016. — AFP

Get a room! Tokyo zoo's bashful pandas try for a baby

Cam Newton took fancy pants where other pros dare not go

Lots of athletes have style, but could they rock the Cam pants? Super Bowl 50 is just days away and already has a breakout star: the \$849 Versace skinny pants of Carolina Panthers quarterback Cam Newton. Newton was snapped Sunday in the zebra stripe, gold swirl rocker pants as he boarded a plane to California, immediately setting off a frenzy on social media and among TV talking heads. We know Newton likes his flashy shoes. We know he can pull off a bushy foxtail hanging down one hip, but those tight, hair metal pants came straight out of left field. Would other pros dare to try?

New York Mets pitcher Matt Harvey, fond of old school rock, great tuxedos and a little cool, fun experimentation in clothes, said there will be no rocking of Cam pants for him. "I don't know if many people can, but I know he enjoyed wearing them," Harvey smiled Tuesday night at a fashion presentation by designer John Varvatos during a round of men's shows in New York. He was joined at Varvatos by Eric Decker, a wide receiver for the New York Jets - and another underachiever when it comes



In this file photo, Carolina Panthers quarterback Cam Newton gets off the plane at the Mineta San Jose International Airport in San Jose, Calif. — AP

to football's most famous pants. "Oh, I don't know if I could rock those pants but Cam definitely put a statement on Super Bowl week for sure," Decker said.

How about Patriots quarterback Tom

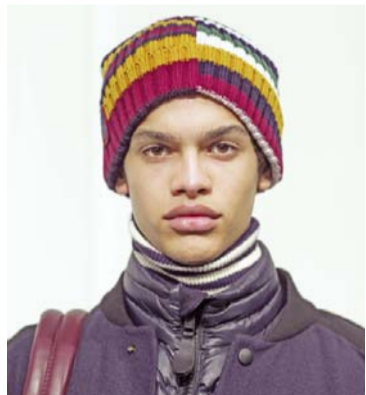
Brady? "I don't know if Tom would. I'm sure he could. He could rock anything," Decker said. "I haven't seen him in skintight pants like that yet so that would be a new style for him." Brady's

fellow Patriot, Julian Edelman, took in the rock-themed Varvatos show as well. The Patriots missed out on Super Bowl 50, but he considers himself a Cam pants contender. "The Cam pants? ... If you go out with a confidence I think I could. I think I could," Edelman smiled. As for Brady, he added: "Tom could rock anything. He's Tom Brady."

Newton kept the look classy up top, pairing his fancy pants with a V-neck sweater, a tie and some gold-tip shoes. His black leather motorcycle jacket added extra oomph. So what's the word within the fashion industry? We asked football fan Tommy Hilfiger to weigh in. "I think he's very cool," the designer said ahead of his own fashion presentation, "and I think he's not only an iconic athlete but he's a fashion icon as well. People look up to him."

The Panthers meet the Denver Broncos on Sunday. Could Newton's nemesis, Bronco quarterback Peyton Manning, succeed in similar pants? "Uh, I think Peyton might be a little old for them," Hilfiger said, "but Peyton has rocked quite a few great things over the years." — AP

Tommy Hilfiger puts out prep aimed at younger set



we're giving it to them a little bit oversized again," Hilfiger said in an interview ahead of his presentation on the third day of New York Fashion Week: Men's. "We were very slim for quite a few years but now we're doing it a little bit more oversized. Better fabrications, more interesting detail and a real nod to military and functional details." Many of the trousers were slouchy, though some suits were narrow and tightly tailored. A relaxed pajama-style suit came in a glen plaid of red and blue with nautical braided trim and a drawstring waist. One pair of red trousers had blue tuxedo striping on outer seams and a long coat in navy blue was fitted with gold buttons.

The global brand put visible stitching along some wider hems on pants and rolled out roomy and functional outerwear in wool with nylon or canvas detailing. There was a rugby shirt in a playful patchwork and luxe cashmere coats in camel,



elevating the collection. Hilfiger focused a lot on nautical and military vibes. "We love gold bullion buttons," he said. "We still have chinos, oxfords, bomber jackets, blazers, but done in new ways." So back



Tommy Hilfiger, center front, walks with his models during the show of his fashion label The Tommy Hilfiger at the Mens Fashion Week Wednesday in New York. — AP photos



Will preppy ever go out of style? Not if Tommy Hilfiger can help it. But guardians of prep like Hilfiger most definitely need to adapt, he said Wednesday as he presented his Hilfiger Edition line aimed at "feeling necessary, youthful and ready for right now," according to the show's notes. These are wardrobe building blocks for men, American classics that Hilfiger has been putting out for 30 years, but with some notable twists aimed at the younger set.

"These guys want preppy but they want preppy in a new way, and

to a key question for the company: Will preppy ever go out of style? "Preppy will always be. It always has been," Hilfiger said, "but it has to be new and fresh. It has to be relevant for the consumer today. Otherwise she or he will not even bite." — AP



Andra Day rises as soul songstress

A phone call from Stevie Wonder changed Andra Day's life. He called Day and asked if he could work with her. Wonder heard about the songstress from his now ex-wife Kai Millard Morris, who discovered Day in a video clip. The clip showed Day singing in front of a strip mall in Malibu, California. The conversation with Wonder nearly six years ago was brief, but it gave Day the inspiration she needed. "I was so nervous," she said. "I kept saying to myself that he's just a regular person. But in the same breath, I was saying, 'He's a legend.' I felt like a meteor hit my house. It inspired me to keep pushing."

Day said her manager "sabotaged" her business relationship with Wonder, so it took more than a year to reconnect. After she left that manager, Wonder introduced Day to longtime producer Adrian Gurvitz, who signed her to his label, Buskin Records. Now her career is taking off. The 31-year-old singer is nominated for two Grammy Awards - for best R&B album for her debut album, "Cheers to the Fall," and for best R&B performance for her standout single "Rise Up."

The Grammys will include a duet by Day and fellow nominee Ellie Goulding. Meanwhile, Day is focusing on her upcoming 35-city concert tour. Everything seems to be falling into place for Day, who typically meditates and prays daily. "My prayers are being answered for my career," she said. "These are prayers I've been praying for as a kid. There's a reason I have this platform. There's a reason I have this gift. It's a blessing." Day has performed at the White House and is being featured on ESPN's Black History Month special. She can be seen in commercials with Wonder and Serena Williams.

Apple commercial

Filmmaker Spike Lee offered to direct the music video for her debut single, "Forever Mine," after seeing her perform during a Nina Simone tribute at last year's Sundance Film Festival. M Night Shyamalan directed her "Rise Up" music video, which is expected to be released this month, Day said. The song caught the interest of Apple executives Tim Cook and Jimmy Iovine, who paired the singer with tennis star Serena Williams in a Beats by Dr Dre commercial. Over the holidays, Day joined Wonder to sing "Somebody at Christmas" in an Apple commercial. The White House also asked Day to perform at first lady Michelle Obama's education initiative "Better Make Room" and the star-studded 2015 National Christmas Tree Lighting ceremony in Washington, DC, in December.

ESPN is featuring Day and her song "Rise Up" as part of the network's Black History Month hour-long special, which airs Feb. 14. Her song will be featured throughout the special, which will honor a host of black athletes, including ballet dancer Misty Copeland. Day credits her rise to her team of supporters, watching Wonder in studio sessions and the mentorship of Gurvitz and Raphael Saadiq, who helped produce "Cheers to the Fall," an album she co-wrote. She said the two producers have helped hone her craft and reach her potential as a vocalist and songwriter. The singer said Gurvitz and Saadiq pushed her to tell an honest story about her life on her album, including a past relationship where she often cheated on a former boyfriend of eight years. "I want people to ... not be afraid of their truth," she said. "No matter how dark or precarious it may seem, continue to pursue your truth." — AP

Run-DMC to open for Chili Peppers at pre-Super Bowl concert

Run-DMC will open up for the Red Hot Chili Peppers at a pre-Super Bowl concert in San Francisco. The famed rap group is expected to hit the stage at the sixth annual DirecTV Super Saturday Night concert party at Pier 70. The show is an invitation-only event co-hosted by Mark Cuban's AXS TV. "We get to be in the energy of the Super Bowl, which is amazing," Joseph Simmons, known as the Rev Run, told The Associated Press on Wednesday. "This should be high energy, fun and cool."

Super Bowl 50 will be held at Levi's Stadium in Santa Clara, California, on Sunday night. Simmons said he's also going to attend the game between the Carolina Panthers and Denver Broncos. Past performers at the DirecTV concert include Beyonce, Jay Z, Justin Timberlake, Katy Perry, Rihanna and Kanye West. The satellite television company also teamed up with Pepsi to put on other shows at Pier 70, including the Dave Matthews Band and Pharrell starting Thursday.

Run-DMC, which includes Simmons and Darryl "DMC" McDaniels, retired the group after their DJ, Jam Master Jay, was killed in 2002.

But Simmons and McDaniels continue to perform together, appearing on the LL Cool J-hosted "Lip Sync Battle" last year and the Christmas in Brooklyn concert in 2014. McDaniels said he's going to enjoy performing with Simmons at the DirecTV



In this file photo, Joseph Simmons, left, and Darryl McDaniels of Run-DMC perform at Christmas in Brooklyn at the Barclays Center in the Brooklyn borough of New York. — AP

show and hopes everyone will enjoy their performance. "We are from that era of eternally great, amazing, fun and enjoyable music with a presentation theme," said McDaniels, who's flying back to New York to watch the game from home. "That's what the people are going to get. We've still got some longevity with this rock 'n' roll, hip-hop thing."

Run-DMC helped take rap to the mainstream with multiplatinum records and hits including "It's Tricky," "Adidas"

and "Walk This Way" with Aerosmith in the 1980s. The group was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 2009. The Recording Academy will honor Run-DMC with a lifetime achievement award at the 58th annual Grammy Awards later this month. "This makes me look back on my career and the group, and makes me feel really appreciated," Simmons said. "With all the accolades, it lets me see that we created something special and stood the test of time." — AP

Damon and Tatum to star in Soderbergh's first movie of retirement

Nearly three years after announcing his retirement from the film industry, Oscar-winning director Steven Soderbergh is heading back to the big screen. Sources tell Variety that Soderbergh is attached to direct the feature film "Hillbilly Heist" with Channing Tatum and Matt Damon on board to star. Glen Basner will produce the movie, which is currently a mystery, but sources say Soderbergh recently got his hands on the script and quickly fell in love with the premise. No reps returned calls for comment.

Sources tell Variety that most of the major studios including Warner Bros, Sony and Fox are all lining up to acquire the package and that a deal should be in place by the end of the week. Since his last feature film in 2013 ("Side Effects"), Soderbergh has focused his efforts on TV, directing the Emmy-winning HBO pic "Behind the Candelabra," which also starred Damon. The duo previously worked together on the "Ocean's Eleven" franchise, "Contagion" and "The Informant!" Soderbergh and Tatum also have a deep past. They worked together on "Haywire," "Magic Mike" and "Side Effects."

In 2012, Soderbergh had said prior to shooting "Side Effects" that the prescription thriller, which co-starred Rooney Mara, would be his final feature film, even though for years he had threatened to leave the biz. —Reuters



Matt Damon

In this file photo, Marion "Suge" Knight is escorted into court for his arraignment on murder charges in Los Angeles. — AP



Knight's jail privileges cut

Former rap mogul Marion "Suge" Knight's access to visitors and phone calls have been completely cut off at the request of sheriff's investigators, court records show. Court records show Los Angeles Superior Court Judge William C. Ryan on Friday cut Knight's access to phone calls and non-attorney visitors. The order was issued at the request of a sheriff's detective investigating Knight's murder case, in which he is charged with running over two men, killing one, outside a Compton burger stand in January 2015.

Details about what prompted the order to restrict Knight's access to visitors are under seal. Knight's attorney, Thaddeus Culpepper, did not immediately return phone and email messages seeking comment. The order came a week after Knight reshuffled his legal team for the fifth time, dropping criminal defense lawyer Thomas Mesereau and enlisting the services of former prosecutor Stephen Schwartz. No details

for the change have been given in open court. Culpepper was designated lead counsel on the case at the time.

Court records show the sheriff's request to restrict Knight's jail privileges had been received a week earlier. Judge Ronald Coen, who is handling separate murder and robbery cases against Knight, asked that the sheriff's request about jail issues be assigned to a different judge. Sheriff's officials had no comment on the change in Knight's jail accommodations. Knight ran over two men outside a Compton, California, burger stand in late January 2015, killing one and seriously injuring the other. He later turned himself in to police, and his attorneys have contended that he was fleeing armed attackers when he ran over the men.

He is being held on \$10 million bail and has pleaded not guilty. Sheriff's officials first asked for Knight's access to all non-attorney visitors to be restricted in March 2015, and Coen approved the restrictions. —AP



Ri Ri, a male giant panda, eats in his enclosure at Ueno Zoo in Tokyo. — AFP

Get a room! Tokyo zoo's bashful pandas try for a baby

Two giant pandas at Tokyo's Ueno Zoo have been given some private time in a bid to create a romantic environment in which the bashful creatures can mate. Public viewing was halted yesterday in the hope that male Ri Ri—who zookeepers confirmed has looked friskier in recent days—will take advantage of the fleeting window that female Shin Shin is in heat. "There's really only a couple of days a year when a panda can get pregnant," a spokesman from Ueno Zoo's education department told AFP.

"Pandas are solitary animals and the only time you will see them together is the mating season. "Usually they just sit apart from each other chewing their food, but Ri Ri has been looking more amorous of late." The cuddly creatures, both 10 years old, have a choice of two

rooms in which to snuggle up to one another, although officials insist they will not interfere with the courting process. "There is a spare recreational room for them out the back," said the spokesman. "But we won't be giving them any special food or dimming the lights for them."

"Nobody knows what kind of mood to create for animals to feel romantic," he added. "They don't just get into the mood with soft lighting like humans." Shin Shin, who was brought from China five years ago, just before the devastating tsunami in Japan's northeast, gave birth to a baby in 2012 but the cub died from pneumonia six days later. She had a phantom pregnancy in 2013 and the pandas have not bred since. Giant pandas are notoriously clumsy at mating, with males said to be bad at determining

when a female is in the right frame of mind and often befuddled at knowing what to do next.

In the event the animals do feel compatible, sex is frequently over too quickly to impregnate the female, who is only receptive to the proposition for two or three days a year between February and May. "It's true the females are picky," the zoo spokesman said. "In their natural habitat, they get to select the male." According to estimates, less than 2,000 giant pandas remain in the wild, in three provinces in south-central China. Should Shin Shin rebuff Ri Ri's advances for a third straight year, Ueno Zoo will consider artificial insemination, the official confirmed. "It remains an option but we'll see how they get on first," he said. — AFP

150 years on, exhibit probes the dark world of 'Crime and Punishment'



A woman visiting an exhibition commemorating the 150th anniversary of the publication of Russian writer Fyodor Dostoyevsky's "Crime and Punishment" at the author's museum in Saint Petersburg. — AFP

Inside an old Saint Petersburg apartment that was once home to Fyodor Dostoyevsky, a new exhibition plunges visitors into the dark and complex world of "Crime and Punishment", shedding new light on one of Russia's greatest literary works 150 years after its publication. Located in the heart of Russia's former imperial capital, the exhibit explores the depths of a novel which won critical acclaim when first published in 1866 and went on to become one of Dostoyevsky's best-known works. Entering the museum, the visitor is literally immersed in the novel whose full text is plastered over the walls, vying for space with an array of paintings, sketches, documents and antiques from 19th century Saint Petersburg where the story is set.

First published in serial form in a literary journal, "Crime and Punishment" tells the story of Rodion Raskolnikov, an impoverished young man who believes himself morally superior to everyone else and tries to test the limits of his freedom by murdering an elderly pawnbroker. He is then tormented by his actions, with the novel exploring themes such as the legitimacy of violence, the limits of freedom and the price of human life—quintessential hallmarks of Dostoyevsky's works and of Russian literature as a whole. Translated into multiple languages and adapted for the silver screen in a string of countries, "Crime and Punishment" is a literary masterpiece which ranks alongside other classics of Russian literature such as Leo Tolstoy's "War and Peace" (1869) or works by Pushkin and Gogol.

"You really get the impression you are submerged in the novel," said 33-year-old Roman Kovchenko as he visited the exhibition with his mother. "This is my favourite Dostoyevsky novel, it's the most 'Saint-Petersburg,'" enthuses another visitor, says 45-year-old Galina Somova who says it holds a particular fascination for residents of the city. —AFP

Austrian museum seeks sponsors to save 'dark side' of art

Would you pay to see art that's broken, mouldy or eaten by worms? Vienna's famous Leopold Museum sure hopes so. The prestigious home of Gustav Klimt and Egon Schiele is displaying damaged artworks to raise funds for their restoration. Around 185 pieces by Austrian artists, ranging from turn-of-the-century paintings to Art Deco chairs and lamps, are part of the unconventional Hidden Treasures exhibition.

Some, like Robert Russ's 1885 "Mill with Evening Sky", reveal damaging tears in the canvas or heavily flaking paint. Other forlorn pieces of artwork include a delicate porcelain figurine with its head missing, and the panel of an oil painting by Cecil van Haanen fallen victim to hungry woodworms.

"Usually you go to the museum to admire works in perfect condition. Here, we are showing the dark side of our collection," the Leopold's new director, Hans-Peter Wipplinger, told AFP in a recent interview.

Boasting around 6,000 pieces, the museum has gained global fame for its outstanding array of 19th and 20th-century Austrian art. Renowned highlights include paintings by the founder of Vienna's Secession movement, Gustav Klimt, and his protege Egon Schiele whose permanent exhibition at the museum is the largest of its kind in the world. But the Leopold's collection also contains many lesser known gems that deserve to see the light of day again, according to Wipplinger. "When I took on my role (in October 2015), one of the

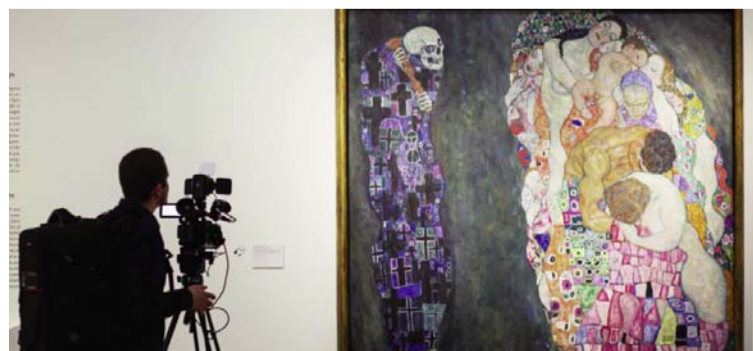
first things I did was to visit the museum's storage. I discovered a number of works worthy of being exhibited, but that were too damaged," he said.

'Must be special'

The museum needs a total of 370,000 euros (\$400,000) to restore the artworks—a sum that largely

exceeds the institution's available funds. "That's how I got the idea of finding patrons willing to finance the repairs," Wipplinger explained. Mould from exposure to dampness, rusty metal parts, bent frames, bad touch-ups: the exhibition, which runs until February 22, illustrates the spoils and damages an artwork can suffer over the years.

"It's also about showing the public all the work and technical know-how required to present a piece in mint condition," Wipplinger said. Many of the works have never been publicly shown, including rare Art Nouveau furniture by Koloman Moser, a co-founder of the illustrious Wiener Werkstaette arts collective. Some paintings are in a fairly good state but too frail to travel. —AFP



A man films "Death and Life", a painting by Gustav Klimt at the exhibition "Hidden treasures of the collection" in Leopold Museum in Vienna on yesterday. — AFP

Collapsing coffins mar Cuba's funerals



Cubans wait outside a church for a funeral mass in Havana, on January 27, 2016. —AFP photos



A man moves empty coffins to a funeral parlor in Havana.

As a deacon at a Cuban cemetery, Miguel Pons has the difficult task of consoling the bereaved and calming their anger when the coffins break. Besides officiating the funeral services at his chapel in Havana's picturesque Christopher Columbus graveyard, the 61-year-old often has to help shoulder the casket to stop it coming apart with the deceased inside.

Made of weak, green wood and lacking handles, the coffins are a poignant indication of how Cuba's public funeral service has never recovered from decades of mistrust between the Church and the communist government. People are fed up.

"I sometimes have to go out and hold the service in the street because the driver tells me, 'Father, we can't get the casket out. The corpse is very heavy and I'm afraid the bottom's going to fall through,'" Pons said. In Cuba, funerals are provided exclusively, and practically free of charge, by the state. But with a lack of investment and decent coffin wood, it is a scrappy business.

Families who come to bury their loved ones lament that the coffins lack nails or are draped in threadbare cloth, Pons said. Sometimes, the glass window in the casket comes loose and drops onto the corpse. "People complain to me. They say, 'Father, look at this!'" Pons said. "And I say to them, 'I know it is very painful. But what can we do?'"



Cubans carry a coffin to a funeral parlor.

Call for action

Burials are an important issue in Cuba, with its aging population and religious sensibilities. Beyond the many historic colonial churches, African spiritual traditions of honoring the dead still survive. These mingle with the Catholicism imported by Spanish conquerors centuries ago. Under communism, Cuba went through a period as an officially atheist country from 1976 until a constitutional reform changed it to a secular state in 1992. The Church's fortunes improved and many Cubans started coming to the chapels again for funerals. But now the public system is showing the strain. In December, the issue reached the country's legislature, where lawmaker Alexis Lorente presented a formal call to improve funeral services. He was quoted by the state newspaper Granma as listing citizens' numerous points of "dissatisfaction" with cremations, flowers, food at wakes and the shortage of hearses. Lorente told AFP that authorities had since launched "a program to repair all the funeral vehicles, and to improve service in funeral homes and the wood used for the coffins."

Crammed crematorium

Except for the lucky few that have a family plot, bodies are buried in common graves, stacked up with strangers. After two years, the decomposed remains are dug up and relatives are allowed to take away the bones, to keep them in an urn or store them in an ossuary. "When you exhume the person, you

take them away in your box. Then at last they have privacy," said Pons. One 70-year-old man told AFP how he buried his mother in November. He nearly keeled over, he said with rage rather than grief. Asking not to be named for fear of retribution, the man recalled how his mother's body lay for seven hours before a hearse came to collect it. "We wanted to cremate her but they told us there was no availability. We had to bury her instead."

Noisy chapels of rest

People still talk about how things were before Fidel Castro's revolution prevailed in 1959, in the days when funerals could be privately paid for. Pons said many Cubans want the state to improve its service and would be willing to pay some of their meager wages for better final farewells. Cuba, which has been gradually opening up its economy, restored diplomatic relations with the United States last year. But on an island where the average salary is \$20 a month, few can spare the thousands of dollars needed for an imported coffin or a family tomb. In Havana funeral parlors, coffins are leaned against the wall instead of being laid out flat in the center of the room.

Wakes often resemble rowdy parties, with mourners talking loudly and drinking as they sit around tables. Pons is waiting for things to change to the point where his church can set up a "dignified chapel of rest," he said. "Somewhere where people will be quiet and where you can pray." —AFP



A man carries supplies to make funeral wreaths.



Funeral wreaths on the back of a pickup.



A vegan squash dish that's bold enough to please meat eaters

By Alison Ladman

Looking for a vegan main dish that's robust enough to leave a meat eater satisfied? This stuffed squash dish has you covered. We start by halving and roasting acorn squash, which have a rich, satisfying flavor that only deepens in the oven. And since the bowl-like shape of the squash just begs to be filled, we created a mushroom-farro stuffing spiked with lemon zest and juice. If you don't mind adding some dairy, crumbled soft goat cheese or feta would be a delicious addition to the stuffing. Each half is just about right as an entree serving, but they are easily cut into quarters to work as a side dish. And if you want to feed a crowd, the recipe is easily doubled or tripled.

Ingredients

Start to finish: 45 minutes
Servings: 4
2 medium acorn squash
Olive oil
Salt and ground black pepper
1 1/2 cups thinly sliced mixed mushrooms
1 medium yellow onion, diced
2 cloves garlic, minced
2 cups cooked farro
1/4 cup chopped fresh parsley
1 tablespoon minced fresh rosemary
1 tablespoon chopped fresh thyme
Zest and juice of 1 lemon

Preparation

Heat the oven to 400 F. Line a small baking pan (such as a 9-by-9-inch pan) with foil and spritz with cooking spray. Cut the acorn squash in half from stem to point and scoop out the seeds and membranes. Slice off a small piece of skin from the rounded side of each half so the squash can sit flat with the cut side up. Rub the cut side of each half with a bit of olive oil, sprinkle with salt and black pepper, then arrange in the prepared pan. Bake for 30 minutes while you prepare the filling. Meanwhile, in a medium saute

pan over medium-high, heat 2 tablespoons olive oil. Add the mushrooms and cook for 5 minutes, or until they begin to brown. Add the onion and garlic and cook for another 5 minutes, or until the onions are tender. Remove from the heat and stir in the farro, parsley, rosemary, thyme, and lemon zest and juice. When the squash has cooked for 30 minutes, remove it from the oven and spoon the filling into each half. Return to the oven and cook for another 10 minutes, or until the squash flesh is tender when pierced with a paring knife.

WINTER CITRUS, MUSHROOM AND FARRO STUFFED ACORN SQUASH



Easy tips for making a tastier (and healthier) Turkey chili

By Melissa D'Arabian

Everyone has a favorite chili recipe, and this is the time of year to break out yours, invite over some friends and yell at football players on TV. Maybe it's time to try a new, healthier recipe, too? Chili is classic American comfort food, so we automatically assume that it can't be healthy. But since it is so darned tasty, it's worth the price of admission to try. And while I'm not against the occasional indulgence, I also love a recipe that manages to be both comforting and healthy.

Enter my game day turkey chili. Stay with me, here. This will not be your typical turkey chili because I have a few tricks up my sleeve. Don't get me wrong, I love a good turkey chili. But they do occupy a special place in the stratified chili eco-system. Put them in a chili competition and you'll see they land well below the fatty brisket chilies that feature tiny puddles of tasty melted fat

that pleasantly coat the palate. Turkey chili, if I'm honest, has been relegated to the "at least it's hot" status for too long.

Here are my tricks. First, make it a red chili. White chili step aside for a moment. The red part comes from tomato, which is healthy, and frankly just feels like comfort food. Second, skip the salt. Instead, use soy sauce directly on the meat after cooking it. This is perhaps the greatest tip I can give you regarding ground turkey! White-ish meat in a deep red chili looks a little strange. You are reminded that you are eating The Healthy Turkey Chili.

But deepen that meat color just a little with the soy sauce and you are back in the land of Real Meaty Chili. The soy sauce also adds tons of rich, savory meaty flavor, a big benefit for a meat that can taste a little flat. Final tip: Add a bit of unsweetened cocoa powder, which deepens both the color and the flavor. This is turkey chili done right! And so, 2016 is off to a good start.

GAME DAY TURKEY CHILI

Ingredients

Start to finish: 45 minutes; serves 8
2 teaspoons vegetable oil, divided
1 pound lean ground turkey
2 tablespoons low-sodium soy sauce
2 teaspoons smoked paprika
1 medium yellow onion, finely chopped
1 red bell pepper, cored and finely chopped
1 12-ounce light beer
2 15-ounce cans low-sodium black beans, drained and rinsed
1 14-ounce can low-sodium tomato sauce
2 14-ounce cans crushed tomatoes
2 tablespoons chili powder
Dash of cayenne pepper
1 teaspoon cocoa powder
Hot sauce, to taste
Plain low-fat Greek yogurt, to serve
Chopped scallions, to serve
Shredded cheddar or Mexican cheese, to serve

Preparation

In a Dutch oven or other large, heavy pot over medium-high, heat 1 teaspoon of the oil. Add the turkey and cook, breaking it up, until cooked through, about 7 minutes. Sprinkle the turkey with the soy sauce and smoked paprika, then mix until well-coated. Continue to cook until any moisture in the pot is gone, about 3 minutes. Spoon the meat out of the pan and set aside. Return the pot to the heat and add the remaining oil. Add the onion and red pepper, then cook until tender, about 5 minutes. Increase the heat to high, then add the beer to deglaze the pan, scraping the bottom to loosen any stuck bits. Simmer for 2 minutes. Return the meat to the pot, along with the beans, tomato sauce, crushed tomatoes, chili powder, cayenne and cocoa powder. Bring to a simmer. Reduce the heat to low, then simmer for 30 minutes. Serve with hot sauce, yogurt, scallions and cheese on the side.



ENTERTAINMENT

'It was a groundbreaker':

How

T H E X F I L E S™

changed television

By Una Mullally

The 1990s show - which returns to TV this week - was often dismissed as fodder for teenagers and conspiracy theorists, but its legacy is evident in today's best television.

In 2016 it is easy to forget there was a time when television was not so hot. In this golden age, successful film actors, writers, directors and producers think nothing of taking a television gig. Television - not film, not music - is the most immediate touchstone for mainstream pop culture.

Into this comes the revival of The X-Files, 14 years after it first wrapped. The show was an influential precursor to many shows since, a gem of the pre-internet age that became a phenomenon. On this side of the Atlantic, The X-Files revival begins tonight with a six-part mini-series by the show's original creator, Chris Carter, and starring the original leads, David Duchovny and Gillian Anderson.

To recap, they are FBI special agents Fox Mulder and Dana Scully, a duo with chemistry so fizzing they inspired a Catatonia song, the ultimate late 1990s accolade. Mulder, a misty-eyed mystery-obsessed believer in the paranormal and extraterrestrial; Scully a pragmatic skeptic determined to find a sensible answer to her partner's theories.

Why does this television show matter? The impact of The X-Files is everywhere. The structure of the show can be broken into its "monster of the week" episodes and the broader show mythology. The wider arc of The X-Files focused on a government conspiracy, the existence of a shadowy group within the US government called the Syndicate, and the alien invasion and colonization of the Earth they were trying to hide. Within all of that there was also the will-they-won't-they story of Mulder and Scully, and the mystery of their own personal backgrounds.

Today, we see multi-arc television as the norm, as broad, complex stories play out over time, in tandem with "story of the week" episodes. But it certainly wasn't the norm in 1993, when The X-Files began.

The show's atmosphere of government conspiracy, paranoia and secrecy was also unusual then, whereas now it is an almost saturated television market. Could there be 24 without The X-Files? Or Numb3rs, Prison Break, Homeland or Scandal? Conspiracy feeds into everything from House of Cards to Mr Robot, but it was The X-Files that brought it beyond JFK truthers into the mainstream.

The sentiment was pretty clear: trust no one. That philosophy is embedded in so



many contemporary television programs - Making a Murderer, True Detective, Sense8, Heroes, Dexter - whereas the dynamic of Mulder and Scully informs CSI, Bones, The Blacklist, Sherlock, The Doctor Who reboot and more. We might like to think of The X-Files as something frivolous, but it changed the course, structure and, perhaps most of all, the feeling of contemporary television.

Prime geek era

Derek O'Connor is a writer, film-maker, and fan. "It was on the cusp of the prime geek era, when all of a sudden popular culture occupied the mainstream, because it started off pre-internet. For a show like that to get the following it did, and have the impact it did and to cross over into the mainstream like it did was huge. It was one of the first 'mythology' shows, the big one obviously being Lost. So you had week in, week out episodes, but also this big back story unfolding.



"It also fed into that post-JFK thing about distrusting the government, and brought everything around the Area 51 thing into a new era. "Some of the best episodes are just those good, scary monster TV shows, but it was also about the two of them [Mulder and Scully]. They had one of those great double acts. It was proper cult telly in the way that cult crosses over and becomes mainstream. Arc runs through everything now, but they did it before that. It was also the show that put Fox as a network on the map [in the] pre-cable era. And as an incubator for a newer generation, the simple fact that it begat Vince Gilligan is massively significant in terms of giving a voice like that an opportunity."

As a testing and starting ground for writing and production talent, The X-Files was very important. It was a very male show behind the scenes. Its most famous graduate was Vince Gilligan, who wrote 30 episodes, directed two



and went on to create Breaking Bad. The 1998 series-six episode Drive was written by Gilligan and featured Brian Cranston as a guest star, who shone in the role; a decade later Gilligan would cast him as Walter White.

Duchovny wrote eight episodes and Anderson wrote one. Writer Howard Gordon went on to be the showrunner of 24, and created Homeland with Alex Gansa, who was also an X-Files writer. On the subject of Homeland, there are shades of both Anderson's and Duchovny's characters in Claire Danes's Carrie, not to mention government conspiracy and the atmosphere of paranoia. The X-Files proved a valuable training ground for several directors, including Michelle MacClaren, who went on to direct 11 episodes of Breaking Bad as well as episodes of Game of Thrones and Better Call Saul. And long before hot-shot star name screenwriters were migrating to television, Stephen King was writing for The X-Files.

Maleness and money

The maleness of The X-Files is apparent even in its revival. Gillian Anderson says she was initially offered half the amount Duchovny was to return to the show. This seems especially misguided considering Anderson worked for years for equal pay on The X-Files and is arguably more successful than Duchovny now.

At the Light House cinema in Smithfield, Dublin, last weekend, one of the X-Files movies was shown at a fancy-dress screening. Programmer Charlene Lydon has "been a fan since the start. I've always had a tendency to like scary stuff. I was introduced to it as part of a Channel 4 'weird night' when they were showing weird stuff including the Fire episode of the X-Files. "It was consistently good telly, especially back at the start," Lydon says. "You had the 'monster of the week' episodes to make you laugh, but also really strong threads of actual story you could invest in, and two really great leads, which is something often lacking in cop-show things. But this was really good drama. The X-Files might be dismissed now as something for tinfoil-hat teens with "The truth is out there" posters on their walls, but whatever the new series is like, the show's legacy is already embedded in our television culture. "It was a groundbreaker," says Derek O'Connor. "That and Buffy [the Vampire Slayer]: everything now comes from those two shows.

— (<http://www.irishtimes.com/>)



Friday Times

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2016

Travel



Battambang Cambodia's lesser-known city





The laid-back city of Battambang in Cambodia's northwest may have a sleepy ambience distinct from the more upbeat hot spots of Phnom Penh, Siem Reap and Sihanoukville, but travelers who venture here will find plenty of excuses to linger. A walkable centre, bags of old architectural charm, day trips to temples and traditional villages - plus the chance to ride on a bamboo train - are just a few reasons to include Battambang on your Cambodia itinerary.

Architecture and art

Battambang's compact central district is a fascinating jumble of French-colonial construction and vernacular shophouse architecture that has managed to withstand the long years of destruction and war. It's a great place for a late afternoon stroll, when the worst of the day's humidity has dissipated. The two highly informative heritage walks put together by KA Architecture Tours are a great way to explore Battambang's notable buildings and architectural history at your own pace. Maps are free to download from their website.

Battambang's historical role as Cambodia's arts hub is also seeing a modern resurgence, with itsy-bitsy independent art spaces and

galleries highlighting a new generation of emerging talent. Check out Lotus Bar & Gallery and Sammaki Gallery to see if there are any exhibitions while you're in town.

The bamboo train

Battambang's Bamboo Train is probably the most fun you can have on a bamboo platform that has been jimmied up with an engine and wheels. This defunct old French rail line provided a vital transport link between Battambang's east bank and the village of O Sra Lev for years. The 'trains' (known locally as norries), used to run cargo and passengers along the line, consist simply of a bamboo and metal frame, a set of

bogies either end and a gasoline-powered engine. When good roads finally connected O Sra Lev to the outside road there wasn't as much use for this ingenious transport system anymore, but tourism saved it from going defunct.

Revvng up to speeds of 15km/h along the old warped tracks is hilarious fun (particularly if you have kids in tow) and is by far one of the most unique rail journeys you'll ever experience. The true brilliance of the system is revealed when you meet a norry coming the other way and the drivers speedily de-assemble one norry so that they can pass. There has been talk of upgrading the railway, which would spell the end of

the bamboo train, though the plan would be to relocate it within the area.

Village life

Just outside of Battambang city, sitting snug between the rolling patchwork quilts of rice fields, are tiny villages of rickety traditional stilted houses, where enormous pigs languidly loll by the road and buffalo snooze beside curvaceous hay bales. A half-day trip tooting around the bumpy lanes by remork (tuk-tuk) or by bicycle tour (Soksabike and Butterfly Bicycle Tours are two excellent Battambang tour operators) is one of the best ways to understand Khmer local village life.

Head to Pheam Ek village to see local





ladies making rice-paper discs (used to wrap spring rolls) and to Somrong Knong to sample authentic kralan (sticky rice and beans and coconut milk cooked in a bamboo tube over charcoal) from the roadside vendors. If your nose can handle it, make a stop at the bustling prahoc factory, where Cambodia's favourite fermented fish-paste condiment is manufactured. Row upon row of fish lay beside the road drying in the sun here.

Temple time

A host of temples sit scattered across the countryside, all within easy day-tripping distance from Battambang. It's a bit of a slog up the side of Phnom Banan, 23km south of the city, to reach the summit temple of Prasat Banan, but it's worth it for the views. The Phnom Sampeau complex, 12km southwest of Battambang, has a wondrous mishmash of colourful wats and stupas at its summit as well as sweeping views; while half-way down the mountain a track leads to a sombre Khmer Rouge killing cave. Here a bone-filled memorial reminds visitors of the atrocities carried out during their reign.

For temples not atop mountains, Wat Ek Phnom, about 10km north of Battambang, is a gorgeously atmospheric topped 11th-



century temple behind a vibrantly coloured modern wat and ginormous modern Buddha statue. Nearby Wat Somrong Knong has a small but beautifully preserved and peaceful 18th-century pagoda, which belies its dark modern history as a

prison during the Khmer Rouge years.

A night at the circus

Cambodia's incredible circus Phare Ponleu Selpak may be more famous for its shows in Siem Reap but Battambang is its home. The

Phare centre here is a training school offering free tuition to disadvantaged youth in a diverse range of arts, from circus skills and theatre to painting and music. The dazzling circus shows under the centre's big top, performed by current students, take place three or four evenings every week and are without doubt one of Battambang's biggest highlights. Guided tours of the centre are also available during the day for travellers who want a peek behind the scenes.

Battambang essentials

Battambang is a three- to four-hour bus trip from Siem Reap and a five- to six-hour journey from Phnom Penh, with regular bus services from both cities.

From Siem Reap there's also the option of taking a riverboat to Battambang along the tributaries that branch out from Tonlé Sap lake. Would-be passengers should be aware that the journey can last up to nine hours and safety features, such as lifejackets, are in short supply. Battambang's accommodation scene is excellent, with everything from basic dorm beds to seriously swish boutique hotels. Most budget places are clustered in the centre, while boutique offerings are generally found on the east bank of the Sangker River.



WORD SEARCH PUZZLE

Comedy Movies 1

Find and circle all of the comedy movies that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell an additional comedy movie.

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

- ALL OF ME
ANNIE HALL
BABE
BEING THERE
BIG
BOB ROBERTS
BULL DURHAM
CARS
CAT BALLOU
CITY SLICKERS
CLERKS
CLUELESS
DUCK SOUP
ELECTION
FLETCH
GHOSTBUSTERS
HAPPY GILMORE
HARVEY
HOLIDAY
HOTSHOTS
LEGALLY BLONDE
LIAR LIAR
LOCAL HERO
MALLRATS
MANHATTAN
MEATBALLS
MOONSTRUCK
OH, GOD!
PLAZA SUITE
REPO MAN
RUSHMORE
SHREK
SLACKER
SLAP SHOT
SLEEPER
THE RUTLES
TOOTSIE
TRADING PLACES
UNCLE BUCK
YES MAN

Yesterday's Solution

Golf

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

- ALBATROSS
APPROACH
BACK NINE
BACKSPIN
BALL
BIRDIE
BOGEY
BUNKER
CADDIE
CART
CHIP
CLUBHOUSE
CLUBS
CONDOR
COURSE
DIVOT
DRIVER
DRIVING RANGE
EAGLE
FAIRWAY
FLAGSTICK
FORE
GREEN
GRIP
GROSS SCORE
HANDICAP
HOLE IN ONE
HOLES
HOOK
IRON
NET SCORE
PAR
PUTTER
ROUGH
RULES
SHOT
SLICE
STROKE
SWING
TEE OFF
TREES
WATER HAZARD
WEDGE
WOOD

The hidden message is: GOLF IS A GOOD WALK SPOILED

Daily SuDoku

9x9 grid for Daily SuDoku with numbers 1-9 in various cells.

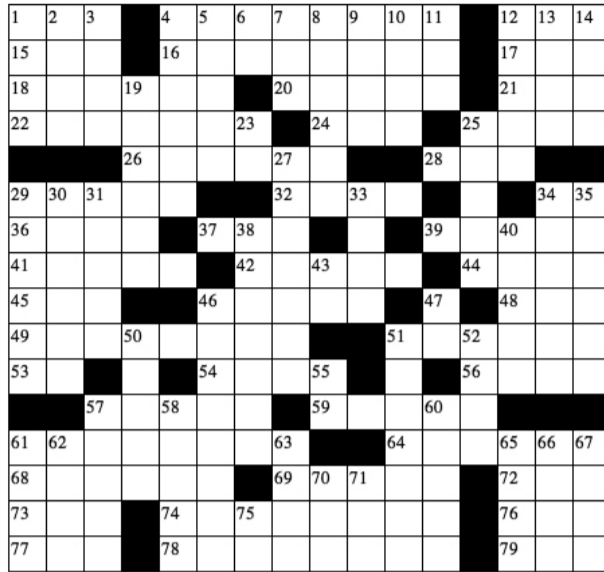
very hard

Yesterday's Solution

9x9 grid for Yesterday's Solution with numbers 1-9 in various cells.

easy

CROSSWORD 1159



ACROSS

- ACROSS1. A statement that deviates from or perverts the truth.
4. The state of being of noble birth.
12. A religious belief of African origin involving witchcraft and sorcery.
15. South American wood sorrel cultivated for its edible tubers.
16. A fibrous amphibole.
17. Airtight sealed metal container for food or drink or paint etc..
18. Any of several plants of the genus Manihot having fleshy roots yielding a nutritious starch.
20. Speak one's opinion without fear or hesitation.
21. Being one hundred more than two hundred.
22. Thin usually unleavened johnnycake made of cornmeal.
24. A strong emotion.
26. Grayish baboon of southern and eastern Africa.
28. Thigh of a hog (usually smoked).
29. Celebes megapode that lays eggs in holes in sandy beaches.
32. In addition.
36. In bed.
37. An informal term for a father.
39. Something whose name is either forgotten or not known.
41. A row of unraveled stitches.
42. Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
44. An unstable meson produced as the result of a high-energy particle collision.
45. A sweetened beverage of diluted fruit juice.
48. (sports) The chief official (as in boxing or American football) who is expected to ensure fair play.
49. A system of timekeeping that defines the beginning and length and divisions of the year.
53. An associate degree in nursing.
54. Rounded like an egg.
56. According to the Old Testament he was a pagan king of Israel and husband of Jezebel (9th century BC).
59. (Brit) An area of open or forested country.
61. Capital and largest city of Indonesia.
64. A B vitamin essential for the normal function of the nervous system and the gastrointestinal tract.
68. Swelling from excessive accumulation of serous fluid in tissue.
69. A switch made from the stems of the rattan palms.
72. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
73. An ugly evil-looking old woman.
74. An act of scaling by the use of ladders (especially the walls of a

DOWN

- fortification).
76. A republic in central Europe.
77. Used of a single unit or thing.
78. An alkalating agent (trade name Leukeran) used to treat some kinds of cancer.
79. A federal agency established to regulate the release of new foods and health-related products.
1. A long narrow inlet of the sea in Scotland (especially when it is nearly landlocked).
2. The United Nations agency concerned with civil aviation.
3. Freedom from difficulty or hardship or effort.
4. A member of an Athapaskan people that migrated to Arizona and New Mexico and Utah.
5. Port city on southern Honshu on Osaka Bay.
6. A small pellet fired from an air rifle or BB gun.
7. A zodiacal constellation in northern hemisphere between Cancer and Virgo.
8. The act of detecting something.
9. A disorderly outburst or tumult.
10. A unit of perceived loudness equal to the loudness of a 1000-hertz tone at 40 dB above threshold.
11. The compass point midway between east and southeast.
12. English scholastic philosopher and assumed author of Occam's Razor (1285-1349).
13. Related to or located at the back.
14. A ruler of the Inca Empire (or a member of his family).
19. Submit or yield to another's wish or opinion.
23. An international organization of European countries formed after World War II to reduce trade barriers and increase cooperation among its members.
25. A landlocked mountainous republic in southeast central Asia north of Afghanistan.
27. A Brazilian river.
30. A port city in southwestern Iran.
31. Having a horizontal surface in which no part is higher or lower than another.
33. Any of a number of fishes of the family Carangidae.
34. Naked freshwater or marine or parasitic protozoa that form temporary pseudopods for feeding and locomotion.
35. An informal conversation.
38. Scandinavian liquor usually flavored with caraway seeds.
40. (Old Testament) The wife of Abraham and mother of Isaac.
43. A light strong brittle gray toxic bivalent metallic element.
46. A green or yellow or brown mineral consisting of a hydrated silicate.
47. The syllable naming the fourth (subdominant) note of the diatonic scale in solmization.
50. Call forth.
51. A city in southeastern Spain.
52. An informal term for a father.
55. A radioactive transuranic element synthesized from californium.
57. An emblem (a small piece of plastic or cloth or metal) that signifies your status (rank or membership or affiliation etc.).
58. Cud-chewing mammal used as a draft or saddle animal in desert regions.
60. A fabric woven with fibers from the flax plant.
62. Close-fitting pants of heavy denim for casual wear (usually in the plural).
63. Any of various strong liquors distilled from the fermented sap of toddy palms or from fermented molasses.
65. (British slang) Cafe.
66. A United Nations agency created to assist developing nations by loans guaranteed by member governments.
67. Kamarupan languages spoken in northeastern India and western Burma.
70. Fermented alcoholic beverage similar to but heavier than beer.
71. Any of various dark heavy viscid substances obtained as a residue.
75. A ductile malleable reddish-brown corrosion-resistant diamagnetic metallic element.

Yesterday's Solution

9x9 grid for Yesterday's Solution with letters D, A, D, A, N, E, V, A, D, A, N, S, I, F, A, R, I, A, P, L, A, N, E, R, A, I, A, A, B, I, R, R, S, C, A, L, E, O, K, E, H, A, L, A, S, L, E, G, I, T, C, H, A, D, C, A, I, G, A, G, G, L, E, R, B, D, M, A, R, S, H, C, L, O, M, P, A, R, U, I, B, L, A, T, T, A, O, V, A, L, P, I, L, E, A, C, P, A, L, A, T, O, N, A, H, A, N, U, K, K, A, H, P, A, L, L, A, T, E, R, A, H, A, E, E, U, S, T, O, M, A, B, A, A, M, U, S, D, R, A, N, A, L, A, R, M, E, M, S, A, H, I, B, M, A, R, A, S, C, A, A, I, G, A, S, P, A, Z, T, E, C, Z, U, M, A, L, A, C, C, A, S, I, S, U, R, E, T, H, A, N, E, C, A, B, S, O, D, P, E, D, A, L, L, E, R, A, B, A



Aries (March 21-April 19)

This may be a very busy time at work for you now. Allow yourself more time for each project or problem customer...



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Supervisors seem to be watching everybody today and if you find work slow, it would be best to see where your energies or talents can be put to work to best help others.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

You are supersensitive today and depending on how you handle it, this can be an advantage in most any profession. If you focus on others, your understanding will enable you to fit into most any group.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

You may be bored with the daily grind but because you are focused on success, money and security, you may find it hard to take your breaks.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Your goals and objectives are very clear. You proceed with your work, not only with self-confidence, but with a clear understanding of the material resources and detailed hard work that is necessary to achieve them.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Anything undertaken professionally today will have good results. There could be some indecision now between various parts of your life that normally should be in balance.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

You are realistic about your abilities and expectations for success. This is an excellent time to get many things accomplished. The practical use of your time will most certainly pay off in the work world today.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

This is a fine time to try out some new ideas or engage in some new business dealings or investments. Compromise should be exercised whenever possible.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

There are many business matters that will keep you busy today. You are filled with great optimism for success in many areas of your life.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

An ambitious project finally comes to a successful ending today. There is cause for celebration. There is also a possibility that someone will pay you back for a debt owed.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

You are very serene today. Tell yourself that you will allow a little time this evening for pleasant daydreaming or artistic creativity-you will be able to come back to a good focus with work projects.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Getting the facts and making sure that people get your message straight can make all the difference in the world. You are able to use good common sense in most of your affairs-you can feel trends and make the right moves.

COUNTRY CODES

Table listing country codes for various countries, such as Afghanistan (0093), Albania (00355), and others, arranged in two columns.

OFFICIALS WANT MORE ZIKA DATA FROM BRAZIL

RIO DE JANEIRO: Brazil is not sharing enough samples and disease data to let researchers determine whether the Zika virus is, as feared, linked to the increased number of babies born with abnormally small heads in the South American country, UN and US health officials say.

The lack of data is forcing laboratories in the United States and Europe to work with samples from previous outbreaks, and is frustrating efforts to develop diagnostic tests, drugs and vaccines. Scientists tell The Associated Press that having so little to work with is hampering their ability to track the virus' evolution.

One major problem appears to be Brazilian law. At the moment, it is technically illegal for Brazilian researchers and institutes to share genetic material, including blood samples containing Zika and other viruses. "It's a very delicate issue, this sharing of samples. Lawyers have to be involved," said Dr Marcos Espinal, director of communicable diseases in the World Health Organization's regional office in Washington.

Espinal said he hoped the issue might be resolved after discussions between the US and Brazilian presidents. He said WHO's role was mainly to be a broker to encourage countries to share. When asked whether the estimate of other scientists that Brazil had provided fewer than 20 samples was true, he agreed it probably was. "There is no way this should not be solved in the foreseeable future," he said. "Waiting is always risky during an emergency."

Genetic resources

Last May, as the first cases of Zika in Brazil were emerging, President Dilma Rousseff signed a new law to regulate how researchers use the country's genetic resources. But the regulatory framework hasn't yet been drafted, leaving scientists in legal limbo. "Until the law is implemented, we're legally prohibited from sending samples abroad," said Paulo Gadelha, president of the Oswaldo Cruz Foundation, Brazil's premier state-run research institute for tropical diseases. "Even if we wanted to



SAN SALVADOR: Aedes aegypti mosquitoes are photographed in a laboratory at the University of El Salvador. — AFP

send this material abroad, we can't because it's considered a crime."

The ban does not necessarily mean foreign researchers can't access samples. Some were shared with the United States, including tissue samples from two newborns who died and two fetuses recently examined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. But a U.S. official said that wasn't enough to develop accurate tests for the virus or help determine whether Zika is in fact behind the recent jump in the number of congenital defects. The spike in cases prompted WHO to declare an international emergency Monday. Given the drought of Brazilian samples, public health officials across the world are falling back on older viruses - or discreetly taking them from private patients.

The US official, who shared the information on condition of anonymity as he was not authorized to

speaking publicly, said the CDC was relying on a strain taken from a 2013 outbreak in French Polynesia to perfect its Zika tests. US researchers trying to sequence Zika's genetic code have been forced to work with virus samples from Puerto Rico for the same reason, he said.

In England, researchers are using samples drawn from Micronesia, the site of an outbreak in 2007. The French are using samples from Polynesia and Martinique. In Spain, scientists have a Ugandan strain of Zika supplied by the United States. Even Portugal, Brazil's former colonial master, doesn't have the Brazilian strain; the National Health Institute in Lisbon said its tests relied on a US sample from the 1980s, among others.

Sample sharing

Some researchers are bypassing Brazil's bureau-

cracy by getting samples sent to them for testing by a private lab, said Dr Jonas Schmidt-Chanasit, an expert on mosquito-borne diseases at the Bernhard Nocht Institute for Tropical Medicine in Hamburg.

"It's almost impossible to get samples from the country," Schmidt-Chanasit told AP, referring to Brazil. "It's not going via official government channels. Our source is simply the rich people who want a diagnosis." In public, health leaders have been eager to boast about their excellent collaboration. WHO's chief, Dr Margaret Chan, said after Monday's meeting that Brazil and the United States were working "very closely" on studies. When asked about sample sharing, Dr Anthony Fauci, the director of the US National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, told AP: "I don't think it's an issue." Behind-the-scenes, it was another story. Four officials at the World Health Organization told AP that the Brazilians were starving international partners of up-to-date information. "WHO has gotten zero from them, no clinical or lab findings," one of the officials said. All four spoke on condition of anonymity because they were talking without authorization.

Ben Neuman, a virologist at Reading University in England, said thousands of samples - or hundreds at a minimum - were needed to track the virus and determine how it's changing. "Science only works when we share," he said. The virus sharing problems aren't limited to Brazil, said Gadelha of the Oswaldo Cruz Foundation. "This isn't a unilateral issue; it's a global problem," he said.

More than a decade ago, WHO faced a similar problem when Indonesia refused to hand over bird flu samples, arguing that Western scientists would use them to make drugs and vaccines the country couldn't afford.

Lawrence Gostin, director of WHO's Collaborating Center on Public Health Law and Human Rights at Georgetown University, said there are no rules that force governments to hand over viruses, tissue samples or other information. "If countries don't share, the only repercussions they face are public condemnation," he said. — AP

CLINIC
PAGE



Kuwait Times

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



KNCC PROGRAMME FROM THURSDAY TO WEDNESDAY (04/02/2016 TO 10/02/2016)

SHARQIA-1 FLIPPED FLIPPED ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: THE ROAD CHIP FRI+SAT ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: THE ROAD CHIP ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: THE ROAD CHIP AMERICAN HERO FLIPPED FLIPPED	11:45 AM 2:00 PM 2:00 PM 4:00 PM 6:00 PM 8:00 PM 10:15 PM 12:15 AM	ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: THE ROAD CHIP ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: THE ROAD CHIP JANE GOT A GUN JANE GOT A GUN JANE GOT A GUN	4:00 PM 6:00 PM 8:00 PM 10:00 PM 12:05 AM
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SHARQIA-3 JANE GOT A GUN JANE GOT A GUN CAPTURE THE FLAG JANE GOT A GUN JANE GOT A GUN JANE GOT A GUN JANE GOT A GUN	12:45 PM 2:45 PM 4:45 PM 6:45 PM 8:45 PM 10:45 PM 12:45 AM	AVENUES-2 AMERICAN HERO STANDOFF AMERICAN HERO AMERICAN HERO STANDOFF AMERICAN HERO AMERICAN HERO	12:15 PM 2:15 PM 4:15 PM 6:15 PM 8:15 PM 10:15 PM 12:15 AM
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CHANGE OF NAME

I, Kerodawala Rajani holder of Indian Passport No. M6422448, resident at D.No. 7-79 (B) Kadali village, Razole Mandal, hereby changed my name to Kerodawala Zainab. **(C 5125)**

Farida Shabuddin Mukaddam, holder of Indian Passport No. Z3082289, D.O.B. 25/08/1963, residing at A/103 Twin Star apartments Rupa Nagar compound near Kapadia Nagar, C.S.T. Road Kurla west Mumbai 400070, India, change my name as Farida Shahabuddin Mukaddam. **(C 5126)**

Abdul Gafoor Mukadam Shabuddin, holder of Indian Passport No. G7279549, D.O.B. 12/10/1956, residing at A103 Twin Star apartment Rupanagar compound near Kapadia Nagar, C.S.T. Road Kurla west. Mumbai, 400070, India. Change my name as Shahabuddin Abdul Gafoor Mukaddam. **(C 5127)**
3-2-2015

I, Abdulla Khan Munirudeen, S/o Abdulla Khan, holder of Indian Passport No: J5547890, D.O.B. 02.12.1965, residing at No. 204B, 5th block, 7th street, Bharathwaj

Nagar, Mudichur, Chennai 600048, shall henceforth be known as Abdulla Khan Kaleem Ullah Khan. **(C 5124)**
2-2-2016

I, Ameya Makarand Dhongade, holder of Indian Passport No: M1041651, R/o 5, Runanubandh Society, Park Avenue, D.P. Road, Aundh, Pune 411007, Maharashtra, changed my name as Amey Makarand Dhongade. **(C 5121)**
1-2-2016

FOR SALE

Toyota Yaris 2013 Saloon, dark grey color, excellent condition. KD 1950. Mob: 50994848. **(C 5123)**
2-2-2016

ACCOMMODATION

Sharing accommodation available for decent executive bachelors/ family at Abbassiya. Separate bathroom/ balcony. Near United Indian School. Contact: 50903076. **(C 5122)**
1-2-2016

SITUATION VACANT

Part-time housekeeper needed for Western family. Please call 98877192. **(C 5128)**
4-2-2016

Hospitals

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

Clinics

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

Friday Times BUSINESS

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12 Pacific rim countries ink Biggest ever trade deal

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NEW DELHI: Visitors gather at Hyundai's pavilion at Auto Expo 2016 in Greater Noida some 45kms east of New Delhi yesterday. India's flagship auto show opened its doors in New Delhi with a new batch of diesel-guzzling SUVs on proud display, despite industry uncertainty about a pollution crackdown targeting motorists in the capital. —AFP

AIRLINE BATTLE BREWS IN GULF

IRAN EYES REGIONAL HUB ROLE • BIG JET ORDER SENDS SIGNALS TO RIVALS

PARIS/DUBAI: An economic battle is likely for dominance of the skies over the Gulf after Iran decided to invest \$27 billion in an airline fleet capable of taking on the region's supercarriers. By ordering dozens of long-distance European jets last month after the lifting of sanctions, Iran is positioning Tehran as a potential long-term transit point between East and West to rival regional hubs such as Dubai, air officials and analysts say. The move is underscored by Tehran's choice of Airbus A380, which is the world's largest jetliner and is used by other Gulf carriers, and sends a political warning to Iran's neighbours not to ignore the Islamic Republic's emergence from isolation. "Certainly this is our historical position: we have always been a centre for communications in the region," Transport Minister Abbas Akhouni said in an interview.

The investment also points to a strategy to take part in the globalisation of the transport industry alongside Gulf rivals, even though the social and economic challenges of building a world-class hub are formidable for Iran. "We used to be a very important airline in the region and globally, so of course we want to play our role fully once again," Iranair Chairman Farhad Parvaresh told Reuters.

Iran signed a deal for 118 Airbus jets, and contracts to expand the main Tehran airport, during a visit to Europe by President Hassan Rouhani, less than two weeks after sanctions were lifted in exchange for curbs on Iran's atomic program. Not all the planes are expected to go to Iranair, but Tehran says it will give

the flag carrier priority. Nor will Iran's hub ambitions bear fruit any time soon, as its airlines must focus first on rebuilding a busy domestic network and catering for inbound tourism and business traffic. "The A380s don't arrive for another five years," Parvaresh said in an interview. "Before then we need to watch closely the expansion of Imam Khomeini (Tehran International) airport."

OUTSIDERS EYE IRAN'S MARKET

Arab Gulf carriers dominate long-haul travel thanks to smart, efficient hubs and a strategic position that places two thirds of the world's population within an optimal 4-8 hours' flying time from Dubai, home to regional heavyweight Emirates.

The only serious regional competitor to Gulf carriers for now is Turkish Airlines. But the variety of short- and long-haul jets acquired by Iran suggests it wants a share of the spoils in the future.

"(Iranair's) obvious intention is to become part of the network operation that the Gulf carriers have operated so effectively," said Peter Harbison, chairman of airline thinktank CAPA, which held an aviation meeting in Tehran last month. "Iran is very well geographically positioned ... We are obviously looking a few years out to get to that stage, but it is really where they need to be in 10 years time."

Even before then, it faces a contest to serve its own market as foreign carriers will be eyeing opportunities in the country of 80 million.

The International Air Transport Association (IATA), a trade association, has predicted Iran's market will more than treble from 12 million passengers a year now, mostly domestic flyers, to 44 million by 2034. "While the airlines here (in Iran) are rebuilding their capacity, the regional carriers ... are looking to suck traffic out over the Gulf airports," Dick Forsberg, strategy chief at aircraft lessor Avolon, said during the CAPA Iran Aviation Summit.

"It is going to be very hard for the airlines here to recover that leakage in the short- and perhaps even medium-term." Already 28 foreign carriers serve Iran and more are likely to arrive, says CAPA. "We are not afraid of competition," Parvaresh said. "We have good relations with most other carriers and there is no problem. I think Iranians for example will want to mainly fly with Iranair."

PLAYING "CATCH-UP"

Parvaresh said Iranair would start flights to Toronto, home to an estimated 50,000 Canadian Iranians. It is also widely expected to seek alliances to help it grow.

Gulf carriers Emirates and Qatar Airways declined comment on Iran. Abu Dhabi's Etihad said it always welcomed competition. A Gulf industry executive said it was too early to gauge Tehran's plans, but added "Iran is a new market for everyone; there is enough demand". Iran would need huge investment and an improved political climate to catch up with

deep-pocketed Gulf rivals that are "25-30 years ahead," he said. With traffic of 6 million passengers a year, Tehran's airport is dwarfed by Dubai's 78 million. Iran plans to boost capacity to 45 million on the way to a target of 70 million.

Any attempt by Iranair to mimic the hub-based business model of Gulf carriers could add a fourth big connecting airport to the three already operating: two in the United Arab Emirates and one in Qatar. "When you have such an early-mover advantage as the (Arab Gulf carriers), there's so much learning that it is extremely difficult to catch up. It's not just about hardware and infrastructure but also about developing the skill, the management layer to operate competitively," said a Dubai-based aviation analyst who asked not to be named.

Some experts have already questioned whether the region can sustain three hubs close together, especially in the event of a downturn, but Gulf airlines say traffic remains buoyant.

RULES ON ALCOHOL, WOMEN COVERING HEAD

Even so, other political and economic questions remain over Iran's bid to divert international traffic across the Gulf. These include the impact of low prices on Iran's ambitious airport construction plans, uncertainty over wary ties with the West and questions over how flexible its establishment will be in implementing strict Islamic rules on passengers in transit. —Reuters



NEW DELHI: Models pose on TVS scootys at Auto Expo 2016, in Greater Noida some 45kms east of New Delhi yesterday. India's flagship auto show opened its doors in New Delhi with a new batch of diesel-guzzling SUVs on proud display, despite industry uncertainty about a pollution crackdown targeting motorists in the capital. —AFP

KUWAIT EQUITIES RISE ON NEWS OF AMERICANA SALE

GULF BOURSES RISE AS OIL RALLIES

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Stock Exchange surged yesterday on news that the country's wealthiest family has agreed to sell its majority stake in Americana food company in an expected multi-billion-dollar deal. The normally dormant Kuwait bourse was trading up 1.5 percent at 5,196 points after the market announced an initial conditional agreement had been reached to sell the Kharafi family's 69 percent stake in Americana.

Al-Khair National for Stocks and Real Estate, which manages Kharafi family stocks, informed the market that a consortium of Gulf investors is set to acquire the stake. The Gulf consortium is represented by leading Dubai businessman and chairman of property

giant Emaar, Mohamed Al-Abbar.

The statement gave no value for the deal but said it is conditional to due diligence investigation and regulatory approvals. It also gave no date for closing the deal. Established in 1964, Americana, or Kuwait Food Company, is the parent group of more than a dozen major food brands like Kentucky, Costa Cafe and TGI Friday's.

It owns 1,630 outlets and employs 63,000 workers in Middle East and North Africa region. It also has 17 factories in the region and abroad and produces a variety of food products.

Americana has been in the news for several months after Saudi-based food company Savola reportedly offered

around \$4 billion to acquire the firm. That offer was rejected.

Stocks rebound

Gulf stock markets rebounded in early trade yesterday, following Asian stock markets higher as oil prices extended their rally into a second day. Dubai's index climbed 2.1 percent in the first 45 minutes of trade, with local investor favorites Arabtec and Drake & Scull trading up 2.6 and 1.8 percent respectively.

Blue chips also bounced back with Emaar Properties up 4.1 percent. In Abu Dhabi, the index gained 1.1 percent with the largest lender by market value, First Gulf Bank, jumping 3.5 percent. Dana Gas was up more than 4.0 percent.

Some traders and fund managers think the Gulf equity markets have now largely factored in economic pain expected this year due to governments' austerity policies, so investors may continue to bargain-hunt cautiously for stocks with attractive valuations and dividend yields, as long as oil does not fall back sharply. Doha's benchmark jumped 1.1 percent in the first 20 minutes of trade with Industries Qatar and Ezdan Holding up 1.9 and 3.1 percent.

But Gulf International Services nose-dived its daily limit of 10 percent for a second session in a row. The oil driller announced on Wednesday it swung to a net loss of 20.9 million riyals (\$5.6 million) in the fourth quarter; QNB Financial Services had forecast a profit of 278.9 million riyals. —Agencies

US PRODUCTIVITY FELL AT SHARP 3% RATE IN Q4

WASHINGTON: US productivity fell sharply in the final three months of 2015, closing out a fifth straight year of weak gains in worker efficiency. The Labor Department says productivity, the amount of output per hour of work, fell at an annual rate of 3 percent in the fourth quarter. It was the biggest quarterly decline in nearly two years. Labor costs rose 4.5 percent in the fourth quarter but were up a more modest 2.4 percent for the year.

Productivity last year edged up a slight 0.6 percent after a tiny 0.7 percent gain in 2014. It has been weak since 2011, a troubling development given that productivity is a key ingredient needed for rising living standards.

Jobless rate

Meanwhile, more Americans sought unemployment benefits last week, but applications stayed near historically low levels in a positive sign for the job market. The Labor Department says weekly applications for jobless aid rose 8,000 to a seasonally adjusted 285,000. The four-week average, a less volatile measure, increased slightly to 284,750.

Applications for jobless aid are a proxy for layoffs. The number of people seeking benefits has stayed below the crucial threshold of 300,000 for the past 11 months, which suggests that employers are holding onto workers and looking to hire on the expectation of continued economic growth. Weekly claims below 300,000 have generally corresponded with strong hiring levels. Economists expect that the jobs report released today will show that the economy added a net 200,000 jobs in January. —AP

IRAQ KURDS TO PAY PARTIAL SALARIES DUE TO ECONOMIC CRISIS

ARBIL: Iraq's Kurdish region has announced it will pay only partial salaries to all government employees except security personnel as it struggles with an economic crisis due to low oil prices. The autonomous region in northern Iraq, like the rest of the country, has been suffering from the huge drop in oil prices since mid-2014.

Kurdish leader Massud Barzani this week called for a referendum on independence, but economic challenges effectively rule out a viable Iraqi Kurdish state for now.

The salaries decision was taken "in order to ensure the continued distribution of part of the monthly salaries and allowances," the region's government said in a statement late Wednesday. The unpaid portion of the salaries going forward, as well as previously unpaid wages from last year, will be considered "loans remaining with the government, and will be returned later," the statement said.

The new measures will affect higher salaries more than lower, it said. The region's cabinet approved other measures aimed at cutting costs and raising revenues, including public auctions of oil and oil products not exported via pipeline, and making employees responsible for expenses associated with government-provided vehicles.

Public employees said the new measures would hit them hard. Kadhim Ismail said he and his wife are both teachers and that "after the reduction in salaries, we don't know how we will manage the rent" along with expenses for their four children. Midia Hassan, a 35-year-old government employee who has three children, was worried after the family had gone into debt to furnish their home.

"We are still paying, and we don't know how we will get by with the reduction in salaries," Hassan said. Iraqi Kurdistan has been independently exporting crude via Turkey since a deal between it and Baghdad on oil and revenue sharing collapsed last year. Plunging prices have made a major dent in the oil revenues on which the region relies for the vast majority of its funds. Salaries for some Kurdish government employees have fallen months in arrears, and some have gone on strike to protest unpaid wages.

The announcement about salaries came after Barzani, who has remained in power despite the expiration of his term as president, called for a referendum on independence. "The time has come and the conditions are now suitable for the people to make a decision through a referendum on their future," Barzani said, adding that a yes vote "would not necessarily lead to (an) immediate declaration of statehood." —AFP

UKRAINE FACES FRESH CRISIS AS ECONOMY MINISTER QUILTS

KIEV: Ukraine faced the prospect yesterday of a fresh political crisis engulfing the war-torn country following its reformist economy minister's resignation over alleged influence-peddling and state graft. A Ukrainian source told AFP that President Petro Poroshenko would meet ambassadors from the G7 nations after they pronounced themselves "deeply disappointed" with Aivaras Abromavicius's shock decision to step down.

Poroshenko met his Lithuanian-born economy chief Wednesday in a bid to change his mind and reassure him that all the charges levelled by Abromavicius would be investigated in full. But the president has no direct say over cabinet appointments, and parliament began debating the 40-year-old's future in a tense session that saw one deputy raising the prospect of a vote of no confidence in the government as a whole. "It is clear to everyone that we are entering a serious political crisis," parliamentary speaker Volodymyr Groysman told a joint press conference with former European Parliament president Pat Cox. —AFP

GLOBAL OIL DEMAND GROWTH IS SLOWING GOING INTO 2016

LONDON: The United States was one of the biggest sources of oil demand growth in 2015 but the outlook for 2016 is much more muted, according to official forecasters. The US transportation sector continues to send mixed signals about the strength of fuel demand at the end of 2015 and heading into 2016.

US consumers are buying a record number of new vehicles, and more of them are choosing fuel-hungry crossover utility vehicles, according to market intelligence supplier Wards Auto. The volume of traffic on US roads has also hit a new record and is growing at the fastest rate for almost two decades, according to the Federal Highway Administration.

But the volume of freight transported by road, rail, air, barge and pipeline has been trending flat or lower since the end of 2014, according to the US Bureau of Transportation Statistics. The amount of freight hauled in November 2015 was actually 1.4 percent lower than in the corresponding month in 2014. If freight movements were weaker in 2015, with the total number of rail cars and intermodal units moved across the network down 2.5 percent compared with 2014, according to the Association of American Railroads.

Road freight was fairly flat last year, ending three years of strong growth, according to the American Trucking Associations. "I remain concerned about the high level of inventories throughout the supply chain," the association's chief economist warned in a statement to the media last month.

"The total business-to-inventory sales ratio is at the highest level in over a decade, excluding the Great Recession period. This will have a negative impact on truck freight volumes over the next few months at least."

Sales of the heavy-duty Class 7 and Class 8 trucks employed for most freight movements ended last year on a soft note according to Wards, down from the end of 2014.

Stocks of unsold heavy duty trucks at manufacturers and dealerships have risen steeply as sales fell towards the end of 2015. At the end of December 2015, there was a 70-day supply of Class 8 trucks, up from 43 days at the end of December 2014, according to Wards.

The data on vehicle sales and miles driven is consistent with other signs of a two-speed economy in which demand from consumers remains strong while industry-related demand has weakened.

FUEL CONSUMPTION

Data on fuel consumption tells the same tale of a two-speed economy. The volume of gasoline supplied to domestic customers between January and November was up 2.7 percent compared with the same period in 2014, according to the US Energy Information Administration (EIA).

But the volume of low-sulfur distillate fuel oil, which includes the diesel used by trucks and trains, supplied to domestic customers was flat compared with 2014. The growth in distillate consumption has been slowing since early 2015 and turned persistently negative from May onwards. Gasoline consumption, on the other hand, has been growing strongly for most of 2015, at some of the fastest rates since before the recession.

More recently, however, there have been some signs the growth in gasoline consumption is moderating, with smaller year-on-year gains in both October and November. Gasoline consumption showed only modest year-on-year gains in December was actually down in January, according to the more timely but less reliable weekly estimates prepared by the EIA.—Reuters



ATHENS: Police uses tear gas against demonstrators throwing petrol bombs during a massive protest in front of the Greek parliament in Athens yesterday. —AFP

STRIKE AGAINST PENSION REFORM SWEEPS GREECE

40,000 JOIN PROTESTS IN ATHENS

ATHENS: Thousands marched across Greece yesterday as diverse classes united in a crippling general strike over a pension overhaul that has sparked a major backlash against embattled leftist Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras.

Police said around 40,000 people joined protests in Athens and another 14,000 in Thessaloniki for the 24-hour industrial action—the third general strike in as many months—that has stopped train and ferry services and grounded dozens of flights.

Opposition to the pension reform—a key part of Greece's latest economic bailout—has led to the rare sight of white-collar staff marching alongside workers.

Lawyers, notaries, insurers and engineers have joined the protests en masse in action the media have dubbed the "necktie movement." "They have mass-cred my generation. We can no longer get married or have children," said Dina, a 32-year-old who owns an underwear shop and was marching in Athens, referring to five years of austerity cuts under Greece's successive economic bailouts.

Tsipras is accused of breaking his promise to eliminate austerity when he

came to power last year.

"The pledges were hot air," read black balloons carried in the protest.

One group marched behind a banner in Chinese opposing the imminent privatization of the Piraeus port authority by Chinese shipping giant COSCO. Many traders shut their shops in solidarity, petrol stations were closed and taxis pulled off the streets. Hospitals were also operating on an emergency footing.

Farmers have formed protest hubs at dozens of locations on national highways, intermittently blocking traffic with tractors, continuing demonstrations that have been going on for two weeks.

On Tuesday, they blocked freight trucks from travelling into Bulgaria and Turkey, causing long lines on the respective borders.

Government 'strong and cohesive'
The strikers are furious at government plans to lower the maximum pension to 2,300 euros (\$2,500) per month from 2,700 euros currently and introduce a new minimum guaranteed basic pension of 384 euros. "It's true that the pension system requires reform but this reform cannot make it viable," lawyer

Thomas Karachristos told AFP.

Tsipras's leftist administration also wants to merge pension funds and increase social security contributions by both employers and staff. Critics say the new system penalizes those who dutifully pay their pension contributions over a lifetime of work and will encourage undeclared labor practices.

But Greece must save 1.8 billion euros from state spending on pensions under a three-year bailout signed with the European Commission, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund in July. The Tsipras government has warned the nation's pension system will soon collapse without the reform, which is expected to be put to a vote later this month in parliament, where the prime minister has only a razor-thin majority.

However, the government has rejected claims that the disputed overhaul has raised questions about its survival. The Tsipras government has only a majority of 153 in the 300-seat parliament.

"The government majority is strong and cohesive," government spokeswoman Olga Gerovassili said Tuesday. —AFP

WORLD FOOD PRICES START 2016 AT SEVEN-YEAR LOW

ROME: World food prices fell to near a seven-year low in January, weighed down by declines for agricultural commodities, particularly sugar, the United Nations food agency said yesterday.

Food prices have fallen for four straight years and remain under pressure from ample agricul-

tural supply, a slowing global economy, and a strengthening US dollar.

The Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) food price index, which measures monthly changes for a basket of cereals, oilseeds, dairy products, meat and sugar, averaged 150.4 points

in January against a revised 153.4 points the month before. The 1.9 percent decrease from December follows an almost 19 percent slide in 2015. Food on international markets in January was 16 percent cheaper than one year ago, the FAO said.

"There are still prospects perhaps for further downward pressure on markets, but the US economy, exchange rates, and the overall macro conditions are impossible to predict and their implications could be quite important," FAO senior economist Abdolreza Abbassian said.—Reuters

RATE CUT PROSPECTS GROW AS BIG CBS ADOPT A DOVISH TONE

FRANKFURT: The world's central banks have all but given up hopes they can return to conventional monetary policy soon, openly touting more easing and venturing deeper into the untested waters of unconventional policies. With global economic headwinds rising, this time from emerging markets, the world's biggest central banks have all hit a strongly dovish tone in the past day. They pointed to risks from emerging markets, China's economic slowdown and ultra-low inflation emanating from low oil prices.

That suggests global interest rates are likely to go even lower. And it raises the risk they will set off a vicious cycle of competitive currency devaluations and fuel growing doubts they can meet their mandates. That is a marked contrast to the start of the year. The US Federal Reserve and the Bank of England both expected to raise rates then, and the European Central Bank said it hoped it was done easing. In marked contrast, New York Fed Governor William Dudley, among the most influential policymakers on the Federal Open Market Committee, on Wednesday poured cold water on any lingering hopes for a rate hike this year.

"One thing I think we can say with more confidence is that financial conditions are considerably tighter than they were at the time of the December meeting," when the Fed raised rates for the first time in almost a decade, Dudley said.

"So if those financial conditions were to remain in place by the time we get to the March meeting, we would have to take that into consideration in terms of that monetary policy decision," he added.

The Fed's well-telegraphed rate increase in March suggested to markets that three or four hikes could come this year. But those expectations have faded since the start of the year. Now markets only see a 40 percent chance of an increase hike in next February.

The Bank of England, which met yesterday, was also seen sending strong signals that it was not in a hurry to raise rates.

CURRENCY WAR?

Bank of Japan Governor Haruhiko Kuroda added fuel to the fire overnight when he said he would not hesitate to ease policy further to hit a 2 percent inflation target at the "earliest" date possible. The BoJ surprised markets with a rate cut last week that took Japanese rates into negative territory. His comments, among others, strengthened the euro, putting pressure on the ECB, which relies to a great extent on the weak currency to generate much-needed inflation.

Conscious that his comment could be seen as battle call in a currency war, Kuroda asked other central banks for their understanding. "As with the Federal Reserve, the European Central Bank or any other major central bank, the BOJ doesn't target exchange rates in guiding monetary policy," Kuroda told parliament.

"By pushing down interest rates and the yield curve, we hope to push down real interest rates so that we can stimulate consumption and investment," he said yesterday.

But pushing down currencies has been a key aim for several big central banks and another big devaluation in China is a persistent fear. "The biggest risk for the world economy at this point is an aggressive policy of devaluation in China," the head of a major central bank in Europe told Reuters recently. "With uncertainty and volatility already high, it would have a big consequence for all economies."

The People's Bank of China has been fighting to keep the yuan stable since Jan. 6, when its second sharp depreciation in six months sparked fears of more devaluation as growth slows in the world's second-biggest economy, already at a 25-year low.

Chinese stocks have lost over a fifth of their value since the start of the year, and a renewed slide in oil prices, a major indicator of economic activity, took Brent crude to its lowest since 2003. The CBOE Volatility Index, the US equity market's "fear gauge", has risen sharply.

Mario Draghi, the European Central Bank's president, also weighed in, arguing that acting too late to combat low inflation was more risky than acting too quickly. His remarks suggested the ECB could cut rates deeper into negative territory as early as March. — Reuters



BRUSSELS: EU Commissioner for Economic and Financial Affairs, Taxation and Customs, France's Pierre Moscovici gives a press conference to announce the European Union's Winter 2016 Economic Forecast yesterday at the EU headquarters in Brussels. —AFP

EUROZONE GDP SEEN GROWING MODERATELY IN 2016, 2017

GROWTH DRIVEN BY CONSUMPTION AMID EXTERNAL RISKS: REPORT

BRUSSELS: Eurozone economic growth will slightly accelerate this year and next, the European Commission estimated yesterday, but the pace will be slower in 2016 than previously forecast because of increased global risks. The gross domestic product (GDP) of the 19-country single currency bloc is expected to expand by 1.7 percent this year from 1.6 percent in 2015. The recovery will gain speed in 2017 with economic expansion of 1.9 percent, the EU executive said in its winter economic forecasts.

The growth estimate for this year is a slight downward revision of the 1.8 percent seen in the last set of forecasts in November. The 2017 figure was unchanged.

External factors are seen as the main risks to the eurozone economy that will continue to grow mostly because of domestic consumption. "Europe's moderate growth is facing increasing headwinds, from slower growth in emerging markets such as China, to weak global trade and geopolitical tensions in Europe's neighbourhood," Commission Vice President Valdis Dombrovskis said in a statement.

Low oil prices, cheap credit and the weak euro will continue to boost eurozone growth, but will be offset by a "disorderly adjustment" in China and the possibility of higher interest rates in the United States. All national economies of the euro zone are expected to grow this year, with the exception of Greece where GDP will drop by 0.7 percent, albeit a lesser decline than the 1.3 percent decrease forecast by the Commission in November.

The Greek economy will return to growth in 2017 with an expected 2.7 percent expansion. "These are the good signs that some stabilisation is already happening," EU's Economics Commissioner Pierre

Moscovici told a news conference, warning however against complacency in the reform agenda.

Germany's economy, the euro zone's largest, will grow 1.8 percent this year and next, compared with November forecasts of 1.9 percent. It also will continue recording large current account surpluses, exceeding the 6 percent limit recommended by the EU institutions.

Growth forecasts in 2016 for France and Italy - the second- and third-largest economies of the euro zone - were also revised slightly downward to respectively 1.3 and 1.4 percent.

Ireland is set to post the highest growth among all 28 EU countries, with an estimated expansion of the economy of 4.5 percent in 2016. The forecast marks a slowdown from the 6.9 percent growth estimated in 2015, but was welcomed by the Commission as it averts fear of possible bubbles, Moscovici said.

INFLATION TO REMAIN LOW

Cheap oil will continue suppressing consumer prices, with euro zone inflation seen at only 0.5 percent this year, the Commission said. In its last forecast released in December, the European Central Bank had put inflation at 1 percent in 2016, but has later said its estimates were to be cut. The Commission sees consumer prices growing by 1.5 percent in 2017, slightly below the ECB forecast of 1.6 percent, and still off the ECB's target of just under 2 percent. Unemployment rates in euro zone countries will continue to fall but at a slower rate and the bloc's average will stay just above 10 percent during the forecast horizon. — Reuters

BOE CUTS ECONOMIC GROWTH OUTLOOK FOR 2016 AND 2017

LONDON: The Bank of England cut its economic growth forecasts on Thursday due to a darker global outlook, and the lone policymaker who had backed a rate rise in recent months unexpectedly abandoned this position.

The central bank said sharp falls in oil prices and shares, and significant risks in emerging economies, weighed on the international outlook, though resilient domestic demand should ensure British growth still remained near its long-run average.

"Global growth has fallen back further over the past three months as emerging economies have generally continued to slow and as the US economy has grown less than expected," the BoE said in its quarterly forecast. The central bank said its Monetary Policy Committee had voted 9-0

this week to keep rates on hold at a record-low 0.5 percent, where they have been for almost seven years.

MPC member Ian McCafferty, who had voted for a rate rise since August, unexpectedly dropped his call. "The more prolonged period of low inflation suggested that the pick-up in the pace of wage growth would be initially more muted than previously expected," he was recorded as saying in minutes of the BoE's policy discussions.

Sterling lost ground against the euro and British government bonds briefly rallied against euro zone debt on the prospect of a more distant British interest rate rise.

"McCafferty felt that the economy is not in a state to support the beginning of the hiking cycle. Overall, this supports our view

that a hike is off the table until Q4 2016," Barclays economist Andrzej Szczepaniak said. The central bank said interest rates were still more likely than not to rise gradually over the next three years. But it appears in no rush to follow the US Federal Reserve, which raised rates in December, just before the latest market turmoil. The dollar fell sharply on Wednesday, after a Fed official said the central bank may have to take more account of tighter monetary conditions going forward.

Sterling has weakened by more than 3 percent over the past three months. The BoE said this reflected concerns about global growth, lower interest rate expectations and possibly uncertainty about Britain's referendum on leaving the European Union, which is likely to take place in the middle of this year. — Reuters



AUCKLAND: Protestors perform a haka outside the venue of the signing of the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement in Auckland yesterday. — AP

12 PACIFIC RIM COUNTRIES INK BIGGEST EVER TRADE DEAL

TPP AIMS TO SLASH TARIFFS, TRADE BARRIERS

AUCKLAND: The biggest trade deal in history was signed yesterday, yoking 12 Pacific rim countries in a US-led initiative aimed at wresting influence from booming China. The ambitious Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) aims to slash tariffs and trade barriers for an enormous 40 percent of the global economy-but pointedly does not include Beijing.

"TPP allows America-and not countries like China-to write the rules of the road in the 21st century," US President Barack Obama said after the pact was signed in New Zealand.

The deal-whose birth was fraught by domestic opposition in the US and in other key players, such as Japan-is a key plank of Obama's so-called "pivot" to Asia, as he seeks to counter the rising power of China. Along with a rebalancing of the US military machine towards the western Pacific, the TPP is recognition of the growing might of China, which has come to dominate the region, threatening American influence.

Supporters of the deal say harnessing the power of free trade in such a dynamic part of the world is vital if the US is to fend off China's challenge to its supremacy.

Trade ministers from 12 participating countries-Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, the United States and Vietnam-signed the pact in Auckland early yesterday. Beijing was muted in its reaction to the deal, saying its officials were studying the 6,000-page document. A commerce ministry statement said China would "actively participate in and facilitate highly transparent, open and inclusive free trade arrangements in the region".

Despite Obama's comments, the US has also sought to play down any overt anti-China rhetoric.

US trade representative Michael Froman, in Auckland, said the agreement

was "never directed against" any specific country and "it's important to have a constructive economic relationship" with China. Although the signing marks the end of the negotiating process, member states still have two years to get the deal approved at home before it becomes legally binding.

"We will encourage all countries to complete their domestic ratification processes as quickly as possible," New Zealand Prime Minister John Key said. "TPP will provide much better access for goods and services to more than 800 million people across the TPP countries, which make up 36 percent of global GDP."

However, ratification may prove far from easy, notably in the United States, where poisonous election-year politics are likely to stymie co-operation over a deal opponents have spun as a job killer. "It's highly unlikely (ratification) before the national elections in November," Tom

Switzer of the University of Sydney's US Studies Centre told AFP.

"In an election year, free trade is not a popular cause, and there are a lot of constituencies in both the Democratic Party and the Republican Party who are very much opposed to free trade or any kind of trade deal."

In Japan-the second biggest economy in the bloc, and one that was a relative late-comer to the process-mainstream politicians and economists have generally supported the TPP as positive for Tokyo's export-driven growth even amid concerns over its impact on its prized agriculture industry. The Canadian government, which has changed since the deal was negotiated, signed up Thursday but has yet to decide whether to go through with ratification.

While the 12 trade ministers were shaking hands in Auckland, thousands of protesters clogged the streets outside to voice their opposition. — AFP



AUCKLAND: Trade delegates pose for a photograph after signing the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement in Auckland yesterday. — AP

PAKISTAN SHELVES PLAN TO PRIVATIZE POWER FIRMS

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has shelved plans to privatize its power supply companies and will miss deadlines to sell other loss-making state firms, reneging on promises Islamabad had made to the IMF in return for a \$6.7 billion bailout three years ago.

Two government officials with direct knowledge of the situation said International Monetary Fund officials meeting with Pakistani officials in Dubai this week to review the progress made on reforms were angered by the backtracking.

But the IMF still agreed yesterday to release the next \$497 million tranche of that loan, leaving a further \$1.1 billion left to be released. Announcing that its team in Dubai had agreed that the tranche should be disbursed, subject to approval by the Fund's executive board, the IMF went on to lament Pakistan's slow progress in some areas.

"While many structural benchmarks have been met, measures pertaining to the energy sector reform and restructuring of loss-making public enterprises are yet to be implemented," the IMF said in a statement. For all the IMF's frustration over the privatisation delays, the government has pushed ahead on other reforms, the Pakistani officials said, though there is another unspoken reason why Islamabad can expect the money to keep coming with little more than a reprimand.

Western allies, and neighbours Afghanistan and India, fear an economic meltdown would create a witches brew in the nuclear-armed Muslim nation of 190 million, mostly poor people, whose fragile democracy is under internal attack from Islamist militants.

Still, economists said a rebuke would send a negative signal to international financial markets about Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's government. "It was embarrassing and brutal," a senior Pakistani official present at the meeting in Dubai, told Reuters, describing the IMF's response when mission head Harald Finger was told that the government had decided not to sell nine power distribution companies because of fear of labour unrest.

"It was nothing less than a dressing down. If the IMF still doesn't penalize us, then all I can say is, 'We're very lucky,'" the official said. The other source, a senior finance ministry official who was also in Dubai, confirmed the account. The finance ministry did not respond to calls seeking comment. A spokesman for the IMF said the Fund would not comment during a mission review. The IMF loan had helped Pakistan stave off a default in 2013, when dwindling foreign exchange reserves covered less than six weeks of imports. Pakistan's reserves have since swelled to \$20.5 billion in January from \$11 billion in mid-2013.

UNION UNREST

The privatization of 68 state-owned companies, which include loss-making enterprises like Pakistan International Airlines and Pakistan Steel Mills, is a crucial part of the IMF deal and was meant to bring the country's finances back on track.

Such enterprises drain about \$5 billion every year from state coffers, around an eighth of the government's fiscal revenues last year of around four trillion rupees (\$38.2 billion).

The government has made some progress, including raising more than \$1 billion by selling its entire stake in Habib Bank Ltd, but has struggled to find buyers for most of the companies and faced stiff opposition from labour unions. Protesters clashed with security officials on Tuesday over plans to privatise the national airline, leaving two people dead. Most PIA flights were grounded on Wednesday.

Both Pakistani officials said the IMF had made clear its frustration with the delays to privatization drive. "The IMF is asking the obvious question: 'Why didn't you start negotiations [with unions] earlier? Why wasn't this handled better at the political level?'" the senior government official said.

The Pakistani officials told the IMF that taking on the power companies' 400,000 unionized employees was fraught with risk, and that instead the government would bring in independent boards of directors to improve management. Pakistan has already missed last year's deadlines to solicit buyer interest in PIA, and the officials said the government has now informed the IMF it would miss the June 2016 deadline to conclude the sale of 26 percent shares of the airline.

Pakistan will also miss its deadline to sell Pakistan Steel Mills by March this year, the officials said.

Pakistani governments problems dealing with the IMF could nudge them toward other avenues for help, like long-time ally China, which plans to invest \$46 billion in a China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), and is also leading the new Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank.

"If money from the CPEC starts coming in, it allows the government to show that something is happening and that they don't need the IMF," said Akbar Zaidi, a South Asian expert at Columbia University. — Reuters



SAN DIEGO: In this Jan 25, 1998, file photo, Denver Broncos quarterback John Elway is upended Green Bay Packers' Brian Williams (51) and Elroy Butler (36) while running for a first down during the third quarter of NFL football's Super Bowl XXXII. — AP

LOSING IN THE SUPER BOWL HAUNTS PLAYERS

SAN FRANCISCO: The pain of losing a Super Bowl never really disappears. It drives players who have experienced it to get back and get it right. Ricky Proehl has been to four Super Bowls as a player, going 2-2. He won and lost with the St. Louis Rams, lost with the Carolina Panthers, and got the second ring in his final NFL season, 2006 with the Indianapolis Colts.

He's at the big game again as Carolina's wide receivers coach, buoyed by memories of earning those rings, haunted by remembrances of the two failures. "Anger, disbelief, shock," Proehl said on Wednesday of his reactions to walking off the field a Super Bowl loser. "And then they rush you off like it's a cattle drive so they can set up a stage for the winning team. You sometimes don't even get a chance to congratulate the winners. "It's painful."

Proehl has relayed those sentiments to

some Panthers, emphasizing just how good the opposite feelings are. "You are on top of the world, on top of your profession," said the former receiver who played for six teams in a 17-year career, the first nine of which he didn't reach the postseason. "You start out with a common goal and you're going with guys to attain a dream, and then you are hoisting the Lombardi Trophy. Everyone in this league should be able to feel that feeling with their teammates." But only four players who will suit up on Sunday have had that joy, just one current Denver Bronco: Peyton Manning with the Colts.

Carolina's Michael Oher and Ed Dickson earned rings with Baltimore, Roman Harper with New Orleans. And the guys who have fallen short, including Manning, have used that letdown as motivation. "We got beat by a hot team and a better team that night,"

Manning said of the 43-8 whipping Seattle put on Denver two years ago. "It was disappointing. It was a tough pill to swallow." And it doesn't matter if the result was lopsided or in the last minute.

Championship ring

Antonio Smith, a 12-year veteran, has reached his second Super Bowl. He was with the Arizona Cardinals when they lost to the Pittsburgh Steelers in the final minute in 2009. The defensive end, in his first season with Denver, has a memento from that season that reminds him why he strives each day to go one step beyond.

"Every time I look at the NFC Championship ring, that's what I think: I left that field a loser," Smith said on Wednesday just before learning his father passed away after recently undergoing heart surgery. "So I have been focusing in on what I need to do here for me to walk off with a better result. "I love this game of football, I love putting it on the line every week. But in the end, you're doing it to have the opportunity to be called champion." Broncos receiver Emmanuel Sanders joined the Steelers two years after that thrilling victory.

Against Green Bay in 2011, he felt the sting of defeat as a rookie. Five seasons later, as Sanders has developed into a top receiver, he still shudders when thinking about coming up short. "I've been here and I have a loss," said Sanders, who has become one of Manning's go-to guys. "I can't suffer that again?" Suffer? "Yeah, man," Sanders added, the smile disappearing from his face. "Does it ever hurt." And there's no way of ever easing the hurt unless you return to the Super Bowl and pull off the victory. Asked how he thought the Buffalo Bills of the 1990s must have felt when they fell four straight times in the Super Bowl, Sanders simply shook his head. Proehl sees little to no difference in working the sideline or being in the coaches' box as opposed to performing on the field. Coaches go through the same kind of preparation and routine as the players. — AP

FAULKNER INJURY ADDS TO AUSTRALIA WOES

WELLINGTON: Australia had injury added to insult after being thrashed in the opening one-day international against New Zealand with an injured James Faulkner returning home. He suffered a hamstring injury in Wednesday's match, comprehensively won by New Zealand by 159 runs, and is to be replaced by Marcus Stoinis.

The left-arm quick, who was also the man of the match when Australia beat New Zealand in the World Cup final last year, was one of the few Australians to distinguish himself when the two sides met in an ODI for the first time since on Wednesday. Faulkner took two wickets and contributed the second highest score of 36 with the bat as the world champions folded for 148 in reply to New Zealand's 307-8. "Unfortunately, with the short turnaround between games we do not believe he will recover in time to take any further part in the series," Australian team doctor Alex Kountouris said. "As a result, he will return to Melbourne to have scans and

start rehabilitation. We are hopeful this is only a low-grade injury but will know more in the coming days."

Faulkner's departure adds to a growing list of injured in the Australian squad with Mitchell Starc, Pat Cummins, Nathan Coulter-Nile and Aaron Finch missing from the New Zealand series as well as coach Darren Lehmann. Stoinis, who will join the Australian squad in time for the second ODI in Wellington on Saturday is an all-rounder who has only played one ODI and one Twenty20 in the past year.

After New Zealand posted a score in excess of 300, with Martin Guptill and Henry Nicholls both scoring half-centuries, Australia were quickly on the ropes at 41-6 before Faulkner and Matthew Wade added 79, an Australian seventh wicket record partnership against New Zealand. Wade was Australia's top scorer with 37 while for New Zealand Trent Boult took three for 38 and Matt Henry finished with three for 41. — AFP

CENTURION BUTTLER LEADS ENGLAND TO DLM TRIUMPH

BLOEMFONTEIN: A century by Jos Buttler set up victory for England by 39 runs on the Duckworth/Lewis method in the first one-day international against South Africa at the Mangaung Oval on Wednesday. Buttler's 105 was the main contribution as England piled up 399 for nine, easily their highest one-day total against South Africa and their second highest of all time.

Fellow wicketkeeper-batsman Quinton de Kock hit an even better century, making 138 not out off 96 balls before rain ended play with South Africa on 250 for five in 33.3 overs. But whereas Buttler was part of a powerful team batting effort, De Kock's only significant support came from Faf du Plessis, who made 55.

Buttler hit 11 fours and five sixes in a 76-ball innings which included a breathtaking variety of strokes. "The reason for promoting Jos was because we have a very flexible batting line-up," said England captain Eoin Morgan. "We were flying at around eight-and-a-half (runs per over) at one stage and it felt right to promote him up the order. "He's one of our only players who has the capabilities to score a 40 or 50-ball hundred. The timing of it just seemed right."

Alex Hales, Joe Root and Ben Stokes all hit half-centuries after opening batsman Jason Roy set the tone for the innings by striking 48 off 30 balls. England's innings included five partnerships worth 50 or more while no fewer than eight batsmen struck sixes, with a total of 15 hits clearing some of the biggest boundaries in South Africa.

All the South African bowlers took heavy punishment, with four going for 70 runs or more, while Farhaan Behardien and JP Duminy, sharing fifth bowler duties, conceded a total of 93 runs. South Africa lost Hashim Amla early but De Kock and Du Plessis kept the hosts in touch with the required run rate in a second wicket partnership of 110 off 83 balls.

Bowlers take a pounding

With storm clouds overhead and a strong wind sending clouds of dust swirling across the ground in a drought-hit city, it seemed that a stoppage might be imminent when Du Plessis was caught on the midwicket boundary off Moeen Ali. The rain did not come and off-spinner Ali struck again when South African captain AB de Villiers was brilliantly caught by a running, leaping Stokes at wide long-on for eight. Despite De Kock reaching his ninth one-day international century off 67 balls, South Africa were unable to keep pace with a Duckworth/Lewis target which grew larger with every wicket that fell before rain eventually arrived. De Kock hit 12 fours and six sixes. Early in his career-best innings he became, at 23, the youngest South African to reach 2,000 runs in one-day internationals.

Ali took three for 43, easily the best figures of a match when most bowlers took a pounding. England's batting assault started in the first over when Roy hit two boundaries off the first over, bowled by Chris Morris. Fellow new ball bowler Marchant de Lange was punished for 31 in three overs as Roy and Hales raced to 62 off the first seven overs.

The introduction of Morne Morkel into the attack brought the wicket of Roy, caught at cover, after he had made 48 off 30 balls in an opening stand of 68. Hales took over as the aggressor as he and Root put on 62 for the second wicket, with Hales making 57 off 47 balls before he sliced De Lange to wide mid-off.

With England scoring at better than seven runs an over, Buttler was promoted up the order and he was quickly into his stride, pounding a half-century off 34 balls with six fours and three sixes. He reached his century off 73 deliveries which, remarkably, was the slowest of his four one-day international hundreds. — AFP



BLOEMFONTEIN: England batsman Jos Buttler plays a shot during the first One Day International (ODI) cricket match between England and South Africa at Mangaung Oval. — AFP

SHARPSHOOTER CURRY NETS 51 AS WARRIORS BEAT WIZARDS

WASHINGTON: Stephen Curry scored 51 points, including an NBA season-high 11 3-pointers, to power the defending league champion Golden State Warriors past host Washington 134-121 on Wednesday. Reigning NBA Most Valuable Player Curry scored 25 points in the first quarter as the Warriors improved to 45-4 with their eighth consecutive victory.

Curry went 11-of-16 from beyond the arc, finishing one 3-pointer shy of matching the one-game NBA record of 12 3-pointers shared by Los Angeles Lakers guard Kobe Bryant and former NBA standout Donyell Marshall.

"I missed one too many," Curry joked. "At the end of the game, yeah, I knew I was within reach. I was kind of searching, but not trying to force with where the game was. You can't mess around with the basketball gods trying to chase a record if the game doesn't call for it." Curry went 13-for-14 from the floor in the first half, making eight 3-pointers in producing 36 points to give Golden State a 74-60 lead.

The Wizards rallied within 81-79 before Curry helped the Warriors put down the threat. Curry's fellow NBA All-Star guard John Wall led Washington with a season-high 41 points and added 10 assists but the Wizards fell to 21-26 with their seventh loss in nine games. "He made some unbelievable shots," Wall said of Curry.

Curry, who finished 19 of 28 from the field, made his first six shots, including five 3-pointers, inside the opening seven minutes. "To start off like I did was fun," Curry said. Warriors coach Steve Kerr compared the attention Curry gets to that received by his former NBA teammate Michael Jordan during their time together with the 1990s NBA champion Chicago Bulls.

"There are a lot of similarities, I think," Kerr said. "Obviously with Michael drawing so much attention everywhere we went. I think today things are bigger in a lot of ways with social media and so many different media outlets. And Steph is getting a lot of notoriety, obviously, and drawing fans and media everywhere we go."

Kerr jokingly took the blame for Curry missing out on a 12th 3-pointer, saying, "My fault. Should've called more plays for him." Warriors forward Draymond Green had 12 points, 12 assists and 10 rebounds, setting a Warriors single-season record with his 10th triple-double, while guard Klay Thompson added 24 points. The Wizards were guided by interim coach Don Newman as coach Randy Wittman was away from the team following his brother's death.

THUNDER 117, MAGIC 114

Russell Westbrook posted his third straight triple-double with 24 points, a career-high 19 rebounds and 14 assists as Oklahoma City held off Orlando. Kevin Durant hit a 3-pointer with a half-second left to cap a 37-point performance and give the Thunder their fifth straight win. Victor Oladipo scored 37 points for the Magic, who have lost 14 of 16.

SPURS 110, PELICANS 97

LaMarcus Aldridge scored 36 points and San Antonio improved to 27-0 at home this season by beating New Orleans. The Spurs have won 36 in a row at home overall, dating to last season. Anthony Davis had 28 points and 10 rebounds for the Pelicans.

HORNETS 106, CAVALIERS 97

Jeremy Lin scored 24 points and Charlotte ended Cleveland's five-game winning streak. Michael Kidd-Gilchrist had 11 points and 13 rebounds for the Hornets, who overcame a



WASHINGTON: Golden State Warriors guard Stephen Curry (30) comes off the court after the Warriors' NBA basketball game against the Washington Wizards. — AP

nine-point halftime deficit. Kyrie Irving had 26 points and LeBron James added 23 for the Cavaliers.

HEAT 93, MAVERICKS 90

Chris Bosh scored 20 points, Dwyane Wade bounced back with 18 after matching the worst shooting half of his career and Miami beat Dallas. The Heat improved to 9-1 against the Mavericks with their fourth sweep in five seasons since losing to Dallas in the 2011 NBA Finals. Wade scored 16 points in the second half after going 1 of 11 before halftime, his first points coming with just 48 seconds left in the second quarter. Dirk Nowitzki

scored 28 for Dallas.

CELTICS 102, PISTONS 95

Isaiah Thomas had 17 points and seven assists to help Boston beat Detroit. Avery Bradley had 15 points for the Celtics, who have won six straight home games and seven of eight overall. Pistons guard Kentavious Caldwell-Pope left with a strained right groin in the second quarter after he appeared to slip on a wet spot on the court. He didn't play in the second half.

HAWKS 124, 76ERS 86

Tim Hardaway Jr. and Mike Scott each

had 13 points and Atlanta coasted past Philadelphia. All 13 of the Hawks players scored. Nik Stauskas had 17 points for the 76ers, who dropped to 7-42.

JAZZ 85, NUGGETS 81

Derrick Favors had 16 points, 10 rebounds and six blocked shots to power Utah over Denver, extending its season-best winning streak to four games. The Jazz, who also got 16 points from Gordon Hayward, have won five straight against the Nuggets. Danilo Gallinari scored 24 points for Denver.

BULLS 107, KINGS 102

E'Twaun Moore scored a career-high 24 points while starting in place of injured Jimmy Butler, and Chicago overcame a sloppy finish to beat Sacramento. Pau Gasol added 16 points, 13 rebounds and made two free throws with 4.3 seconds remaining to help the Bulls to their first win in Sacramento since December 2011. Derrick Rose had 21 points and nine assists. DeMarcus Cousins had 30 points and 11 rebounds in his return to Sacramento's lineup. The Kings' All-Star center missed two baskets and two free throws in the final 40 seconds.

TIMBERWOLVES 108, CLIPPERS 102

Andrew Wiggins scored 31 points, Zach LaVine added 17 and Minnesota ended a 14-game road skid against the Clippers with its first win over Los Angeles at Staples Center in nearly four years. Karl-Anthony Towns had 17 points and 12 rebounds for the Timberwolves, who also ended two other streaks: five straight losses and 12 in a row on the road. Chris Paul scored 22 points and Jamal Crawford added 21 off the bench for the Clippers. Their four-game winning streak ended and they fell to 15-4 without injured Blake Griffin.

NBA results/standings

Charlotte 106, Cleveland 97; Atlanta 124, Philadelphia 86; Boston 102, Detroit 95; Indiana 114, Brooklyn 100; Golden State 134, Washington 121; Oklahoma City 117, Orlando 114; Miami 93, Dallas 90; San Antonio 110, New Orleans 97; Utah 85, Denver 81; Chicago 107, Sacramento 102.

Eastern Conference					Western Conference				
Atlantic Division					Northwest Division				
	W	L	PCT	GB					
Toronto	33	16	.673	-	Oklahoma City	38	13	.745	-
Boston	29	22	.569	5	Portland	24	26	.480	13.5
NY Knicks	23	28	.451	11	Utah	23	25	.479	13.5
Brooklyn	12	38	.240	21.5	Denver	19	31	.380	18.5
Philadelphia	7	42	.143	26	Minnesota	15	36	.294	23
Central Division					Pacific Division				
Cleveland	35	13	.729	-	Golden State	45	4	.918	-
Chicago	27	21	.563	8	LA Clippers	32	17	.653	13
Indiana	26	23	.531	9.5	Sacramento	21	28	.429	24
Detroit	26	24	.520	10	Phoenix	14	36	.280	31.5
Milwaukee	20	31	.392	16.5	LA Lakers	10	41	.196	36
Southeast Division					Southwest Division				
Atlanta	29	22	.569	-	San Antonio	41	8	.837	-
Miami	28	22	.560	0.5	Memphis	29	20	.592	12
Charlotte	24	25	.490	4	Dallas	28	24	.538	14.5
Washington	21	26	.447	6	Houston	26	25	.510	16
Orlando	21	27	.438	6.5	New Orleans	18	30	.375	22.5

SHOCK AT PLAYER BRAWLS IN ARGENTINE FRIENDLIES

BUENOS AIRES: Mass on-pitch brawls between players in supposedly "friendly" matches between top Argentine football teams have driven the government to vow to end soccer violence. Long used to match-day violence involving hooligan gangs, Argentine fans saw ugly rucks erupt on the pitch itself at two recent high-profile friendlies. Argentina's new President Mauricio Macri, himself a fan and former chairman of top team Boca Juniors, responded by vowing to crack down on soccer violence.

Last week's Buenos Aires summer derby between the country's two most popular teams, Boca and their fierce rivals River Plate, descended into a full-on punch-up. A match already marred by cynical fouls and insults degenerated after a clash between former Manchester City striker Carlos Tevez of Boca and a River defender. Five players were sent off and River Plate's goalkeeper was hit by a projectile from the stands, but the match carried on to end in a 1-0 win for River.

On Sunday in the city of Mar del Plata, a match between rivals Estudiantes and Gimnasia was abandoned after a mass brawl broke out on the pitch with kicks, spitting and shoving. "We all regret it. It got out of hand," said Gimnasia's Uruguayan midfielder Roberto Brum. He had left the pitch before the ruck broke out but jumped off the bench and ran back on to join in the fight. Overall 18 players were booked by the referee. It is not yet known what their sanctions will be.

Soccer security measures

A day after the second brawl, Security Minister Patricia Bullrich called a meeting of officials from the Argentine Football Association. "She demanded the utmost severity," said the head of the association, Luis Segura. "It will be handled by our disciplinary tribunal."

Estudiantes' chairman is Juan Sebastian Veron, a former Manchester United midfielder and Argentina international. He promised the club would impose "internal sanctions" over the violence. But he called for critics "to understand the confrontations that there are on the pitch."

"This is absolute instinctive barbarity," said Dario Mendelson, a sports psychologist. "It is true that there is extra pressure during classic matches, but you have to train your mind to cope with the pressure," he said. "No preventive measures are being taken here."

'Save football'

Argentine anti-violence football charity Let's Save Football agrees that players are under pressure and blames authorities for being too lax in the past. "This is violence by the players, but violent groups of the clubs' fans pressure them and they end up offering up that kind of behavior to the stands," said the NGO's leader Mariano Berges.

He is a former judge who probed various cases of football violence. His group says six people were killed in football-related violence in Argentina last year, 16 in 2014 and 12 in each of the two years before that. Rules in place since 2013 have restricted visiting fans' movements at football grounds to prevent clashes. But fights between fans of rival sides have given way to violent power struggles among fellow members of extreme fan groups.

They fight each other over rackets such as ticket sales and parking around the stadium. Now the violence has spread to the pitch to an alarming degree. "This reflects many years of exasperating permissiveness by the authorities," said Berges.

Macri has called for an end to football violence. "We clearly hope that all Argentines, be they fans of Boca, River Plate or other teams, or those who do not like football, can see on the pitch a spectacle that is just about sport," he said recently. His government last week announced it would draw up a national blacklist of fans banned by their clubs for violence. "It seems there is now political resolve to end this problem," said Berges. "That is what has been missing over the last 20 years. In that time there has been a lot of talk but nothing done in practice." —AFP



UNDER 16 TENNIS TOURNAMENT CONCLUDES

KUWAIT: The under 16 Tennis General Tournament was concluded Tuesday in the presence of Kuwait Tennis Association Secretary General Abdelredha Al-Ghareeb, and Yarmouk Sports Club Board Member Hussein Al-Ghareeb. Yarmouk Sports Club defeated Kuwait Club 2-1. Salmiya Club was in second place and Kuwait Club was third. Abdelredha Al-Ghareeb congratulated the clubs that won top places headed by Yarmouk club. He said the tournament discovered several distinguished players who will be depended on in the future.



VONN HAS COMPLAINTS FOR DOWNHILL COURSE

GARMISCH-PARTENKIRCHEN, Germany: Lindsey Vonn left the finish area with plenty of complaints about the state of the Kandahar course and thinking she still had the fastest time in Thursday's training for a World Cup downhill. Officially, she didn't, because late starter Romane Miradoli of France beat her by .20 seconds. But Miradoli, with the No. 38 bib, missed two gates. Since it was only a training run, her result will stand, although it meant little. By the time Miradoli came down, Vonn had already left with her father Alan.

The training run was twice delayed to allow organizers to better prepare the course left in bad condition by mild weather and rain over the past week. A men's giant slalom on the same hill had to be canceled on Sunday. Fresh snow overnight added to the problems. "It was good to get a training run in, although it was on the limit of safety," Vonn said. "But I am glad we got it in. I didn't really ski that great, nothing special, more of high-speed inspection."

Racers are required to have at least one training run before a downhill race, so they are now clear to race on Saturday, weather permitting. Another training run is scheduled today, but it is likely to be canceled to allow the organizers to prepare and preserve the course. Rain is predicted for Friday but Vonn thought that could be a good thing if it allows organizers to smooth out the bumpy course.

"Maybe they can work some magic

with the rain," the American said. "The course is really bally, in some turns there is no surface underneath." Vonn has won four of five downhill races this season, while crashing out in one, and also leads the overall World Cup standings by 45 points over Lara Gut of Switzerland, who also missed a gate in training.

Vonn clocked 1 minute, 49.70 seconds for her run. Viktoria Rebensburg of Germany, winner of the last two giant slalom races, was third, with Breezy

Johnson of the United States fourth. Johnson was another late starter but didn't skip any gates. "The course is soft, with room for improvement," Rebensburg said. "The crew still has a lot to do." Tina Weirather of Liechtenstein, who won the race last year, was sixth in training, behind Corinne Suter of Switzerland. "It's very bumpy, somewhere it's hard, somewhere it's soft," Weirather said. "It's a miracle that we were able to come down today." —AP



ITALY: Lindsey Vonn, right, celebrates on the podium with second placed Tina Weirather after winning the women's World Cup super-G, in Cortina D'Ampezzo. —AP

Seria A roundup

RACISM MARS LAZIO V NAPOLI AS HIGUAIN STRIKES AGAIN

MILAN: Racist chanting halted play at the Stadio Olimpico on Wednesday as hosts Lazio suffered a 2-0 defeat that kept visitors' Napoli's sterling Serie A season on track. Goals by Gonzalo Higuain, the Argentine's 23rd in as many league games, and Jose Callejon combined to keep Maurizio Sarri's men top of the table with a two-point lead on champions Juventus. But the game was marred by a three-minute suspension in the second half on the orders of match officials for racist and insulting chanting aimed at Napoli's Senegalese defender Kalidou Koulibaly.

"I'm glad they stopped the game, it was beginning to become embarrassing," said Napoli coach Maurizio Sarri. Higuain is bidding to beat Gunnar Nordahl's all-time Serie A record of 35 goals in a single, 20-team season (1950) and after spurning an early chance was soon into his stride, thanks to a slice of fortune. The Argentine ran on to Callejon's through ball on 24 minutes only to see Federico Marchetti come out to block, but as the ball bounced up Higuain chested it home. Callejon, who hit a brace in a 5-1 thumping of Empoli last weekend, doubled Napoli's lead three minutes later. Napoli's seventh consecutive win equalled a club record from 1988, but winger Lorenzo Insigne said: "The championship is still long and I don't know how long we can keep this up but we're playing great football thanks to the coach and we want to continue, and see where we end up."

Irreplaceable Gonzalo

"Gonzalo is irreplaceable, he's scored 23 goals now and it would be difficult to do without him." Lazio may now face sanctions for the racist chanting and to add to their problems, Stefano Pioli's men dropped one place to ninth, with Empoli going the other way thanks to Manuel Pucciarelli's leveller at the death in a 1-1 draw with Udinese.

But Lazio midfielder Ogenyi Onazi, who is from Nigeria, refused to believe Lazio's fans are racist: "Impossible!" He added: "When I'm playing I don't hear what's being said because I'm concentrated on my game." Juventus had a Sebastian De Maio own-goal, from Juan Cuadrado's angled strike, to thank for a 1-0 win over Genoa and a 16th win of the campaign amid what is set to be a tough



ROME: Napoli's David Lopez eyes the ball as Lazio's Abdoulay Konko challenges him, during a Serie A soccer match at Rome's Olympic stadium. — AP

month of competition on three fronts.

But despite setting a new club record of 13 consecutive wins, coach Massimiliano Allegri looked furious when second-half substitute Simone Zaza saw red for a rash, studs-up challenge that left the Turin giants exposed for the final minutes.

"Zaza has to learn to calm down and use his brain when you're going into this kind of tackle," Allegri told Sky Sport. Allegri admitted: "We've just come from a run of five or six 'clean' games and sometimes to win the title you have to win the 'dirty' ones as well."

Inter Milan looked to be heading up to third place after hanging on to Mauro Icardi's strike early after the restart to secure a 1-0 San Siro win over Chievo. But Fiorentina striker Mauro Zarate, who joined the club last week from West Ham, came off the bench to hit an injury-time winner and secure a last-gasp 2-1 win for Paulo Sousa's men over Carpi after Kevin Lasagna had levelled Borja Valero's early opener for the hosts. Fiorentina remain third, eight points off the pace with Inter a point further behind although Roberto Mancini was again left lamenting seeing his side spurn a host of solid scor-

ing opportunities in a busy first half. AC Milan's recent revival continued three days after their spectacular 3-0 derby win over Inter with a precious 2-0 win at Palermo thanks to Carlos Bacca's strike and a 33rd minute penalty from M'Baye Niang.

Roma, 2-0 winners at Sassuolo on Tuesday, are fifth at 12 points behind with Milan just two points adrift in sixth. There was joy at the bottom of the table, too, with struggling Verona securing their first win of the campaign after former Milan striker Giampaolo Pazzini hit an 84th minute winner in a 2-1 defeat of 10-man Atalanta. — AFP

PSG SET NEW LEAGUE UNBEATEN RECORD

PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain established a new Ligue 1 record on Wednesday as they stretched their unbeaten streak to 33 matches by easing past Lorient 3-1 at the Parc des Princes. Edinson Cavani was given a rare start by Laurent Blanc and justified his manager's decision by opening the scoring in only the sixth minute.

Lorient struck back midway through the first half with a well-worked equaliser from Raphael Guerreiro. The defending champions forged ahead again though with a Zlatan Ibrahimovic goal 10 minutes after half-time. PSG were not at their fluent best, but Layvin Kurzawa made it three with an excellent strike. Blanc rang the changes, six in all, from the side that equalled the record Nantes set over 20 years ago by winning at Saint-Etienne on Sunday. "We can be very pleased tonight. The record, it really is something", Blanc said after his side's 14th win in a row.

"About the match itself though my feelings are mixed. We were not in total control at certain times. "But I have to take my share of the responsibility. After rotating the team, it is normal to have a few problems." It did not take the champions-elect long to get into their stride and Cavani eased any possible early nerves by latching onto an Ibrahimovic through ball, rounding Lorient goalkeeper Benjamin Lecomte and slotting into an empty net.

PSG were in dominant form early on, and after Ibrahimovic had a long-range free-kick saved by

Lecomte, Marquinhos headed the resulting corner narrowly wide. But Lorient showed that they were not just in the capital to make up the numbers,

and they drew level in the 19th minute.

Marauding strikers

A cute backheel from striker Majeed Waris



PARIS: Lorient's Didier Ndong, left, and PSG's Zlatan Ibrahimovic challenge for the ball during a French League One soccer match, Paris Saint Germain against Lorient at Parc des Princes stadium. — AP

released marauding left-back Guerreiro, who finished confidently past home stopper Kevin Trapp. Lorient continued to hold their own, although Lecomte had to be alert to tip away another Ibrahimovic set-piece. Uruguayan Cavani almost restored the hosts' advantage early in the second period when he caught out Lecomte with an impudent lob, but the ball rebounded back off the post.

A matter of seconds later PSG broke their visitors' resistance as talismanic striker Ibrahimovic tapped in Kurzawa's cross for his 20th league goal of the season. Full-back Kurzawa had a fantastic match on his return from a knock that ruled him out of the game at the weekend, and he capped his display with a fine volley to seal all three points for his team.

Angel di Maria and Cavani both missed chances to add a fourth, while Walid Mesloub was denied at the other end by Trapp. But those late exchanges were mere footnotes in a win that enters PSG into the record books and keeps them a staggering 24 points clear at the top of the table. With a crucial Champions League last 16 tie against Chelsea starting on February 16, Blanc still wants further improvement. "We could have had more goals, but Lorient could have scored more too. "I am delighted with the performance of Cavani, but individually and as a team we could have done better, and I include myself in that." — AFP

COSTA SNARLS IN VAIN AS WATFORD HOLD CHELSEA



way out, even though he looked in good nick on his return to action. Chelsea are now unbeaten in nine games in all competitions under interim manager Guus Hiddink since the Dutchman took charge following Jose Mourinho's sacking in December.

Terry's glittering Chelsea career has earned him the undying loyalty of the club's supporters and there were cheers when his name was read out before kick-off and banners hoisted aloft bearing his image. Hiddink had declared that Terry was playing as well as ever and would remain an integral part of his plans whatever might happen in the close season. And he needed Terry at his obdurate best on another tricky night for the fallen champions.

Gomes to the rescue

Nothing has summed up Chelsea's tetchy response to their predicament than the permanent expression of rage plastered over Costa's face this season. He was in typically feisty mood as he pushed over Prodl in a needless off-the-ball incident and surprisingly escaped censure from Dean.

Watford as a unit are far too tenacious to be cowed by Costa's crude attempts at intimidation and they began to push Chelsea onto the back foot. They went close to taking the lead twice in quick succession when Prodl's header from a Ben Watson corner was well saved by Thibaut Courtois, who repelled Etienne Capoue's stinging drive moments later.

Costa showed the more positive aspects of his game when he overpowered Craig Cathcart to reach Oscar's long pass and attempted a shot that was deflected wide. But he finished the half in the spotlight again when he was booked after shoving over Paredes in response to an innocuous nudge seconds earlier.

Hiddink needed to get Costa and his team-



WATFORD: Chelsea's Brazilian-born Spanish striker Diego Costa (center) leaps to try to connect with a cross during the English Premier League football match between Watford and Chelsea at Vicarage Road Stadium. — AFP

mates refocused at half-time and they made an early incursion into the Watford area after the interval that ended with John Mikel Obi's deflected shot being tipped over by Heurelho Gomes. The hosts remained dangerous, however, and Troy Deeney volleyed wide before Jose Holebas fired into the side-netting.

Oscar wasted a golden opportunity to give Chelsea the lead when he poked wide from Costa's

cross and the Brazil midfielder was unable to get the better of Gomes with another, more accurate, effort that the goalkeeper palmed away. Hiddink sent on Eden Hazard for the last 18 minutes and his arrival immediately perked up Chelsea's lethargic attack, the Belgian teeing up Branislav Ivanovic for a shot that Gomes saved well at his near post. Costa almost had the last word, but his deflected header was superbly saved by Gomes. — AFP

LEICESTER'S CHARGE RELEGATES CHELSEA-MANU TO SIDESHOW

MANCHESTER: It sums up the erratic nature of this season's Premier League that a match between Chelsea and Manchester United has been relegated to a mere sideshow just as the title race is getting interesting. Instead, this weekend is all about whether Leicester can pull off its biggest shock yet and finally be recognized as a genuine title contender.

Leicester, which battled relegation all of last season, takes a three-point lead to Manchester City on Saturday in a match between the top two sides in the league. A victory would guarantee Leicester at least a five-point lead with 13 matches remaining.

Surely that would make the team favorites for the title and set up one of the most unlikely story lines in English soccer history. "It's not a coincidence we're top of the table," Leicester midfielder Danny Drinkwater said. "This is team spirit at its highest. We won't stop believing. "We're staying on the ground but if we carry on the way we are, then why not have the belief (to win the league)? It would go down in history surely."

Even a draw would be fine for Leicester, which visits another title challenger in Arsenal the following weekend before a benign run of games. City, though, will want to send a message to Leicester's upstarts and collect a fourth straight win in all competitions to take over in first place on goal difference.

Seeking a third league title in five years, City has extra motivation for the run-in - giving departing coach Manuel Pellegrini a successful send-off after it was announced this week that Pep Guardiola would be the club's manager from next season.

Chelsea - the defending champion - and Man United - a record 20-time champion - already are also-rans in the title race, although United will boost its ambitions of qualifying for the Champions League with a win at Stamford Bridge on Sunday. United is in fifth place, five points off the Champions League qualification spots and 10 points behind Leicester. Chelsea is 13th and can probably forget about making up ground to the European positions in the top five.

Arsenal is winless in its last four league games and has dropped to fourth, behind Tottenham on goal difference, ahead of a visit to Bournemouth on Sunday. — AP



away two late penalties although Everton should have won more comfortably, being denied by the woodwork three times in six second-half minutes.

Everton left out goalkeeper Tim Howard as well as below-par defender John Stones while their £13.5million signing from Lokomotiv Moscow, Oumar Niasse, was introduced before the kick-off. Newcastle gave a debut to winger Andros Townsend with deadline day loan signing Seydou Doumbia on the bench.

Everton were quickly into top gear and had the first chance early on as Barkley found Romelu Lukaku who in turn laid the ball off to Tom Cleverly. But the former Manchester United player's low drive was turned to safety by Newcastle keeper Rob Elliot. The home side was deservedly ahead after 23 minutes when Lennon collected the ball on the edge of the penalty area, turned and drove it low into the goal. Barkley then tried a cheeky lob after Elliot had ill-advisedly darted from his area to try and head the ball away but the England midfielder's attempt was too high. Lennon almost had a second three minutes before the interval but his close-range effort, from a cross by Seamus Coleman, was blocked by Chancel Mbemba.

That was Mbemba's last involvement of the evening as he picked up a foot injury and was replaced by Jamaal Lascelles. Newcastle's best chance of the first half only came in time added-on when Joel Robles had to be alert to smother a Daryl Janmaat cross with Ayoze Perez hovering.

Lukaku, suffering from a back problem, was taken off at the

BARKLEY INSPIRES EVERTON TO VICTORY OVER NEWCASTLE

LIVERPOOL: Everton defeated Newcastle 3-0 for their first home win in the Premier League since November on Wednesday as the struggling Magpies were left inside the relegation zone. Aaron Lennon was on target after 23 minutes while Ross Barkley tucked



LIVERPOOL: Everton's English midfielder Ross Barkley celebrates scoring their second goal from the penalty spot during the English Premier League football match between Everton and Newcastle United at Goodison Park. — AFP

break and his replacement Arouna Kone should have scored from close range after Lennon had been denied by an Elliot save. Elliot then pushed a Barkley drive onto the crossbar while the woodwork also saved the visitors when Jonjo Shelvey blocked another attempt onto the bar. Incredibly, Cleverly also saw a free-kick come off the upright. — AFP

KING OF BLING NEYMAR UNFAZED BY SCANDAL

BARCELONA: Sporting earrings, shades and posing for selfies with devoted fans, Brazilian superstar Neymar's swagger was better suited to the red carpet than a grilling from Spain's highest court on the growing scandal of how his transfer from Santos to Barcelona came about in 2013.

Neymar endured the toughest 90 minutes of his season as he and his father were interrogated by a judge on Tuesday over their role in the complicated web of contracts that sealed the transfer after a complaint of fraud and corruption by Brazilian investment fund DIS.

His biggest legal battle may yet come back at home, though, as Brazilian prosecutors have also filed tax fraud and forgery allegations. Yet, Brazil's golden boy, who is expected to captain his country on home soil at the Rio Olympics later this year, remains one of sport's most marketable assets according to industry experts.

Major sponsors have flocked to the 23-year-old's door for his good looks, happy-go-lucky nature and silky skills with Nike, Gillette, Panasonic and Volkswagen among Neymar's big name brands. "Neymar's legal problems could affect his image in one way or another, but not to the point of breaking contracts or losing sponsors," Erich Beting, director of Maquina do Esporte and an expert in football marketing in Brazil, told AFP. "Neymar has had a teflon-like ability since the beginning of his career."

The \$17 million dollars he raked in from sponsors outweighed the \$14 million he made from Barca in 2015, according to Forbes magazine, drawing comparisons with David Beckham. "He is someone that everyone knows, from the 70-year-old grandmother to the five-year-old grandson," continues Beting.

"When you reach the status where people want to be like you, that makes you priceless for brands and that is what he has managed."

Neymar's deeply religious and family orientated values are also a magnet for sponsors. His four-year-old son Davi Lucca is often seen with his father at the Camp Nou on matchdays, whilst he has a giant tattoo of his sister Rafaella's face on his right arm. However, it is his father and agent, Neymar Sr, a former mechanic, who has drawn the attention of judicial authorities in Spain and Brazil, as well as accusations he has hijacked his son's success for his own financial gain. "My father is doing everything to ensure that I can just focus on playing football. He handles the books, but in the moment when you see someone you love suffering, it starts to hurt," Neymar told Brazilian TV station Globo on Sunday. —AFP



BARCELONA: Barcelona's Brazilian forward Neymar complains to the referee during the Spanish Copa del Rey football match. —AFP



BARCELONA: FC Barcelona's Lionel Messi, center, duels for the ball against Valencia's goalkeeper Mathew Ryan, left, during a semifinal, first leg, Copa del Rey soccer match at the Camp Nou stadium. — AP

SUAREZ, MESSI HAT-TRICKS CRUSH NEVILLE'S VALENCIA

BARCELONA: Luis Suarez scored four and Lionel Messi hit a hat-trick as Barcelona piled more misery on Gary Neville's ill-fated reign as Valencia boss to take an unassailable 7-0 lead in their Copa del Rey semi-final, first-leg on Wednesday.

Two fine finishes inside 12 minutes from Suarez put Barca in control before Messi rounded off a fine team move for Barca's third. It could have been even worse for Valencia as Neymar hit the post from the penalty spot after Shkodran Mustafi was sent-off for bringing down Messi inside the area.

However, Messi and Suarez both added two more after the break to make next week's second-leg at the Mestalla a formality. "It is one the best games we have played all season in every sense," Suarez told Canal Plus. "From the first minute to the last we showed a great attitude, we were good on the ball and we have a good advantage."

The Cup had been Neville's one refuge during a winless run of eight league games since taking charge in December, but Valencia were blown away by a Barca side back to their best and on the verge of a fifth final in six seasons.

However, Neville insisted he wasn't prepared to resign just two months after taking charge. "I won't sleep well tonight. I didn't like what I saw. The fans didn't deserve that and we have to recover incredibly quickly," said the former Manchester United captain. "It's going to be a painful three or four days. This was one of my most painful days in football."

Off-field problems

Neymar had made headlines earlier in the week as he was quizzed by a judge in Spain's top court over the murky trans-

fer deal which brought him to Barca in 2013 amidst corruption and fraud allegations. However, he showed his performances continue to be unaffected by off-field problems as he drove at the Valencia defense before playing in Suarez to fire across Australian international Matt Ryan into the far corner.

Alex Vidal then cut-back Sergio Busquets's ball over the top of the Valencia defense for Suarez to slam home his 33rd goal of the season five minutes later. Messi was left with the simple task of slotting in his first of the evening from close range after great work by Andres Iniesta and Suarez just before the half-hour mark.

Valencia were happy to get to the break just three down as Messi then hit the bar from Suarez's brilliant low cross before the Argentine was clipped by Mustafi as he bore down on goal. Neymar was over-confident with his one-step run-up, though, as his penalty came back off the post. Gerard Pique, Busquets and Messi all fired just off target as Barca continued to run riot after the break.

However, the biggest cheer of the night from the home fans was reserved for on-loan Real Madrid winger Denis Cheryshev's introduction as a substitute on his Valencia debut. Cheryshev's inclusion when he should have been suspended saw Madrid thrown out of the competition in December. Messi latched onto Suarez's lovely backheel to make it 4-0 and then completed his hat-trick with a fierce effort that Ryan was disappointed to see slip through his grasp. Suarez rounded off the scoring as he powered home a header from Adriano's cross and fired in a low shot at the near post two minutes from time. —AFP

NEVILLE WON'T QUIT DESPITE THRASHING

BARCELONA: Valencia boss Gary Neville admitted his side's 7-0 Copa del Rey semi-final mauling at the hands of Barcelona on Wednesday was one of his worst nights in football but he refused to quit. Luis Suarez scored four and Lionel Messi added a hat-trick as Barca rendered next week's second-leg meaningless with what Valencia sporting director Jesus Garcia Pitarch described as one of the worst results in the club's history.

Neville has yet to win in eight La

Liga games since taking his first managerial role in December and with Valencia set to visit fellow strugglers Real Betis on Sunday, Pitarch refused to give his full backing to Neville staying in charge beyond the weekend.

"I wish Betis game started in 10 minutes. It's going to be a painful three or four days," said Neville. "This was one of my most painful days in football. They happen, I had some as a player, now as a manager, but, when you give the ball away close to

your own goal three times in first 15 minutes, you get punished."

Neville refuted suggestions he may be considering resigning and refused to answer more questions when pressed on his future. "Positivity has been immovable in my life. When I have moments like this I don't enjoy them at all, it was painful. I stood out there both halves feeling helpless, trying to change it in some way, knowing the tide of the game was against us. —AFP



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