

Ghanem meets Erdogan in Ankara



Turkey renews Syria shelling as air raids hit MSF hospital



'Revenant' sweeps Baftas with three top gongs



Bryant feels the love in record-setting All-Star Game



GOVT DENIES ANY PLAN TO CUT WAGES AMID DEFICIT

MOVES TO LIMIT NUMBERS OF MARGINAL LABORERS



Min 09°
Max 25°
High Tide 05:55 & 17:16
Low Tide 11:31



News

in brief

National holidays on February 25-27

KUWAIT: The Cabinet during its weekly meeting yesterday approved a memo of the Civil Service Commission (CSC) concerning National Day and Liberation Day holidays, which will begin on Thursday, Feb 25, and run until Saturday, Feb 27, Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah said. Employees at all government institutions and public bodies will resume work on Sunday, Feb 28, added Sheikh Mohammad, who is also the Acting Minister of Electricity and Water.

Mol to stiffen penalties for traffic violations

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Interior announced yesterday that it plans to stiffen penalties on some traffic violations for the safety of people and to curb road accidents. Some studies have been made by some bodies in this regard in order to make traffic laws and their penalties compatible with reality, the ministry's general department of relations and security media said in a press statement. The department stressed continued contact with different media outlets, noting that approving or amending traffic legislations or laws will be explained through a media campaign.



KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets Chairman of the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) Ali Thunayan Al-Ghanem and KCCI members at Seif Palace yesterday. They discussed with the Amir means of financial reform as well as Kuwait's developmental vision in light of falling oil prices. — KUNA (See Page 2)

By B Izzak and A Saleh

KUWAIT: State Minister for Cabinet Affairs and acting Electricity and Water Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah denied yesterday reports saying that the government could reduce salaries of Kuwaiti employees in its attempt to finance a huge budget deficit. The minister told reporters that he did not hear anything like that and it was only raised in the local press without any foundation.

But the minister said that the government presented to the National Assembly's financial affairs committee a draft law for a new pay scale for civil servants with the hope it will be approved as part of the economic reform package. Sheikh Mohammad said the government provided the Assembly with its vision for rationalizing expenditures and agreed to meet again on Saturday to provide the Assembly committee with specific plans and data about economic reforms. The minister said the government rationalization policy will not affect infrastructure projects, especially in the electricity sector, because these projects are linked to ambitious housing projects.

A key meeting was held on Sunday between the government and the Assembly's financial and economic affairs committee to discuss government plans for cutting subsidies and introducing economic reforms. The meeting was attended by the prime minister and speaker of the Assembly and a large number of lawmakers. The government wants to reduce subsidies provided to petrol, electricity and water without impacting low-income people. But lawmakers asked the government to implement spending cuts before taxing citizens.

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SALEH HAILS TIES WITH IAEA

KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Anas Al-Saleh hailed yesterday relations between Kuwait and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) as being firm since 1967. Addressing a seminar on nuclear applications for sustainable development in GCC countries co-organized by Kuwait and the IAEA, Saleh, who doubles as acting minister of oil, said Kuwait has been keen to stick to all IAEA conventions and agreements with a view to creating international peace and security.



KUWAIT: International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) chief Yukia Amano (center), flanked by Kuwaiti Foreign Ministry Undersecretary Khaled Al-Jarallah (left) and Finance and acting Oil Minister Anas Al-Saleh, attends a seminar on nuclear applications for sustainable development in Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries yesterday at the Arab Organizations Headquarters. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Patronized by HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, the seminar comes within the framework of existing cooperation between Kuwait and the nuclear watchdog, the minister added. The event is mainly meant to share information and views on the peaceful use of nuclear sciences and technologies in order to address various world challenges and buttress social and economic development at both national and regional levels, he noted.

Kuwait has signed all IAEA agreements, including the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), since it

joined the agency in 1964, Saleh said, appreciating the IAEA's contribution to achieving world peace and security through its role and efforts. Over the last decades, HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah has exerted relentless efforts to set out a new concept of humanitarian diplomacy to safeguard

regional and international peace and security, Saleh pointed out. The minister appreciated the Amir's distinguished initiatives purposed to support sustainable development, fight poverty, pollution, food shortage, illiteracy and diseases and alleviate climate change impacts.

Continued on Page 13

'SILK ROAD' TRAIN IN TEHRAN

TEHRAN: The first train to connect China and Iran arrived in Tehran yesterday loaded with Chinese goods, reviving the ancient Silk Road, the Iranian railway company said. The train, carrying 32 containers of commercial products from eastern Zhejiang province, took 14 days to make the 9,500-km journey through Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan. "The arrival

of this train in less than 14 days is unprecedented," said the head of the Iranian railway company, Mohsen Pourseyed Aqayi. "The revival of the Silk Road is crucial for the countries on its route," he said at a ceremony at Tehran's rail station attended by the ambassadors of China and Turkmenistan.

Continued on Page 13



TEHRAN: Iranian officials applaud on the platform as the first train connecting China and Iran arrives at the capital's railway station yesterday. — AFP

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KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah is pictured with Chairman of Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) Ali Thunayan Al-Ghanem. —Amiri Diwan and KUNA photos



(From left) Constitutional Court member Ahmad Bu-Ghammaz, Chairman of Kuwait's Supreme Judicial Council and the Cassation Court, and President of the Constitutional Court Justice Yousef Al-Mutawaa, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Justice and Awqaf Minister Yaqoub Al-Sane and Supreme Judicial Court member Abdulatif Al-Sraiya.

AMIR RECEIVES KCCI CHAIRMAN, MEMBERS

NEWLY APPOINTED JUDGES TAKE OATH BEFORE AMIR

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Seif Palace yesterday Chairman of Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) Ali Thunayan Al-Ghanem, as well as KCCI members.



Chairman of Kuwait's Supreme Judicial Council and the Cassation Court, and President of the Constitutional Court, Justice Yousef Jassem Al-Mutawaa takes the oath before His Highness the Amir.

They discussed with His Highness the Amir means of financial reform, as well as Kuwait's developmental vision in light of oil prices' decline. The meeting was attended by Deputy Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah.

"It is of great honor to me and the members of the Chamber to meet His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah during such critical economic circumstances encountering our country, regarding the decline in oil prices," Ghanem said.

"This requires efforts of all of us, hand in hand with His Highness the Amir in order to set Kuwait in a prominent financial status," he said. "The drop in oil prices has a great impact especially on the State's budget, as 90 percent of it depends on oil revenues, while many other nations only depend on 50 percent of their oil revenues, and yet has succeeded in their endeavor," he added.

"As representatives of the Chamber, we are working with the private sector to cooperate with His Highness the Amir and the Cabinet in order to reach the proper solutions and alternatives besides oil in order to support our budget and State revenues" he said. "His Highness the Amir encourages us and has given us all the needed support" he affirmed.

Judges take oath

Earlier, His Highness the Amir received Chairman of Kuwait's Supreme Judicial Council and the Cassation Court, and President of the Constitutional Court, Justice Yousef Jassem Al-Mutawaa, as he took the oath before His

Highness the Amir on the occasion of assuming his new post.

His Highness the Amir received the Court of Appeals Attorney, member of the Constitutional Court Judge Ali Ahmad Bu-Ghammaz, as he also took oath before His Highness the Amir, on the occasion of assuming the post.

His Highness the Amir also hosted Attorney at the Ministry of Justice, member of Kuwait's Supreme Judicial Court Abdulatif Sraiya' Al-Sraiya' on the occasion of assuming his new post. The meeting was attended by Deputy Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah, and Minister of Justice, Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Yaqoub Abdulmohsen Al-Sane.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Amir received Engineer Ahmad Abdullah Al-Manfouhi, the new Director General of Kuwait Municipality, on the occasion of his assignment to his new post. The audience was attended by Minister of Municipal Affairs Essa Ahmed Al-Kanderi and Deputy Minister of the Amiri Diwan Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah. His Highness also received Dr Waddah Bader Al-Sayedd Hashim Al-Rifai, on the occasion of winning a GCC excellence award.

IAEA Director

Also yesterday, His Highness the Amir received Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Yukiya Amano and the accompanying delegation. The audience was attended by Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah and Deputy Minister of the



His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Mubarak Hamad Al-Sabah meets Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Yukiya Amano.

Amiri Diwan Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah. His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Mubarak Hamad Al-Sabah also received Amano, with attendance of Jarallah and Kuwait Ambassador to Austria and Kuwait's Permanent Representative to International Organizations Sadiq Maarafi. Amano also held discussions with Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled on ways of cooperation between the two sides as well as the latest regional and international developments.

In other news, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-

Sabah received Chairman of the Kuwaiti National Security Bureau Sheikh Thamer Al-Ali Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah and Director General of the Environment Public Authority (EPA) Sheikh Abdullah Ahmad Al-Humoud Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

Moreover, His Highness the Crown Prince received the State Audit Bureau Acting Chairman Adel Saraawi and members of the organizing committee of the celebration for the bureau's 50th anniversary. His Highness also received Minister Kandari and Kuwait Municipality's new director Manfouhi. —KUNA

GHANEM MEETS TURKISH PRESIDENT

ANKARA: Kuwait's National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem and his accompanying parliamentary delegation met with the President of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdogan at the presiden-

tial palace in the Turkish capital yesterday.

During the meeting, the Kuwaiti top lawmaker conveyed greetings of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah

Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to the Turkish President, who, in return, conveyed his greetings to His Highness the Amir and the Kuwaiti political leadership.

The two sides discussed several important issues regarding the Kuwaiti-Turkish bilateral relations and latest developments on regional and international scenes, including developments in Syria and Iraq, and the suffering of the Palestinian people in the occupied lands due to Israel's continued oppressive policies.

They also discussed terrorism and stressed the importance of bolstering regional and international cooperation to counter this increasing and dangerous phenomenon, in addition to finding ways to boost Kuwaiti-Turkish ties in political, economic, tourism, and cultural fields.

The meeting was attended by MPs Kamel Al-Awadhi and Ahmad Al-Qedheebi, and Kuwaiti Ambassador Abdullah Al-Thuwaikh. Earlier, Ghanem held official discussions with his Turkish counterpart Ismail Kahraman at the parliament in Ankara. Ghanem is on an official visit to Turkey at the invitation of Kahraman. — KUNA



ANKARA: Kuwait's National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem meets with the President of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdogan. — KUNA



KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets Qatari Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammad bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al-Thani. — KUNA

QATARI FM LEAVES KUWAIT

KUWAIT: Qatar's Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammad bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani left Kuwait yesterday after concluding a two-day official visit. He was seen off by First Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. Earlier, the two men discussed bilateral relations and

ways to bolster them in all areas. He was also seen off by a number of senior foreign ministry officials.

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah had received the Qatari minister at Seif palace on the occasion of his visit to the country. The meeting was attended by

Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled and Deputy Minister of the Amiri Diwan Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah. Sheikh Mohammad also met with His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Mubarak Hamad Al-Sabah. — KUNA

CABINET HOLDS WEEKLY MEETING

KUWAIT: Cabinet held its weekly meeting at Seif Palace yesterday under the chairmanship of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. Ministers were briefed on messages received by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah from Tunisian President Beji Caid Essebsi and Sudanese President Omar Hasan Al-Bashir on relations between Kuwait and the two Arab countries and means of promoting them, and political developments.

They were apprised of two letters received by His Highness the Amir from Indonesian President Joko Widodo on an invitation to participate in the fifth exceptional summit of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to be held in Jakarta in March, and on the "distinguished" relations between the two countries.

The Cabinet listened to a presentation by Deputy Prime Minister and

Minister of Defense Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah on results of the Munich Security Conference which discussed means of promoting cooperation and contacts to combat terrorism.

Sheikh Khaled told conferees about results of meetings with ministers of defense of friendly countries that focused on enhancing bilateral cooperation to serve mutual interest and combat terrorism which poses a threat to the whole world.

Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs and Acting Minister of Electricity and Water Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah briefed ministers that Central Agency for Information Technology obtained the 'best m-government service award' in the Arab world. Ministers expressed their satisfaction over this achievement, seeing it as an accomplishment of the government performance.

They also were apprised of recom-

mendations of the legal affairs committee on a draft decree approving Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on technological and scientific cooperation between Kuwait and Sudan, and a draft decree approving an agreement between Kuwait and Chile, Kuwait and Cambodia, and Kuwait and Russia on visa-exemption for holders of official, special or diplomatic passports. The Cabinet approved these draft decrees and sent them to His Highness the Amir.

Ministers were apprised of two recommendations of the committee to okay two bills on private security companies and the system of Islamic Organization of Food Security. They okayed the two bills and sent them to His Highness the Amir to be referred to National Assembly. Finally, the cabinet discussed several reports bearing on the overall political developments in both Arab and international arenas. — KUNA



KUWAIT: First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah received yesterday credentials of newly-appointed Ambassador of Pakistan Ghulam Dastagir at the Foreign Ministry headquarters. — KUNA

TWO FARWANIYA BUILDINGS WITHOUT ELECTRICITY

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: At least two nine-storey buildings in Farwaniya have remained in darkness for the last seven days after the Ministry of Electricity and Water allegedly cut the supply of electricity due to unsettled electricity bills. "We were told that the building owner has not paid the electricity bills for years now. We are suffering for the past seven days, and we want the electricity back," said Veenu, a resident of the building. "There are children, elderly people and pregnant women who have no choice but to use the stairs to reach their flats. There are sick people here as well. Our house rent is inclusive of electricity," he added.

Contacting the Ministry of Electricity and Water on its emergency number 152, the operator took the details and promised to call back. In 30 minutes, the ministry informed Kuwait Times their personnel were at the location. They spoke to the haris, but details of their conversation are not known. But a source told Kuwait Times that the ministry personnel told them they cannot do anything about their electricity problem.

Calls to the landlord went unanswered. "We've been calling many people, but nobody wants to talk to us and explain why we have to endure this situation. It is weird why they cannot explain things to us properly," said Veenu. "All I know is that we are in

darkness for seven days now because someone failed to settle the electricity bills," he said. Power cuts in apartments in Kuwait typically occur over rent disputes.

The haris too could not provide a proper and accurate answer, and is no longer answering calls by Kuwait Times. Earlier, the haris (building's janitor) confirmed that power has been cut for the last seven days. "Yes, it is true - there is no electricity for seven days now," he said. "I do not know the reason, but the cut was from the ministry. This is all what I know. People in the building are suffering from lack of electricity. Things will get worse when the weather gets hotter, but what can I do - I am just the haris here."

DOCTOR JAILED FOR ABUSING, HALF-BLINDING HOUSEMAID

COUNCILOR ACCUSED OF LAND FRAUD

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: The court of cassation yesterday sentenced a Kuwaiti female doctor to 42 months in prison and a KD 5,001 fine for abusing her housemaid and causing the loss of sight in her left eye. According to the case paper, the doctor had been torturing the maid daily and had also been accused in a similar case filed by another maid in 2007. The victim escaped from the doctor's house when she hired new housemaids and reported the matter.

Notably, the criminal court had acquitted the doctor, but the victim's lawyer contested the verdict and took it to the court of appeal, which passed a sentence of 4 years' imprisonment and KD 5,001 fine, but finally the court of cassation reduced it to 42 months plus the fine. The victim's lawyer then filed another case demanding a KD 250,000 compensation for his client.

Absconding reports

Acting Director of the Public Authority for Manpower Abdullah Al-Motoutah said that six new cases have been added to those entitled to undo absconding reports filed against them, as per directive number 29/2015. The directive was issued by the residency affairs department's director Maj Gen

Talal Maarafi. Following the addition, the total number of cases increased to 12. Speaking on the sidelines of a workshop organized by the manpower authority under the title 'Rights and Duties', Motoutah explained that the new six cases include holders of Palestinian passports and documents, cases in which employers provide a waiver, getting a transfer approval from the labor department, dual sponsorship (like having a work permit registered in a sponsor's name and residency in another's), humanitarian cases and those reviewed by a committee comprising of the Interior Ministry's assistant undersecretary for citizenship and passports affairs, the residency director, the manpower authority's director and his deputy for protecting labor rights.

Councilor charged

Lawyer Mohammed Ahmed Taleb yesterday filed a case against a current member of the municipal council, accusing him of fraud. Taleb said his client had bought a piece of land from the defendant for KD 238,000 and gave him a down payment of KD 48,000 pending a waiver, but the accused started stalling. He added that on checking on the land ownership deed, he found out that defendant did not even own the land and that all

attempts to refund the down payment had failed.

Advisor

Former Vice Chairman of the Municipal Council Jassar Menawer Al-Jassar was appointed advisor to the Municipal Council starting this month.

Municipality complaints

A report issued by Kuwait Municipality's Public Relations Department said that the total number of complaints received through the hotline 139 in January was 81 including complaints about cleaning, garbage, filthy streets and uncollected garbage. The report explained that 24 of those complaints were made with the Capital governorate areas followed by Farwaniya, where 20 complaints were made, then Mubarak Al-Kabeer and Ahmadi with 10 complaints each, Hawally with nine complaints and finally Jahra with eight complaints.

Beggar arrested

A beggar was arrested in Mubarakia Market yesterday with possession of KD 1,707 in cash, according to sources. The suspect was identified as a 54-year-old Bangladeshi national, and police discovered that she is wanted by authorities for absconding.

NEW RULES FOR EXPATS HIRING FILIPINA DOMESTIC HELPERS

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: The Philippine Embassy has set a requirement preventing maid recruitment agencies from allowing expatriates to hire Filipina domestic help. The reason given by the embassy is that some expats were taking the Filipinas to work outside of Kuwait without informing the embassy.

Abdraham, who runs a maid agency in Hawally, told Kuwait Times that the agency faced problems when helpers they had recruited ended up in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Saudi Arabia. "This order [from the Embassy] was applied one month ago in some agencies," he explained. "So we asked anyone who needs Filipina maids to get the approval from the embassy."

However, not all agencies have applied the rule and when Kuwait Times asked, several noted that they would still provide Filipina domestic helpers to expatriate residents.

One employer argued that non-working mothers are not required to hire maids, and went as far as

suggesting that they should be stopped from hiring helpers because some of them force maids to work for others in exchange of money. "We face some complaints about forcing the maids to work for others by the hour," said the recruiter who wished to be identified only by her first name Sharifa. "If the mother is not working then she does not need a helper." Conditions for employment, however, seem to vary from agency to agency.

No policy

Cesar Chavez, Philippine Labor Attache to Kuwait Attorney, told Kuwait Times that there is no such policy but the embassy does require non-Kuwaiti families to get an additional approval with no extra fees to give the embassy the information about the number of family members and so on. Chavez pointed out that if any family wants to travel outside Kuwait for vacation they must update their contact information with the embassy so that it can maintain accurate information regarding the helper's

whereabouts.

Kuwait has faced a slew of challenges in recent years regarding the recruitment, hiring and treatment of domestic helpers, most of whom come from impoverished countries in Asia. Last year, the parliament adopted its first ever domestic workers labor law, regulating the thriving industry. There are an estimated 660,000 domestic helpers in Kuwait and the vast majority are brought by recruitment agencies which charge fees of between KD 400 to KD 1,500 to hire a domestic worker for up to two years. Charges are typically determined by the nationality of the domestic worker with agencies charging the highest fees for Filipino domestic workers.

Under the new labor law, domestic workers are granted the right to a weekly day off, 30 days of annual paid leave, a 12-hour working day with rest, and an end-of-service benefit of one month a year at the end of the contract, among other rights. Kuwait is the first in the Arab Gulf states to pass such a law but mechanisms for implementation remain to be developed.

MAN KILLED, THREE INJURED IN CRASH

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: An Arab man was killed and three others injured during a car accident on Seventh Ring Road yesterday. Mubarak Al-Kabeer fire center responded to a call and helped free the injured from the vehicles. Separately, a Kuwaiti student was killed and two others were injured when their vehicle flipped over near Dahr on the Seventh Ring Road. The two injured persons were taken to hospital in critical condition.

Human trafficking

Ten men and two women were charged with human trafficking after being caught in a suspicious place in Mangaf. Meanwhile, a citizen was also arrested in Mangaf over a KD 51,000 debt.

Bag stolen

A citizen's bag was stolen from a hall in Jahra. The citizen said jewelry

worth KD 2,000, KD 23 in cash and four civil IDs were in her bag at a wedding party. Separately, an Indian man accused a citizen of beating him and submitted a medical report stating the injuries he sustained.

New directions

Director General of Kuwait Municipality Ahmad Al-Manfouhi issued a decision that bans carrying out work of establishing offices, storage areas, central mixers or temporary construction inside a work site until after informing the safety department about what will be done before the start, according to a form prepared by the municipality's safety department.

KFSD course

The sea fire department at Kuwait Fire Services Directorate (KFSD) organized a course for the Interior Ministry's non-commissioned officers and the coastguard department. The course covered fighting fires at sea,

survival tips and falling into the sea while sailing.



TEMPERATURES TO RISE GRADUALLY: RAMADAN

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: Meteorologist Essa Ramadan said that a gradual rise in temperature is expected over the coming days with the approach of spring, with temperatures between 18 and 27 degrees centigrade.

Hospital's parking

Head of the Hawally committee at the municipal council Yousef Al-Ghareeb said that the committee approved during its meeting yesterday a request to build a multi-storey parking building outside Mubarak Hospital's casualty department. Ghareeb also said that a request by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor to allocate two land

plots to build a bank in Siddiq has been approved.

Sewage water

The environmental affairs committee at the Municipal Council postponed discussing a proposal by former council member Mona Borelli on suspending allocating sites to dump treated sewage water into the sea until further notice from the Environment Public Authority (EPA) and Public Authority of Industry (PAI). In this regard, committee chairman Mane Al-Ajmi said many government bodies attended a meeting yesterday to discuss the problem created by dumping Ghazali sewage line waste into the sea and the damage this has done to both seawater and marine life.

ACTION PLAN TO GUARANTEE 'IDEAL' VOTING PROCESS: JUSTICE MINISTRY

WOMEN MAKE UP 16% OF OIL SECTOR'S EMPLOYEES: KPC

KUWAIT: The number of female employees in the Kuwaiti oil sector amounts to 3,218 of total 19,290 employees, making up 16 percent, said Nizar Al-Adsani, CEO of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC). The oil sector in Kuwait and around the world has employed several women in leadership positions as one of the main pillars of that sector, Adsani said in his speech at the 'Woman and the Global Leadership' conference, which kicked off yesterday. He added that women's leadership role at KPC is very significant and effective.

He also said that women's participation in the oil sector is not just a job, but also a strategic partnership that is vital and important, and proved females' competency and potentials in the oil field, noting that women in the Middle East region make up only 12 percent of the total higher administrative jobs. Meanwhile, Adsani indicated that the number of population around the world will be around nine billion people in 2040 from current 7.2 billion, which will require more clean fuel to meet economic and social developments, expecting a demand increase for energy by 25 percent from 2014 to 2040. —KUNA

KUWAIT: The committee tasked with supervising the February 20th by-elections has set an action plan to guarantee an 'ideal' voting process, head of the committee counselor Adnan Al-Jasser said yesterday. The committee, of the Justice Ministry, assigned 84 members of the judicial branch to all polling stations, all headed by chief of the primary committee Judge Hamad Al-Hadhram, said Jasser, adding that 52 more judges were put on stand-by. The total number of eligible voters in the Third Constituency amount to 81, 812 (43,049 of whom females).

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Interior (MoI) has made all security preparations and arrangements for parliamentary by-elections in the Third Constituency slated for next Saturday, said a senior ministry official.

"The final touches for the process have been completely put in order to impose security control and public order at polling stations," Assistant Undersecretary of the Interior Ministry for Public Security Major General Abdulfattah Al-AI. He added that all human, technical and material capabilities and requirements have been made available for Saturday's by-elections. Ali added that such security measures are primarily intended to ensure a fully transparent and smooth electoral process, pointing to coordination and cooperation among other competent state bodies in this regard. —KUNA

\$120 BILLION PROJECTS EXECUTED DESPITE FINANCIAL TROUBLES: KCCI

KUWAIT: Regardless of the current economic situation, primarily dwindling oil prices, major development projects valued in the vicinity of \$120 billion are being carried out, said a Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) member. While meeting a visiting Omani commercial delegation, KCCI Member Tareq Al-Mutawaa said Kuwait's development projects and civil servants making up roughly 90 percent of the country's public and private workforce would not be affected by the present financial circumstances. He added that the Omani team's visit mainly aimed to explore Oman's available investment opportunities for Kuwaiti investors, hailing bilateral strong social and economic bonds. The head of the Omani delegation, Amer Al-Hajri said his country boasts a set of investment incentives, including foreign investors' ownership of shares in Omani businesses and tax exemptions. He added that Oman enjoys political and economic stability, unrestricted transfer of money and profits and free trade and easy access to world markets. —KUNA

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NO ZIKA VIRUS CASES IN KUWAIT: MINISTER



KUWAIT: Minister of Health Dr Ali Al-Obaidi speaks at the opening session of the Fourth Kuwait Dental Administration Conference. — KUNA

KUWAIT: Minister of Health Ali Al-Obaidi declared Kuwait as a Zika virus-free country. Speaking at the opening session of the Fourth Kuwait Dental Administration Conference on Sunday, Obaidi confirmed that no Zika-infection case was reported in Kuwait so far. He added the ministry is coordinating with the World Health Organization (WHO) to prevent the virus from reaching Kuwait.

WHO has recently declared a global health emergency over the rapid spread of Zika in the Americas as the outbreak has coincided with an increase in head and brain malformations among newborns especially in Brazil.

Zika virus disease is caused by a virus transmitted by Aedes mosquitoes. People with Zika virus disease usually have symptoms that can include mild fever, skin rashes, conjunctivitis, muscle and joint pain, malaise or headache. These symptoms normally last for 2-7 days. There is no specific treatment or vaccine currently available. The best form of prevention is protection against mosquito bites. The virus is known to circulate in Africa, the Americas, Asia and the Pacific.

Dental clinics

Meanwhile, the minister unveiled that 240 dental clinics

would start operation in three health centers soon in addition to 140 others in Sabah Al-Ahmad specialized center which would be inaugurated in 2017. He noted that there is a great cooperation with the Ministry of Public Works to equip the dental clinics at Jaber Hospital and prepare them for operation in the near future.

The ministry is doing all in power to provide integrated health services through the primary health centers nationwide, so it aims to open dental clinics in every health center, he clarified. He revealed that the ministry has increased the number of dental clinics in primary health center from 134 to 311 in during the period from 2000 to 2014. He added the ministry has also equipped dental clinics with the latest-of-the-art technology for diagnosing and treatment.

Obaidi underlined that the state is keen on providing school students, people with special needs and senior people with high-quality dental treatment. There are 220 at schools and mobile dental clinics for this purpose, he said. Kuwait also has increased the number of dentists dispatched abroad for post-graduate studies, especially through the Kuwaiti Dentistry Board Program in Ireland, he said.

Furthermore, he pointed out that a post-graduate dentistry

studies program has been launched in cooperation with the Faculty of Dentistry at the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland in which 300 Kuwaiti dentists had studied. Moreover, over 400 Kuwaitis have been sent to study dentistry abroad during the period from 2000 to 2014. The ministry has offered training programs for 1,026 dentists till 2014, added the minister.

2,400 dentists

In the meantime, head of the organizing committee of the conference and Director of the Dental Administration at the Ministry of Health Dr Sabiha Al-Mutawa said 18 keynote speakers would deliver lectures in the conference which will also host 18 diverse workshops. The event also attracts nearly 2,400 dentists from Kuwait and other world countries.

Mutawa stated that this is a biennial conference which goes with the mission of the Ministry of Health to update and upgrade the knowledge and skills of all involved with dentistry. The edition is themed "Our Vision For A Better Tomorrow" and it tackles several dental topics ranging from dental marketing, different aspects of clinical dentistry, laboratory technology, cone beam computed technology, behavior management and basic life support techniques. — KUNA

AUTHORITIES JOIN HANDS TO CONTAIN FOOT-AND-MOUTH

KUWAIT: The Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources (PAAAFR), in coordination with Kuwait Environmental Police, has taken all necessary precautions to prevent spread of the foot-and-mouth disease, PAAAFR Director General Faisal Al-Hasawi affirmed yesterday.

"The health situation is stable; proportion of infections among the herds has dropped," Hasawi said, adding that the Kuwait Environmental Police (KEP) have enforced a quarantine at Al-Sulaibiah farms. The Environmental Police, along with the Public Security, is staging patrols all over Al-Sulaibiah to ensure effectiveness of the quarantine, preventing entry or exist of cattle infected with the foot-and-mouth disease, he added. The patrols work round the clock and there are two fixed monitoring stations there, as well.

Tight quarantine

Hasawi indicated that the special government panel that groups representatives from PAAAFR, the Municipality and the KEP as well as the Union of Fresh Dairy Producers (UFDP), is coordinating efforts to enforce the tight quarantine in the region, warning that violators would be penalized.

No infections have been registered in more than half of the farms there, and the "livestock wealth is sound and their products are free from diseases," said Hasawi who also called on all relevant authorities to cooperate with the farms. PAAAFR has diligently worked to cope with such outbreaks that happen yearly in the country, he added.

Hasawi re-affirmed that the dairy products "were sound and were not affected after a number of cows were infected with the foot-and-mouth disease," re-noting that standard processing and enveloping are observed in the dairy products manufacturing. Explaining further, Hasawi said the disease had actually infected non-immunized calves that do not give milk.

Three times

Meanwhile, PAAAFR Director of Livestock Health, Dr Abdulrahman Al-Kandari, said the department immunizes the cows in the country three times per year, with 28,000 shots each time. He also clarified that the infectious disease does not transmit to camels.

Furthermore, the foot-and-mouth disease "poses no hazard to human well-being," Hasawi explained, however he noted that only two cases were recorded in Kuwait over the past 50 years. And that the patients had recovered. The disease outbreak was first reported early this month among a number of cows. Farmers had been guided on how to prevent it from spreading.

Conserving wildlife

In other news, the Kuwait Environment Protection Society emphasized the importance of continuous productive cooperation with PAAAFR for protection of vegetation, wildlife and marine creatures. It also called for boosting cooperation in organizing cultural and awareness activities between both sides.

Secretary General of Kuwait Environment Protection Society (KEPS) Wejdan Al-Oqab said yesterday that a fresh visit by a PAAAFR's delegation to KEPS' headquarters tackled mutual cooperation, besides a host of issues namely overgrazing, grazing in prohibited areas, and their negative impact on wildlife, as well as developing and protecting wild plants in the country.

The two sides also agreed on allocating selected public gardens to develop and enrich their vegetation, besides discussing unjustified damage and tampering with plants and flowers in public gardens. Meanwhile, Hasawi said both KEPS and PAAAFR share the same visions towards various environmental issues related to protection of Kuwait's natural resources. Hasawi applauded the mutual cooperation with KEPS and hailed the latter's distinguished work in the environmental field. — KUNA



This file photo shows the Jaber Hospital under construction.

MINISTRY TO DELIVER JABER HOSPITAL IN JUNE

KUWAIT: Minister of Public Works Ali Al-Omar stated Sunday that the ministry aims to deliver Jaber Hospital to the Ministry of Health in June 2016, three months ahead of the schedule. In a statement to KUNA after participating in the

Parliament's Priorities Committee meeting, Omar, who doubles as Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs, said representatives of the Ministry of Public Works and Ministry of Health

would meet soon to discuss the required equipment for the hospital. The minister added that the meeting also touched upon the situation in other mega projects such as the new Education Ministry headquarters, Jaber Bridge, and Al-Jahra motorway. — KUNA

KUWAIT COMPLETES PROJECT TO REMOVE OSHAIREJ HARBOR

KUWAIT: Kuwait Dive Team completed a phased project to remove Oshairej port stretching over 200,000 square meters, lifting thousands of tons of waste and barricades. The project took over three years to remove the port, located in the southern coast of Kuwait Bay, head of the team Waleed Al-Fadhil said yesterday. The harbor was affecting water currents in the area, said Fadhil, adding that the team has removed 80 sunken ships and boats from the port.

The official also said that the team has cleaned up fishing nets and plastic waste that were hazardous to the environment, in cooperation with Kuwait Municipality and the Environment Public Authority (EPA). Meanwhile, he noted that this area is of great significance as it contains different forms of marine life. The port was also a vital source of rocks that Kuwaitis used to build their houses in the olden times, he added. — KUNA



ZAIN OFFICIAL SPONSOR OF KUWAIT GRAND PHOTOGRAPHY CONTEST

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading telecommunications company in Kuwait, announced its official sponsorship of the Kuwait Grand Photography Contest for the third year running. The contest, considered the largest of its kind in the country, comes under the patronage of HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

Zain's support of this competition for three consecutive years comes as part of its endless efforts to highlight and support Kuwaiti youth's hidden talents, especially that photography is a hobby that has tremendous widespread among youth in Kuwait.

The previous two editions of Kuwait Grand Photography Contest witnessed overwhelming local and regional success. This year's contest will witness its international launch with

participation of judges from Kuwait, Oman, USA, UK, China, and Italy.

Zain's sponsorship of the contest springs from the company's core belief that equipping young people with skills and tools necessary to help them navigate their future lives is an opportunity it should not pass on. Photography is developing to become a well-recognized and regarded profession and Zain is keen to support its further development within the local community.

Zain will continue to foster young talents, believing that the current generation of youngsters holds to the keys to the future development of Kuwait and need to be well supported by private and governmental entities. Registration is open until the 1st of March through kwtphotography.com.



FREE DISTRIBUTION OF RARE SAPPLINGS TO GREEN THUMBS

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: Kuwait farmer Yousef Al-Kreibani, who was the first to plant black tomatoes in Kuwait, in addition to many other vegetables in rare colors, distributed saplings to the public last Thursday in Mishref. Due to great demand, the entire stock was exhausted within 15 minutes, so Kreibani will again distribute saplings of rare vegetables and plants to citizens and expats this Thursday February 18th at 4:00 pm on Abdullah Al-Salem Street (New Street) in Mubarakiya.

"This initiative aims to increase agricultur-

al and planting awareness in Kuwait through teaching and encouraging people to engage in home planting and expand green areas in the country," Kreibani told the Kuwait Times. This initiative will include distributing more than 20 varieties of rare saplings including those of black and orange tomatoes, purple and orange cauliflower, red and blue corn, red lettuce and others. Saplings of some trees like cardamom and henna will also be distributed. "I advise people to come early to ensure they receive the saplings. I plan to repeat this initiative in the future in various other areas of Kuwait," noted Kreibani.

MEDIA IMPORTANT WEAPON TO ESTABLISH GCC NATIONAL IDENTITY: INFO MINISTER



Information Minister Sheikh Salman Al-Sabah

KUWAIT: Minister of Information Sheikh Salman Sabah Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah stressed that media is an important weapon to establish national identity of GCC countries through acts seeking to address challenges in order to promote values of tolerance, love, peace and belonging. This came yesterday during a speech by the minister while inaugurating the 46th Board of Directors of the GCC Joint Program Production Institution's meeting.

"Our region is going through a very critical and sensitive phase, and facing successive events and developments on both political and security levels," Sheikh Salman, also Minister of State for Youth Affairs, said. "We should immunize our countries and peoples against effects of these events and developments in line with the directives and visions of GCC leaders, and recommendations of information ministers with current and future plans," he added.

These plans should target youth as they are mostly affected by cultural and media production which runs counter to "our values, traditions and moderation of Islam", he noted. Since its establishment, the institution, which is a title of GCC joint action in TV and Radio program, is one of pioneering cultural and educational institutions on the Arab level seeking to build Gulf personality through "distinguished program production", the minister said.

"As a result of events around us, and developments of media and communication, we should develop concepts and goals of our media and cultural message to achieve the Gulf cohesion and discard extremism and terrorism for maintaining security and safety of our countries and peoples," he pointed out. He stressed the importance of program production in promoting tourism among GCC countries that has a positive impact on economy and development

in the Gulf states in general.

On the sidelines of the meeting, Ali Al-Rais, the Institution's Director General, told KUNA that the meeting is held annually to approve some recommendations and topics of agendas. Participants will discuss how to deal with social media which imposed itself as a reality on media and review what has been presented to male and female students at schools.

Meanwhile, GCC assistant secretary for cultural and media affairs Khaled Al-Ghassani said in a similar statement the meeting discusses a

number of issues on the Gulf region, adding that the institution sought last year to develop and improve its performance under a direct supervision of Information Ministry of Kuwait.

Conferees were briefed on the report of the Institution's Director General concerning what has been fulfilled last year in this regard, he said. A number of topics proposed by member states on the institution's performance and how to select programs to be carried in the coming phase will be discussed during the two-day meeting, he noted. — KUNA

UNION URGES PAPERS NOT TO LAY OFF STAFF

KUWAIT: Nasser Al-Othman, Secretary General of the GCC Journalism Union (GCCJU) urged newspapers in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries to avoid laying off journalists and to reasonably and fairly compensate them in case they had to. Othman argued that some newspapers might resort to laying off staff as a cost-cutting measure to face financial problems in view of the situations GCC states are going through because of the falling oil prices.



Nasser Al-Othman

Othman also urged newspapers that can safely go through this stage to try, as hard as

possible, to assimilate laid off journalists. He also warned of losing experienced journalists who, along with younger ones, were the pillars of GCC journalism.

Further, Othman urged journalism societies and relative GCC establishments to cooperate in attempts to find suitable settlements that would help newspapers continue operating as well as help find ways out of this 'hopefully temporary' dilemma. He also urged GCC information ministries and authorities to do their best to support journalism establishments and journalists.

CONTROVERSY OVER KTV COMEDIC DANCE

KUWAIT: A visiting comedian who danced on KTV during an interview stirred controversy yesterday with comments on social media about the dance. The incident prompted a statement from the Assistant Undersecretary for Television Affairs at the Ministry of Information Yousef Mustafa.

According to Mustafa, behaviors that run counter to the country's traditions and customs, and values through the State TV are not accepted. He added in a statement published by state news agency KUNA that the behavior made by a guest during a program contradicts rules and disciplines of Kuwait TV which is a safe haven to the society. He noted that those responsible for the behavior will be investigated by Ministry of Information.

OOREDOO LAUNCHES EXCLUSIVE CAMPAIGN FOR BUSINESS OWNERS DURING HALA FEBRUARY

KUWAIT: Ooredoo Kuwait, a member of the international Ooredoo Group, launched a special offer to support small business owners across Kuwait, in celebration of Hala February 2016 with Ooredoo. Business owners who sign up to Ooredoo Shamel Business Pro plans, which start from KD 30, get a complimentary 2-night stay at the luxurious Banana Islands Resort in Qatar, with two first-class airline tickets. Also, all new lines activated during the month of February will have a one month free subscription.

Commenting on Hala February offer, Ooredoo Senior Director of B2B-Sales Division Hamad Al-



Marzouq said: "We are proud to be supporting local businesses with an exclusive offer during Hala February. Supporting young and local businesses is among our corporate social responsibility plans,

and is at the core of our values at Ooredoo."

Ooredoo offers two different levels of plans for small and medium business owners: Shamel Business plans, which include free local minutes, SMS, and internet. Additionally, customers can benefit from calls between the employees of the company, as well as free business hours.

Additionally, Ooredoo offers Shamel Business Pro plans, which come with free international minutes and data roaming. Additionally, Business Pro customers get a free secondary SIM card that allows them to share their local mobile internet with a mini router that comes with the plan.

Sponsored by Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences




Dr. Rob Long
Chartered Educational Psychologist

Delivers a lecture at CCET entitled:

Well Being for Children & Young People

- Doctor Rob Long is a Chartered Educational Psychologist who works independently to provide professional development training for schools, colleges and other professionals.
- Previously, Rob lectured in Psychology before working as an Educational Psychologist.
- He managed a Primary Behaviour Support Team and also supported Secondary schools in reviewing their behaviour management policies and practice.
- Rob's main area of interest is supporting children who face social, emotional, and behavioural difficulties.
- He has written and had published several books to support the work and training that he provides. Rob's books offer teachers and support staff many practical ways to manage difficult situations.
- Rob recently completed his Doctorate in Educational Psychology at Cardiff University.



• The lecture will be delivered on Tuesday 16th of February 2016 at 7:00 PM

The lecture will be delivered in English accompanied by Arabic translation

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Al-Anbaa

Al-Anbaa

PROMISE

By Dr Nermin Al-Houti

A word that has many meanings, and all lead to one - commitment. We, in his era are missing the meaning of promise, covenant and commitment in everything in our daily lives. Our societies used to see that when an individual committed himself to do something, regardless of its results and repercussions, as we heard from our grandfathers, that person used to fulfill his promise towards the person he made the commitment to. Those were our societies in the past, that did not need contracts or witnesses - only keeping the 'word'.

But today's promises are only lies being said in order to escape from the situation or take whatever was wanted, then when you face the person whom you promised, the answer will be: "Forgive me; you know the circumstances. I could not or I did not promise."

It is regretful for all those who gave a promise but did not fulfill them. My message today comes from many individuals who sent me emails. When I read them all, I found them leading to one thing, which is "promise", and not committing to it between the two sides. Away from the contents and privacy of some topics, I get astonished by some main characters in the stories of my readers, who made promises and swore to commit to them. Despite the different stories and the conflicting plots of the stories I read, we find out that all those people made promises, but they did not keep them when they got what they wanted. The closing sentence of most stories I read was "I did not promise you anything!"

Away from stories, we really miss the meaning of commitment in our society, not only at the personal level, but at all levels in our daily life. We now chase promises in our society, until the promise became a phantom whose alphabets we miss, be it at home, school, work or personal relations, until we became societies that lack the meaning of promise.

A final word: For all those who gave a promise and did not keep it, remember the saying of Almighty Allah: "And fulfill the covenant of Allah when you have taken it [o believers], and do not break oaths after their confirmation while you have made Allah, over you, a witness. Indeed, Allah knows what you do. (Holy Quran 16:91)

— Translated by Kuwait Times



INTERIOR MINISTER DEFUSES CRISIS WITH KEY ARAB STATE

KUWAITI ENVOY ADMITS PAYING OFFICIAL FOR INFORMATION

KUWAIT: Kuwait recently managed to overcome a diplomatic crisis that had almost affected its relations with a major Arab state when security forces in that state accused Kuwait's ambassador of bribing a senior official to provide him with information about the work and activities of the body he works for, said informed diplomatic sources in that Arab state.

The sources explained that a while earlier, security forces had detected the ambassador's relationship with the senior official and on placing him under close surveillance, they found that the official had been providing the ambassador with information, decisions and discussions made by that sovereign body concerning Arab issues or inter-Arab relations, namely those with GCC states. The sources added that the official denied the charges at first but collapsed on being confronted with documented evidence and digital documents he had been providing the

ambassador with. Further, the source neither confirmed nor denied news about that country's intelligence collection of a computer from Kuwait's embassy to unload information on it. "All measures needed to maintain the sovereign body's security have been made regardless of diplomatic norms because what happened had never happened before and cannot be let go, especially with Kuwait's embassy, because both countries have the best historic relations," said the sources.

Further, the sources highlighted that all steps followed and measures made had been done with constant coordination between that country's intelligence and Kuwait's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Sabah, who did his best to wrap up the issue and fully cooperate with the concerned country's intelligence to limit the violation, claiming a 'personal mistake' on the ambassador's side. Moreover, the sources said that

Kuwait's ambassador was recalled to Kuwait where he said that what he did was part of his duties as a diplomat to highlight the attitudes taken by the country he was designated to in order to help Kuwait's foreign minister and the government make the right decisions. The sources also noted that the ambassador used to send part of the information he collected back to Kuwait. The sources added that when told that offering money and rewards in return for such information might be described as 'espionage', the ambassador stressed that he had good intentions, adding that he asked to complete the remaining three months of his tenure and return to Kuwait and retire.

Finally, the sources said that a senior intelligence official from the concerned country had visited Kuwait for a few hours where he conferred with Sheikh Mohammad and expressed satisfaction on realizing that the whole matter was an individual action. — Al-Rai

News

In Brief

LEGISLATION NEEDED TO CHANGE SALARIES

KUWAIT: Chairman of Kuwait's Supreme Judicial Council and the Cassation Court, and President of the Constitutional Court, Justice Yousef Jassem Al-Mutawaa said that the salaries of Kuwaiti employees cannot be changed in any way without a legislation. Asked about the role the judiciary might play in light of the government's new direction towards spending rationalization, Mutawaa said that "the issue has not been discussed yet at the Supreme Judicial Council so far, but judges are like state employees, be it in rewards and others." He said the judiciary's budget and financial affairs are in the hands of justice ministry, and "we do not have a role in it." — Al-Qabas

1.6 km tunnel to be built

KUWAIT: Informed sources at the Public Works Ministry revealed details of the final stages of the First Ring Road development. The details include constructing a tunnel that links the Grand Mosque with the Palace of Justice. The ministry will receive technical offers for evaluation before awarding the projects. The sources said it is difficult to determine the cost of the final stage at this time, especially that the tunnel is the first of its kind in Kuwait. They added that the tunnel will be built between 10 to 16 meters underground, and will be 1.6 kilometers long. They said that the project is expected to start in November 2019 and will end in October 2021. — Al-Qabas

Govt pays 95% power bill

KUWAIT: Official statistics showed that the average cost of power per one house is KD 11,560 per year, and the state bears 95 percent of its costs at KD 11,010, while the consumer pays 5 percent only. The stats showed that the cost of operating air conditioning for 16 hours a day is KD 10,158, and heat lighting is KD 1,275 per house each year as a general average. The recommendations calls for looking into the subsidies in a way that it is not a reduction only, but instructions to use energy saving material. — Al-Qabas

Interior approves incentives

KUWAIT: The Interior Ministry approved the financial and material incentives for its senior officials in its new form as part of its budget this year, in a way that agrees with state policy to rationalize spending. The ministry approved a financial allowance for every assistant undersecretary at KD 250 that will be paid starting with March. The payment will be referred to as 'rental allowance', and will be paid instead of giving officials luxurious cars, and sports utility vehicles for director generals. A security source said the measures included the cancellation of vehicle fuel coupons, except for those that belong to the ministry, which has special stations. — Al-Rai

Crime

Report

FACE-VEILED WOMAN LURED MAID TO RAPISTS

KUWAIT: Ahmadi detectives are looking for a face-veiled woman who lured a Filipina maid to a camp with men who raped her, with a possibility that the woman presented a stolen or forged ID to the maids' office. A security source said that the domestic help office's owner said a veiled woman asked for a maid and entered a room where the maids were, and selected one, paid the down payment and handed a copy of a civil ID.

The owner said he was surprised two days later with the return of the maid who told him that when she left the office, a car was waiting, and they got in the backseat, while two men were in the front. The car went to a desert area with tents. When they entered a camp, the woman disappeared, while the two men along with others took turns raping her. Detectives heard the testimonies of the office's owner and the victim, who said she was able to escape when the suspects went to sleep.

Gas cylinders stolen

A restaurant owner told Mafdan Hawally police that five gas cylinders were stolen from his store. He said an eyewitness said a red car was used by the thief.

Suicide

A 22-year-old Indian man hanged himself to death at his sponsor's home in Adailiya. A suicide case was filed and investigations are in progress.

Drug abuse

A 22-year-old Kuwaiti girl was taken to the Drugs Control General Department after discovering she was using drugs. A security source said the girl was walking near Adailiya cooperative and collapsed all of a sudden. Paramedics were called, and she was found to be using drugs.

Reckless drivers

Policemen brought four reckless drivers in Ahmadi under control after they turned a crossroads into a racing track. The four were drag racing and skidding tires, creating noise and disturbance. Police surrounded the area to prevent them from escaping, then arrested them. The cars were impounded, and the four are facing further legal action.

Neighbors' fight

A fight broke out between two female Kuwaiti neighbors in Salmiya, who exchanged insults and threats, after one of them accused the other of beating her son. Neighbors attempted to cool things down but failed. Hawally patrols went to the building took both women to the police station for further legal action.

Compatriots' row

An Egyptian man was beaten by a compatriot using a hammer following a dispute between the attacker and his wife. The Egyptian told police that his female neighbor had a dispute with his wife over drying laundry on the roof and exchanged blows, so he went to rescue his wife, but the neighbor beat him with a hammer and injured his hand. The Egyptian submitted a medical report as he lodged a complaint.

Man mugged

A Bangladeshi man told Nagra police station an unidentified person beat him and stole phone recharge cards and KD 25. He said he hung on to the car, but the suspect dragged him on the street. He submitted a medical report. — Al-Rai, Al-Anbaa

ABU DHABI TOURISM AUTHORITY EMBARKS ON ROADSHOW CAMPAIGN

HIGHLIGHTING 2016'S FESTIVALS, ACTIVITIES

KUWAIT: Abu Dhabi Tourism and Culture Authority (TCA Abu Dhabi) will announce 2016's top festivals and activities during its Roadshow Campaign in the capital cities of the GCC as it actively promotes Abu Dhabi as a unique destination with a year-long program of events for families and tourists alike. Headlining these events will be the action-packed Red Bull Air Race, which forms part of the Abu Dhabi Aerospace and Aviation Week in March. The race features world-class acrobatic pilots who will be flying their planes at incredible speeds whilst twisting and turning through a tough slalom course with the aim of recording the fastest lap time.

In addition, the always eagerly anticipated Formula 1 Etihad Airways Abu Dhabi Grand Prix in November will see the finest Formula 1 race car drivers reaching top speeds of more than 300 KPH as they battle each other on the Yas Marina Circuit for the closing race of the 2016 Formula 1 season.

Preferred destination

"The UAE's capital of Abu Dhabi continues to live up to its well-established reputation as a preferred and sought-after destination for exciting family-oriented fun and entertainment," said Sultan Al-Mansoori, GCC Country Manager, TCA Abu Dhabi. "For



2016, we have worked even harder to bring bigger and better events that offer more fun and excitement. Accordingly, we would like to encourage families and tourists from the GCC to carefully plan their year-long calendar in order not to miss out on their favorite events," Mansoori added.

The host of other events programmed throughout the year that truly make Abu Dhabi a year-long family-oriented destination include Abu Dhabi Classics. Running

until the 10th of May from its launch in October of the previous year, the eight-month-long event features 26 classical concerts and performances by some of the world's leading musicians, orchestras and the most prestigious names in Western and Eastern classical music. These performances will take place in the UAE capital, Saadiyat Island, Liwa desert and other historic sites in the emirate's heritage heartland of Al Ain.

Thrilling activities

Once the summer months kick in, the whole family can also enjoy three months of thrilling activities and entertainment in Abu Dhabi Summer Season 2016. Fun-filled events include superb comedy acts, world-famous children's shows, star-studded concerts, international theatre shows and much more.

With a host of hotels and attractions offering attractive packages and special Summer Season promotional offers, the entire family can also indulge in enjoyable shopping sprees at various shopping malls. Further adding to all the fun and excitement is the chance to win amazing prizes with the mega promotions and raffle draws throughout Abu Dhabi Summer Season 2016.

In December 2016, the annual Abu Dhabi Food Festival is all set to team up with SIAL Abu Dhabi, the region's professional business platform for the food, drink and hospitality industries, to bring together all the ingredients for a food extravaganza across the emirate. Spread over three weeks, the festival, which attracted over 50,000 visitors last year, will incorporate the already established and popular Street Feast, Emirati Kitchen and Gourmet Abu Dhabi strands.

VIVA PARTICIPATES IN MOBILE WORLD CONGRESS 2016 IN BARCELONA

KUWAIT: VIVA, Kuwait's fastest-growing and most developed telecom operator, announced its participation in Mobile World Congress 2016 organized by Group Special Mobile association "GSMA" that will take place in Barcelona between 22



and 25 February 2016.

VIVA's CEO Eng Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al-Badran will head VIVA's executive delegation to the congress at STC's Booth, where all VIVA's achievements will be displayed since its inception, in addition

to the latest offers, services and products. VIVA reaped several awards for excellence in the Kuwaiti telecom sector in 2015, including "Best Industry Call Center" and "Best Medium Help Desk" from Insights - Middle East Call Center Awards 2015, the only Call Centre dedicated, Professional Services Organization in the Middle East.

Up to 2,200 companies from around the world will participate in this congress, specialized in telecommunications, internet and technology, in addition to more than 90 thousands visitors who will experience the latest in the mobile industry.

The GSMA represents the interests of mobile operators worldwide, uniting nearly 800 operators with more than 250 companies in the broader mobile ecosystem, including handset and device makers, software providers and internet companies, as well as organizations in adjacent industry sectors. The GSMA also produces industry-leading events such as Mobile World Congress, Mobile Asia Expo.

ABK LAUNCHES TAP 'N' GO SERVICE FOR PREMIUM VISA CREDIT, PREPAID CARDHOLDERS

KUWAIT: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) recently announced the launch of the all new Tap 'n' Go service that is now available for Visa premium credit and prepaid cardholders. The new service uses Visa payWave, a contactless payment technology that enables cardholders to simply wave or tap their card on contactless payment terminals without the need to physically swipe or insert the card into a point-of-sale.

Tap 'n' Go uses a Near Field Communication (NFC) technology and allows customers to conduct low value transactions in a faster, more convenient and secure way at any terminal that accepts Visa payWave.

Commenting on this advancement, Stewart Lockie, GM - Retail Banking at ABK said: "The launch of the new Tap 'n' Go service is one step further towards applying the Bank's 'Simpler Banking' strategy, which has been a priority. ABK's Emirates Visa Infinite, Signature and Gold Prepaid Travel cardholders can apply for a Visa payWave-enabled card at any of the Banks branches".

"Visa is pleased with Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait's decision to implement Visa's payWave technology, which is in line with Visa's objectives to provide easy, secure, and convenient payment solutions to our consumers in Kuwait. Delivering a seamless payment experience to our customers is a priority for us. Visa's innovation leadership means extending the benefits of electronic payments to more people in more



places where and when they want them - whether they choose traditional cards, Visa payWave-enabled cards or smartphones with Visa mobile payment functionality," said Amit Vij, Kuwait Country Manager at Visa.

Visa payWave is accepted globally and is specifically of value when transacting in fast-paced locations like supermarkets, and public transport in London, Paris, Rome and Singapore.

The Bank supports the adoption of innovative contactless-based payments as it is committed to servicing its customers based on their changing needs while providing them with 'simpler' banking solutions.

For more information on Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait please visit www.eahli.com or contact an ABK representative via 'Ahli Chat' or by contacting a customer service agent via 'Ahlan Ahli' at 1899899.



Israeli former Olmert begins his prison term

PLANE RETURNS TO LONDON; LASER BEAMED INTO COCKPIT

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SNOW, SLEET, RAIN HIT MID-ATLANTIC, NORTHEAST



EVANSTON: A woman walks in the parking lot in Evanston, Ill. Snow has now overspread nearly all of the Chicago Metro area in the early afternoon and is expected to continue into tonight. —AP

NEW YORK: A grab bag of weather conditions - including snow and sleet - will descend on communities from the mid-Atlantic to the Northeast, but with many people off for Presidents' Day it may be just another day to hunker down. After much of the northeastern United States experienced record cold on Valentine's Day, the National Weather Service said yesterday would be snowy in many areas before sleet or freezing rain started and rain finally arrived.

Washington Mayor Muriel Bowser said she deployed the DC snow team Sunday ahead of the storm, which is expected to deliver a sloppy mix of snow, sleet and rain. One to 3 inches was a forecast for yesterday. Outside the nation's capital, the Virginia Department of Transportation staged nearly 2,500 trucks to treat and clear roads. Philadelphia also could see 1 to 3 inches of snow and New York City could get up to 4 inches before the transition to wet weather begins. Meteorologist Bruce Sullivan said there could be significant snowfall - anywhere from 4 to 8 inches - in eastern Ohio, western Pennsylvania and western New York. Some mountainous areas such as in North Carolina could get even more snow. The weather could have less impact because schools and many workplaces will be closed for the federal holiday and traffic should be lighter than usual. By today, when temperatures increase, Sullivan said the rain and some runoff could cause flooding in some areas. Sunday's teeth-chattering temperatures were some of the coldest on record.

From New York and Boston to Providence, Rhode Island, and Hartford, Connecticut, temperatures on Sunday morning dipped to as low as minus 40 - on Mount Washington in New Hampshire. The National Weather Service said the temperature in New York City's Central Park fell to minus 1, a record low for the date. The last time it was below zero in Central Park was

in January 1994. Boston reached minus 9, breaking the record set in 1934 by 6 degrees. It reached minus 16 in Worcester, Massachusetts, breaking the 1979 record of 11 below zero. Providence hit minus 9 and Hartford minus 12, also breaking records from 1979.

In Montpelier, Vermont, the overnight temperature hit minus 19, tying a record set in 2003. And South Lincoln, Vermont, recorded 27 below zero. Temperatures were so low in some spots, utilities were knocked out. A frozen regulator left about 400 customers in Connecticut without natural gas service and officials believe extreme cold in Vermont broke a utility pole, knocking out service to about 1,500.

An emergency generator didn't kick in for Sheffield Selectboard Chairman Walter Smith, who said he lost a greenhouse full of about 500 orchids. "I've got it working now, but it's too late," he said. The cold kept many people inside. In a New Jersey bagel shop that's usually brimming with customers on Sunday mornings, Joe Weir was among a small handful of people who sat drinking coffee. "I just came from a church service, and it definitely wasn't as packed as it usually is," the 60-year-old Toms River man said. "We have a lot of elderly parishioners, and when the weather gets bad or real cold like this, a lot of them choose to stay in and watch a Mass on TV instead of going to church. Can't say I blame them."

But on Sunday, officials were only concerned by the cold they said was dangerous and could be fatal to those spending too much time outdoors - especially the homeless. Outreach teams brought 105 people into New York shelters, and 288 showed up at hospitals and health facilities including more than 20 who were brought in for care needed immediately, New York Mayor Bill de Blasio said at a news conference inside a lower Manhattan subway station. —AP



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News

in brief

Retired Saudi security officer shot dead by IS

RIYADH: A retired security officer in southern Saudi Arabia has been shot dead in an attack claimed yesterday by the Islamic State group...

US plane impounded; body and cash found on board

HARARE: Authorities Zimbabwe aviation impounded a US-registered cargo jet, a senior official said yesterday, with a dead body and millions of South African rand reportedly on board...



HOBBART: Photo shows a deadly Australia eastern brown snake, which has enough venom to kill 20 adults with a single bite, in the Sydney suburb of Terrey Hills.

Girl falls victim to a rare case of deadly snakebite

SYDNEY: A young girl has died in Australia after being bitten by a feared brown snake, officials said yesterday, a rare fatality even though the country is home to some of the planet's deadliest species...

UN urges UAE to release 5 Libyans allegedly tortured

GENEVA: UN human rights experts are calling on the United Arab Emirates to release five Libyans, including three with Canadian or US dual citizenship, who were allegedly tortured while in detention over the last year...

2 killed, more than dozen injured in Burundi blasts

BUJUMBURA: At least two people were killed and more than a dozen injured in a series of grenade blasts in Burundi's capital yesterday, witnesses said.

LONDON: British town halls and publicly funded universities face "severe penalties" if they institute boycotts of "unethical" companies or Israeli goods under controversial new rules...

later this week by Cabinet Office Minister Matt Hancock during a visit to Israel, the government statement said, without saying what penalties may be imposed.

"We need to challenge and prevent these divisive town hall boycotts," Hancock was expected to say. The measure would apply to the public sector as a whole, including the National Health Service.

in recent years that have angered Israeli authorities. In 2014, Leicester City Council instituted a boycott on goods made in Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank.

The Cabinet Office said it continued to support labeling "to ensure that individual consumers are able to make informed choices before they buy".

consumers are able to make informed choices before they buy". But an opposition Labor Party spokesman said the boycott ban was "an attack on local democracy".

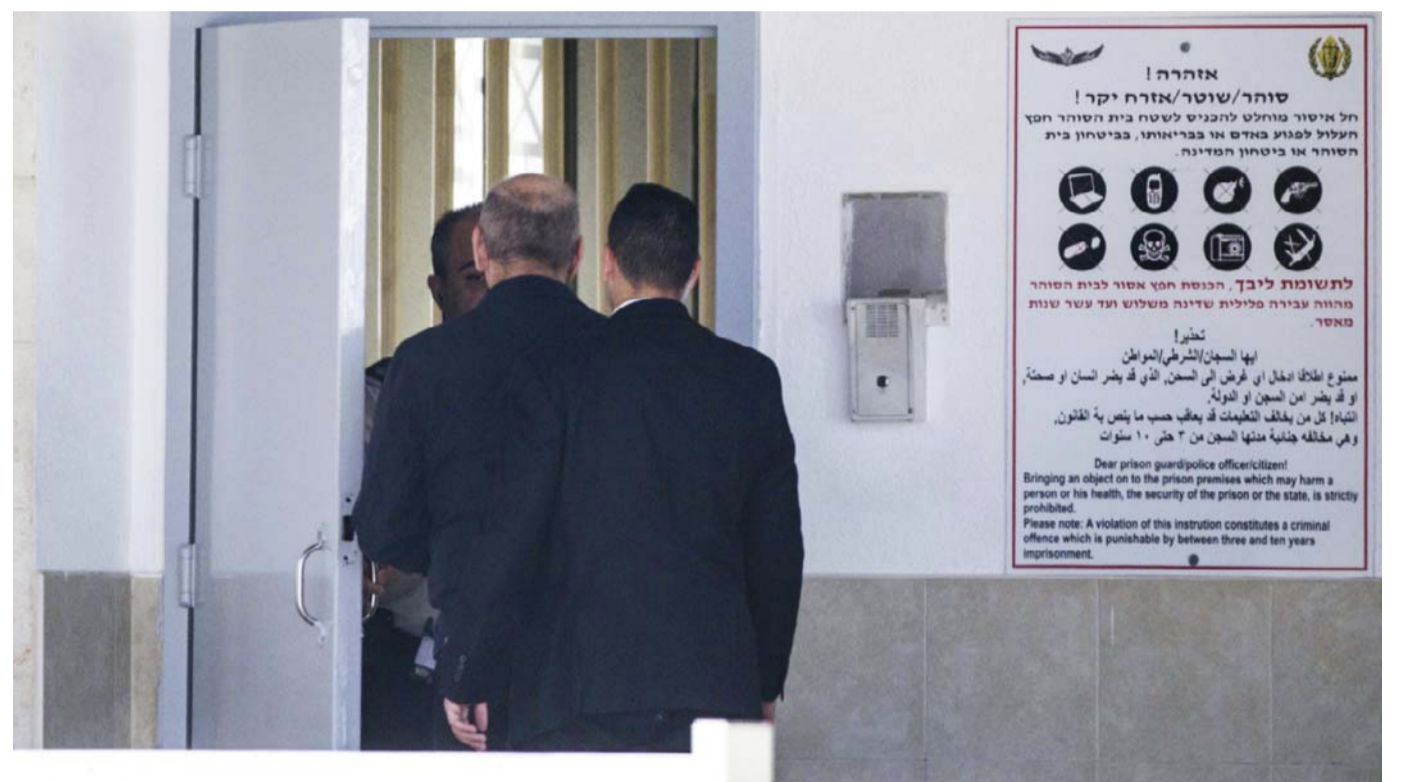
"This government's ban would have outlawed council action against apartheid South Africa," he said. Amnesty International's UK economic relations program director Peter Frankland also condemned the plan.

ISRAEL'S EX-PM OLMERT BEGINS PRISON TERM FOR CORRUPTION

FIRST ISRAELI EX-PREMIER TO SERVE JAIL TIME

RAMLE: Ehud Olmert, once feted for his peace efforts with the Palestinians yesterday became Israel's first former premier to serve jail time as he began a 19-month sentence for bribery and obstruction of justice.

In a video message released yesterday morning before he began his sentence, Olmert maintained his innocence. "You can imagine how painful and strange this change is to me, my family, loved ones and supporters," said Olmert, looking haggard and downcast.



RAMLE: Former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert (center) arrives at the Maasiyahu Prison in the central Israeli city of Ramle yesterday as he begins a 19-month term for bribery and obstruction of justice.

his appeal against a third sentence of eight months for fraud and corruption.

The Israeli Prisons Service says he has been assigned to special block 10, "which is intended to house prisoners who for various reasons cannot be placed with the general prison population." He will join four other unidentified inmates in block 10, which has a maximum capacity of 18.

Luxury travel and cigars

Born near the port city of Haifa, Olmert was elected to parliament in 1973 for the rightwing Likud party and served as mayor of Jerusalem from 1993 to 2003.

efforts with the Palestinians at the Annapolis conference in the United States in 2007, but the corruption charges against him have come to define his legacy. US financier Morris Talansky, a key witness in one of the cases, testified that Olmert gave him envelopes stuffed with cash and said much of the money may have been spent on luxury travel and fine cigars.

MALKI: LATEST VIOLENCE SHOWS PALESTINIANS AT END OF TETHER

TOKYO: Renewed violence between Israelis and Palestinians has its roots in the latter's humiliation and desperation after decades of occupation, Palestinian foreign minister Riad Al-Malki said yesterday.

Most of the Palestinians were carrying out attacks but others died during clashes and demonstrations. Malki pointed to ongoing Israeli occupation of the West Bank, which began in 1967, saying Palestinians born under it have seen nothing "but humiliation, soldiers' check-points, deaths and killing".

During the meeting, Abe pledged \$78 million in fresh economic assistance, according to Jiji Press and Kyodo News. Abe also "expressed Japan's intention to continue its political and economic support so that Palestine will be an independent, democratic, viable and contiguous state,"

Malki, at his press conference, also said that Palestinian authorities do not advocate violence and are trying to prevent it. "But the international community has to understand that there is a limit to everything," he said.

Some analysts say Palestinian frustration with Israeli occupation and settlement building in the West Bank, the complete lack of progress in peace efforts and their own fractured leadership have fed the unrest. Israel blames incitement by Palestinian leaders and media as a main cause of the violence.

He stressed that a multilateral framework to solve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is needed and he praised an initiative discussed late last month by France to revive plans for an international conference to end the conflict.

"If Daesh take advantage of lack of any brokers... then of course, they might come and try to fill it," he said, referring to Islamic State. "This is very dangerous," he added.



ISTANBUL: Protesters wheel a person overcome with the effects of tear gas during clashes in Istanbul between police forces and people protesting against security operations against Kurdish rebels in southeastern Turkey.

TURKEY SHELLS KURDS AS RAIDS HIT MSF HOSPITAL

BEIRUT: Turkey shelled Kurdish fighters in Syria for a third day yesterday and a suspected Russian air strike on a hospital left several dead, as violence shook the country ahead of a hoped-for ceasefire.

Turkey accuses the Kurdish forces of links to the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), an outlawed movement that waged a decades-long insurgency against the Turkish state. Following similar fire on Saturday and Sunday, Turkish shelling again hit several parts of Aleppo province on Monday.

The SDF was advancing despite the shelling, it said, and there was heavy fighting inside the western limits of Tal Rifaat. The SDF has already seized the nearby Minnigh air-base from rebel forces, and severed the road between Tal Rifaat and the key rebel-held town of Azaz on the border with Turkey.

Turkey fears the Kurds will be able to create a contiguous Kurdish territory just across the border in northern Syria. Turkey's Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu warned Monday that Ankara "will not let Azaz fall" to the SDF, adding "the necessary intervention will be made".

The situation is a major headache for Washington, which has backed the Kurds in their battles against the Islamic State group despite the discomfort of fellow NATO member Turkey. In recent days, Washington warned the Kurds not to "take advantage" of the situation in Aleppo to seize new territory.

Ankara's shelling has prompted criticism from Damascus, which has urged the UN Security Council to take action. Turkey yesterday also denied claims it had sent troops into northern Syria and rejected reports it was planning a ground intervention.

In northwestern Idlib province meanwhile, suspected Russian strikes hit an MSF-supported hospital, the Observatory said. MSF confirmed the hospital's destruction, without saying who was behind it, and reported at least seven people had been killed, with another eight staff members missing, presumed dead. It said the dead were five patients, a caretaker and a guard, and added that an unknown number of patients were also missing.

Warning to Kurds

The SDF was advancing despite the shelling, it said, and there was heavy fighting inside the western limits of Tal

SAUNAS, AQUARIUMS, BAR FOUND AT MEXICO PRISON

MONTERREY: Authorities found "luxury cells" with aquariums, portable saunas and even a bar at a Mexican prison where 49 inmates were killed in a brawl, officials said Sunday. The warden and superintendent of the Topo Chico prison in the northern industrial city of Monterrey, Nuevo Leon state, were arrested and accused of drug trafficking and failing to apply security measures.

A guard faces charges of fatally shooting one of the inmates during Thursday's melee. Zetas drug cartel leader Ivan Hernandez Cantu, alias "El Credo," had a king-sized bed in his cell, a huge flat-screen television and a luxury bath, the Nuevo Leon state prosecutor's office said. "At the time of the attack, a lady was with him," chief prosecutor Roberto Flores said. Authorities say the battle stemmed from a dispute over control of the prison between Hernandez and another Zetas leader, Juan Pedro Zaldivar Farias, alias "Z-27."

Most of the victims died when they were stabbed or beaten with sticks by other inmates during the skirmish. The state government said Sunday that police took control of the prison and "put an end to the self-government that leaders of organized

crime exerted with the complicity of some authorities." The prison had "luxury cells" with air conditioners, mini-fridges, digital televisions, aquariums and portable saunas, the government said in a statement, adding that authorities had seized everything.

The prison had food stands, convenience stores and even a bar that were operated by inmates, the statement said.

Relatives of inmates said that the prisoners had to pay high prices to get water and food due to the bad quality of the meals provided by the prison. Authorities also found hundreds of figures of Santa Muerte, a Grim Reaper-like "Death Saint" worshiped by criminals but also millions of ordinary Mexicans. "All the privileges are over," state public safety chief Cuauhtemoc Antunez said. The prison had 3,800 inmates at the time of the riot, 35 percent over capacity, and it was housing drug cartel members as well as suspects of less serious crimes awaiting trial. Authorities transferred 233 inmates, including the two Zetas leaders, to other prisons following the violence. The day after the massacre, officials found scores of makeshift knives, hammers and drugs inside the prison.—AFP



MEXICO CITY: Pope Francis celebrates an open-air mass in Ecatepec—a rough, crime-plagued Mexico City suburb. — AFP

POPE WANTS MEXICO FREE OF 'MERCHANTS OF DEATH'

MEXICANS URGED REJECT THE DEVIL

ECATEPEC: Pope Francis urged Mexicans on Sunday to reject the devil and build a nation free of "merchants of death" during an open-air mass with 300,000 people in a crime-ridden city. The pontiff used the service in Ecatepec, a rough Mexico City suburb, to touch on two major themes of his trip to Mexico—drug violence and the plight of migrants. The pope urged his flock to turn Mexico into a "land of opportunity," where "there will be no need to emigrate in order to dream" and where they will "not have to mourn men and women, young people and children who are destroyed at the hands of the merchants of death."

Ecatepec, a city of 1.6 million people, has become infamous for a spate of disappearances of women, whose bodies have turned up in abandoned lots or canals, prompting authorities to declare a "gender violence alert" last year. The city lies in the populous state of Mexico, where some 600 women have been killed between January 2014 and September 2015, according to the non-governmental National Citizen Observatory of Femicides. Francis urged the faithful to resist the three temptations of Christ—vanity, pride and wealth. "Brothers and sisters, let's get this into our heads: You can't talk with the devil. You can't talk with him because he will always defeat us," the 79-

year-old emphasized. "Only the word of God can defeat him."

'Too many kidnappings'

Thongs lined the streets of Ecatepec, where walls were decorated with graffiti art featuring the pope's image, to cheer the pope's arrival on the second full day of a trip that will take him to other Mexican hotspots. Hundreds of police officers stood guard around the field. "What the pope said was important. (Violence) is a delicate issue because the authorities aren't doing anything to end this," said Alicia Tejada, a 27-year-old accountant who watched mass on a large screen installed near the field.

Patricia Flores Marin, 46, was touched by the message about migrants because her daughter illegally migrated to the United States, but she is glad her child no longer lives in Ecatepec. "I wouldn't be at ease having her here. There are too many kidnappings," she said. The Argentine-born pontiff made it clear before his arrival in Mexico that he would speak out about the corruption and crime afflicting parts of the country.

Two massacres served as reminders of Mexico's ills during his visit: 49 inmates died in a prison riot in the northern city of Monterrey on the eve of his

arrival, while 13 people were shot dead in the drug cartel-plagued Pacific state of Sinaloa on Saturday. Francis used his visit to the National Palace and the capital's cathedral on Saturday to bluntly urge political leaders to provide Mexicans with "true justice" and security. Many Mexicans, fed up with a decade of drug violence that has left 100,000 dead or missing, had hoped to hear such words from the pope.

Serenaded by girl

After the outdoor mass, the pope met with sick children at a pediatric hospital in Mexico City along with first lady Angelica Rivera, who wiped away tears when a girl sang for the pontiff. "Seeing your eyes, your smiles, your faces made me want to thank you. Thank you for the affection that you have shown in welcoming me," the pope told the children. Francis has chosen to visit some of Mexico's most troubled regions during his five-day trip to the world's second most populous Catholic country. The pope will face other tough issues during his trip. On Monday, he visits Mexico's poorest and least Catholic region, the southern largely indigenous state of Chiapas, where monks and pilgrims began to arrive for a mass in three native languages. — AFP

SCALIA'S DEATH SENDS JOLTS THROUGH PRESIDENTIAL RACE

WASHINGTON: The sudden death of Justice Antonin Scalia, a towering conservative icon on the US Supreme Court, has set off an epic election-year battle over his successor that will shape American life far into the future. Scalia died of an apparent heart attack at age 79, leaving what had been a conservative-dominated court evenly divided in a year of blockbuster cases on abortion, affirmative action, immigration and President Barack Obama's health care law.

The news sent shockwaves through the White House race, as Republican and Democratic candidates absorbed the implications of the surprise, potentially course-altering opening on the court. "I think last night with the passing of Justice Scalia, we are reminded of how important this election is, how high the stakes are and why we must win," Senator Marco Rubio, in a bitter fight for the Republican nomination, told "Fox News Sunday."

Firing the first shot in the succession battle hours after Scalia's death, Obama said he would exercise his "constitutional responsibilities" and name a successor. Leading Republicans—including all six conservative White House contenders—threatened to block any nomination Obama puts forth, arguing

that it should be left to the next president to fill Scalia's vacant seat. Republicans contended that no president in recent history has nominated a Supreme Court Justice in his final year in office. But Justice Anthony Kennedy, nominated by Ronald Reagan, was confirmed in 1988, an election year. Obama called on the Senate to give his nominee a "fair hearing and a timely vote." The president nominates Supreme Court candidates, but Senate approval is required for them to take up the lifetime post, a long tenure that allows members of the court to be free from the political pressures of running for office.

'Rare talent'

Obama ordered flags to fly at half-staff across the United States to mark Scalia's passing, praising him as "one of the towering legal figures of our time." Scalia died at a private ranch in the Big Bend area of West Texas during a hunting trip. Presidio County Judge Cinderella Guevara told WFAA television the cause of death was a heart attack. Appointed to the Supreme Court by Reagan in 1986, Scalia championed originalism, the legal theory that the meaning of the Constitution should be interpreted as fixed at the time it was ratified, in 1788.—AFP

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- The original coupon should be attached to the back of each photo and should include a complete information about the participant.

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- All submitted photos will become property of Kuwait Times newspaper and can be used for different purposes.
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BOSNIA SUBMITS EU MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

NATO, MONTENEGRO BEGIN MEMBERSHIP TALKS

BRUSSELS: Bosnia yesterday formally submitted an application to join the EU, hoping to catch up with its Balkan neighbors after years lost following the bloody break-up of Yugoslavia. In the early 2000s, Bosnia appeared set to join the now 28-nation European Union but deep divisions between its Serb, Croat and Muslim communities blocked the political and civil society reforms demanded by Brussels for membership until last year.

Dutch Foreign Minister Bert Koenders, whose country holds the six-month EU rotating presidency, said the bloc was happy to see "Bosnia back on the reform path". "It is urgent to maintain the positive momentum by continuing to implement reforms," Koenders said, stressing that the EU would look carefully at what would likely take some years.

Dragan Covic, the chairman of Bosnia's tripartite presidency, said he submitted the application on behalf of all the people of Bosnia-Herzegovina - Croats, Serbs and Bosniaks. Covic noted that Croatia had joined the bloc in 2013, while Serbia and Montenegro were now making progress towards membership too.

Facing "years of many challenges ahead" Bosnia needed to improve its economy and show that it could be a "credible" member of the EU, he said.

'Need unity in challenging times'

EU foreign affairs head Federica Mogherini and EU Enlargement Commissioner Johannes

Hahn said in a statement that the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s "were one of the most awful pages of European history". The fact that Bosnia now wanted to join the EU, even when the European project was being tested to the limit, showed how important it was to the future, they said in a joint statement. "Today we celebrate another step towards a united and peaceful continent. And we need unity in challenging times," they said. "As some forces across our continent are questioning the very existence of our union, Bosnia and Herzegovina's application shows that the need of a united European continent is still strong among our peoples."

Bosnia has been deeply divided along ethnic lines since the bitter 1992-1995 war following the break-up of Yugoslavia. The Balkan nation's EU bid was stalling for years. Trying to push unblock the process, Brussels in 2014 adopted a new approach to the country, under the leadership of London and Berlin, and focused on reforms to revive the economy instead of difficult constitutional issues. Bosnia's unemployment rate is over 40 percent, among the highest in Europe. Bosnian political analyst Tanja Topic said violent protests in February 2014, when demonstrators set fire to government buildings in anger at the country's social and economic situation, were a "turning point."

"It was then that Brussels realized a bad situation that the country was facing," she said. Submitting the application was "important at least symbolically to mark a break with a dis-



SARAJEVO: A bird flies among Bosnian State flags near the Bosnian State parliament building in Sarajevo, Bosnia. — AP

couraging stagnation period which lasted eight years," Topic added. Bosnia's Dnevni Avaz newspaper warned that there should be "no illusions" over the country's EU aspirations. "Submitting the application for membership does not mean that the doors of Europe are wide open. The hardest work starts as of today," the paper's editorialist Erol Avdovic

wrote. In another development, NATO began talks yesterday with Montenegro over possibly becoming the 29th member of the US-led alliance currently embroiled in a crisis with Russia over Ukraine. NATO formally invited the small Balkan state to join in December, sparking a sharp response from Moscow which warned it would have to respond to what it

sees as encroachment on a region crucial to its security. NATO officials said two days of talks in Brussels will cover the "details of membership including political, military and legal questions, and provide an opportunity for both sides to clarify outstanding issues." The meeting was a "mark of the progress made by Montenegro since regaining its independence. NATO membership will reinforce Montenegro's security and sovereignty," NATO negotiator Thrasyvoulos Terry Stamatopoulos said in a statement. During the accession process, which NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg hopes to conclude this year, Montenegro will have to push through a series of reforms to ensure it meets the democratic and civil society norms expected in the alliance.

Montenegro Prime Minister Milo Djukanovic has strongly backed NATO membership but the pro-Russian opposition has called for his ouster. Djukanovic won a vote of confidence in Parliament last month, insisting the government remained "unconditionally attached" to its goal of NATO membership. Stoltenberg says Montenegro is free to choose NATO membership and that the December announcement was "not directed at anyone." Among the other states of the former Yugoslavia, Croatia and Slovenia have both joined NATO, while many of the former communist states in eastern Europe once ruled from Moscow have also become members. Russia sees this process, backed by a military build-up in response to the Ukraine crisis, as firmly directed against its security. — Agencies

INTO THE MOSH PIT: REPUBLICAN CAMPAIGN TALK GETS NASTIER

WASHINGTON: In 2011, eyebrows shot up when former vice presidential candidate Sarah Palin used a salty acronym - WTF - to mock the policies of President Barack Obama. How quaint. Five years later, Donald Trump has blown right past acronyms in a profanity-laced campaign for the Republican nomination that has seen multiple candidates hurl insults and disparaging remarks at one another and their critics.

In recent days, Trump has publicly lip-synched the F-bomb, blurted out the S-word more than once, hurled an offensive term for coward at rival Ted Cruz and fired a steady string of put-downs at other candidates whom he labels pathetic, liars, losers, nasty, evil and more. While Trump started it, other GOP candidates have jumped right into the rhetorical mosh pit, readily trading versions of "liar, liar" in Saturday night's venomous debate. Cruz has said Trump is "losing it," called out his "Trumpertantrums" and dismissed the billionaire's insults as "hysterical."

Before exiting the race, New Jersey Gov Chris Christie predicted that he could beat Hillary Clinton in a debate, promising, "I'll beat her rear end on that stage," and tormented fellow Republican Marco Rubio as a fragile "boy in the bubble." Even Jeb Bush, whose 90-year-old mother recently complained that he was too polite, belatedly joined in. Bush, a favorite target of Trump's taunts, tweeted back: "You aren't just a loser, you are a liar and a whiner." This, after weeks of calling him a "jerk." It's not that politicians are typically paragons of proper speech and etiquette. They've just tended to keep their name-calling and coarseness off-mic.

Low blow

Now, it's on the podium - and by design. "There's a general taboo-breaking that allows more and more of it to happen faster and faster," says Robert Lane Greene, author of "You Are What You Speak," a book about the politics of language. "The first time somebody does it, eyebrows go up

and people get concerned, but then the next person doing it is less eye-opening." The Democratic nomination contest has been tame in comparison with the Republicans: Hillary Clinton complained of a "low blow" when Bernie Sanders said she was a progressive only on "some days." Sanders, in turn, rejected Clinton's accusation that his campaign had engaged in an "artful smear" by insinuating that she was beholden to Wall Street.

As for the GOP campaign, Trump is playing to voters who have a disdain for anything associated with the establishment, including the whole idea of appearing "presidential," says Norman Ornstein, an American Enterprise Institute scholar who's been watching presidential politics for decades. That makes it hard for Trump's rivals to fight back using traditional tactics.

"If you are trying to be a boxer playing by Marquess of Queensberry rules and you're coming up against a mixed martial arts guy who doesn't even abide by the rules of mixed martial arts, do you sink to that level?" Ornstein asks. "There's no easy way to respond, because if you're trying to show you're different from this vulgar guy, then he's going to beat you up." Greene sees the coarseness of the GOP campaign as evidence that "the contest to become the alpha male in the room has become more obvious this time than in previous elections." That seems to be just fine with the voters who have put Trump at the top of the polls and handed him a victory in New Hampshire's first-in-the-nation primary. About a quarter of Republican voters in New Hampshire said "telling it like it is" was the most important quality to them in selecting a candidate, and two-thirds of those voters went for the potty-mouth guy who tells it like no one else.

"He's real, right?" said Joanne Galvin, an independent voter from Pelham, New Hampshire, explaining her vote for Trump. She dismissed his use of a vulgarity about Cruz at a big rally by saying Trump was simply repeating what someone in the audience had shouted out. —AP



YORKSHIRE: Children trudge through new falling snow as winter weather hits the North York Moors, North Yorkshire, England yesterday. Many parts of Britain are bracing for another week of wintry weather with snow forecast to fall. — AP

SCARRED BY ELECTION FLOP, UK POLLSTERS DIVERGE OVER BREXIT

ONLINE POLLS SUGGEST EU REFERENDUM WILL BE TIGHT RACE

LONDON: If you believe online polls, Britain's looming referendum on whether to quit the European Union will be a tight race that the "out" camp could win. But if you trust telephone polls, the "in" camp should triumph by a wide margin. The divergence has raised fresh questions about whether polling is reliable after the industry suffered a severe blow to its reputation last year when a general election resulted in a Conservative victory that it totally failed to predict. The stakes in the referendum could hardly be higher.

The EU risks losing its second-biggest economy and one of its two main military powers, while the consequences for Britain in terms of trade, growth and influence in the world could be profound. The pollsters are desperate to get it right this time. "I don't think the polling industry can afford to get this one wrong and I think the world will be looking at our performance," said Martin Boon, director of pollster ICM.

The trouble is that pollsters disagree on which method - phone or internet - is producing better results, and independent experts say it is impossible to know for sure. "The honest truth is there's an awful lot of uncertainty surrounding this referendum," said academic John Curtice, Britain's foremost expert on electoral behavior. "If the online polls are correct it's quite close, and we don't know which set of polls is correct, if either." Over the past six months, the two firms that have been conducting phone polls, ComRes and Ipsos MORI, have consistently found the option to stay in the EU was ahead by well over 10 percentage points, and in some polls by more than 20 points.

But online polls, which are being done more frequently by YouGov, ICM and four other firms, have found that the two sides are neck and neck. The largest lead in an online poll was nine points for the out camp, in a YouGov poll published on Feb 4. Curtice has been overseeing a "poll of polls", a rolling average of the six most recent phone and web polls, which provides a summary of the overall referendum polling picture. Last updated on Feb 7 when it showed 51 percent in favor of remaining and 49 percent wishing to withdraw, the poll of polls has never shown a lead for the so-called "Brexit" option.

Engagement gap?

Pollsters pointed out that these were early days, with major uncertainties hanging over key aspects of the referendum. Those include when it will take place, whether some high-profile politicians like London Mayor Boris Johnson will campaign to leave, and what final deal on Britain's membership terms Prime Minister David Cameron will secure from Brussels. Pollsters from both sides of the divide also said they expected there would be some convergence between the two methods as campaigning intensified and

voters became more engaged.

For now, a phone versus online debate is in full swing. One argument put forward in favor of phone polls is that web panels tend to attract more politically engaged respondents, as people must voluntarily participate rather than receiving uninvited calls. This could skew online results towards the out camp, regarded as the more committed group. Tom Mludzinski, director of political polling at ComRes, said it was also difficult for internet polls to reach elderly voters. He saw a risk that those older people who did take part in online surveys were not typical of their age group and potentially more passionate about wanting Brexit.

"Our experimentation has led us to view telephone to be the most reliable for this particular issue," Mludzinski said, adding that for certain other contests online polls were better. But others countered that respondents to phone polls may not be representative of the broader population either, because most people hang up and only a small minority take part. Boon said that in one phone poll conducted by ICM before last year's election, it took 28,000 calls to get 2,000 interviews. He said low response rates were common nowadays. Several pollsters noted that in the run-up to the election, online polls over-estimated support for anti-EU party UKIP while phone polls under-estimated it, which some said reflected how web surveys attracted the more politically engaged. If there is a correlation between the UKIP vote and support for Brexit, as

seems likely at least to some extent, then that could suggest a similar effect in the EU referendum polling. Boon said this was possible but speculative as he had found no evidence of UKIP voters being over-represented in ICM's online referendum polls. "My personal inclination is that the telephone polls are probably a bit too far one way and the online polls are a bit too far the other way, which magnifies the separation between the two," he said.

'An intriguing mystery'

Anthony Wells, director of political and social research at YouGov, said a further source of uncertainty was the fact that online polls were getting a much higher proportion of "don't know" responses than phone polls. "If the difference between the two is how knowledgeable people are and how strongly people feel and how engaged they are in politics, then the 'don't knows' should be the other way round," he said, adding that this was "an intriguing mystery".

One risk is that people could be telling phone interviewers they favor staying in the EU because they don't want to seem uninformed and they perceive that stance to be uncontroversial, a psychological factor that would not affect online polls. "If it is causing more people who don't have an opinion to say that they would vote to stay in the EU then the leads for 'remain' in the phone polls are phantom," Adam Drummond, who manages political polling at Opinium, said in a blog. —Reuters



Pope John Paul II

BBC: POPE JOHN PAUL II HAD INTENSE FRIENDSHIP WITH MARRIED WOMAN

LONDON: Pope John Paul II had a close relationship with a married woman which lasted over 30 years, according to letters which feature in a documentary being shown by the BBC yesterday. While the documentary does not claim he broke his vow of celibacy with Polish-born philosopher and writer Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, the tone of some of his letters to her points to intense feelings between them, the broadcaster says. The two spent camping and skiing holidays together and went on country walks. In one letter from September 1976, he calls her a "gift from God". "My dear Teresa," he writes. "You write about being torn apart, but I could find no answer to these words."

Also in September 1976, he writes: "Already last year I was looking for an answer to these words, 'I belong to you', and finally, before leaving Poland, I found a way - a scapular." A scapular is a piece of cloth worn as part of the habit of monastic orders and the then Cardinal Karol Wojtyla gave Tymieniecka his. "The dimension in which I accept and feel you everywhere in all kinds of situations, when you are close, and when you are far away," he adds. Edward Stourton, the senior BBC journalist who made the documentary, said more than 350 letters were found at the National

Library of Poland, the first dated in 1973 and the last a few months before his death in 2005. "I would say there were more than friends but less than lovers," he said.

"One of the fascinating stories that comes out of these letters is of a struggle to contain what was certainly a very intense relationship which mixed emotions and philosophical ideas in proper Christian boundaries." A close associate of John Paul II said it was "possible" that a married woman had fallen in love with him before he became head of the Roman Catholic Church. "Women fall in love with priests all the time, and it's always a big headache," Father Adam Boniecki, editor-in-chief of the progressive Tygodnik Powszechny Catholic weekly said.

"If she was in love with (Karol) Wojtyla, she was most likely not alone," said Boniecki, himself the author of a detailed account of the pontiff's life. Tymieniecka "translated Karol Wojtyla's books into English, making his work known to US academics... but her translations caused tension between the two", Boniecki said. The BBC has only seen John Paul II's letters, not Tymieniecka's side of the correspondence. She died in 2014. John Paul II was pope from 1978 to 2005 and was made a saint by the Catholic Church after his death. — AFP

PLANE RETURNS TO LONDON AFTER LASER WAS BEAMED INTO COCKPIT

LONDON: A British pilots' union yesterday demanded action after a laser beam dazzled the co-pilot on a New York-bound flight, forcing the Virgin Atlantic jet to turn back shortly following take-off from London's Heathrow Airport. Police responded to "reports of a laser shone in the direction of a commercial flight that had taken off at Heathrow" on Sunday night, a spokesman said. The Airbus A340 carrying 252 passengers and 15 crew from London to New York continued over Ireland before requesting to return, flight radar showed. A crew member told air traffic control there was a "medical issue with one of the pilots after a laser incident after take-off," according to flight radio recording.

A message on Virgin Atlantic's website confirmed flight VS025 had returned to Heathrow "due to a laser beam incident". "Following this incident the First Officer reported feeling unwell," it said. "The decision was taken by both pilots to return to Heathrow rather than continue the transatlantic crossing."

Unions warned that lasers were a growing problem, with 9,000 incidents reported to the UK Civil Aviation Authority between 2009 and 2015. London Heathrow alone recorded 48 incidents in the first half of 2015, followed by Birmingham with 32, Leeds Bradford with 24 and Manchester with 23.

"This is not an isolated incident," said British Airline Pilots' Association (Balpa) general secretary Jim McAuslan. "Aircraft are attacked with lasers at an alarming rate and with lasers with ever-increasing strength. "Shining a laser at an aircraft puts that aircraft, its crew and all the passengers on board at completely unnecessary risk. Modern lasers have the power to blind," he added. A man was arrested earlier this month after a green laser was shone into the cockpits of passing planes over Kent in southeast England, according to police. The eye of a British Airways pilot was damaged in November by a "military" strength laser shone into his cockpit, according to Balpa. — AFP

News

in brief

Punch-trunk love: Chinese elephant crushes vehicles

BEIJING: A heartbroken elephant acted out his thwarted crush on nearly 20 cars near a Chinese nature reserve during a sulk over the Valentine's Day weekend, local media reported yesterday. The spurned pachyderm-angry after losing a fight for a mate, the official Xinhua news agency cited rangers as saying-wandered out of a national park and onto a road in Yunnan province, proceeding to smash and dent visitors' cars in a fit of jealous pique. In a video, Zhusunya, a male Asian elephant whose name translates to "Bamboo Shoot Teeth", pushed and hit a vehicle, provoking shouts of surprise from bystanders. The broken-hearted bull damaged 14 cars during a rampage on Friday and another four over the course of an hour on Sunday, Xinhua said. There was no estimate of damages, but it said visitors would be compensated. As of 2015, fewer than 250 wild Asian elephants were believed to exist in China according to a study by China's National Nature Science Foundation, primarily in Yunnan in the southwest of the country, part of a habitat that extends into neighboring Laos, Vietnam and Myanmar.

Eight family members die as train hits van

KARACHI: A train crashed into a van at a crossing in southern Pakistan, killing eight people and injuring four from the same family, an official said yesterday. In the latest accident to hit the country's run-down railways the northbound Fareed Express hit the van near Allah Dino Sand, a village 170 kilometers north of Karachi. A Sindh provincial health official, Dr Hasan Murad Shah, said the dead and the injured in the accident Sunday night were from the same extended family of farmhands. Railway accidents in Pakistan generally take place at the unmanned crossings. They lack barriers and sometimes signals, leaving commuters to judge for themselves whether it is safe to proceed. At other times vehicles find themselves stuck on the tracks. Train accidents are common in Pakistan, which inherited thousands of miles of track and trains from former colonial power Britain. But the railways have seen decades of decline due to corruption, mismanagement and lack of investment.



KASHMIR: People hold funeral prayers in Ratnipora for a civilian killed during clashes in the village of Kakpora, south of Srinagar. —AFP

Tense Indian Kashmir shuts down after civilian deaths

SRINAGAR: Indian Kashmir largely shut down yesterday as a general strike was called to protest at the killing of two civilians during a gunbattle between troops and suspected separatist militants. Authorities also imposed a curfew in parts of the region's main city of Srinagar, where hundreds of police and paramilitary troops patrolled deserted streets and erected checkpoints to halt any protests. "No one is allowed to leave their home. There are soldiers everywhere," Umar Ahmed, a student, told AFP by phone from his home in Srinagar's old quarter. Businesses closed throughout the region after separatist leaders, placed under house arrest to prevent them leading protests, called for a strike, while Kashmir University cancelled student exams. Authorities also suspended train services in the region to stop protesters gathering. A female university student was killed on Sunday as troops cordoned off Kakpora village, 35 kilometers south of Srinagar, suspecting the presence of militants.

Despite threats, over 100,000 join Pakistan anti-polio drive

KARACHI: More than 100,000 health workers fanned out across Pakistan yesterday, stepping up a drive to eliminate the polio virus this year from one of its last bastions, despite continuing militant threats to vaccination teams. Pakistan accounts for more than 70 percent of the world's cases of polio, a virus that can cause lifelong paralysis and is now endemic in only two countries, Pakistan and Afghanistan. "We have intensified our efforts," said Asher Ali, a project manager in the southern city of Karachi for Rotary International Pakistan, one of the groups involved in the effort. "If we take normal action, it will never be eradicated." Pakistan's polio cases are declining, with just 54 cases of wild polio virus reported last year, down more than 80 percent from 2014, when the country suffered a large spike in cases. The latest immunization push aims to finish vaccinating every child in the country by the end of May. Efforts to eliminate polio in Pakistan have been complicated in recent years, as polio workers have faced attacks by militants who say the health teams are Western spies, or that the vaccines they administer are intended to sterilize children.

Cambodian property tycoon jailed for assault on TV star

PHNOM PENH: A Cambodian court yesterday jailed a property tycoon for a vicious assault on an actress at a Phnom Penh restaurant, an attack that horrified the public after it was caught on CCTV. Footage of the July assault on Ek Socheata, better known by her stage name SaSa, sparked outrage in a country where the rich are often seen to be beyond the reach of the law. Wealthy businessman Sok Bun fled to Singapore after the attack, but returned to Cambodia after calls from strongman Prime Minister Hun Sen to give himself up. He was arrested on arrival at the airport and charged with violent conduct. Sok Bun admitted guilt and begged the public to forgive him. Yesterday a Phnom Penh court sentenced the tycoon to three years in prison. He will serve 10 months in jail while the rest of the sentence is suspended, Judge Sor Lina ruled. The property magnate, who was not present in court due to sickness, was also fined about \$1,500. Violence against women is common in Cambodia but the public exposure of the attack struck a nerve in the country.

AS INDONESIA HUNTS DOWN ISLAMIC STATE, HOMEGROWN JIHADIS REGROUP

JEMAAH ISLAMIYAH ACTIVE AGAIN, RECRUITING AND COLLECTING FUNDS

JAKARTA: As Indonesian counter-terrorism forces hunt down supporters of Islamic State following last month's gun and suicide bomb attack in Jakarta, a quiet resurgence is unfolding of a homegrown radical network with a far deadlier track record here. That group is Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), whose network was until recently thought to have been severely degraded by a crackdown that put hundreds of its leaders and followers behind bars after a series of attacks on Western interests in the 2000s.

But Reuters interviews with two active and one former member of Jemaah Islamiyah have revealed that it is active again, enlisting new supporters, raising funds and sending men to train in war-torn Syria. "JI is currently in preparation level. They have not done any operations but they are recruiting people, strengthening their knowledge, education, network and finances," said Nasir Abas, a former member. "I would not underestimate them."

Jakarta-based security analyst Sidney Jones believes Jemaah Islamiyah's membership is back to around 2,000, where it was before its most notorious attack, a bombing on the resort island of Bali that killed over 200 people, most of them Australians. JI suspects arrested recently were found with caches of arms. Experts say there is no evidence that the emergence of the ultra-violent group Islamic State from the crucible of

conflict in the Middle East has prompted the revival of Jemaah Islamiyah in Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim nation. Jemaah Islamiyah had links in the past to al-Qaeda, which Islamic State sees as a rival, but its resurgence is not being read as intra-jihadi competition playing out in Southeast Asia.

Organized and well funded

Islamic State stamped its presence in the region for the first time last month when local supporters of the group launched a broad-daylight assault at a busy intersection in central Jakarta with explosives and guns. Eight people were killed, four of them the attackers themselves. Police are on alert for further strikes by Islamic State followers, but say these are likely to be far from the scale of the attack on Paris last November because the group lacks organizational strength in Indonesia.

They believe Jemaah Islamiyah's sophisticated training, organization, and funding could pose a bigger security threat. Former Jemaah Islamiyah member Nasir Abas said its ranks still include older men who trained in Afghanistan in the 1980s and returned with combat experience and bomb-making skills. Then there is the more ample funding: Experts estimate that the weapons used in last month's attack on the Indonesian capital cost no more than \$70, a shoestring budget compared to the

\$50,000 spent to launch the Bali bombings back in 2002.

Jemaah Islamiyah once had cells across Southeast Asia, including Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand, with a goal of establishing an Islamic state across the region. Current members say it is no longer transnational and is focused on Indonesia, where its strategy is to win public backing for its ideology and ambition. "We must be peaceful up to a certain point, otherwise how will we win public support?" Abu Rusydan, whom many believe to be its current leader, told Reuters by telephone. "If the Indonesian government can understand our message through words then we don't need to carry out (attacks like) the Bali bombing. When asked why Jemaah Islamiyah was sending men to Syria, Abu Rusydan said it was "to provide humanitarian services".

'In it for the long haul'

Changes to Indonesia's anti-terrorism law, which would give police more power to detain suspects pre-emptively and prohibit Indonesians from joining overseas militant organizations, are under consideration following last month's attack. A Jakarta court last week jailed seven men accused of having links to Islamic State. Among several suspected militants rounded up by police since December were four Jemaah

Islamiyah-linked men who were found with bomb-making materials, guns and books on waging jihad.

But senior security sources say monitoring the activities of Jemaah Islamiyah members is difficult because much of the group went underground after key figures were arrested. One source said that, like Islamic State supporters, Jemaah Islamiyah members use social media such as the messaging app Telegram but tracking them is harder. And, legally, little can be done to stop the recruitment and education campaign underway in parts of Indonesia's most populous island Java.

Abu Rusydan, who spent 3-1/2 years in prison for his role in the Bali bombings, lives openly in Central Java where he leads prayers and sermons at his neighborhood mosque. Taufik Andrie, who works with a deracialisation non-governmental organization in Jakarta, says Jemaah Islamiyah is in for the long haul, recruiting very smart and patient people. "They are very careful about not pushing their members to get involved in small violent actions," he said. Analyst Jones believes they are unlikely to mount a major attack any time soon as it could lose them community support. "They believe deeply they have to be ready ... once the political situation becomes more amenable to make a push for an Islamic state," she said. —Reuters



NEW DELHI: A student makes her speech as Jawaharlal Nehru University students gather for a protest against the arrest of a student union leader in New Delhi, India yesterday. —AP

INDIAN STUDENTS PROTEST IN THOUSANDS; GOVERNMENT CRACKS DOWN ON DISSENT

MINISTERS SLAM 'ANTI-INDIA' BEHAVIOR BY STUDENTS

NEW DELHI: India's biggest nationwide student protests in a quarter of a century spread across campuses yesterday after the arrest of a student accused of sedition, in the latest battle with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government over freedom of expression. Outrage over the arrest of the left-wing student leader, who had organized a rally to mark the anniversary of the execution of a Kashmiri separatist, has led to demonstrations in at least 18 universities. In the largest protest, thousands of students and academics at New Delhi's prestigious Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) boycotted classes and erected barricades for a fourth day in an escalating conflict with the authorities.

"The government does not want students to have a say," said Rahila Parween, vice-president of the Delhi unit of the All India Students' Federation, a left-wing student union. "It wants to dictate what students think, understand and say." The incident marks another flare-up in an ideological confrontation between Modi's nationalist government and left-wing and liberal groups that is prompting critics to compare it with Indira Gandhi's imposition of a state of emergency in the 1970s to crush dissent. Members of Modi's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) accused the student leader, Kanhaiya Kumar, of "anti-India" sentiment. One BJP lawmaker said the university, which has a tradition of left-wing politics, should be shut down.

"I can assure you that every action we take is to protect our country. Any anti-India activity will not be tolerated," BJP President Amit Shah, one of Modi's closest allies, said at party headquarters. Protests spread when Kumar was arrested last week for sedition, after giving a speech questioning the hanging in 2013 of Mohammad Afzal Guru over his role in the 2001 attack on parliament. Activists have long questioned Guru's conviction, and India's Supreme Court has described the evidence against him as circumstantial. Scuffles erupted outside a New Delhi courthouse between lawyers and students where Kumar, 28, was to appear before a judge yesterday.

Anti-India sentiment

A leader of the student group that is aligned with the BJP said freedom of expression should not be misused to justify acts that could harm the country. "You cannot be an Indian if you celebrate the death anniversary of a terrorist," said Saurabh Sharma, joint secretary of the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (All India Student Council). Home Minister Rajnath Singh has, meanwhile, faced ridicule for citing a fake tweet to say that the JNU demonstration had been backed by Hafiz Saeed, a Pakistani militant accused by India of being behind the 2008 attack on Mumbai in which 166 people died. Delhi police circulated the fake tweet at the weekend in a warning to students "not to get carried away by such seditious and anti-national rhetoric." A spokesman did not answer calls to his mobile phone yesterday seeking comment.

"The crackdown signals an utter lack of judgment in the government, where ministers manage to manufacture a national crisis out of what were always, at best, minor affectations in student politics," Pratap Bhanu Mehta, a leading political commentator, wrote in the Indian Express newspaper. Since Modi rose to power in May 2014, people in India have been attacked by Hindus enraged at reports of cows - sacred in their religion - being slaughtered, smuggled or consumed. There has been a series of attacks on churches, while writers have returned awards in protest over the government's silence over a series of murders of secular scholars.

At least 18 university campuses witnessed protests yesterday. Students in the eastern city of Kolkata burnt an effigy of Modi and left-wing groups in the neighboring state of Odisha planned state-wide demonstrations. Analysts said the student protests were the most widespread in India since the self-immolation of a young Indian in 1990 after the government ruled in favor of providing affirmative action to the lower castes in higher education. "We are witnessing liberal India, particularly young people who are usually more idealistic, fighting back," said Satish Misra, a political analyst at the Observer Research Foundation. —Reuters

DAY OF THE SHINING STAR

February 16 is the birthday of Chairman Kim Jong Il of the National Defense Commission of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. It was designated as the Day of the Shining Star in 2012. The Shining Star, or Kwangmyongsong in Korean, is the byname of Kim Jong Il. Since his birth, he was called the Shining Star. With a lofty ambition to make Korea a prosperous people's country true to President Kim Il Sung's noble intention, he actively assisted him in handling the affairs of the Workers' Party, the state and the People's Army and made a lot of achievements worthy of special note in history.

His outstanding leadership skills were fully displayed by the close of the last century. The demise of President Kim Il Sung, the collapse of the Eastern European socialist countries, the allied imperialist forces' desperate moves against the DPRK to put an end to socialism, catastrophic natural disasters that hit the country for several consecutive years and the ensuing economic difficulties and food scarcity-the country was in dire straits.

However, Kim Jong Il broke through the difficulties with unparalleled courage and will. With clairvoyant wisdom and extraordinary vision he advanced an original theory that the army is precisely the Party, the state and the people and, on this basis, held higher the banner of Songun. He then made ceaseless inspections of army units and other relevant sectors. Under his leadership the People's Army grew up into an invincible army and the country built up its military strength in every way, foiling the imperialists' adventurous military maneuvers.

Kim Jong Il led his people to overcome economic difficulties and set up a firm springboard for the building of a thriving nation. Their struggle to this end started with the successful launch of Kwangmyongsong 1, the DPRK's first test satellite, in August 1998. Thanks to Kim Jong Il's broad magnanimity of embracing the whole nation and deep love for compatriots, the inter-Korean summit meeting was arranged for the first time in June 2000, 55 years after the division of the nation and adopted the June 15 Joint Declaration, a milestone for Korea's reunification.

The greatest of his achievements was that he developed the DPRK into a nuclear state and a power with capabilities of manufacturing, launching and controlling artificial satellite. The successful launch of Kwangmyongsong 3-2, the first applications satellite of the DPRK, on December 12, 2012 was a brilliant fruition of his achievement and an expression of the greatest respect of the Korean people for him. It is worth mentioning that the artificial satellites of the DPRK are named after his byname. Together with the Day of the Shining Star, Kim Jong Il's life and achievements will be engraved in the minds of the Korean people and progressive mankind.

- Material from the Embassy of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in Kuwait



PAKISTAN'S UNIVERSITY REOPENS AFTER ATTACK

PESHAWAR: The university in northwest Pakistan where Taliban gunmen killed at least 20 people last month reopened for classes yesterday with teachers - but not students - allowed to carry weapons. Pakistani Taliban militants have threatened more assaults on schools and universities since the Jan. 20 attack on Bacha Khan University in Charsadda, fueling a growing sense of insecurity in the country.

The attack had reminded Pakistanis of the horrors that took place a little over a year earlier, when militants massacred 134 pupils at an army school just 19 miles away, in Peshawar, the main city in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. Before Monday's reopening the university took extra security measures, installing new CCTV cameras, hiring more armed guards, and raising the height of boundary walls, vice chancellor Fazal Rahim Marwat said.

The university also decided that teachers could

continue to carry their own licensed weapons as long as they do not display them in classrooms, Marwat said. A chemistry professor who was killed during last month's assault had been lauded as a hero for firing back at the attackers. But Marwat said the school decided to reject a request from some teachers to issue them firearms. "After taking whatever security measures were possible for protection of students and faculty members, we opened the university today for classes," Marwat said.

Students who owned weapons had to submit them at the entrance of the campus, he said. Firearms are easily available in northwest Pakistan, and gun ownership is ingrained in the culture of Pashtun tribes of the region. Many of the returning students arrived at the campus with their parents and relatives, who waited while they went to classes. Several, however, were still too traumatized to

attend school or were made to stay home by scared parents. "I know the university has been opened today, but my parents didn't allow me to go today," said student Ihsanullah Khan. "I am not afraid and will definitely join my friends very soon."

Vice chancellor Marwat said the university had arranged counseling sessions for students and for recreational trips elsewhere in the country. The Pakistani army said the attack on the university was masterminded by Umar Mansoor, a Pakistani Taliban militant based in Afghanistan, who was also blamed for the Peshawar school massacre. The Pakistani Taliban is fighting to topple the government and install a strict interpretation of Islamic law. Yesterday, an IED blast in Pakistan's volatile South Waziristan region on the border with Afghanistan left one paramilitary soldier dead and three injured. —Reuters

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 Emirates Juice Factory
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 Qatar

You will be responsible for all Finance functions including but not limited to controlling, managing, authorizing, evaluating and implementing Corporate Finance decisions in areas covering revenue, receivable, payable, cash/banking, payroll, general ledger and taxation including other local regulations, as well as, assisting the commercial team in strategic planning through evaluation of investment options.

Apply Now **JB3448849**



Students of St Scholastica's College gesture the "number one" sign as they dance to take part in the "One Billion Rising" campaign in Manila yesterday. The campaign, the fifth to be held since 2012, calls for the end of all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls. The movement refers to UN statistics that one in three women, about one billion globally, will be raped or beaten in their lifetime. —AFP

FOUR US REPORTERS ARRESTED IN BAHRAIN

DUBAI: Bahrain has arrested four American journalists covering the anniversary of its 2011 uprising, witnesses said yesterday. Bahraini police said it detained four Americans for providing "false information that they were tourists" while also alleging one took part in an attack on its officers. The US Embassy in Manama said in a statement yesterday it was "aware of the arrest of four US citizens in Bahrain" on Sunday but that it could not discuss the case due to privacy concerns.

The identities of the journalists and whether they worked for a specific media outlet was not immediately clear. Bahraini police said one was a woman and three were men. Photographs of the reporters working in Sitra,

a largely Shiite community south of the capital that has seen repeated protests, circulated on social media, including one image of a woman being filmed while speaking to a masked protester.

On Sunday, police arrested a photographer working with the group, the two witnesses said. Later that night, police surrounded the area with checkpoints and arrested the other three, the witnesses said. The witnesses spoke to AP on condition of anonymity for fear of being arrested. An Interior Ministry statement alleged one of the four journalists "was wearing a mask and participating in attacks on police alongside other rioters in Sitra." The statement also said the journalists entered the

country between Thursday and Friday on tourist visas.

"At least some of the arrestees were in the country as members of the international media but had not registered with the concerned authority and were involved in illegal activities," the statement said, without elaborating on what those activities were. Bahrain requires international journalists to obtain special media visas before entering Bahrain to work. The island kingdom allows citizens of many countries, including the US, to get a tourist visa on arrival. Obtaining a media visa takes several days if granted, and activists say Bahrain has denied media visas for some journalists since the 2011 protests.

A statement on the state-run Bahrain News Agency said the journalists had "been afforded full legal rights in line with the kingdom's procedures and constitution while investigations continue." Bahraini officials did not respond to questions from the AP about the arrests. The 2011 protests in Bahrain, which is home to the US Navy's 5th Fleet, were the largest of the Arab Spring wave of demonstrations to rock the Gulf Arab states. They were driven by the country's Shiite majority, who demanded greater political rights.

But while changes swept across the region, Bahrain's own protests found themselves put down after Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates sent in reinforcements. Bahrain

blamed regional Shiite power Iran for stirring up the demonstrations, though a government-sponsored investigation into the unrest said there wasn't "a discernable link" between the protests and the Islamic Republic based on the information the government gave them.

Bahrain's government committed to a number of reforms in the wake of the 2011 demonstrations, but low-level unrest continues, particularly in Shiite communities. Small groups of activists frequently clash with riot police and bombs occasionally target security forces. Hundreds of Bahraini youths protested Sunday on the fifth anniversary of the uprising. — AP

GOVT DENIES ANY PLAN TO CUT WAGES AMID...

Continued from Page 1

In a related development, HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah yesterday received the head of the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce Ali Al-Ghanem, who said they discussed the current economic situation in the wake of the sharp decline in oil prices. He said among the topics raised was how to find alternatives for oil revenues.

Separately, the court of appeals yesterday overturned a two-year jail sentence and a large fine against former minister of electricity and water Ahmad Al-Jassar and 15 current and former senior ministry officials, and acquitted them. The lower court had passed the sentence after convicting the officials of squandering public funds by approving a multi-million contract in 2007 that turned out to be bad for the ministry. After the lower court passed the verdict, Jassar submitted his resignation and later quit the Cabinet, barely a few months after taking up the post. At the time of approval of the contract, Jassar was a top official in the ministry.

Minister of Social Affairs and Labor Hind Al-Subaih meanwhile said yesterday that the ministry will shortly issue a number of decisions that would greatly limit the

number of expatriate marginal workers. These decisions will be linked to the mechanism of recruiting foreign laborers from abroad and the duration of their stay in the country, the minister said.

Subaih said a decision will be issued to ban residency transfers from cooperatives, and transfers will be limited to other cooperatives just like the agriculture, fishing, shepherding and industry sectors. She said the plan to halt transfer from cooperatives came after statistics showed large numbers of workers have transferred from co-ops to the private sector, adding that 40 percent of corruption has been eradicated from the cooperatives sector.

"We will continue to organize the labor market and limit the influx of marginal labor and concentrate on trained technical labor," Subaih said, warning inspection campaigns will continue in order to arrest violating workers in cooperation with the interior ministry. Subaih denied any injustice or inequity against expats who are deported from the country, saying deportation is for violating the labor law, and "despite this, we are keen on giving them all their rights". She said the goal is to organize the labor market and punish violators, be they workers, employers or even colluding officials.

'SILK ROAD' TRAIN IN TEHRAN

Continued from Page 1

The journey was 30 days shorter than the sea voyage from Shanghai to the Iranian port of Bandar Abbas, according to Aqayi. The railway will not stop in Tehran "as we are planning to extend the railway to Europe in future," generating more income for Iran from passing trains, he added. The train will leave every month and the frequency will be increased if necessary, Aqayi said. The train is run by private companies using existing routes, Iranian railway company spokesman Sadeq Sakari told AFP.

According to Iranian media, more than a third of Iran's foreign trade is with China, which is Tehran's top customer for oil exports.

Chinese President Xi Jinping and Iranian President Hassan Rouhani agreed last month to build economic ties worth up to \$600 billion within the next 10 years. It came during a visit to Iran by Xi, the first by a Chinese president in 14 years, and just days after sanctions against Tehran were lifted under a historic nuclear deal with world powers.

Xi's signature foreign policy initiative known as "One Belt One Road" is touted as a revival of ancient Silk Road trade routes. The Silk Road is an ancient network of commercial land and sea routes, named for the lucrative Chinese silk trade, that were central to business across the Asian continent connecting China to the Mediterranean Sea. — AFP

SALEH HAILS TIES WITH IAEA

Continued from Page 1

IAEA Director General Yukia Amano said IAEA's efforts were at the forefront of the world's moves to develop knowledge and modern technology and provide valuable services to member states through research programs and activities. The IAEA offers special programs in the fields of food, agriculture, human health and environmental managements as

well as nuclear applications and sciences with the main goal of eradicating poverty, protecting human health, saving power and water and easing climate change effects, he said.

The nuclear watchdog is currently seeking to develop its labs to cope with modern advancements, he said, thanking Kuwait for its recent donation of €3 million, along with its regular contributions to the IAEA's technical cooperation fund. — KUNA



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Focus

RUSSIA GETS COLD;
SOVIET NEIGHBORS
CATCH PNEUMONIA

By OlzhasAuyezov and Andrei Makhovsky

Before he left Russia at the end of 2014, Sayidhujaz Rizoyev used to make up to \$40 a day as a construction worker. Then his boss decided not to renew his contract, and he returned home to ex-Soviet Tajikistan. Now the 31-year-old father of one earns about \$6-7 a day selling small items such as batteries in the capital Dushanbe. "So far, this has been enough to make ends meet," said Rizoyev.

The collapse in world oil prices to 12-year lows has crippled the economy of Russia, which shrank last year by nearly 4 percent, while its rouble currency has lost almost 60 percent of its value against the dollar since mid-2014. The small handful of other former Soviet states that also export oil have also been hit: police in Azerbaijan, which posted some of the fastest economic growth rates in the world a decade ago during an oil boom, have lately had to use force to break up protests as growth has stalled.

But for ordinary civilians, the economic damage may be severest of all in the outposts of the former Soviet Union that have no energy resources of their own to sell, stayed poor while Russia grew richer and now lack stashes of accumulated petrodollars to cushion the impact. The oil price crash has been felt in countries as far-flung as Tajikistan, Moldova, Belarus and Armenia. Kyrgyzstan's som currency dropped 22.4 percent against the dollar. Georgia's economic growth nearly halved last year.

For many of the small countries at the fringes of the old Soviet empire, the main export has been citizens, who toil abroad mainly in Russia as informal labourers. Such workers have lost jobs or seen the remittances they send home drop in value.

Political Tensions

A tiny country in central Asia on the old Soviet frontier with Afghanistan, Tajikistan relies on remittances from workers abroad for about 45 percent of its gross domestic product, according to the International Monetary Fund. Migrant workers in Russia often have put up with sordid living conditions, racial discrimination and shakedowns by officials, but it is worth it because they earn more money than would be possible at home.

That calculation is now changing. Abduzohir Sotov said he had been working in Russia but came home because of the slowdown in the Russian economy. "It no longer makes sense," he said. Tajikistan's somoni currency lost 24 percent of its value against the dollar last year according to the official exchange rate, and more on the cash market. Central bank reserves cover only 1.7 months of imports, a precariously low level by international standards.

Economic woes translate into concerns about political stability in countries that mostly failed to build democracies after the Soviet Union split up. Tajikistan is still run by its Soviet-era Communist boss, President Imomali Rakhmon, whose allies plan to hold a referendum that will allow him to run for president for an unlimited number of terms. He faced a coup attempt last September led by his former deputy defence minister, who then died in a gun battle along with 37 of his supporters. Such political tensions "are aggravated by the uncertain economic outlook," said Deirdre Tynan, Central Asia project director at the International Crisis Group (ICG) think tank.

Farm Machinery

Nearly 4,500 km away in Belarus, on the edge of the European Union, similar economic hardship is being felt. The economy of the country, Russia's closest ally, shrank about 4 percent last year while its currency lost nearly half its value against the dollar. In the first 11 months of 2015, Belarus sent exports to Russia worth \$3 billion, compared to \$3.8 billion over the same period the year before. Production of combine harvesters, traditionally sold to Russian farmers, was down 80 percent last year.

"The state, companies, state enterprises have some accumulated capital, which for now allows them to postpone the descent into crisis. But the reserves won't last for long," said Yaroslav Romanchuk, head of the Mizes analytical centre. "The number of bankruptcies this year will at some point start to increase exponentially." A Belarusian businessman, who spoke on condition of anonymity in a country where foreign media are treated with suspicion, said the crisis in Russia was already helping push down wages, which would affect consumer spending.

"For me, the moment of truth came when I saw a job ad a few days ago. A serious company was looking for a reasonably competent specialist and offered a (monthly) salary of \$200," said the businessman. "Just two or three years ago we could not find a secretary for \$500," he said. —Reuters

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BIGGER ROLE FOR RUSSIA STRATEGISTS IN SYRIA

By Mariam Karouny

While Russian fighter planes pound rebel positions on the battlefield in Syria, Russian military strategists are playing a far more subtle role in support of President Bashar Al-Assad. Several sources - on both sides of the battle lines - have told Reuters in interviews conducted over the past two months that Russian advisers have been involved in drawing up plans to secure Damascus, Assad's seat of power. Those interviewed by Reuters, including non-Syrian military officials fighting alongside Assad's forces, said Russia's plans to buttress Damascus involve weakening rebel forces in the south of the country between the capital and Jordan. The aim is to reduce the rebels' chances of launching a major offensive.

The Russian Defence Ministry did not respond to written questions for this article. Russia has said it has no ground troops in Syria beyond those protecting its bases. Russia does concede it has trainers and advisers on the ground, but only in an educational and advisory capacity. Russia's influence in military planning is already evident, rebel fighters and the non-Syrian military officials say.

They say Russian experts played a major role in a Syrian army offensive at the turn of the year in the western coastal province of Latakia, home to the Alawite population of which Assad is part. That offensive helped pave the way for the Syrian army to push towards the Turkish border, cutting the insurgents' supply lines from Turkey.

Degrees of Involvement

The extent of Russian involvement on the battlefield is disputed, however. Two military officials, neither of them Syrian but both fighting alongside the Syrian army, said

Russian officers and military experts had helped in the planning and directed the offensive in Latakia. According to their account, the Russians were in charge of artillery fire and provided artillery cover, not just air strikes. "The coast battle was theirs," said one of the sources.

A Syrian military source, speaking on condition of anonymity to Reuters in Damascus last week, said the Russians were partners, but he denied they had a leadership role. "The Russian role in participation, in planning and executing military operations is being reinforced all the time. It is participation, not management," said the source. "The Russians take part in the ground and air planning, but at the end, the Syrian officers are the ones who know the land, the fronts, the geography better."

Insurgents interviewed by Reuters, including a local commander from the Ahrar al-Sham group, also said that Russian troops took part in the fighting. Moscow says that its main goal in Syria is to target headline Islamist groups which pose a global threat, including to Russia. Islamic State commander Abu Omar al-Shishani is a Chechen. He is believed to be leading thousands of fighters most of them from Chechnya and Central Asia.

Ceasefires

Pro-government sources say the Russian role has expanded to include facilitating local ceasefires in rebel-held areas around Damascus, with the aim of creating a secure buffer around the capital. Syrian Minister of National Reconciliation Ali Haidar described the process as purely Syrian even if there had at times been Russian help. "The truth is that since the presence of the Russians on Syrian land, they can play the role of mediator in some areas," he said at his offices in Damascus. "The Russians make contact

(with militants) when they can, of course - in Douma and other areas," he said, in reference to an area east of Damascus.

"Sometimes it is the militants who request mediation by the Russians," he said. Those wishing to relocate wanted guarantees of safe passage to rebel strongholds, and those wishing to stay wanted to be sure they wouldn't be killed later on, he said. According to the non-Syrian sources interviewed by Reuters, Russian advisers orchestrated two deals in which headline Islamist fighters were evacuated from the south towards areas their groups control in the northern and central provinces.

One of the non-Syrian military sources said the Russians worked "in the shadows" to facilitate the ceasefire deals. In some cases the Russians operated as guarantors for the deals. Dozens of cars left southern towns of Syria in December carrying fighters from Nusra Front with their families to the northern province of Idlib which is under control of an alliance of rebels including Nusra Front. Weeks later a convoy left Hajar al-Aswad and Yarmouk camp areas near Damascus carrying fighters and families from Islamic State to the group's stronghold of Raqqa.

A second source who was informed of the deals said the fighters were given safe passage. The aim was to empty these areas of headline Islamists so clearing the way for the government to strike deals with the remaining rebels. "The Russians want all the battles to be focused in the north, they want the south and Damascus and the coastal line all neutralized. Ultimately they are working towards achieving a wider political solution," said the source. The Syrian government and its allies accuse the opposition and the insurgents of blocking efforts to end the fighting and reach a political deal. —Reuters

CRIMEA TATARS RESIST RUSSIAN RULE

By Nataliya Vasilyeva

Elnara Asanova lives alone with her four small children because her husband, an ethnic Tatar, is in jail. Last April, when she was seven months pregnant, police grabbed him from the streets of their village because he had taken part in a Tatar protest against Russian annexation of Crimea. She is not allowed to visit him, so she travels to every court hearing. Once she took 7-month-old Mustafa, so her husband could glimpse the child as he was led from the police van to the courtroom. The court has refused to release him on bail, describing him as a flight risk. "They say he will run away. But where to?" said Elnara, a meek young woman. She points to her children. "We live in the country. You can't survive here without a husband." Two years after Russia seized Crimea from Ukraine, President Vladimir Putin touted the move as a historic achievement, looking on with a satisfied smile from countless billboards across the peninsula. However, overwhelming opposition from the Muslim Tatar ethnic minority puts a crack in this picture of unanimous support, as evidenced in interviews with more than two dozen Tatars across Crimea. And the resistance appears to be growing.

Many described the intimidation of community leaders, the closure of Tatar language classes and a general atmosphere of mistrust of Tatar residents. The AP conducted some interviews at other people's homes because of worries about police surveillance. The majority of the people in Crimea are ethnic Russian and support Russia's annexation. The nearly 300,000 Crimean Tatars, who make up less than 15 percent of the population, are Muslims, although largely secular. Community leaders say repression has left young people fleeing, risking their radicalization along the lines of the restive North Caucasus, a patchwork of predominantly Muslim republics in southern Russia. Tatar activists are already fighting back. Before Russia annexed Crimea, Lenur Islyamov was a businessman with family and assets in Moscow. Last fall, he traded his business suits for military-style clothing to lead a resistance movement that imposed a blockade on the peninsula in retaliation for Russia's persecution of the Tatars.

In September, the activists began stopping goods from crossing into Crimea. Three months later, the Ukrainian government stepped in and

banned all trade. "Everyone, including Ukraine, left us with no other choice," said Islyamov, whose assets in Moscow and Crimea have been seized. "Most of us don't want to go to war - we want to make sandwiches, take our children to school, go shopping - but we've been forced to do this." Deliberate power outages have also become widespread. In November, unknown attackers blew up electricity pylons in Ukraine and tied Crimean Tatar flags to them, leaving 2 million people without heating. No one claimed responsibility for the explosions, but Tatar activists were suspected. Tatars in Crimea cheered the power cuts, saying the blackout returned the world's attention to the situation in Crimea.

Hardships

Muzafar Fukala, community leader of the village of Voinka, said losing light was "nothing" compared to the hardships Tatars had survived in the past. "I'm prepared to live in a complete blackout until this scum leaves," he said, referring to supporters of the annexation. To avoid police harass-

ment, Fukala spoke to the AP in the home of friends in a neighboring village.

Both the border blockade and the power outages have put a big hole in the Kremlin budget at a time when plummeting oil prices have left Moscow with little to spare on shoring up its newest acquisition. Russia had to fly in supplies and thousands of generators, and speed up the construction of underwater power lines.

Islyamov is also working to set up a "battalion" of 500 Tatar activists to be stationed just a few miles from the border. Tatar activists in military fatigues, some of them carrying automatic weapons, now stand in the winter cold by the roadside of their tent camp. They used to search cars crossing into Crimea and back until blockade leaders announced that Ukrainian border guards and customs officials would now do so instead.

In November, Chechen intelligence officers called on Islyamov's 17-year-old son in Moscow, where he studied, and threatened him unless he denounced his father publicly. Several hours later, Islyamov arranged for his son to leave Russia.

Officials in Crimea in charge of ethnic minorities did not respond to the AP's requests seeking interviews and comment. Officials in the Crimean government have accused Tatar leaders who opposed the annexation of betraying the interests of the Tatars and being agents of Ukraine. Under Russian law, people can be punished for calling for the return of Crimea to Ukraine.

Repression

The Crimean Tatars have a long history of repression. In May 1944, all 200,000 Tatars, who then made up a third of Crimea's population, were put on trains and shipped to Central Asia in the space of three days. Thousands died during the grueling journey or starved to death in the barren steppes upon arrival. Unlike other peoples deported during World War II by Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin, the Tatars were not allowed to return to their native land until the 1980s.

A visit to a Tatar home today opens a window to a parallel world far from the throngs of flag-waving Russians who gave Putin a Hollywood star reception on the streets of the Black Sea port of Sevastopol on his visit last summer. Tatars here all watch ATR, a Crimean Tatar channel owned by Islyamov, which was banished from Crimea and now broadcasts from exile in mainland Ukraine. They talk of "better times" and a future "victory," alluding to the eventual return of Crimea to Ukraine. In almost equal measure, Crimean Tatars feel betrayed by Kiev, after Ukrainian troops stationed on the peninsula surrendered to Russian forces in February 2014 without putting up any resistance. Later on, most of these troops took Russian citizenship and joined the Russian armed forces.

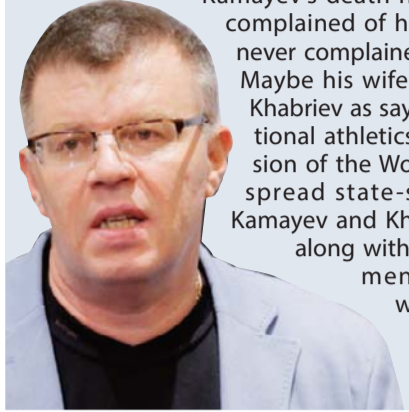
Left on their own, the Tatars at first made a foray into the new Crimean government. Islyamov, who had Russian citizenship, was dispatched in April 2014 by the Mejlis, the Tatars' self-governing body, to become a deputy prime minister. Less than two months later, he resigned. He said Russian leaders were not interested in Tatar problems and every conversation turned into a dispute about Russian supremacy. "We saw that Ukraine had ditched us, that it was inevitable that Russia was going to swallow Crimea and the global community was doing nothing," he said. —AP



In this photo taken Jan 23, 2016, a Crimean tatar activist stands guard at concrete blocks at a checkpoint in the village of Chonhar in the Kherson region in southern Ukraine close to the de-facto border with Crimea. —AP

EX-RUSSIAN ANTI-DOPING CHIEF KAMAYEV DEAD

MOSCOW: The former executive director of Russia's anti-doping agency (RUSADA) Nikita Kamayev has died two months after resigning his post, the Tass news agency reported on Sunday. The report, citing the former general director of the scandal-hit agency Ramil Khabriev, said it appeared Kamayev's death had been caused by a heart attack. "He complained of heart ache after a skiing session. He has never complained about heart problems, at least to me. Maybe his wife knew about such problems," it quoted Khabriev as saying. Russia was suspended from international athletics last November after a special commission of the World Anti-Doping Agency exposed widespread state-sponsored cheating and corruption. Kamayev and Khabriev stood down from their positions along with the rest of the senior RUSADA management in mid-December as Russia began working on lifting the ban in time for its athletes to compete at the Rio de Janeiro Olympics in August. —Reuters



MAN UTD TO NAME STAND AFTER BOBBY CHARLTON

LONDON: England great Bobby Charlton is to have the South Stand at Manchester United's Old Trafford stadium named after him, 60 years on from his debut for the club. The Premier League side said on Monday that the formal naming would take place at the home game against Everton on April 2. Charlton, a United director, joined the club as an apprentice in 1953 and made his debut in October 1956. The 1966 World Cup winner made 758 appearances for the club, scoring a record 249 goals. "Bobby is quite simply, the most iconic figure in English football history. A player, a diplomat, a gentleman and a tireless worker for charity, he represents everything that is good about football and Manchester United," said executive vice-chairman Ed Woodward in a statement. The South Stand contains the only original part of the 1910 stadium infrastructure, as well as the directors' box and old players' changing rooms. The North Stand was named after the club's most successful manager Alex Ferguson in 2011 to mark his 25 years in charge. A statue of the 'United Trinity' of Charlton, George Best and Denis Law—the players who helped United become the first English club to win the European Cup in 1968 — already stands outside Old Trafford. —Reuters

DEFAR RUNS YEAR'S FASTEST 3,000M

BOSTON: Ethiopian two-time Olympic champion Meseret Defar ran the year's fastest 3,000 metres as she returned to the track for the first time in more than two years at the Boston indoor grand prix on Sunday. The 2004 and 2012 Olympic 5,000 metres gold medallist romped to victory in 8 minutes, 30.83 seconds in her first race since 2013. The birth of her daughter in 2014 and injuries in 2015 had kept her off the track. "I didn't have confidence after a long break, didn't know my shape, but running 8:30 in my first race - I'm so happy," said the 32-year-old. Six other 2016 bests were set in the meeting including New Zealander Nick Willis' 3:53.27 victory in the mile and 19-year-old Ethiopian Dawit Seyaum's 4:01.86 in the women's 1,500 metres. American Kurt Roberts upped the 2016 shot put best to 21.57 metres and compatriot Natasha Hastings delivered another top mark in the women's 300 metres, 36.25 seconds. —Reuters



RETURN OF IMURA BOOSTS JAPAN'S SYNCHRO HOPES

TOKYO: The return of Masayo Imura, known as the "mother" of Japanese synchronised swimming, has bolstered the country's hopes ahead of this year's Olympic Games to such an extent the team will be considered "failures" if they return from Rio without a medal. Japan won bronze when the team event was added to the programme at the 1996 Atlanta Olympics, and took silver in Sydney and in Athens four years later. They also won duet bronze from 1984 to 1992 and silver in 2000 and 2004. At the Beijing Games in 2008, Japan took bronze in the duet but failed to



Masayo Imura

medal in the team event, while China, under Imura's guidance, finished third. The Chinese then went one better in London with silver while Japan failed to make the podium in either category. Imura's role in China's success prompted scathing criticism

on social media for her "betrayal" of her homeland. However, Imura returned home to take over as head coach in 2014 and the switch reaped immediate dividends. The Japanese took bronze at the World Championships in both team and duet events last year—success which captain Yukiko Inui said had jacked up expectations for Rio.

"Now we're in a position where if we don't take a medal, we've failed," Inui told reporters poolside after a recent practice session.

"So we're under a lot of pressure. The Olympics will be even tougher." To prepare for Olympic preliminaries in Rio this March, the team—which usually train and compete indoors—underwent rigorous training in Guam to acclimatise to an outdoor pool for Rio.

"We practiced until we were satisfied," said Imura, who is known for her hard training methods. "The swimmers had excuses written all over their faces: 'the wind is too strong' or 'the rain is so heavy we can't open our eyes' or 'the wind blew too suddenly'. Many excuses." Imura's tough approach was on full display at the training session, where she paced poolside as the team swam and flipped in a routine based loosely on Japanese myths, occasionally shouting "No! You're doing it all wrong!" While some athletes and visitors planning to come to the Olympics have expressed concern about Zika, a virus linked to birth defects in newborns, the Japanese swimmers did not seem overly concerned.

"Synchronised swimming athletes don't have the time to go out and relax in places like parks," Imura said, though she added the team is getting information from Brazil on potential measures such as mosquito repellent.

Team captain Inui said the group was talking more about their routines and practice than Zika. "We'll leave the worrying to our coaches and focus on what we do best," she added. — Reuters



CRANS MONTANA: Mikaela Shiffrin, of the United States, center, winner of an alpine ski, women's World Cup slalom, poses on the podium with second placed France's Nastasia Noens, left, and third placed Canada's Marie-Michele Gagnon, in Crans Montana, Switzerland, yesterday. — AP

SHIFFRIN WINS WC SLALOM RACE AFTER 2 MONTHS OUT

CRANS-MONTANA: Mikaela Shiffrin is definitely back. Two perfect runs saw the American win a women's World Cup slalom by almost a half-second yesterday in her first race after two months out with injury.

Crossing the line smiling after her second run, Shiffrin turned to look at the timings board then put her head in her hands at the realization she had won. "I came in blind a little bit," she said. "I knew my training skiing was some of the best I was doing but I just wasn't sure. It was kind of close your eyes and go, see what happens at the end of the run."

"I didn't know what to expect from the rest of the girls. I was just watching on television and wasn't sure of the pace. I could see it but it's different from being there." It was Shiffrin's first race since tearing a ligament in her right knee in December. The Olympic and world slalom champion started skiing again only two weeks ago.

Shiffrin won two slaloms in Aspen,

Colorado, and both by big margins, before the training mishap in Sweden. She has won her last six slaloms stretching back to last season.

This was Shiffrin's 18th win on the circuit, moving her level with Tamara McKinney for the second-most wins by an American woman. She turns 21 next month. Leading after the first run, Shiffrin finished 0.45 seconds faster than Nastasia Noens of France and 0.50 ahead of Marie-Michele Gagnon of Canada as several of her rivals struggled in difficult conditions.

Three of the top 10 after the first run did not finish: Michelle Gisin, Petra Vlhova and Erin Mielzynski. Lila Lapanja of the United States also skied out. "That was a tough race, tough for all the girls," Shiffrin said. "Some of the girls had really bad visibility. I had OK visibility, I was struggling to see but at least I could see a bit. I'm relieved with the luck of having better visibility."

"I was at the top, looking at the start and I

was thinking, 'Oh it doesn't look too bad.' Then I closed my eyes for about a minute, visualizing the course, and then when I opened them again I was like, 'Hey, where did the slope go?'"

World Cup slalom leader Frida Hansdotter finished sixth, 5.89 behind Shiffrin. The Swede has 545 points, 99 more than second-best Veronika Velez-Zuzulova of Slovakia, who was 10th. Shiffrin, who has won the past three titles, is 245 points behind Hansdotter. There are only two

slalom races left along with a parallel event this month in Stockholm that counts in the slalom standings. "The slalom globe's out. I'm going to focus on GS a little bit now, try to see how quickly I can get back, see how many points I can get overall," Shiffrin said.

Shiffrin is targeting the super G and super combined in Soldeu at the end of the month, but added, "That depends how training goes." — AP

SNOOKER STAR DECLINES MAXIMUM 147 BREAK AS BONUS 'TOO CHEAP'

Ronnie O'Sullivan was a few pots away from achieving perfection in a frame of snooker. But, with a maximum break of 147 in his grasp, the sport's most charismatic player turned down the chance to complete the most coveted feat in snooker because he felt the prize money of 10,000 pounds (\$14,500) was "too cheap."

In the latest controversial episode in O'Sullivan's colorful career, he chose to pot the pink ball off the next-to-last red - instead of continuing his bid for the perfect break with the more difficult black. The decision during a first-round match at the Welsh Open yesterday drew a few jeers from the crowd for the most popular player in the sport.

The five-time world champion went on to clear the table for a break of 146. "I knew it

was 10 grand and I just thought that's a bit too cheap really," said O'Sullivan, nicknamed "The Rocket." "To make a maxi, it's such a massive achievement, and if they're going to pay us 10 grand, I think it's worth a bit more than that."

"Once the prize goes up a bit, I'll go for the 147." Winning the frame clinched a 4-1 victory over Barry Pinches, and O'Sullivan grinned broadly as he left the arena in the Welsh capital of Cardiff. The incident revived memories of a frame O'Sullivan played at the World Open in Glasgow in 2010. On that occasion, he just needed to pot the black ball to complete a 147 when he decided to end the frame, on a break of 140. But after the match, the referee pleaded with him to "do it for the fans," so O'Sullivan returned to the table and sank the black. — AP

KTA CONCLUDES U-18 JUNIORS' TOURNAMENT



KUWAIT: Kuwait Tennis Association concluded the U-18 juniors' tournament, as Salmiya club claimed first place, Yarmouk second and Kazema third. Technical Director of KTA Abbas Al-Busairi attended the final match along with other fans of the game.



PAS SHOOTING TOURNAMENT CONCLUDES

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: The second Public Authority for Sports Shooting Tournament concluded on Sunday at Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Olympic Shooting Complex.

The ceremony was attended by President of Kuwait and Arab Shooting Federations Eng Duaj Al-Otaibi, KSSF and ASF Secretary General Obaid Al-Osaimi and Kuwait Shooting Sport Club Vice-president Mohammad Mustafa Karam and PAS supervisor of "Sports For

All" Waleed Al-Sultan.

The tournament was held over three days from 12th to 14th February in the 50m pistol and rifle, as well as archery.

Obaid Al-Osaimi said shooting community is happy to organize the PAS tournament which saw strong competition between shooters, and that the KSSF and KSSF highly appreciates the role of Information Minister, State Minister for Youth Affairs Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah, Director General of PAS Sheikh Ahmad

Mansour Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, his deputies and all employees there for their efforts in the interest of sports in general and shooting in particular.

Al-Osaimi lauded the large participation of shooters from the club and National Guard, as this tournament is being held while the club is preparing for HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah Sixth Annual Shooting Grand Prix which begins from 1st to 8th March, with the participation of nearly 45 countries.

Results of the tournament are as follows:

50 meter air rifle, prone:
Khalid Al-Subaie, Abdallah Al-Harby and Mishref Al-Daihani.

50 meter pistol:
Hassan Al-Mulla, Saad Mane, Ali Al-Mutairi.

50 meter rifle 3 positions:
Abdallah Al-Harby, Khalid Al-Subaie

and Mohammad Adel.

50 meter rifle prone - women:
Amal Al-Asem, Neeran Irzouqi and Heba Irzouqi.

Olympic archery:
Bader Saleh, Faisal Al-Rashidi and Abdallah Al-Harmy.

Compound archery:
Faisal Mislem, Ahmad Al-Shatti and Amer Al-Hajiri.

JONES LOOKS TO JOSEPH AS IRELAND LOOM FOR ENGLAND

ROME: While Eddie Jones has a "pretty good idea" of his squad for a crucial Six Nations clash against Ireland in a fortnight, there is a pretty good chance Jonathan Joseph will be in his starting XV.

England, who flopped out of the World Cup as hosts last autumn, saw Joseph score three second-half tries on his second consecutive start as Jones' men followed last week's battling 15-9 win over Scotland at Murrayfield with a 40-9 dismantling of Italy in Rome.

Having escaped the injuries so dreaded against the usually physical Italians, England are now set for two weeks of intense focus on beating Ireland in a fortnight.

"We've had two games and two wins and no major injuries, so we're sailing along pretty well at the moment," said Jones, who became England's first foreign head coach when he replaced Stuart Lancaster in the wake of their World Cup flop.

England have finished runners-up in the last four Six Nations and are set to welcome an Irish side bent on atoning for an opening draw with Wales and Saturday's 10-9 defeat to France in Paris.

But Jones, sounding jovial and bullish after a much-improved second-half performance saw Bath's Joseph score his maiden England hat-trick, says he has already seen enough to know the nucleus of his matchday squad.

"I've got a pretty good idea in my head at the moment," said the Australian.

He added: "For each game we'll have a particular gameplan and depending on who is suitable for that game will play." Jones ruffled a few feathers when he demanded England give Italy a good "smacking" in Rome, but after resisting on their way to trailing 11-9 at half-time Italy finally caved in.

When an alert Joseph intercepted Leonardo Sarto's misplaced pass to Michele Campagnaro in the 52nd minute, Italy's heads began to drop.

ALERTNESS

"The turning point was the interception try. It changed the game for us from a men-

tal point of view," said Italy captain Sergio Parisse.

The speed and alertness of England's replacements was soon felt, and error-stricken Italy were hastened to a chastening defeat when Joseph added another two and Owen Farrell one.

For Jones, who was manager of Australia when Jonny Wilkinson's last-minute drop goal secured England the 2003 World Cup, it was all part of the plan.

"We weren't expecting to score a lot of points in the first half, we were expecting to do that in the second half and that's how it turned out," he said.

"We could have easily scored 60 points out there."

Italy's only real complaint was the mid-air tackle dished out to Luke McLean by James Haskell, but Parisse said it could not excuse Italy's deficiencies. "When you concede 40 points and lose like this, you can't start complaining about certain decisions made by the referee," said Parisse, who missed a late drop goal that would have secured victory over France last week.

Jones, meanwhile, was quick to credit the 24-year-old Joseph, while taking the media to task for suggesting the Bath centre had previously fallen out of favour.

The Australian said it was "a lot of talk from you guys, not from me. Let's get that right. He wasn't under pressure for his spot. You guys had him under pressure."

He added: "I thought he was very good. Last week, his defence was outstanding... sometimes, in a 13's job, you don't get a lot of ball. Today he did, and he was sharp on his feet."

Fly-half Farrell, who finished with 17 points, said of Joseph: "He's sharp... he's a classy rugby player at the same time. He doesn't make many mistakes and makes a lot of good decisions." Joseph, who also played a full game against Scotland, played down suggestions had been trying to prove a point. "I wouldn't say so. It was more a case of just wanting to do my country proud, my family proud. I don't take any game lightly, I want to prove myself every game and put in as much effort as I possibly can," he said. —AFP

GOROMARU NOT GOING TO TOULON, SAY REDS



Ayumu Gorumaru

BRISBANE: Australia's Queensland Reds yesterday said there was no truth in French reports that their star Japanese recruit Ayumu Gorumaru will join European champions Toulon next season.

France's Canal Plus on Sunday said full-back Gorumaru, who rose to fame during last year's World Cup, had signed a one-year deal with the option of a second year with the lavish-spending French outfit.

But a Queensland Rugby Union spokesperson said the reports were "not true", without elaborating.

Gorumaru shot to prominence when he scored 58 points as Japan won three of their four matches at the World Cup, including a stunning win over South Africa. He is set to make his Super Rugby debut in just under two weeks' time with the Reds, who already have Wallabies Quade Cooper and James O'Connor playing in France with Toulon.

Gorumaru, 29, caused a stir in his homeland when he opted to join the Reds for the upcoming Super season rather than Japan's first ever participants, the newly formed Sunwolves.

French reports last week named him as world rugby's best paid player, saying he was earning 200,000 euros per month, mostly from sponsorships and endorsements. That would place him ahead of newly-retired All Black Dan Carter, who helped New Zealand seal back-to-back World Cups in November before signing a three-year deal with Paris club Racing Metro said to be worth about 1.78 million euros a season. —AFP



MEMPHIS: Kei Nishikori, right, of Japan and Taylor Fritz of the United States pose with their trophies after Nishikori beat Fritz in the singles championship at the Memphis Open tennis tournament Sunday, in Memphis, Tenn. Nishikori won 6-4, 6-4. —AP

NISHIKORI CAPTURES FOURTH MEMPHIS TITLE IN A ROW

WASHINGTON: Japan's seventh-ranked Kei Nishikori captured his fourth consecutive ATP Memphis Open title on Sunday by defeating 18-year-old US wildcard Taylor Fritz 6-4, 6-4.

Top seed Nishikori won his 11th career ATP crown by taking his 17th consecutive Memphis match victory. He joins Roger Federer, Novak Djokovic and Rafael Nadal as the only active players to have won the same event four years in a row.

"It has been amazing," Nishikori said as he accepted the guitar-shaped champion's trophy. "It was really fun on the court. This is something I've never done before, something new. I'm very happy for that."

Fritz, in only his third tour-level event, was the youngest American in an ATP final since a 17-year-old Michael Chang won at Wembley in 1989. "It was a great week for me," Fritz said. "Winning the tournament four times, that's incredible. He was too tough for me today."

Fritz smashed a backhand winner down the line to break Nishikori's first service game of the match-his lone break of the contest-and then held at love himself for a 3-0 edge. But the Asian ace bounced back by winning six of the next seven games.

A double fault cost Fritz a break in the fifth game and he struggled to hold in the seventh, denying Nishikori break points on two aces and a service winner. Nishikori broke in the ninth game on a forehand winner and held at love to claim the first set after 36 minutes. In the second set, Nishikori broke on a forehand winner for a 3-2 lead and forced Fritz to save two match points in the ninth game before holding in the 10th on a forehand winner to end it after 79 minutes.

After starting the week 1-2 in ATP play, Fritz will jump from 145th to 103rd in the world rankings. "I'm sure he has got a bright future and is going to be among the top players very soon," Nishikori said of Fritz.

Fritz, last year's US Open junior champion, made his ATP debut last year at Nottingham, beating Carreno Busta before a second-round exit. He lost to compatriot Jack Sock in five sets in the first round of last month's Australian Open. —AFP

TAYLOR ENDS DROUGHT AT PEBBLE BEACH

LOS ANGELES: Journeyman Vaughn Taylor surged to victory in the PGA Tour's Pebble Beach Pro-Am on Sunday, firing a seven-under 65 for a one-shot victory over five-time major winner Phil Mickelson. For Taylor, it was the end of a victory drought stretching to 2005, while Mickelson remained in search of his first US PGA Tour title since the 2012 British Open.

Mickelson had birdied 17 and had a chance to force a playoff with a birdie at 18, but to his shock his five-foot putt lipped out to leave Taylor to celebrate his victory on 17-under par 270.

Mickelson had looked poised to end his long dry spell when he took a two-shot lead into the final round of the Northern California tournament he has won four times.

But an even par round of 72 that included four bogeys and two birdies wasn't enough to get the job done and he settled for second on 271. "I'm certainly disappointed that I wasn't able to put it together," Mickelson said. "But it makes me a little bit more determined to get this back where I want it."

"I played a little tighter than I wanted," he added. "A few more mistakes in the short game around the greens." Sweden's Jonas Blixt challenged early, aided by an eagle at the par-five sixth, but finished with a 69 for 272.

Japan's Hiroshi Iwata, tied for the lead after his third birdie of the day at the 11th, bogeyed 16 and 18 and finished tied for fourth on 273 alongside Sweden's Freddie Jacobson, who carded a 71.

Taylor, 39, captured his third tour title, to go with back-to-back victories in the Reno-Tahoe Open in 2004 and 2005. He played

in the Ryder Cup in 2006, but fluctuating form saw him lose his tour card, and he has bounced between the US tour and the developmental Web.com tour in recent seasons.

LONG TIME COMING

In addition to struggles on the course, he endured a frightening boat accident while fishing on a river near his home in 2014 — one in which he feared he would drown.

"It has been a long time," Taylor said, becoming more emotional as he spoke. "I didn't think it was going to happen. I've worked so hard and just kept getting knocked down and knocked down. I can't believe it. "I can't believe it happened again."

Taylor's nine birdies on the par-72 Pebble Beach Golf Links included four in a row from the 13th. He capped that run by rattling in a 29-footer at the 16th. "I wasn't even thinking about making that putt," Taylor said. "I just tried to put a good roll on it... I just flushed it."

With the win, Taylor—who calls Augusta, Georgia, home-booked a return to the Masters for the first time since 2008. "Oh my God," he said. "I'm thinking about the Masters. I mean, are you kidding?"

"I just wanted to play next week," added Taylor, is now qualified to do so. "I wasn't even thinking about winning. Things were just magical out there." World number one Jordan Spieth ended a disappointing week on a relatively strong note. After just making the cut-made after 54 holes to allow all the field to play each of three courses used in the event-Spieth carded a bogey-free six-under 66 to finished tied for 21st. —AFP

COACH LANGER THRILLS IN VOGES' LATE FLOURISH

MELBOURNE: The amazing high of confidence and the sober knowledge of cricket mortality have combined to inspire Australia batsman Adam Voges to the astonishing feats of his golden summer, according to his coach Justin Langer.

Voges was named man-of-the-match in the first test against New Zealand, firing the tourists to an emphatic innings win in Wellington yesterday with a brilliant 239, his second double-century of his short test career.

Having compiled an unbeaten 269 against West Indies and 106 not out against the same team in his previous two trips to the crease, Voges amassed 614 runs since his last dismissal-way back in November during the maiden day-night test against New Zealand in Adelaide.

That smashed a 12-year record held by Sachin Tendulkar who collected 497 runs between wickets in 2004. It also left Voges with a Don Bradman-esque average of 97.46 from 14 matches.

Not bad work for a man who played his first test at the age of 35 in June and promptly became the oldest debutant to score a century with an unbeaten 130 against West Indies at Roseau.

Langer, Voges' coach and mentor at Sheffield Shield side Western Australia, has been thrilled to see a player he once helped through a time of crushing doubt become the game's hottest player. "It's been magnificent. He could probably never have written a script of how well he's playing," Langer told Reuters in an interview yesterday. "That said there's no more deserving person. He's an outstanding character. Like great players

and great people do, he's grabbed his opportunity with both hands.

"He's confident and confidence is an amazing thing. And he knows that at his age he's got to run with the opportunity for as long as he can, so he's really hungry to do that." Putting established team mates like opener David Warner and his captain Steven Smith in the shade, Voges' 899 runs at a giddy average of 179.80 is Australia's best from the seven matches over the summer.

At the age of 35, Voges' call-up for the touring squad to West Indies and England was something of a surprise for local cricket fans, but not for Langer.

ROBOTIC, MECHANICAL STANCE

A gritty opening batsman in a succession of great Australian teams from 1993-2007, Langer watched his Western

Australia captain rack up 1,358 runs at an average of 104.46 during an outstanding Shield season in 2014-15.

Just over two years before, however, Voges was in a major form trough and feared for his spot in the state side when Langer took over as coach at the end of 2012. Voges was sporting an awkward-looking batting stance somewhere between that of former England captain Graham Gooch and ex-England batsman Peter Willey, who was famous for facing bowlers front-on.

"He had the most unorthodox, robotic, mechanical stance I'd ever seen," the 45-year-old Langer, who played 105 tests for Australia, said. "It was the most bizarre thing I had ever seen. I remember throwing balls at him at the WACA (ground) and I said 'What are you doing?' He said 'What do you mean?'"

"I said 'You are not going to make runs with that stance, go back to tapping your bat and getting natural and relaxed and then watch the ball like a hawk, which is your trademark'."

"That was sort of a starting point in his turnaround in his fortunes. All of a sudden he was able to float, move his feet properly, hit the ball on both sides of the wicket." The 36-year-old 'rookie', once picked in the test squad in 2006 but denied a debut, will savour his moment all the more for having waited so long, Langer said.

"He's super-fit and there's no reason why he can't keep playing," Langer said. "But he also knows he can't get complacent. He can't stop scoring runs in club and Shield cricket because as soon as you do, 'Mother Cricket' will come and smack you." —Reuters

INDIA UNDERLINE CREDENTIALS AS WORLD T20 FAVOURITES

MUMBAI: Twenty20 series wins over Australia and Sri Lanka have given top-ranked India plenty of cause for optimism as they launch their bid for a second world crown in the sport's shortest format on home soil next month.

Champions in the inaugural edition of the World Twenty20 in 2007, India blanked hosts Australia 3-0 at the start of the year before returning home to rally for a 2-1 win over Sri Lanka.

The three-match series started with a surprise defeat on a seamer-friendly surface in Pune but India were spared the usual outpouring of discontent that follows any cricketing loss with convincing wins in the remaining two matches.

A green-tinged pitch like the one witnessed in Pune is unlikely to be seen during the March 8-April 3 event and captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni has already identified his preferred 11 a month before the hosts open their campaign against New Zealand.

"We are always a top contender when it comes to shorter formats," Dhoni said after India beat Sri Lanka by nine wickets in Visakhapatnam on Sunday. "Also, with the World Cup to be held in India, we know the spinners will come into the equation. It gives us the added benefit."

"Added to that is the exposure of having played the IPL (T20 tournament) over here.

Out of the eight seasons, we have played seven seasons in India.

"We have got a lot of players, especially ones who are part of the team, who have got very good experience of playing in India." The return of batting mainstay Virat Kohli, rested for the Sri Lanka series, for Ajinkya Rahane is likely to be the only change to India's starting side for the upcoming Asia Cup T20 event in Bangladesh and the subsequent World Twenty20.

The strong form of India's top order has left the middle to lower batsmen with limited opportunities to impress, however, and while Dhoni would like to see that deficiency addressed, he realises it could be difficult to fulfil.

"Not everybody has had a chance to bat but we will keep facing this problem because our line-up is quite deep," Dhoni added. "We will try to give chances to a few of the players who haven't batted so far. But usually those who are batting close to six, seven and eight will have to develop ways to play the big shots as soon as they go in anyway."

Dhoni, who led the side to that victory in 2007 and also the 50-over World Cup on home soil four years later, was more relaxed about his bowling options, saying the side had the right balance to tackle any conditions. — Reuters



WELLINGTON: Doug Bracewell of New Zealand plays a shot during day four of the first cricket Test match between New Zealand and Australia at the Basin Reserve in Wellington yesterday. — AFP

SMITH DELIGHTS AS AUSTRALIA CLOSE IN ON TOP RANKING

WELLINGTON: Australia's aim of regaining the top ranking in test cricket has taken a major step forward following yesterday's comprehensive victory over New Zealand in the opener of their two-match series, according to captain Steve Smith.

Australia thumped the hosts by an innings and 52 runs at the Basin Reserve shortly after lunch on the fourth day to put themselves in prime position to usurp India at the head of the ICC test rankings.

The triumph means Smith's side can afford to draw the second test starting in Christchurch on Feb. 20 as any series victory, whether it be by a 1-0 or 2-0 margin, will take Australia past India.

"We want to be number one in the world in all three formats and I think this test match is a step in the right direction," Smith told reporters. "I said when I took over as captain that I wanted to win every series away from home."

"It's great to be one-nil up in the series against New Zealand and hopefully we can take a step up in Christchurch." Smith felt his team had put in a complete performance against Brendon McCullum's side, exploiting the green wicket on the first day, then building a patient innings when they batted to ensure they wore down the home attack as conditions improved.

"It was a pretty good toss to win. Having said that, we had to put the ball in the right areas for extended periods and I think we did that," he said. "We put the New Zealand batters under pressure and reaped the rewards from that... and with our batting, we were willing to bat for long periods and get through the tough periods."

REVERSE SWING

McCullum also praised Australia's bowlers for their efforts on the first morning and for their ability to eke out some reverse swing when New Zealand batted a second time.

"When you know you've got favourable conditions it's not always easy to execute as well as they did for as long as they did," McCullum said of his side being reduced to 51-5 inside the first 12 overs in the first innings.

"(Then) the way they went about the second innings on that wicket, they identified pretty quickly the ball wasn't swinging conventionally.

"Once the ball is reverse swinging, it's another thing to apply pressure and execute it and they did that outstandingly well."

Smith was keen for his side to build on their win, with pace bowler James Pattinson likely to come back into contention, while seamer Peter Siddle would need tests on a back spasm.

"We have played some very good test cricket over the last couple of months," Smith said, referring to series wins over New Zealand and West Indies.

"Obviously to win both series at home and start this one the way we have has been really satisfying and there is a lot of improvement left in us, but I think we're going in the right direction."

Australia top the one-day international rankings, are second on the test list but a lowly eighth on the T20 table ahead of next month's ICC World Twenty20 in India. — Reuters

AUSTRALIA CRUSH NZ WITH DAY TO SPARE

WELLINGTON: Australia inflicted a crushing innings defeat on New Zealand with a day to spare in the first Test in Wellington when they dismissed the home side for 327 yesterday. In a Test that will be remembered for two majestic innings by Adam Voges and Usman Khawaja, as well as an umpiring howler, Australia won by an innings and 52 runs.

Nathan Lyon, Jackson Bird, Mitchell Marsh and Josh Hazlewood all shared the spoils as the last six New Zealand wickets fell for 149 on day four. Australian captain Steve Smith said it was the first step in their quest to regain the number one Test ranking which will require them sweeping the two-Test series.

"We want to be number one in the world in all three formats and I think this Test match is a step in the right direction," he said. "It was a pretty good toss to win. Having said that, we had to put the ball in the right areas for extended periods and I think we did that. We put the NZ batters under pressure and reaped the rewards."

New Zealand were on the back foot from the time they lost the toss and were 51-5 in the first session, according to skipper Brendon McCullum. "Conditions were difficult on that first morning," he said.

"We came up against a team who played a very, very good Test match and we were just a little bit short. It's not a reinvent the wheel situation but we've got to tidy up a few areas." New Zealand had been set a target of 379 just to get in credit in their second innings after Voges' 239 set up Australia's first innings of 562. The recognised New Zealand batsmen made starts, but were unable to turn them into big scores. After getting to 218-7 it was left to the last three batsmen to add 109 runs. Tim Southee was in a one-day mood with 48 off 23 balls and Mark Craig contributed an unbeaten 33.

At the top of the order, Tom Latham scored 63 and Henry Nicholls, on debut, added 59 while Martin Guptill made 45 and Kane Williamson 22. Williamson and BJ Watling are renowned as doughty batsmen capable of occupying the crease for a long time but neither lived up to their reputation in the face of a tight bowling attack. Lyon occupied one end with his off-breaks and the quicks were rotated at the other with a plan for each of the batsmen.

BATTLE OF WITS

Watling has featured in two world-record stands for the sixth wicket at the Basin Reserve in the past two years.

He batted for 510 minutes with McCullum in a 352-run stand that saved a Test against India in 2014 and last year batted for 479 minutes in an unbeaten 365-run stand with Williamson to beat Sri Lanka.

But he was undone in 40 minutes by Australia when he attempted to cut a Lyon delivery and was beaten by the turn with the ball taking an inside edge to ricochet into the stumps. Nicholls resumed the day at 31 and won a

battle of wits with Hazlewood who fired down a series of good length deliveries, seaming the ball away and tempting the left-hander to chase the shot.

When Nicholls refused to take the bait, Hazlewood switched to a short delivery which was pulled to the square-leg boundary.

Bird eventually claimed the 24-year-old with a good length delivery that bowled him as he tried to turn it to the on side. Southee and Craig delayed the inevitable, putting on 59 for the ninth wicket.

Lyon finished with four for 91, while Mitchell Marsh took three for 73. Australia had been in

charge of the Test from the time Smith won the toss and New Zealand were out within two sessions on a green-topped wicket.

As the wicket flattened out, Australia were able to score more freely with their cause helped by umpire Richard Illingworth wrongly calling no ball when Voges was bowled by Doug Bracewell on seven.

The 36-year-old went on to make 239 while Khawaja added 140 to have New Zealand effectively out of the game after the first innings. The second Test starts in Christchurch on Saturday. It will be the last international for the retiring McCullum. — AFP

SCOREBOARD

WELLINGTON: Scoreboard at completion of the first Test between New Zealand and Australia in Wellington yesterday:

New Zealand 1st innings 183 (M. Craig 41 n.o.; Hazlewood 4-42, Lyon 3-32, Siddle 3-37).	M. Craig not out	33
Australia 1st innings 562 (A. Voges 239, U. Khawaja 140, S. Smith 71; Anderson 2-79, Southee 2-87).	T. Southee c Khawaja b Lyon	48
	T. Boubt b Marsh	12
	Extras: (b2, lb5, nb4)	11
	Total (for 10 wickets, 104.3 overs) 327	
	Fall of wickets: 1-81 (Guptill), 2-121 (Williamson), 3-157 (Latham), 4-178 (McCullum), 5-185 (Anderson), 6-214 (Watling), 7-218 (Nicholls), 8-242 (Bracewell), 9-301 (Southee), 10-327 (Boult)	
	Bowling: Hazlewood 29-7-75-2, Bird 19-4-51-1 (nb2), Siddle 8-0-30-0, Marsh 17.3-2-73-3 (nb2), Lyon 31-10-91-4	
	Result: Australia win by innings and 52 runs.	



VISAKHAPATNAM: A file picture taken on February 14, 2016 shows India's Ravichandran Ashwin bowling during the third T20 international cricket match between India and Sri Lanka at the Dr. Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy ACA-VDCA Cricket Stadium in Visakhapatnam. Ravichandran Ashwin underlined his status as India's talisman with a career-best 4 for 8 in February 14's decider when he again opened the bowling. — AFP



NEW DELHI: Industrialist and owner of the Indian Premier League's Rising Pune Supergiants cricket team Sanjiv Goenka (L) and team captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni speak during an event to unveil the team jersey at an event in New Delhi yesterday. — AFP

CHINA MILLIONS LURE POOR SOUTH AMERICA PLAYERS

MONTEVIDEO: They may lack Barcelona or Chelsea's glamour, but Chinese football clubs are luring skillful South Americans with irresistible multimillion-dollar chases in their quest to make China a world soccer power.

While Argentina's Lionel Messi or Brazil's Neymar bathe in glory as well as cash at Barcelona, a lower-profile Latin legion is hearing the call of the east, where big-money transfers offer precious economic security for players from poor families.

"As professionals we have to see it as a work opportunity. We have short careers. We have to think of the economic stability of our families," said Colombian midfielder Mauricio Molina, who played for six years in South Korea.

Luis Paulo Rosenberg, an economist and former vice-chairman of Brazilian club Corinthians, sees such players as "purely economic actors."

"As long as they are receiving those millions, it doesn't matter to them whether China has good or bad football," he said.

Unlike US teams who have scooped up European stars nearing retirement such as England's David Beckham and Steven Gerrard, Asian sides want top players with their best years ahead of them.

Clubs in China in particular are paying huge sums to get them, matching the level of major transfers in Europe—but focusing on Latin America, where such riches are a distant dream.

Brazilian midfielder Ramires last month transferred from Chelsea to Jiangsu Suning in China for \$31 million and scored on his debut. His countryman Alex Teixeira, 26, has just joined him at the Chinese club, which outbid Liverpool to sign him from Shakhtar Donetsk for \$56 million.

Colombian striker Jackson Martinez, 29, moved in early February from Atletico Madrid to Guangzhou Evergrande for around \$46 million.

"They are taking South American players because we have different skills from Asian ones," Molina told AFP.

FOOTBALL CASH 'BUBBLE'?

China's Super League has no fewer than 26 Brazilian players—its biggest foreign contingent. Twelve more Brazilians play in China's second division, according to tracking website Transfermarkt.

Brazilian media have calculated that 134 Brazilian players played in China between 2003 and 2010. "A Brazilian player does not start out on his footballing career aiming to play for the national side or sign for Barcelona," said Rosenberg.

"He starts out to solve the economic problems stemming from his humble

background. Most of them have many relatives and friends to support and they look to maximize their returns."

The trend for buying up players has raised skepticism as well as excitement. "China bursting onto the scene is harmful for Brazilian football because it is inflating the market without much guarantee of consistency," said Ary Rocco, a sports marketing expert at Sao Paulo University. "We do not know how long this investment will last. It seems to be driven by a temporary bubble."

CHINESE 'SPORTING POWER'

In the days when such transfers were still rare, Guangzhou Evergrande won its first top league title the year it signed Argentine midfielder Dario Conca in 2011.

In the current Chinese transfer window, Super League clubs have spent \$314 million so far, according to

Transfermarkt.

China lost all three of its matches in the only World Cup it played in, in 2002. It let in nine goals and scored none. Now Chinese President Xi Jinping, a self-confessed football fan, has said his aim is for China to host and win a World Cup.

He wants to "turn China into a sporting power as part of the Chinese dream." "In China they wanted to make football grow and they wondered why they weren't making progress," said Sergio Garcia, a coach who used to run a football youth training school for Chinese players in his native Argentina.

"The problem was that a youth player could not start at 16, because he had to study in school all day. Now they have decided to teach football in the primary and secondary schools," he said. "But I think investing so much money is more for marketing than to make the sport grow." —AFP

MAN CITY'S PEP TALK MAY COME BACK TO HAUNT THEM

LONDON: Manchester City may come to regret their decision to announce Pep Guardiola's appointment as manager four months before Manuel Pellegrini relinquishes charge of the Premier League club.

City are still in contention to win four trophies but their form in the two weeks since they confirmed Guardiola's arrival in July has raised questions about their ability to mark Pellegrini's departure with silverware.

Successive home defeats by leaders Leicester City and second placed Tottenham Hotspur have left City six points off the pace with serious doubts about whether their expensively-assembled squad is still playing for the manager.

Backed by the wealth of Sheikh Mansour of Abu Dhabi, City are proving that all the money in the world cannot guarantee success on the field.

Pellegrini, who guided City to the Premier League title and League Cup victory in 2014, was honest enough after the 2-1 loss to Spurs on Sunday to admit his team had been beaten by the better side.

He defiantly suggested, however, that they could still win the title even though they have taken only one point out of 15 this season from matches against Leicester, Spurs and Arsenal, the three teams above them.

"We will see at the end of the season which is the best team," he said, "but the first problem is our team. "We need to improve on a lot of things. We have 36 points more to play for. I think all the teams will lose more points from now until the end of the season but when you don't depend just on what you do of course it's more difficult." City have a number of world-class players on their books, including striker Sergio Agüero, midfielder Yaya Toure and defender Vincent Kompany who returned to the side against Tottenham after six weeks out injured.

"There is not a chance we will give up on the title. We have to improve," said Pellegrini. They need to do so quickly. City face rejuvenated Chelsea in the FA Cup fifth round at Stamford Bridge on Sunday before a taxing trip to Ukraine and the first leg of their Champions League round of 16 tie against Dynamo Kiev.

Four days later they play Liverpool in the League Cup final at Wembley and meet the same opponents at Anfield in the League three days later.

Adverse results over the next two weeks could signal the end of a four-pronged trophy assault and condemn Pellegrini to a painful farewell before Guardiola arrives with a huge task to rejuvenate the club. — Reuters



FLORENCE: Fiorentina's forward from Senegal Khouma Babacar (C) celebrates after scoring a goal during the Italian Serie A football match Fiorentina vs Inter Milan, on Sunday at Florence's "Artemio Franchi" comunal stadium. — AFP

BABACAR STEERS VIOLA TO DRAMATIC INTER WIN

ROME: Fiorentina striker Khouma Babacar bundled home a late winner in a dramatic finish to seal a 2-1 win over Inter Milan that reignited La Viola's hopes of European football next season.

Babacar was a late replacement for Josip Illicic, who had helped set up Borja Valero's 60th minute leveller following Marcelo Brozovic's 26th minute opener for Roberto Mancini's visitors.

And the Senegal striker seized the day when Samir Handanovic failed to hold Federico Bernardeschi's weighted cross-shot into the six-yard box, bundling home at the second attempt in the first minute of added-on time.

The win moved Fiorentina two places up to third place, eight points behind new leaders Juventus, who pushed Napoli down to second at a point adrift with a 1-0 win in Turin on Saturday.

"Overall, I think we deserved the win," Fiorentina coach Paulo Sousa told Mediaset. "We played open, attacking football and tried to exploit them down deep on both flanks."

Referring to Babacar's late winner, he added: "We capitalise on the fact some of the goalkeepers from these big teams help you with their rebound saves." Inter remain fifth but are now 12 points off the pace, four behind Fiorentina and only two ahead of city rivals AC Milan, who secured a precious 2-1 home win over Genoa earlier on Sunday.

Fiorentina's win, however, ended on a sour note

with players from both sides given their marching orders at the death, leaving the hosts to finish with 10 men and Inter nine. Inter later protested by imposing media silence.

Inter's Alex Telles saw red for a second bookable offence eight minutes from the finish although replays suggested he got the ball in his challenge on Bernardeschi. In the dying seconds tensions flared, with Mauro Zarate shown a red card for grabbing Inter defender Jeison Murillo by the back of the neck as they exchanged some choice words.

'JEERS INTO CHEERS'

At the final whistle, Inter midfielder Geoffrey Kondogbia was also given his marching orders after sarcastically applauding the referee.

Sousa further applauded his players, as they bid for an unlikely top three finish and a possible Champions League qualifying place.

"These lads believe in themselves, even when things aren't going well," added the Portuguese, a midfielder with Inter in his playing days.

"They have a good work ethic and want to succeed, and that makes me proud to coach them." Japan midfielder Keisuke Honda hit a late winner in an inspirational performance for Milan as they continued their resurgence with a 2-1 win over Genoa.

Milan are bidding to secure a Champions League spot for the first time in three seasons and

welcomed Genoa to the San Siro on the back of a run of six games without defeat.

"In this second half of the season we're doing well, and can do better. We have to keep it going," said Milan coach Sinisa Mihajlovic "I'm happy for Honda because in the past he has, like (Riccardo) Montolivo, fallen out of favour. But both have shown that with will and sacrifice you can transform the jeers into cheers."

Honda stung Mattia Perin's gloves with a rasping shot that the keeper palmed out of the top corner on four minutes.

From the resulting corner the ball was kept in play and it was Honda's cross, flicked on by M'Baye Niang, that found Carlos Bacca unmarked at the back post to slam the ball past Mattia Perin after just five minutes.

It was Bacca's 13th league goal of the campaign and took the Colombian joint second in the league scoring charts alongside Juve forward Paulo Dybala, who is 11 strikes behind runaway leader Gonzalo Higuain of Napoli. Honda doubled Milan's lead just after the hour with a superb strike from 20 yards, his first goal of the season ending a 483-day goal famine. Genoa striker Alessio Cerci, who moved to the club from Milan in the January transfer window, prompted even more jeers from the largely partisan crowd when he hit a late consolation for the visitors. —AFP

KLOPP PURRS OVER 'REAL STRIKER' STURRIDGE

BIRMINGHAM: Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp hailed Daniel Sturridge after he set his side up for a 6-0 victory at Aston Villa in his first Premier League start for the German. England striker Sturridge started in the league for the first time since October after a series of injury setbacks and scored the opening goal in Liverpool's rout of Villa on Sunday.

Now Klopp hopes for an injury-free run for the 26-year-old, whose all-round game impressed his manager more than his headed goal in the 16th minute. "Of course we need the goals of Daniel and he needs the goals, that's clear," said Klopp.

"It's not a surprise that he scores goals, but it surprised me how good he is with the team and his movement. He is a real striker. "It is good to see him fit and when he hides himself on the pitch he is really difficult to defend against because he is always somewhere and you don't know his next move."

"For us this is very important and changes a lot of things of course, but we can only speak about this when he is available. "When he's not we cannot say, 'But with Daniel it would have been different.' In this game it was brilliant."

Sturridge returned to the scoresheet on the same day that his England team-mate Danny Welbeck made his comeback for Arsenal and scored the winner against Leicester City.

Both men are eyeing a place in England's squad for Euro 2016 in France. "It's great," said Sturridge. "Welbz' is a good friend of mine and he's feeling good. I spoke to him the other day and it's good to see him back. "Hopefully we will be there in the summer and we can help the country have some success."

GARDE 'SAD AND FRUSTRATED'

For Liverpool, victory marked the end of

a five-game winless run, ending a difficult period for Klopp, who saw Sturridge and Philippe Coutinho make a difference on their returns from injury.

"It is good for us when we have all our players available, but football and life is not like this," said the German.

"You have to get results when your best players are not all available and that is what we didn't do often enough.

"We know about the problems we had and I know you (the media) are not always interested in this and that is OK.

"We believe in our work and in the squad and in the way we work and this time we got the benefit."

James Milner, Emre Can, Divock Origi, Nathaniel Clyne and Kolo Toure also scored as Liverpool stroled to a victory that lifted them up to eighth, three points shy of the European places.

It was Villa's worst defeat at home since 1935 and plunged the Premier League's bottom club into deeper crisis.

They are now eight points adrift of safety at the foot of the table with 12 games to go and thousands of supporters walked out with less than an hour on the clock.

Many of those that remained chanted against owner Randy Lerner, while some in the main stand shouted directly at chief executive Tom Fox. Manager Remi Garde said: "It's very disappointing. I feel humiliation. "It was very painful with six goals conceded, but it is three points thrown away, not more. We don't have time to moan too much about this. "It's the worst defeat I've had as a manager and I have a lot of feelings, but I will keep some of them to myself.

"As a manager it was the worst performance I've had. It was a very bad defeat. I'm very sad and frustrated. I'm very sorry for the fans." —AFP



ASUNCION: Brazil's Sao Paulo players celebrate their victory over Uruguay's Liverpool in their final Copa Libertadores U20, football match at Defensores del Chaco Stadium in Asuncion on Sunday. —AFP

MATCH-FIXING ATTEMPTS UNCOVERED BY DUTCH PROBE

AMSTERDAM: Attempts to fix the result of a Dutch league match seven years ago have been uncovered by a Dutch football association (KNVB) investigation, it said yesterday.

It is the first time such a case has been established in the Netherlands, the KNVB added in a statement.

It said the probe had uncovered a bid by Ibrahim Kargbo, then a player at Willem II Tilburg, to fix the outcome of a league match against FC Utrecht in August 2009 in co-operation with convicted Singaporean fraudster Wilson Raj Perumal.

"Dutch football is one of the last in Europe to lose its innocence in this matter," said KNVB operational director Gijs de Jong.

"We have long warned this could happen in the Dutch league but it is still difficult to swallow now that this has been established. Hopefully it will add urgency in the Netherlands to the fight against this plague."

The KNVB said Kargbo had promised the then captain Michael Aerts and a third unidentified player would work together with him to throw the match against Utrecht in return for 25,000 euros (\$28,025) each.

But although Utrecht won 1-0, Perumal, who has already been prosecuted and jailed in other countries for match fixing, refused to pay saying the agreement had been for a win by more than a single goal.

"Nevertheless, it has been established that they agreed on the out-

come of the match. There is not enough legal evidence to determine whether Aerts was involved and it is unclear who the third person was," added the KNVB statement.

BENEFIT MATCH

It also said a benefit match between Willem II and the Sierra Leone national team in November 2009 was specifically organised with the objective of manipulating the result on behalf of an Asian betting syndicate.

Results of Sierra Leone national team in other competitions might also have been fixed by Kargbo, who was captain of the team, according to the statement.

Allegations made by a Dutch newspaper last year that other Willem II matches had been manipulated were not proven, the statement added, with KNVB saying it would send the report to soccer governing bodies FIFA and UEFA and the Dutch police.

The 33-year-old Kargbo, who last played at English non-league club Thamesmead Town, would not be allowed to participate in any capacity in Dutch football in the future, said the statement. Kargbo has already been suspended in Sierra Leone for alleged match fixing. Perumal, 50, has featured in cases involving more than 100 manipulated matches around the world and been jailed in Finland and Hungary. —Reuters



NELSPRUIT: Sierra Leone's Ibrahim Kargbo, right, as he challenges South Africa's Bernard Parker during their Africa Cup Of Nations qualifier in Nelspruit, South Africa. — AP

PLATINI VOWS TO FIGHT 'INJUSTICE' AT FIFA APPEAL

ZURICH: The fallen head of European football, Michel Platini, faced a FIFA appeals committee yesterday in a bid to clear his name and overturn an eight-year ban from the sport for ethics violations.

"I am not fighting for my future, but against injustice," the former French star told journalists outside the Zurich headquarters of world football's governing body.

While most football power-brokers typically enter FIFA's compound in luxury sedans with tinted windows, the 60-year-old Platini walked the final 100 metres (330 feet) to FIFA's gate, smiling and looking upbeat as reporters peppered him with questions.

"If I had anything to feel guilty about, I would be in Siberia, hiding in shame," said Platini, also a former FIFA vice president. "I'm very well. There are worse things in life."

In December, FIFA judges ruled that a mysterious 2 million Swiss franc (\$2 million, 1.8 million euros) Platini received from Sepp Blatter in 2011 violated the world body's ethics guidelines and that both men had abused their positions.

Blatter, FIFA's disgraced president who turns 80 in March, was also hit with an eight-year ban over the payment. His appeal hearing is set for today.

Both men, once the most powerful figures in world football, have insisted that the payment was part of a legitimate oral contract reportedly for consulting work performed by Platini a decade earlier.

If the appeals panel rules against them, both are expected to take their case the Court of Arbitration for Sport in Lausanne.

The notorious 2011 payment is also part of a criminal probe by Swiss prosecutors targeting Blatter, in which Platini has been questioned in a capacity that falls between a witness and an accused person.

'EYE-TO-EYE'

Platini boycotted his December hearing at FIFA's ethics tribunal, claiming that a judgement against him had been pre-

determined.

But on Monday he said he would face the appeals committee "eye-to-eye." "I have done nothing and I am afraid of nothing," he said. "We'll see what happens... Maybe this is not over."

Platini had been the favourite to win FIFA's February 26 presidential vote but the December ruling levelled the final blow to his hopes of succeeding Blatter.

He withdrew from the race, leading the European confederation (UEFA) to back Gianni Infantino, Platini's long-serving deputy at Europe's governing body.

But UEFA has said it will not elect a new president until Platini's appeals have been exhausted, meaning the Frenchman could reclaim his post at the top of European football if his ban is overturned.

NOT BLAMING BLATTER

Platini and Blatter have been the most high-profile casualties in the unprecedented, wide-ranging scandal that has seen senior football executives suspended or fired, with 39 people indicted for corruption by the United States.

The saga has provoked endless discussion about the complicated relationship between Blatter and Platini, who previously were allies before the relationship turned publicly sour.

Platini on Monday seemed to dismiss suggestions that Blatter was responsible for his troubles.

"Is it Blatter who put me in this situation? Not at all, because he is in the same situation as me, but someone pushed the button (against me) and I will try to find out who," he said.

Meanwhile, as the two men fight to preserve their football careers, the campaign to replace Blatter is heating up with the vote 11 days away.

Infantino and the head of the Asian Football Confederation Sheikh Salman bin Ebrahim al-Khalifa are widely seen as frontrunners, ahead of Jordan's Prince Ali bin al Hussein, South Africa's Tokyo Sexwale and France's Jerome Champagne. — AFP



BARCELONA: FC Barcelona's Luis Suarez kicks the ball to score during a Spanish La Liga soccer match between FC Barcelona and Celta Vigo at the Camp Nou stadium in Barcelona, Spain. Lionel Messi put on another show at the Camp Nou on Sunday, scoring a remarkable goal from a free kick and then helping to set up a hat trick for Luis Suarez - including a daring assist from a penalty kick - as Barcelona thrashed Celta Vigo 6-1. — AP

SUAREZ HAT-TRICK AS BARCA HIT CELTA FOR SIX

BARCELONA: Barcelona maintained their grip on the Spanish title thanks to a wonderful Luis Suarez hat-trick to see off a spirited Celta Vigo 6-1 on Sunday.

Atletico Madrid remain three points behind as they were 1-0 winners at Getafe thanks to Fernando Torres's first minute goal.

Real Madrid slip down to third, a further point adrift of Barca, who also have a game in hand on both clubs from the capital. Lionel Messi's brilliant free-kick opened the scoring at the Camp Nou, but Celta deservedly drew level before half-time through John Guidetti's penalty.

However, Suarez took over in the final half hour as he swept home Messi's fine through ball and before prodding home from point-blank range.

The best was still to come, though, as Messi passed a penalty into Suarez's path to complete his hat-trick before Ivan Rakitic and Neymar rounded off the scoring.

The final score was harsh on an under-strength Celta, who acquitted themselves well for the first hour before being blown away by the magic of Barca's star front three.

Messi got a festival of brilliant goals started with a sumptuous free-kick from 25 yards into the top corner just before the half hour mark.

Yet, Celta reacted positively and after Bravo parried Claudio Beauvue's spectacular volley, the

visitors were given a lifeline as Jordi Alba chopped down Guidetti inside the area.

The Swede missed a spot-kick as Celta bowed out the Copa del Rey semi-finals against Sevilla in midweek, but the former Manchester City and Celtic striker dispatched the penalty confidently into the bottom corner.

Barca started much more brightly after the break and Suarez hit the post following brilliant wing play from Neymar just 60 seconds into the second-half.

The Uruguayan was more precise on the hour mark as he swept home Messi's scooped through ball first time into the top corner.

MAGICAL

More magical footwork from Messi and Neymar left Suarez with an open goal to move back ahead of Cristiano Ronaldo as La Liga's top scorer 15 minutes from time.

However, it was his third that will be replayed the world over as after Messi was chopped down inside the area, he casually passed the ball into the path of the onrushing Suarez to slot home.

The party wasn't finished there as Suarez's lovely through ball was looped over Sergio Alvarez by Rakitic for the fifth.

And Suarez added another assist to a sparkling performance for Neymar also to dink the ball over the stranded Alvarez in stoppage

time. Atletico had a far more routine win at Getafe to remain in the title hunt. Torres ended a five-month goal drought to net his 100th Atletico goal against Eibar last weekend and was brilliantly picked out by Yannick Carrasco's low cross to get the visitors off to the perfect start.

Atletico then held on to record their 15th clean sheet in 24 Liga games this season to leapfrog Real Madrid back into second place. However, Diego Simeone's men did suffer a big injury blow when Carrasco hobbled off with ankle ligament damage early in the second period.

The Belgian international is now a major doubt for both Atletico's trips to PSV Eindhoven in the Champions League last-16 next week and the Madrid derby in a fortnight.

Elsewhere, Sevilla closed the gap on Villarreal in the battle for the fourth Champions League place to eight points with a 2-0 win over relegation threatened Las Palmas.

Second-half goals from Ever Banega and Kevin Gameiro overcame the Canary Islanders' resistance to register Sevilla's 13th consecutive home win in all competitions.

Basque minnows Eibar's brilliant second season in the top flight continued as they saw off Levante 2-0 to move up to sixth. And Real Sociedad moved into the top half with their third straight win 3-0 over Granada. — AFP



ZURICH: Suspended UEFA president Michel Platini speaks to the media as he arrives to attend his appeal against a eight year ban from football yesterday at the FIFA headquarters in Zurich. — AFP

ARSENAL FIGHTBACK GIVES WENGER TITLE BELIEF

LONDON: Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger confessed that he had glimpsed the grim apparition of Premier League title failures past during his side's nerve-jangling 2-1 victory over leaders Leicester City.

At half-time of Sunday's table-topping showdown at the Emirates Stadium, Leicester led 1-0 through Jamie Vardy's penalty and Arsenal were staring down the barrel of an eight-point deficit to the summit.

But after Leicester's Danny Simpson was sent off, substitutes Theo Walcott and Danny Welbeck struck to lift Wenger's side to within two points of first place and rekindle hopes of a first league crown since 2004.

"A loss today (Sunday) would have been massive," Wenger told his post-match press conference. "Even after that you get all the negative vibes, the belief goes down. It would have been much more difficult."

"We would not have given up, but eight points is three games to come back. We would need to win three, they would need to lose three." Welbeck's goal, a 95th-minute header on his return from a 10-month injury lay-off, sets Arsenal up nicely for a run of games that sees them tackle Hull City in the FA Cup and holders Barcelona in the Champions League before returning to league action at Manchester United on February 28. They must also visit second-place Tottenham Hotspur and fourth-place Manchester City over the season's closing weeks, but Wenger said the nature of the victory over Leicester would give them great heart.

"It will strengthen our belief that we are in the fight," said the Frenchman, whose side had won 2-0 at Bournemouth on their previous outing. "Because we had a bit of a dodgy spell-with Liverpool 3-3, Stoke 0-0, we lost (1-0) against Chelsea, played 0-0 at home against Southampton-so now after that we win two games."

"We're still mathematically in the fight and that will strengthen our belief of course."

Wenger revealed that he had waited until the last minute before deciding to put Welbeck on the bench following his return from a long-term knee problem.

'I HAVE A DREAM'

"You know Danny Welbeck. He is a great guy, with a great mentality. He worked extremely hard. That is why he is fit," Wenger

said. "In the last two days he was convincing in training. I planned at the start, when I made my press conference on Friday morning, to play him next week."

"But in the last two training sessions he was very strong and I decided just in the end to include him in the squad."

"Everyone is extremely happy for him because he has been out for 10 months. That's an eternity for a player. Let's not forget he has not played one minute for us."

Vardy's goal on the stroke of half-time, his 19th of the season, put Leicester on course for another big win after their 3-1 success at Manchester City the previous weekend.

But Simpson's dismissal after two bookings-for impeding Alexis Sanchez and holding back Olivier Giroud-changed the course of the game and they finished the weekend with Spurs and Arsenal breathing down their necks. Having only previously seen his side beaten twice, Leicester manager Claudio Ranieri has not had much to rail against this season, but he declared himself "very angry" with referee Martin Atkinson's decision to send Simpson off.

In stark contrast to Arsenal, Leicester now have two weeks to prepare for their next league assignment-a home game with Norwich City-and Ranieri said that he would be giving his players a week off.

"It's the same as if you win the match," he said. "Go home, and we will see you next Monday, because they deserve it. They made a fantastic performance today. They go, I don't know where, Dubai maybe. They go wherever they want."

Asked if Leicester's title dream was still alive, a smiling Ranieri answered cryptically.

"I have a dream," he said. "But I don't tell you what is my dream." — AFP



UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE
Benfica v Zenit St. Petersburg 22:45
beIN SPORTS
Paris Saint-Germain v Chelsea 22:45
beIN SPORTS

PSG FACING INTERNAL CRISIS AHEAD OF GAME WITH CHELSEA

PARIS: Despite enjoying a near-perfect season on the pitch, Paris Saint-Germain is dealing with a major internal crisis on the eve of its biggest game so far.

The runaway French league leader should be full confidence as it prepares to welcome Chelsea at the Parc des Princes for the first leg of their Champions League last-16 match today. PSG is unbeaten in its last 44 domestic matches, and key players Javier Pastore and Marco Verratti have recovered from injuries in time.

Instead, a poisonous atmosphere enveloped the club over the weekend after defender Serge Aurier was suspended for insulting coach Laurent Blanc and some of his teammates in an online video. During a live session with fans on social media, Aurier aimed abuse at Blanc and insulted Zlatan Ibrahimovic and Angel Di Maria. Aurier has since apologized but could soon be placed on the transfer list.

The video left the club's Qatari owners unimpressed, and president Nasser Al-Khelaifi said he would not allow anyone to get away with damaging PSG's image.

Aurier's comments are a setback in Qatar Sports Investments' attempt to turn PSG into a world-class club. When QSI took over in June 2011, PSG endured serious problems of hooli-

gism and racism, and was everything but a model of sporting stability. It has been transformed into one of the world's richest clubs, and the Parc des Princes has been cleaned of its most violent supporters. But PSG has yet to pass the quarterfinals of the Champions League, and the slick image its owners want to promote has been dented at the worst moment.

Aurier has been a key player for Blanc, and is widely regarded as one of the best right backs playing in Europe. But this isn't his first run-in with authorities, as he was suspended for three matches last year for insulting a Champions League referee on social media.

Against Chelsea, he is likely to be replaced either by Marquinhos or Gergory Van der Wiel. Ibrahimovic and Di Maria are expected to start up front, with Lucas Moura and Edinson Cavani in competition for a starting position on the left flank of the attack.

MAKESHIFT DEFENSE

The central-defensive pairing of Kurt Zouma and John Terry also has been integral to Chelsea's improvement under coach Guus Hiddink, but it has been split up.

Zouma was ruled out for the season last week with a knee ligament injury, and Terry hurt his

hamstring and was substituted during the 5-1 win over Newcastle in the Premier League on Saturday. Terry trained on Monday but if he isn't declared fit, Chelsea likely will throw together Gary Cahill and Branislav Ivanovic at center back to handle the threat of Ibrahimovic.

Cesar Azpilicueta would be moved to right back to accommodate Baba Rahman on the left.

COSTA REVIVAL

Striker Diego Costa is back to his best, and that spells danger for PSG.

He appeared to be more interested in fighting than scoring at the start of the season, but since Jose Mourinho departed, Costa has been more focused on his primary job and scored eight goals in 10 games.

VERRATTI EXTENDS DEAL

Midfielder Marco Verratti has extended his contract with PSG until 2020. He has played a crucial role in PSG's rise to the summit of French football since his arrival in July 2012.

Blanc has often expressed his admiration for Verratti, who has 155 appearances.

PSG said the "contract extension demonstrates the importance of the 23-year-old midfielder." — AP



PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain's Swedish forward Zlatan Ibrahimovic (C) and his teammates warm up during a training session yesterday in Saint-Germain-en-Laye, western Paris, on the eve of their UEFA Champions League football match against Chelsea. — AFP

Sports

Shiffrin wins WC slalom race after 2 months out



Match-fixing attempts uncovered by Dutch probe



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AUSTRALIA CRUSH NZ WITH DAY TO SPARE

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NEWARK: Milan Lucic #17 of the Los Angeles Kings plays the puck in the second period against John Moore #2 and Jacob Josefson #16 of the New Jersey Devils at the Prudential Center on Sunday in Newark, New Jersey. — AFP

RED WINGS TOP BRUINS 6-5

DATSYUK SCORED TWICE TO SURPASS 900 NHL POINTS

DETROIT: Pavell Datsyuk scored twice to surpass 900 NHL points, and Henrik Zetterberg and Darren Helm also had two goals apiece to lift the Detroit Red Wings to a wild 6-5 victory over the Boston Bruins on Sunday. Both teams blew two-goal leads before Datsyuk's shot from the point deflected past goalie Jonas Gustavsson with 12:23 remaining in the game. Zetterberg was credited with the goal, and the Red Wings held on to their 6-5 lead until the end. Boston's Brad Marchand set a franchise record for fastest goal by scoring 8 seconds into the game, and Zach Trotman, Loui Eriksson, Dennis Seidenberg and Joonas Kemppainen also scored for the Bruins. Boston's Tuukka Rask was pulled after allowing five goals on 24 shots. It was the second time in three games he allowed five goals. Marchand opened the scoring with a wrist shot after the Bruins won a faceoff in the Detroit zone. It was the fastest in the NHL since Alexandre Burrows scored 6 seconds in for Vancouver on March 16, 2013, against Detroit, according to STATS.

Zetterberg tied the game less than three minutes later, and the Bruins needed only 14 seconds to take the lead again when Trotman's shot from the blue line beat Petr Mrazek. Eriksson scored to make it 3-1, but Datsyuk reached the 900-point milestone when he scored during a scramble in front with 5:15 left in the period. Helm tied it early in the second, and Datsyuk scored again with the man advantage. Helm's second goal made it 5-3 with 8:59 left in the second. Seidenberg made it 5-4 with a long shot just 22 seconds after Helm had put the Red Wings ahead by two. Then Kemppainen scored a short-handed goal 38 seconds into the third, beating Mrazek from the left circle.

RANGERS 3, FLYERS 1

Derek Stepan scored twice in the third period to lead New York past Philadelphia. Derick Brassard scored early and

Henrik Lundqvist stopped 21 shots to help the Rangers improve to 5-0-1 in their last six games. They also beat the Flyers at home for the 11th time in 12 games. Brayden Schenn spoiled Lundqvist's shutout with 9.7 seconds left with his 16th goal of the season, but the Flyers lost for the fifth time in six games. Steve Mason finished with 27 saves. Stepan's first score, at 10:34 of the third, was his 100th career goal. Brassard tied his career high with 19 and matched Mats Zuccarello for the team lead.

DEVILS 1, KINGS 0

Keith Kinkaid made 25 saves for his first NHL shutout, and David Schlemko scored in New Jersey's victory over Los Angeles. New Jersey won its third straight to pass the idle New York Islanders for third place in the Metropolitan Division. Los Angeles has split the first four outings of their seven-game trip. Schlemko scored on a power play in the first period, beating goalie Jhonas Enroth through a screen.

BLUES 2, LIGHTNING 1

Robby Fabbri and Patrik Berglund scored on break-aways and Brian Elliott stopped 37 shots in St. Louis's victory over Tampa Bay Lightning. Elliott allowed only Nikita Kucherov's goal in the final minute. Tampa Bay lost for the third time in four games and had a nine-game home winning streak stopped.

SABRES 4, AVALANCHE 1

Sam Reinhart had a goal and an assist as part of a three-goal first period, leading Buffalo past Colorado. Jack Eichel, Evander Kane and Marcus Foligno also scored and Robin Lehner made 34 saves to help Buffalo snap an 0-6-4 skid against Colorado. Erik Johnson scored for Colorado. — AP

BRYANT LEAVES ALL-STAR GAME WINNER, WEST ROLLS 196-173

TORONTO: Kobe Bryant said his NBA All-Star Game goodbye and the next generation of the West's best sent him off a winner, rolling to a record-setting 196-173 victory over the East on Sunday night.

The first All-Star Game outside the US was the highest-scoring ever, with both teams scoring more than any team had ever managed. Bryant didn't provide much of the offense but many of the memories. He finished with just 10 points, so few that he lost his career lead in All-Star Game scoring to LeBron James, even though James also had a quiet night.

But Russell Westbrook scored 31 points in his second straight All-Star MVP performance, Stephen Curry added 26, Anthony Davis 24, and Kevin Durant 23. Paul George finished with 41 for the East, tying Westbrook's total from last year in New York that was one off Wilt Chamberlain's record. John Wall added 22 points.

James finished with 13 points, just enough to move ahead of Bryant for most ever in the All-Star Game. He has 291, while Bryant, who is retiring after this season, leaves with 290. He checked out with 1:06 left to cheers and hugs from his fellow All-Stars who now put up points in bunches the way Bryant did for so long. Bryant had seven assists and six rebounds, but shot just 4 for 11 in a game where there isn't really much defense and had never been less. The 369 combined points were 48 more than last year's record, and both clubs blew away the previous individual team record of 163. But people just wanted to see Bryant play, not necessarily play well. The pregame was a celebration first of Canada, then of Bryant. A video message from Canadian Dr. James Naismith, basketball's inventor, was followed by player introductions by two-time NBA MVP Steve Nash and Grammy winner Drake. Canadian Nelly Furtado sang her country's national anthem.

Then it was time for two video tributes for Bryant, whose 18 All-Star selections are second only to Kareem Abdul-Jabbar. Bryant thanked fans who have given him more than 30 million votes in his career, and as he finished speaking all the All-Stars lined up in the background to salute him. He took the opening jump ball against James - neither team had a true center voted to the starting lineup - and each East starter took a turn early covering Bryant.

Toronto hosted the very first NBA game on Nov. 1, 1946. Neither Naismith nor anyone who saw that game would recognize the way it looked Sunday.

Curry and Durant launched shots from spots where only buzzer-beating heaves were once attempted, and Westbrook put together another combination of speed



TORONTO: Kobe Bryant #24 of the Los Angeles Lakers and the Western Conference shoots against Dwyane Wade #3 of the Miami Heat and the Eastern Conference in the second half during the NBA All-Star Game 2016 at the Air Canada Centre on Sunday in Toronto, Ontario. — AFP

and force that turned it into a rare All-Star blowout in the second half.

The West has won five of the last six even without longtime mainstay Bryant, who hadn't played since 2013 because of injuries. But players like Westbrook, Durant and Curry are more than ready to shoulder the load. At 37, Bryant has trouble keeping up with the youngsters - especially the real young ones. Chris Paul's son stole the ball from him as Bryant warmed up for the second half. But he was the star without playing a starring role. He had said he didn't want players forcing him the ball in an effort to make him the MVP - he's already got four of them in this game - but he was never far from the center of attention. — AP

NHL results/standings

NY Rangers 3, Philadelphia 1; Tampa Bay 1, St. Louis 2; Detroit 6, Boston 5; Buffalo 4, Colorado 1; New Jersey 1, Los Angeles 0.

Eastern Conference							Western Conference							
Atlantic Division							Pacific Division							
W	L	OT	GF	GA	PTS									
Florida	32	18	6	158	133	70	Dallas	36	15	5	184	152	77	
Detroit	29	18	9	145	143	67	Chicago	36	18	5	163	137	77	
Boston	30	20	6	172	157	66	St. Louis	32	17	9	143	138	73	
Tampa Bay	30	21	4	147	135	64	Colorado	29	26	4	158	164	62	
Montreal	27	25	4	155	152	58	Nashville	26	21	9	149	149	61	
Ottawa	25	26	6	163	181	56	Minnesota	23	22	10	135	140	56	
Buffalo	23	28	6	136	160	52	Winnipeg	25	27	3	142	160	53	
Toronto	20	25	9	132	156	49								
Metropolitan Division							Central Division							
Washington	40	10	4	181	125	84	Los Angeles	33	19	3	153	131	69	
NY Rangers	32	18	6	163	143	70	San Jose	29	20	5	160	146	63	
New Jersey	29	21	7	127	130	65	Anaheim	27	19	8	125	130	62	
NY Islanders	29	19	6	157	140	64	Arizona	25	24	6	145	169	56	
Pittsburgh	28	19	7	141	139	63	Vancouver	22	21	12	131	152	56	
Carolina	25	21	10	137	149	60	Calgary	25	26	3	146	162	53	
Philadelphia	24	21	10	131	148	58	Edmonton	22	29	6	143	171	50	
Columbus	23	28	6	148	178	52								

Note: Overtime losses (OT) worth 1 pt and not included in loss column (L).

Kuwait Times BUSINESS

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**UAE's Aldar Properties
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aviation: IATA**

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INDIA FACES HURDLES DESPITE BETTER ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

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BEIJING: Customers queue up at the check out line at a supermarket in Beijing yesterday. Chinese trade slumped in January, authorities said as both exports and imports tumbled with feeble domestic and global demand dragging on the world's second-largest economy. —AFP

CHINA EXPORTS AND IMPORTS SLUMP

CENTRAL BANK FIXES VALUE OF YUAN HIGHER

BEIJING: Chinese trade slumped in January, authorities said yesterday, as both exports and imports tumbled with feeble domestic and global demand dragging on the world's second-largest economy. Exports dropped 11.2 percent year-on-year to \$177.5 billion in dollar terms, Customs said, while imports plummeted 18.8 percent to \$114.2 billion-giving the Asian giant a record monthly trade surplus of \$63.3 billion. Tremors in overseas markets and weakness in partner economies have weighed on China, a main driver of the world's economic growth, and the globe's largest trader in goods.

Rock-bottom prices for commodities such as oil and slowing growth in infrastructure spending have hit China's import values, while exports have been hurt by frail overseas demand, along with rising labour costs and the increasing competitiveness of rival economies.

"We believe the slump in trade growth mainly reflects weakening investment demand, possibly from weaker property investment and measures to reduce overcapacity," wrote Nomura analyst Zhao Yang. The figures were far worse than expected, with economists forecasting a 1.8 percent fall in exports in a Bloomberg News survey, and a 3.6 percent slide in imports.

China's economy grew 6.9 percent in 2015 — the lowest rate since 1990 — and is expected to

slow further this year, with the darkening perspective contributing to plunges in global stock markets in recent weeks.

It has also been a factor in the decline of the yuan currency in recent months, but analysts said the record trade surplus gave Chinese officials some breathing room to cope with the floods of cash that have flowed out of the country.

Yesterday the yuan leapt up more than one percent in onshore trade, its biggest gain for more than a decade according to Bloomberg News. The large positive trade balance "should help offset some of the capital outflow and alleviate some depreciation pressure on the RMB," said the ANZ analysts.

Happy new year?

The export figures were sharply lower than the 1.4 percent slide in December, when imports had declined 7.6 percent. Inward trade was hammered in January, falling in both volume and value terms, which a BofA Merrill Lynch research report said was "due to weakness in domestic demand and further downward adjustments in commodity prices".

China's leaders are looking to retool the economy to one focused more on consumer spending, but BofA Merrill Lynch said the lack of investment in fixed assets—such as the big-ticket infrastructure projects that long fuelled China's growth—would

drag on imports. "The sharp drop of trade in January was a reflection of weak external demand," ANZ analysts wrote in a note, citing weakness in trade partners Korea and Taiwan, although they added seasonal factors may have been an issue.

Capital outflow from China was nearly \$160 billion in December alone, according to Bloomberg Intelligence. Over the weekend China's central bank chief blamed foreign speculators in part for volatility in the yuan currency and said there was no further basis for depreciation.

"China has the world's largest foreign exchange reserves," People's Bank of China governor Zhou Xiaochuan said, according to a transcript of the interview posted on the bank's website Saturday.

"RMB depreciation has failed to lift China's export growth so far," wrote researchers with China International Capital Corporation, adding that authorities should make clear their plans for the currency. The benchmark Shanghai index fell as much as 2.95 percent in the morning after a week-long holiday for the Lunar New Year, but pared losses during the day as other regional markets surged, closing down 0.63 percent.

While the trade figures were shakier than expected, Julian Evans-Pritchard of Capital Economics said in a research note that "things may not be quite as bad as they look" due to distortions in the data resulting from the shifting Lunar New

Year holiday and capital flows.

Seasonal volatility meant it was "arguably too early to jump to conclusions" before the February figures became available, he said. Customs earlier gave the figures in yuan terms, which showed exports down 6.6 percent, imports falling 14.4 percent, and a trade surplus of 12.2 percent.

Yuan intervention

China's central bank yesterday fixed the value of the yuan higher by the biggest margin for more than three months after its chief Zhou Xiaochuan said there was no reason the unit should fall further.

The People's Bank of China (PBoC) set the yuan at 6.5118 to \$1.0, strengthening 0.30 percent from the fix on February 5 which was the last trading day before a long holiday, according to figures from the national foreign exchange market. It was the biggest jump since November 2. In January Beijing guided the unit down by setting its daily fix lower for eight consecutive sessions.

China is seeking a greater role in global commerce for the yuan, but limits the currency to rising or falling two percent on either side of the daily fix. In early afternoon yesterday the yuan was quoted at 6.4900 to \$1.0, up more than one percent from the February 5 closing rate of 6.5695, data from the China Foreign Exchange Trade System showed.

The increase was its biggest rise in more than a decade, according to Bloomberg News. In an interview with Caixin magazine published over the weekend, PBoC head Zhou blamed foreign speculators for volatility in the yuan and said there was no reason it to fall further.

"There is no foundation for continued depreciation," he told the magazine, according to a transcript posted on the bank's website. The Chinese economy grew 6.9 percent in 2015 — the slowest rate since 1990 and capital has been flowing out of the country due to worries over the flagging growth, causing the currency to weaken.

January's decreases in the yuan fix represented a 1.4 percent fall and raised worries of a creeping devaluation. They echoed moves in mid-August when China adjusted the yuan down nearly five percent over a week, spurring fears it was pursuing a currency war to help boost its flagging exports.

Chinese exports dropped 11.2 percent year-on-year to \$177.5 billion in dollar terms in January, Customs said yesterday, as feeble external demand dragged on the world's second-largest economy. Analysts said the yuan was still likely to depreciate further this year. "His (Zhou's) comments signal against the intention for a sharp one-off devaluation, but leave scope for possible further round(s) of gradual depreciation," Goldman Sachs said in a research note yesterday. —AFP

RUSSIA: BETTER IRAN-SAUDI TIES WOULD HELP OIL PRICES

MOSCOW: Russia wants to see improved relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia at a time when joint action is needed to influence global oil prices, the RIA news agency yesterday quoted Zamir Kabulov, a senior official at Russia's Foreign Ministry, as saying. Russia, one of the world's top oil producers, has repeatedly refused to cooperate with the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries in recent years despite the falling price of oil, the lifeblood of its economy.

Any hope of sealing a global output deal has so far foundered on Iran's position. Tehran is boosting production to try to regain market share after sanctions were lifted, paving the way for it to re-enter the market after a long absence. The prospect of cooperation between Iran and leading producer Saudi Arabia is further complicated by the fact that the two countries are geopolitical foes who support different sides in conflicts in both Syria and Yemen.

"We all need stability on the oil market and a return to normal (crude) prices," RIA quoted Kabulov as saying. "And these are the key nations, especially Saudi Arabia and Iran, which is striving to return to the oil market, anticipating the removal of sanctions."

Some OPEC countries are trying to achieve a consensus among the group, while some non-members back an oil production freeze, sources familiar with the discussions said last week, a possible attempt to tackle the global glut without cutting supply. Top exporter Saudi Arabia might be warming to the idea, though it was too early to say whether it would give its blessing because any deal would mainly depend on a commitment by Iran to curb its plan to boost exports, the sources said.

Even as officials on both sides discussed the possibility, Russia and OPEC continued to pump oil at some of the highest levels in recent times last month, suggesting both were locked in a fierce struggle for market share. Benchmark Brent crude has fallen around 70 percent since mid-2014. —Reuters

HSBC KEEPS HQ IN LONDON, REJECTS MOVE TO HONG KONG



LONDON: A general view of the headquarters of the banking giant HSBC, with the Poplar Dockland Light Railway station in front, at Canary Wharf in London yesterday. —AP

LONDON/HONG KONG: Banking group HSBC Holdings has decided to keep its headquarters in Britain, rejecting the option of shifting its centre of gravity back to main profit-generating hub Hong Kong after a 10-month review.

The decision by HSBC's board, which Europe's biggest bank said was unanimous, gives a boost to London's status as a global financial centre, under threat since the financial crisis of 2007-09 from tougher regulation and rising costs. Yet Chief Executive Stuart Gulliver immediately warned that the bank could not stick with the status quo were Britain to vote in favour of leaving the European Union in a promised referendum, saying it would consider moving around 1,000 employees from London to Paris.

Some investors had encouraged HSBC to consider moving its HQ from Britain, partly because of a tax on banks' global balance sheets brought in after the financial crisis which had cost it \$1.1 billion in 2014. But following extensive lobbying by the banking industry, British finance minister George Osborne said in July he would halve the levy and, crucially for HSBC, no longer apply it to the overseas assets of British banks, part of efforts to help to keep Britain an attractive place for banks.

The bank denied using the threat of moving to force the British government to rein in the tax.

"We had no negotiation with the government," HSBC Chairman Douglas Flint told BBC radio yesterday. "The government was very well aware of our view ... but there certainly was no pressure put on, or no negotiation". The waiver on applying the

levy to HSBC's overseas assets will only come fully into effect in 2021 at the earliest, leaving the bank exposed to shifting political winds in Britain in the interim, said Investec analyst Ian Gordon in a research note, who nonetheless kept a "buy" rating on its shares.

Asked if the government had caved in to threats by the banks, a spokeswoman for Prime Minister David Cameron said Osborne's budget last year had set out that the levy was introduced to raise revenue and stabilise bank balance sheets. "It served its purpose, it worked but it risks doing harm if left unchanged, he (Osborne) said that clearly last summer." A Reuters analysis showed that moving to Hong Kong might have actually increased the bank's tax burden.

LESS AGGRESSIVE

"Arguably, a more benign approach in the UK to the regulation of banks, and a less aggressive tone by politicians, also played an important part in the decision," said Guy de Blonay, a fund manager at Jupiter Asset Management which holds shares in HSBC. "The bank can now turn its attention to succession planning, likely to revolve around its Chairman Douglas Flint initially (2017), and then CEO Stuart Gulliver (2018)".

The decision to stay in London comes after a tumultuous period for European banks, whose shares have tumbled on fears of a global economic slowdown and the impact on earnings from a prolonged period of low or negative interest rates. HSBC shares are down more than 30 percent

from last April when the group began its headquarters review, hit by China's flagging economic growth and market turmoil.

For Hong Kong, the chance of luring back HSBC, short for Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corp, to its birthplace and to the heart of its Asian growth strategy has been lost for now.

"London is one of the world's leading international financial centres and home to a large pool of highly skilled, international talent," HSBC said in a statement. "It remains therefore ideally positioned to be the home base for a global financial institution such as HSBC."

Analysts estimated the cost of moving out of London at between \$1.5 billion and \$2.5 billion, a hefty bill to swallow unless HSBC was able to achieve clear tax and regulatory advantages.

Hong Kong, where HSBC was founded about 150 years ago and where it employs more than 20,000, was considered the strongest relocation option as it accounts for 46 percent of HSBC's pretax profit. But gyrations in Chinese markets coupled with concerns about China's growing influence over Hong Kong had helped make it more likely the bank would stick to London.

HSBC said it remained committed to its Asia "Pivot" strategy, under which it plans to invest more into China's Pearl River Delta north of Hong Kong which already accounts for half of HSBC's China revenue. The Hong Kong Monetary Authority, which had earlier said it would welcome an HSBC move to Hong Kong, said it respected the board's decision to maintain the status quo. —Reuters

STORM CLOUDS OVER ITALY'S BUDGET HORIZON

ROME: Italy's public finance difficulties are set to deepen as its economy weakens, and it may be punished by the markets even if Prime Minister Matteo Renzi reaches a compromise with the European Commission over this year's budget.

Gross domestic product grew just 0.1 percent in the last quarter of 2015, data showed on Friday, as the recovery from a three-year recession petered out. The official forecast of 1.6 percent growth in 2016 already looks far out of reach. Tax revenues may also disappoint, making it less likely Italy can bring down its huge debt for the first time in eight years as Renzi has promised. In another blow, officials say privatizations of the state railways and public air traffic control company are unlikely to go ahead this year as planned due to difficult market conditions.

Before these setbacks, Renzi was already locked in an unusually heated row with Brussels over his 2016 budget, which the Commission says risks breaking the EU's fiscal rules after he raised targets for the budget deficit and public debt. It will give a definitive verdict in the spring, and may ask for adjustments. Renzi has demanded more

leeway in the rules and attacked the Commission's "budget pedants". Experience suggests a face-saving compromise will be reached. But the Commission knows it risks losing credibility. "Italy has benefited more than any other country from budget flexibility," its Deputy President Jyrki Katainen said this month. "If we go on with this flexibility of the rules we won't have any more rules." But even if a deal is done, it will only push back the problems for a few more months, and they are getting bigger all the time.

DEBT MOUNTAIN

Having delayed promised debt reductions for four years now, Rome would have to make a much bigger fiscal adjustment to meet its commitments in 2017. Its public debt ratio of more than 130 percent of economic output is the second-highest in the euro zone after Greece's, and unless Renzi wins even more concessions he will have to find cuts of more than 15 billion euros (\$17 billion) in 2017.

Rome has not seen that kind of entrenchment since the height of the 2011 debt crisis when former prime minister Mario Monti passed draconian measures to

save the country from bankruptcy.

But Renzi faces a toxic combination of faltering growth, stalled privatizations and, despite the shield of the European Central Bank's bond-buying program, higher borrowing costs.

There is also a growing risk of a full-blown Italian banking crisis. The country's lenders, burdened with some 200 billion euros of bad loans, have lost almost 30 percent of their value on the Milan stock market this year. The gap between the yields on 10-year government bonds (BTPs) yields and safer German Bunds has climbed to more than 1.3 percentage points from 0.9 points in December.

Some analysts fear Italy could follow Portugal, whose bond yields posted their biggest weekly rise for more than three years last week as investors fretted over Lisbon's public finances and the health of the world economy.

"Italy is definitely vulnerable. As long as there is a risk-off environment, there is a risk that the BTP-Bund spread could widen further," said Daniel Lenz, a bond strategist at DZ Bank. Renzi must call an election by early 2018 at the latest. He has seen austerity-

minded governments in Lisbon and Madrid thrown out of office recently and does not want to follow suit. His approval ratings have slumped over the last year and domestic hostility to cuts remains high due to the listless economy and high unemployment. He is under pressure from opposition parties eager to cash in on the strong rise in anti-European sentiment among ordinary Italians.

Nevertheless, Italy signed the tougher "fiscal compact" that the eurozone drew up in 2012 in response to the debt crisis, mandating steep annual debt falls. It even made annual balanced budgets a constitutional requirement. But Rome has yet to put the rules into practice. Its debt has climbed steadily and parliament has voted each year to allow itself a special exemption to the balanced budget law.

SQUARING THE CIRCLE

This year, if the Commission does not force Renzi to amend his budget, the deficit will fall marginally to 2.4 percent of gross domestic product from 2.6 percent in 2015. After cutting taxes by more than 5 billion euros this year, Renzi has slated deeper cuts

to corporate and income tax in 2017. At the same time, he has pledged to narrow the deficit in 2017 down to 1.1 percent of GDP. How he hopes to perform this feat has not yet been explained.

Gustavo Piga, an economics professor at Rome's Tor Vergata University, urged him to take his dispute with the Commission even further and renege on his budget commitments for 2017.

"Italy needs real fiscal stimulus," he said. "Renzi should tackle the 20 percent of wasteful spending in the state sector, while launching a program of public investment and hiking the budget deficit target to 4 percent." Renzi is unlikely to follow that advice, even with problems mounting from all sides. Although growth is weakening, Italy has been out of recession for more than a year, meaning that under current rules justification for more EU budget leeway has all but disappeared.

"There is no more room for flexibility, and it wouldn't be good for Italy either," said Daniel Gros, head of the Brussels-based economic think-tank CEPS. "Now, with markets more averse to risk, Italy would be well advised to be very prudent." — Reuters

News

in brief

Saudi Electricity expands sukuk program to \$2.5bn

DUBAI: Saudi Electricity Co, the Gulf's largest utility firm, said yesterday its board had approved expanding the amount of its planned US dollar-denominated sukuk program to \$2.5 billion from \$1.5 billion. Funds from the issuance will be used to finance some of the company's capital projects, it said in a bourse statement without elaborating.

Egypt's CIB agrees to sell CI Capital for \$118m

CAIRO: Egypt's largest listed company, Commercial International Bank (CIB), said in a statement yesterday it had accepted an offer from Orascom Telecom to buy its investment banking arm CI Capital for 924 million Egyptian pounds (\$118.01 million). Orascom Telecom plans to merge CI Capital with Beltone Financial, which it bought last year.

Saudi's Arabian Cement cuts H2 dividend

DUBAI: Arabian Cement yesterday said it was proposing a cash dividend for the second half of 2015 of 2.5 riyals per share. This compares with a proposed dividend of 3.25 riyals per share for the prior-year period, according to Thomson Reuters data.

Egyptian pound falls to 9 pounds against dollar

CAIRO: The Egyptian pound weakened to 9 against the dollar on the black market yesterday from 8.85 a day earlier, two black market traders told Reuters. Egypt, which depends on imports for its food and energy, is facing a foreign currency crisis and authorities are under increasing pressure to devalue the pound.

UAE'S ALDAR PROPERTIES MANAGES STOCK RELEASE

ABU DHABI: Abu Dhabi's Aldar Properties is monitoring the amount of real estate it puts up for sale as it tries to manage the impact of a slowdown in the sector, a company executive said yesterday.

He was speaking after the developer reported a 5.6 percent rise in fourth-quarter net attributable profit, helped by higher recurring revenue from assets such as shopping malls, schools and hotels.

Economic growth in Gulf countries is slowing as low oil prices have led to spending curbs and job cuts across major sectors. Residential prices in Abu Dhabi, capital of the United Arab Emirates and home to most of the UAE's oil reserves, rose 25 percent in 2013 and 2014 but flattened in 2015.

"We're watching how much we're releasing into the market," Aldar Chief Development Officer Talal Al-Dhiyebi told reporters on a conference call without giving further details. "In the last two to three months, we've seen a slight slowdown on demand but we are selling at a smaller rate."

Transaction volumes in Abu Dhabi were also flat, according to Matthew Green, head of research at consultancy CBRE Middle East, which could lead to deflationary pressures. Still, Aldar would raise capital expenditure to around 2.5 billion dirhams this year from around 1.1 billion dirhams in 2015, Chief Financial Officer Greg Fewer said, as the company spend on six projects launched since 2014.

Most of these projects had strong order books, including its affordable housing

scheme on Reem Island which was 90 percent sold, Dhiyebi said. The state-linked builder of Abu Dhabi's Formula One circuit said it made a profit attributable to equity holders of 735 million dirhams (\$200.1 million) in the three months to Dec. 31.

Reuters had previously calculated earn-

ings of 760 million dirhams before the quarterly breakdown was provided. The figure was above both the earnings recorded in the corresponding period of 2014 and the 512.7 million dirham forecast of an analyst at SICO Bahrain.

The growth was driven by income from

recurring revenue assets, which contributed 62 percent of earnings in 2015 versus 34 percent in the previous year and would be a buffer against any slowdown in the market, Fewer said. Aldar's shares were down 2 percent at 0857 GMT against a 0.5 percent dip in the wider market.— Reuters

OPEC MEMBERS INCREASINGLY KEEN TO END OIL GLUT: NIGERIA

ABUJA: The mood inside the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) is shifting from mistrust to a growing consensus that a decision must be reached on how to end the global oil price rout, Nigeria's oil minister told Reuters. Oil prices have slumped by more than 70 percent to near \$30 a barrel over the past 18 months as OPEC, led by top producer Saudi Arabia, sought to drive higher-cost producers out of the market by refusing to cut production despite a supply glut.

The price crash has crippled some economies that depend heavily on oil sales for income, such as Nigeria and Venezuela, and even Saudi Arabia is shoring up its resources to withstand the painful revenue drop. "There's increased conversation going on. I think when we met in December ... they (OPEC members) were hardly talking to one another. Everyone was protecting their own positional logic," Nigerian oil minister Emmanuel Ibe Kachikwu told Reuters in an interview.

"Now I think you have cross-logic ... they

are looking at what are the deficiencies, what is the optimum."

Struggling oil producers have made repeated calls for an emergency OPEC meeting, but Kachikwu said that the timing had not been right. The cartel's next regular meeting is in June. "We haven't been sure that if we held those (emergency) meetings that we could actually walk away with some consensus," Kachikwu said. "A lot of barrels are tumbling out of the market from non-OPEC members, so the Saudi philosophy is obviously working. But it's not influencing the price higher, which means that whether we like it or not some barrels are coming in from ... members and non-members to cover whatever is dropping out."

IEA WARNING

The International Energy Agency said on Jan. 19 that oil markets could be oversupplied by as much as 1.5 million barrels per day in the first half of 2016 and warned that prices could decline further as Iran's emergence from eco-

nomical sanctions brings more crude to the market. OPEC has declined to trim output without help from non-members, which so far have refused to participate. Russia, the world's biggest oil producer, has played coy by floating the idea of a cut without saying whether it would participate.

In an attempt to find a compromise, Venezuela's oil minister recently proposed a freeze on new production to place a cap on the growing glut while not requiring countries to surrender market share.

Kachikwu said that he would meet his Qatari and Saudi counterparts next week to discuss the situation. "Have we got to the point where we can say there is a definite strategy? In terms of production reduction or freeing, no, I don't think we have got there. But there is a lot of energy (behind the idea)," Kachikwu said. "As you get closer to the statutory (OPEC) meeting dates ... you are going to see a lot more people get active in those conversations and try to find solutions." — Reuters

DEFYING GLOBAL SLUMP, IRAN STOCK MARKET SOARS

DUBAI: A leap by the Tehran stock market in the past four weeks contrasts with gloom in many bourses around the world and hints at Iran's investment potential as its economy, long isolated by sanctions, rejoins the global trading system.

The TEDPIX index has soared 18.3 percent since Jan. 16, when the sanctions were lifted after an international deal on Iran's nuclear program. Average daily trading turnover has tripled from last year to around \$150 million. The economy is still struggling - growth is close to zero, the jobless rate exceeds 10 percent and many banks face mountains of bad debt. Political tensions between hardliners and moderates could slow efforts to address these problems.

As a result, some commentators are warning that the notoriously volatile market may not hold on to its gains. "The Tehran bourse is disregarding warnings and the condition of world markets ... It is going down the same road as in 2015, the result of which will only be a lack of confidence and the flight of capital from this market," the conservative Nassim news agency said in a commentary last week.

But many investors are betting that by restoring Iran's links with the rest of the world and attracting foreign capital and technology, the end of sanctions will trigger a long-term economic boom.

"The actual benefits of the lifting of sanctions

will take six to 12 months to start to feed into companies' financials," said Payam Malayeri, head of asset management at Griffon Capital, a Tehran-based firm which last month launched an offshore equity fund focused on Iran.

"Investors are discounting that now - they are looking ahead to corporate earnings growth in 2017 and 2018." Some economists think Iran's gross domestic product could grow 5 to 6 percent annually in the next several years. That would boost corporate earnings 15-25 percent a year, Malayeri estimated. Also, dividend yields are high at around 12 percent.

So far, auto stocks have led the rally because of prospects for tie-ups with foreign firms; Iran

Khodro, which announced a 50/50 venture to build cars with Peugeot, has rocketed 52 percent. Pharmaceutical and engineering shares have also surged; banks and petrochemicals have underperformed.

Almost all new buying of stocks has been by local retail investors. Most foreigners remain cautious and while sending money into Iran has become easier, full international banking ties have not yet been restored. But foreign fund inflows are picking up. Ramin Rabii, chief executive of Iranian investment group Turquoise Partners, which manages most foreign portfolio investment on the Tehran exchange, estimated \$10-20 million had entered in the past three months, bringing the

total outstanding near \$100 million.

"We may see \$100 to \$200 million of fresh foreign money in the next 12 months," Rabii said. That would still be tiny compared to the market's capitalisation, equivalent to \$94 billion at the free market exchange rate, but it would begin to establish foreign investors as a significant force.

There is plenty of risk. Debts in the banking sector, red tape and restrictive labour laws may slow any economic boom. Initially, some companies or sectors could actually suffer as the lifting of sanctions exposes them to more competition. Renaissance Capital says steel producers' profit margins may shrink as imports of cheap metal increase.—Reuters

EXCHANGE RATES

AL-MUZAINI EXCHANGE CO.

ASIAN COUNTRIES	
Japanese Yen	2.644
Indian Rupees	4.400
Pakistani Rupees	2.863
Sri Lankan Rupees	2.081
Nepali Rupees	2.742
Singapore Dollar	215.750
Hongkong Dollar	38.420
Bangladesh Taka	3.807
Philippine Peso	6.293
Thai Baht	8.447
GCC COUNTRIES	
Saudi Riyal	79.843
Qatari Riyal	82.245
Omani Riyal	777.677
Bahraini Dinar	795.140
UAE Dirham	81.517
ARAB COUNTRIES	
Egyptian Pound - Cash	36.750
Egyptian Pound - Transfer	38.282
Yemen Riyal/for 1000	1.397
Tunisian Dinar	150.530
Jordanian Dinar	421.980
Lebanese Lira/for 1000	2.134
Syrian Lira	2.134
Morocco Dirham	31.335
EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES	
US Dollar Transfer	299.250
Euro	339.950
Sterling Pound	437.350
Canadian dollar	217.720
Turkish Lira	102.240
Swiss Franc	309.620
Australian Dollar	216.060
US Dollar Buying	298.050

GOLD

20 Gram	247.810
10 Gram	126.830
5 Gram	64.260

UAE EXCHANGE CENTRE WLL

CURRENCIES	TELEX TRANSFER PER 1000
Australian Dollar	203.14
Canadian Dollar	219.71
Swiss Franc	311.02
Euro	340.15
US Dollar	299.60
Sterling Pound	437.30
Japanese Yen	2.68
Bangladesh Taka	3.813
Indian Rupee	4.395
Sri Lankan Rupee	2.081
Nepali Rupee	2.749
Pakistani Rupee	2.859
UAE Dirhams	0.08153
Bahraini Dinar	0.7962
Egyptian Pound	0.03815
Jordanian Dinar	0.4261
Omani Riyal	0.7780
Qatari Riyal	0.08260
Saudi Riyal	0.07986

DOLLARCO EXCHANGE CO. LTD

Rate for Transfer	Selling Rate
US Dollar	299.650
Canadian Dollar	218.200
Sterling Pound	435.490
Euro	338.430
Swiss Franc	293.805
Bahrain Dinar	792.715
UAE Dirhams	81.825
Qatari Riyals	83.030

Saudi Riyals	80.585
Jordanian Dinar	422.110
Egyptian Pound	38.157
Sri Lankan Rupees	2.084
Indian Rupees	4.394
Pakistani Rupees	2.862
Bangladesh Taka	3.806
Philippines Peso	6.292
Cyprus pound	570.726
Japanese Yen	3.625
Syrian Pound	2.361
Nepalese Rupees	3.737
Malaysian Ringgit	72.966
Chinese Yuan Renminbi	46.238
Thai Bhat	9.384
Turkish Lira	102.431

BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY

COUNTRY	SELL CASH Europe	SELLDRAFT
British Pound	0.428092	0.437092
Czech Korune	0.004526	0.016526
Danish Krone	0.041332	0.046332
Euro	0.331914	0.339914
Norwegian Krone	0.030988	0.036188
Romanian Leu	0.085840	0.085840
Slovakia	0.008860	0.018860
Swedish Krona	0.031719	0.036719
Swiss Franc	0.300362	0.310563
Turkish Lira	0.096443	0.106743
	Australasia	America
Australian Dollar	0.204717	0.216217
New Zealand Dollar	0.192386	0.201886
Canadian Dollar	0.210949	0.219449
US Dollars	0.295150	0.299650
US Dollars Mint	0.295650	0.299650

Asia		
Bangladesh Taka	0.003426	0.004026
Chinese Yuan	0.044080	0.047580
Hong Kong Dollar	0.036510	0.039260
Indian Rupee	0.004133	0.004523
Indonesian Rupiah	0.000018	0.000024
Japanese Yen	0.002557	0.002737
Kenyan Shilling	0.003110	0.003110
Korean Won	0.000238	0.000253
Malaysian Ringgit	0.068288	0.074288
Nepalese Rupee	0.002836	0.003006
Pakistan Rupee	0.002666	0.002946
Philippine Peso	0.006249	0.006529
Sierra Leone	0.000066	0.000072
Singapore Dollar	0.212094	0.218094
South African Rand	0.012984	0.021484
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001728	0.002308
Taiwan	0.008920	0.009100
Thai Baht	0.008109	0.008659
Arab		
Bahraini Dinar	0.786885	0.794885
Egyptian Pound	0.034076	0.038412
Iranian Riyal	0.000083	0.000084
Iraqi Dinar	0.000196	0.000256
Jordanian Dinar	0.418045	0.425545
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000	1.000000
Lebanese Pound	0.000149	0.000249
Moroccan Dirhams	0.020276	0.044276
Nigerian Naira	0.001227	0.001862
Omani Riyal	0.770854	0.776534
Qatar Riyal	0.081485	0.082698
Saudi Riyal	0.078913	0.079863
Syrian Pound	0.001267	0.001487
Tunisian Dinar	0.147127	0.155127
Turkish Lira	0.096443	0.106743
UAE Dirhams	0.080493	0.081642
Yemeni Riyal	0.001352	0.001432

OIL PRICES FELL TO 12-YEAR LOWS BEFORE REBOUNDED

NBK OIL MARKET REPORT

KUWAIT: Market bears continued to dominate going into the new year, sending benchmark crude oil prices to a 12-year low in January. Amid a 'perfect storm' of unremitting crude oversupply, continuing stock builds, weakening China-centered emerging market growth and a strengthening US dollar, ICE Brent, the international marker, fell to \$27.8 per barrel (\$/bbl) on 20 January, a level last seen in November 2003. Similarly, West Texas Intermediate (WTI), the US benchmark, dropped to \$26.5/bbl. Prices looked to have recovered somewhat by month's end, however, with Brent rising by 24% to \$34.7/bbl after it was reported that OPEC and Russia might consider a coordinated production cut.

In the futures markets, January was a particularly volatile month, with hedge funds and speculators seasawing between long and short positions. Towards the end of the month, many bearish positions were being reversed amid renewed optimism about a potential supply cut. Brent prices for delivery in 2017 and 2018 were ranging between \$41-\$46/bbl, slightly below the consensus of analyst's forecasts.

Nevertheless, despite the four-day rally at the tail end of January, market sentiment remains overwhelmingly bearish and reflective of the issue at the heart of the oil price downturn: persistent crude oversupply. With Iran recently unshackled from international sanctions and looking to bring at least another 500,000 barrels per day (b/d) of crude to markets by mid-2016, any relief that may have been coming from a potential decline of 600,000 b/d of non-OPEC supply, as per the International

Energy Agency's (IEA) forecasts, may have to be delayed until 2017 at the earliest.

Indeed, the IEA reckons that 2016 could be the third year in a row that supply will exceed demand by 1.0 mb/d, with the imbalance only beginning to unwind in late 2016 and early 2017. Oil prices are therefore likely to remain under pressure for longer, and would require a sooner-than-expected production cut by OPEC (in tandem with Russia) or a steeper decline in US shale output to see any significant rise. A supply disruption arising from a major geopolitical incident remains another possibility; with OPEC spare production capacity at historically low levels in relation to global supply (just shy of 2.5 percent), any disruption to supply could have an outsized impact on the oil markets.

However, judging by the ease with which markets shrugged off the spike in tensions between Iran and Saudi Arabia relating to the execution of the Shia cleric Nembr Al-Nembr in January, markets' tolerance of geopolitical risk may be higher than previously assumed.

Oil demand growth

World oil demand growth is expected to slow back down to its long-term average of 1.2 mb/d in 2016, after peaking at a five-year high of 1.8 mb/d in 2015, the IEA has estimated. The stimulus of lower oil prices on oil demand has begun to fade, while warm winter weather in the northern hemisphere has suppressed the traditional seasonal boost to oil demand (for heating oil). Macroeconomic conditions have also weakened in several emerging markets and

commodity-dependent exporters including China, Brazil and Russia.

Elevated OPEC production

According to data obtained via OPEC secondary sources, OPEC production fell by 190,000 b/d in December to 32.2 mb/d. (Chart 4.) This figure now includes output from Indonesia after the country was readmitted to the group as its 13th member at the 4 December meeting.

Saudi Arabia posted the largest decline among OPEC's Arab producers, with output slipping by 40,000 b/d to 10.1 mb/d. (Chart 5.) December marked the tenth consecutive month that the kingdom pumped more than 10 mb/d, bringing the kingdom's annual average to an all-time high of 10.2 in 2015.

Riyadh remains deeply committed to protecting its market share in the current low oil price environment, so any potential cut in OPEC production would likely be contingent on the Saudi-led group securing the participation of non-OPEC nations such as Russia. And even then, it is by no means certain that individual country production quotas will be adhered to.

Production in neighboring Gulf countries, with the exception of Kuwait, showed slight gains compared to November. Output in the UAE and Qatar increased by a relatively small 10,000-20,000 b/d to settle at 2.9 mb/d and 0.67 mb/d, respectively. Kuwaiti output dropped by 10,000 b/d to 2.7 mb/d in December. Looking ahead to the rest of 2016, gains in OPEC production are likely to come mainly from Iran, now that the Islamic Republic has been freed

from international sanctions. The Iranian authorities seem confident of returning quickly to international markets with at least 500,000

b/d in the next few months and an additional 500,000 b/d by year-end. This would bring Iran's production back to its pre-sanctions

level of 3.7 mb/d. Most observers reckon that this target is too optimistic given the weakened state of oil infrastructure in the country.

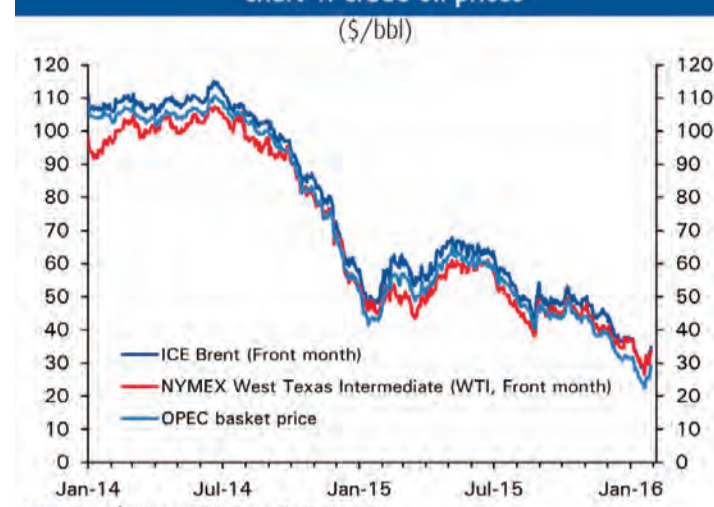
Decline in US shale output

World crude supply expanded by 2.6 mb/d in 2015, following gains of 2.4 mb/d in 2014. (Chart 6.) For 2016, however, all eyes will be on non-OPEC output and the supply response to low oil prices. Having expanded by 1.2 mb/d in 2015, non-OPEC supply is expected to contract by 600,000 b/d this year, according to the IEA. This is largely predicated on output moderating in the US, where hitherto resilient US shale production is finally beginning to suffer from cutbacks in capital spending and falls in oil rig activity.

The most recent data from the US Energy Information Administration (EIA) showed that US crude output growth in 2015 had slowed to 0.9 percent, or 81,000 b/d, from 12.3 percent in 2014. According to weekly data provided by the EIA, US crude output fell from a high of 9.6 mb/d in June 2015 to 9.2 mb/d as of 22 January 2016, a decline of 389,000 b/d, or 4.0 percent.

Oil markets are bracing themselves for a volatile year. Uncertainty surrounds OPEC's potential production response, including the additional volumes of crude Iran is likely to bring to the market, and the extent to which non-OPEC supply will be negatively affected by the oil price downturn. While there seems to be greater scope for prices to rise in view of all of the above, it cannot be taken for granted that oil prices reached their bottom in January.

Chart 1: Crude oil prices (\$/bbl)



Source: Thomson Reuters Datastream

Chart 2: ICE Brent forward price curve (\$/bbl)



JAPAN ECONOMY SHRINKS IN Q4 IN BODY BLOW FOR 'ABENOMICS'

TOKYO: Japan's economy contracted in the last quarter of 2015, official data showed yesterday, dealing another blow to Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's faltering bid to boost growth.

The figures will fan talk of fresh Bank of Japan measures, after policymakers shocked markets last month with an unprecedented negative interest rate policy widely seen as a desperate move to kickstart the world's number three economy. Weak demand for big-ticket items like cars and home appliances held back the vast economy which shrank 0.4 percent in October-December or an annualised 1.4 percent drop.

That was Japan's second quarterly contraction in 2015, although GDP edge up a tepid 0.4 percent for the whole year, underscoring Tokyo's challenge in slaying deflation and cementing a sustained recovery. Tokyo brushed off the weak numbers, saying that "the fundamentals (of the economy) remain good", but analysts countered that Abe's growth plan was stumbling.

The premier's bid to revive Japan's once-soaring economy, dubbed Abenomics, has also been shaken by a bloodbath on equity markets since the start of the year and a resurgent yen that threatened to dent companies' profits.

"The latest data show that it is difficult to say that the Abe government has achieved of its goal of a 'virtuous cycle' of rising incomes, wages, and investment," said Tobias Harris, political risk analyst at US-based consultancy Teneo.

"Japan has remained too dependent on export-led growth, which has suffered in light of China's slowdown and the effects it has had on the global economy."

Japan's factory output has suffered as worries persist about global growth, with revised data Monday showing industrial production contracted 1.7 percent in December, worse than a preliminary 1.4 percent drop. However Tokyo's Nikkei 225 stock index soared more than seven percent Monday, boosted by bargain-buying and a weaker yen following last week's 11 percent drop.

'Not carved in stone'

The yen, which surged four percent last week against the dollar, turned lower Monday on talk about the BoJ unveiling fresh monetary easing



TOKYO: Workers take a rest at a park beside a construction site in Tokyo yesterday. Japan's economy contracted in the last quarter of 2015, official data showed yesterday, dealing another blow to Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's faltering bid to kickstart the world's number three economy. — AFP

measures as well as speculation about Tokyo intervening in currency markets to stem the unit's rise.

The wild volatility on world markets and sharp swings in the yen since the start of 2016 prompted Abe on Friday to hold an emergency meeting with Japan's central bank chief Haruhiko Kuroda. The BoJ shocked investors by announcing the negative rate policy last month, a plan that aims to prod banks into lending by charging them for storing excess reserves with it.

But as his growth programme wobbles and the BoJ struggles to hit an ambitious two-percent inflation target, Abe must decide whether to follow through with another sales tax hike next year. The rise is seen as key to containing a spiralling national debt, but it could further dent spending. "It is not carved in stone, if the real problems are going on he can push it out," said Nicholas Smith, Japan strategist at brokerage CLSA, referring to the planned tax rise.

"With what's going on in the market, this is a temptation." Abe's growth plan-big government spending, central bank monetary easing and reforms to the highly regulated economy-appeared to bear fruit at first. The yen weakened sharply, which boosted Japanese exporters' profits and sparked a huge stock market rally.

But sustained growth has been elusive and Abe's efforts to overhaul the economy have been widely criticised as half-hearted. Tokyo will be watching labour talks this spring closely for signs that firms are ready to put more cash into employees' pockets, which would offer hope for a pick-up in consumer spending. "The government plans to raise the consumption tax in 2017, so we will probably see an increase in spending later this year ahead of the hike," said Taro Saito, senior economist at NLI Research Institute. "But I don't think we should expect the fundamentals of the Japanese economy to recover easily." — AFP



SINGAPORE: This general view shows the exterior of US engine maker Pratt & Whitney's first manufacturing facility in Singapore yesterday. The company's subsidiary P&W NGPF Manufacturing Company Singapore Pte Ltd will produce fan blades and other key components for Pratt & Whitney's new PurePower Geared Turbofan (GTF) engine family. — AFP

TURKISH ASSETS WEAKEN ON FEARS OF SYRIAN WAR

ISTANBUL: Turkish assets weakened yesterday, bucking the positive trend in emerging markets, on concern that the NATO member is being dragged ever deeper into the war in neighboring Syria, where government forces and Kurdish fighters are pressing on its borders.

A major offensive has brought the Syrian army, backed by Russian bombing and Iranian-backed Shi'ite militias, to almost 25 km (15 miles) from the Turkish border. Kurdish fighters have meanwhile exploited the violence, expanding their foothold in territory abutting Turkey and drawing Turkish shelling. Defence Minister Ismet Yilmaz denied a report that Turkish soldiers had entered Syria at the weekend and said Ankara was not planning such a move, but market nerves were heightened by the death of a Turkish soldier on the border. "Domestic geopolitical concerns are affecting us negatively despite some optimism on a global basis," said a forex desk trader at one Istanbul-based bank, declining to be named.

"The reason for the lira performing more negatively than other developing countries

this morning is the killing of a Turkish soldier at the Syrian border and talk of Turkish ground intervention in the region at the weekend." The lira was the only emerging market currency weaker against the dollar on Monday morning, slipping to 2.9495 by 0851 GMT from 2.9294 late on Friday.

Turkey's main stock index fell 1.58 percent to 69,813.61 points, lagging behind the main emerging markets index which rose 1.82 percent.

The 10-year benchmark bond yield rose to 10.75 percent from 10.72 percent on Friday. Turkey began strikes on Saturday on the Syrian Kurdish YPG militia, which it sees as an extension of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) which has waged a three-decade insurgency for autonomy in southeast Turkey and is seen by the United States and European Union as a terrorist group. The YPG is, however, backed by both the United States and Russia in its fight against Islamic State, much to Turkey's chagrin, even though Moscow backs Syrian President Bashar al-Assad while Washington and Ankara insist he must go. — Reuters

NEW ZEALAND INC ON M&A RADAR AFTER \$1.33BN DEALS

WELLINGTON: A pair of diverse New Zealand firms said they received takeover offers worth \$1.33 billion in total, as low interest rates and the weak Kiwi dollar combine to put a range of companies in a low-flying market firmly on the radar for global dealmakers.

With one offer for an industrial manufacturer and another bid - already agreed - for a software maker, New Zealand watchers said on Monday the deals may be the start of a broad wave of interest, tipping cash-rich private equity houses as future potential asset buyers.

In the larger of the two deals, resins and coating company Nuplex Industries Ltd said Belgian rival Allnex Belgium SA/NV, backed by private equity firm Advent International Corp, made a bid valuing the company at around NZ\$1.05 billion (\$695 million). Nuplex said it's in

"advanced discussions" with the bidders. Separately software company Diligent Corp said its board had agreed a NZ\$941 million buyout offer from US investment firm Insight Venture Partners. Diligent said its board has recommended shareholders accept the deal.

"There's been a lot of talk that there's potential for mergers and acquisitions in the market as a whole and we are only now really starting to see it," said Philip Hunter, a broker with First NZ Capital. Low interest rates combined with a weak New Zealand dollar create "a conducive environment," Hunter said.

Shares in both Nuplex and Diligent surged on the deal news. Nuplex said it had first entered talks with Allnex last October, and that after three revisions on deal terms it now considers the offer to be "attractive" for shareholders. — Reuters

LOAN-DEPOSIT SHIFT BOOSTS SAUDI; MOST MARKETS FIRM

MIDEAST STOCK MARKETS

DUBAI: Saudi Arabian stocks rose sharply yesterday after the central bank raised banks' maximum loan-to-deposit ratio, while most other bourses in the region were buoyed by a rebound of global markets. The Saudi central bank, seeking to ease tightening liquidity caused by low oil prices, increased the ratio of deposits that commercial banks can lend out to 90 percent from 85 percent, industry sources told Reuters.

That may not make much difference in the long term to the pressures on Saudi banks, which face deteriorating credit quality as the economy slows as well as demands on their funds from heavy government bond issuance. The three-month Saudi inter-bank offered rate edged up on Monday to 1.73125 percent from 1.72875 percent. But the central bank's move was a welcome effort by authorities to support the economy, and the Saudi banking stock index climbed 2.1 percent. The overall Saudi equities index rose 2.4 percent as petrochemical giant Saudi Basic Industries SE gained 3.1 percent. Major real estate developer Dar Al Arkan rose 2.3 percent.

But Arabian Cement dropped 1.8 percent after it said it was proposing a cash dividend for the second half of 2015 of 2.5 riyals per share, down from 3.25 riyals a year ago.

Real estate stocks buoyed Qatar's bourse after strong earnings from United Development Co, the most heavily traded stock, which jumped 6.7 percent in its highest volume since last July. The company reported a 10.2 percent rise in 2015 net profit and recommended a dividend of 1.5 riyals per share, up from 1.25 riyals a year earlier. Other real estate shares rose in sympathy, with Barwa Real Estate gaining 7.7 percent, and the overall Qatari index surged 2.7 percent.

DUBAI, EGYPT

Dubai's index fell 0.3 percent as DAMAC Properties slipped 0.8 percent and builder Drake & Scull, which had risen on Sunday because of better-than-expected fourth-quarter earnings, fell back 0.9 percent. Islamic Arab Insurance Co fell 2.9 percent in unusually heavy trade after it posted a 162.8 million dirham (\$44.4 mil-

lion) net loss for 2015 compared to a 36.7 million dirham profit in 2014.

But shipper Gulf Navigation rose 3.5 percent after it reported that its profit doubled last year. Telecommunications firm du fell sharply in early trade after reporting a 10.1 percent fall in fourth-quarter profit, but it closed flat. Shares in du's bigger rival, Abu Dhabi-listed Etisalat, rose 1.3 percent after it posted a 2.7 percent rise in quarterly profit. The Abu Dhabi index rose 0.8 percent.

In Egypt, the stock index also gained 0.8 percent as billionaire Naguib Sawiris's Orascom Telecom surged 3.7 percent. Beltone Financial soared 10 percent for a third straight trading day.

Commercial International Bank accepted Sawiris's bid to buy its investment arm CI Capital, market sources said on Sunday. Orascom plans to merge CI Capital with Beltone. Giza General Contracting jumped 7.5 percent in heavy trade after a disclosure statement showed a purchase of 1.17 million shares in it by a related party. — Reuters

SHARES CLIMB AS FIRMER YUAN EASES DEFLATION FEARS

LONDON: World stocks rose sharply yesterday as China's central bank fixed the yuan at a much stronger rate and oil cemented recent gains, easing fears of global deflation.

The rally belied a string of poor economic data from Beijing and Tokyo as demand for safe-haven assets waned, yet investors remained on edge due to lingering concerns about growth and the health of the financial sector. European stocks rose 3 percent, having shed nearly 10 percent over the last fortnight, mirroring a bounce in Asia. Futures pointed to notional gains of 1.6 per-

cent on Wall Street but U.S. markets will be closed for a holiday.

Meanwhile, assets that tend to perform well in times of stress lagged. The Japanese yen lost ground against the US dollar, top-rated German bond yields edged away from nine-month lows and gold slipped 2 percent after its strongest week in four years.

"We had a very strong statement from the Chinese authorities signaling they are committed to a stable currency and that's helped sentiment ... safe-haven flows have

unwound somewhat," said RIA Capital Markets strategist Nick Stamenkovic.

In China, spot yuan jumped more than 1 percent to 6.4934 per dollar - its firmest this year - after the People's Bank of China set its daily midpoint 0.3 percent stronger and the head of the bank was quoted as saying speculators should not be allowed to dominate market sentiment.

A stronger yuan reduces the risk that China will export deflation to the world, while worries about consumer price growth have also been helped by bounce

back in the oil price. Brent and US crude futures edged up yesterday adding to Friday's 10 percent surge on speculation that the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) might finally agree to cut output to reduce a world glut. Eurozone long-term inflation expectations also rebounded from record lows on Monday even as Germany's Bundesbank cut its forecast for consumer price growth in the bloc's biggest economy.

after losing 10 percent of its value so far this year. European shares followed in their wake, led by a 4 percent rebound in banking stocks on news that the European Central Bank (ECB) is in talks to buy bundles of Italian bad bank loans as part of its asset-purchase program.

Yet some strategists cautioned that yesterday's rebound may prove short-lived, with concern that central banks have little ammunition left to fight off the heady mix of an oil-induced deflationary forces, capital outflows and economic weakness in China, and pressure on the world's financial sector.

"It's possible we could see calmer markets this week but we are not out of the woods yet," Thomas Harr, global head of fixed income and currency research at Danske Bank in Copenhagen.

"For the last couple of weeks we have seen a bit of central bank fatigue - they have cut rates into negative but it isn't having much of an impact." Against a basket of currencies, the dollar was up slightly at 96.433 having been at its lowest in almost four months. Likewise, it edged up to 113.99 yen, having touched a 15-month trough just under 111.00 last week.

The euro was last down 0.6 percent at \$1.1184, having slipped from a 3-1/2 month peak of \$1.1377. —Reuters

DISCONNECT

China's weak exports and imports in January, down 11.2 percent and 18.8 percent year-on-year respectively, seemed not to disturb markets. The resulting jump in the country's trade surplus to \$63 billion for the month might have helped, as that may offer support to the yuan.

The disconnect between markets and economics was perhaps starkest in Japan, where the Nikkei jumped more than 7 percent, putting its worst week since the depths of the global financial crisis in 2008 quickly behind it. This came despite data showing the economy contracted by an annualised 1.4 percent in the last three months of 2015, more than expected.

MSCI's broadest index of Asia-Pacific shares outside Japan rose 2.3 percent,

Daily Kuwait Stock Exchange Report

Monday 15 February 2016

Index	Change	Closing	Last Closing	High	Low
Price Index	▲ 8.08	5,130.13	5,131.05	5,140.37	5,117.49
Weighted Index	▲ 1.27	350.17	348.90	350.83	348.07
KSX 15	▲ 4.64	826.38	821.74	830.50	820.27

Volume	93,501,211
Value (KWD)	8,634,056
Number of Trades	2,835

Security	Trades		Volume	Value (KD)	Trades	Last	Change
	High	Low					
MARIN	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	114	▲ 0.0
IKARUS	81	80	5,200	416	2	81	▼ -2.0
IPG	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	320	▲ 0.0
NAPESCO	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	600	▲ 0.0
ENERGYH	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	32.0	▲ 0.0
CPI	43.0	42.0	1,710,132	73,309	50	43.0	▼ -0.5
ARAR	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	116	▲ 0.0
Oil & Gas			1,721,332	73,725	50	704.26	▼ -2.49
KFOUC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	210	▲ 0.0
DFCC	460	455	97,500	44,550	6	460	▲ 5.0
ALKOUT	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	610	▲ 0.0
ALQURAIN	170	168	284,477	48,092	18	168	▲ 0.0
Basic Materials			381,977	92,642	24	886.59	▲ 3.37

Security	Trades		Volume	Value (KD)	Trades	Last	Change
	High	Low					
SOKOUK	34.0	31.0	10580649	346,244	178	31.5	▼ -2.0
KRE	45.5	45.0	725,000	32,975	9	45.5	▲ 0.0
URC	94	90	94,000	8,516	6	94	▲ 3.0
NRE	80	88	130,000	11,460	7	89	▲ 0.0
SRE	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	340	▲ 0.0
TAM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	500	▲ 0.0
AREEC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	138	▲ 0.0
MASGALIH	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	59	▲ 0.0
ARBREC	25.5	24.5	123,370	3,079	7	25.5	▲ 1.0
ERESCO	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	54	▲ 0.0
MADANEC	890	860	494,690	431,627	34	860	▼ -30.0
INJAZZAT	83	83	5,800	481	2	83	▲ 0.0
INVESTORS	20.0	19.0	705,405	14,922	19	19.5	▼ -0.5
IRC	24.0	21.5	49,780	1,122	11	23.0	▼ -0.5
ALTUJARIA	80	78	741,530	50,191	41	78	▲ 0.0
SANAM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	46.0	▲ 0.0
AAYANRE	64	64	100,000	6,400	2	64	▲ 0.0
AQAR	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	75	▲ 0.0
ALADARIA	18.5	18.0	35,000	645	2	18.5	▲ 0.5
MAZAYA	106	104	353,896	37,300	9	104	▲ 2.0
ADNC	23.0	21.5	13,249,730	288,567	148	21.5	▼ -1.5
THEMAR	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	80	▲ 0.0
TUARA	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	39.5	▲ 0.0
TAAMEER	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	20.5	▲ 0.0
ARKAN	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	99	▲ 0.0
ARGAN	176	176	34,289	6,035	4	176	▲ 0.0
ABYAR	24.5	23.5	282,455	6,749	12	24.5	▼ -0.5
MUNSHAAT	40.0	45.0	3,832,118	182,145	61	47.0	▼ -1.0
FIRSTDUBAI	39.0	37.5	124,180	4,996	8	39.0	▲ 0.5
KBT	37.5	36.5	2,854,166	104,400	39	37.0	▼ -0.5
REAM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	186	▲ 0.0
MENA	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	19.0	▲ 0.0
ALMUDON	28.0	26.5	295,240	8,064	12	28.0	▼ -1.0
MARAKEZ	34.0	34.0	2,000	68	2	34.0	▲ 1.0
REMAI	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	31.5	▲ 0.0
MASHAER	98	98	67,701	6,635	2	98	▼ -2.0
Real Estate			34,946,979	1,560,407	613	831.74	▼ -0.82

Security	Trades		Volume	Value (KD)	Trades	Last	Change
	High	Low					
KCEM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	365	▲ 0.0
REFRI	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	320	▲ 0.0
CABLE	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	345	▲ 0.0
SHIP	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	146	▲ 0.0
PCEM	1,020	1,000	800	800	3	1,020	▲ 20.0
PAPER	425	410	67,582	28,381	8	420	▲ 20.0
MRC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	57	▲ 0.0
ACICO	290	275	31,256	8,752	8	290	▲ 20.0
GGMC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	470	▲ 0.0
HCC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	132	▲ 0.0
KPAK	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	340	▲ 0.0
KBMM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	250	▲ 0.0
NICBM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	228	▲ 0.0
EQUIPMENT	52	52	10	1	1	52	▲ 1.0
NCCI	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	99	▲ 0.0
GYPSUM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	102	▲ 0.0
SALDOOKH	64	62	170,100	10,731	6	64	▲ 2.0
AGLTY	425	420	231,225	97,615	15	420	▼ -5.0
EDU	210	196	440	88	3	210	▲ 4.0
CLEANING	37.0	36.5	781,000	28,877	19	37.0	▲ 0.0
CITYGROUP	500	500	90,000	45,000	1	500	▲ 0.0
KGL	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	42.0	▲ 0.0
KGPC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	210	▲ 0.0
HUMANSOFT	910	910	140	127	2	910	▲ 50.0
NAFAIS	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	120	▲ 0.0
SAFWAN	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	300	▲ 0.0
GFC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	31.0	▲ 0.0
MAYADEEN	18.0	17.5	708,137	12,691	14	18.0	▲ 0.0
CGC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	790	▲ 0.0
MITCC	71	69	396,100	27,331	11	69	▼ -1.0
UPAC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	600	▲ 0.0
ALAFCCO	182	180	50,010	9,008	8	182	▲ 0.0
MUBARRAD	60	58	2,012,580	118,608	48	58	▼ -2.0
LOGISTICS	57	53	1,657,545	90,863	67	54	▼ -2.0
SCEM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	83	▲ 0.0
GCEM	76	73	91,592	6,757	7	76	▲ 0.0
QCEM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	70	▲ 0.0
FCEM	74	71	555,010	40,456	18	74	▲ 2.0
RKWC	95	95	68,000	6,460	3	95	▲ 0.0
SPEC	88	88	100	9	1	88	▲ 2.0
Industrials			6,911,827	532,555	243	977.42	▲ 12.01

Security	Trades		Volume	Value (KD)	Trades	Last	Change
	High	Low					
KSH	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	204	▲ 0.0
NSH	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	82	▲ 0.0
PAPCO	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	102	▲ 0.0
CATTL	128	128	53,400	6,835	3	128	▲ -3.0
DANAH	69	69	40,000	2,700	2	69	▲ -4.0
POULT	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	188	▲ 0.0
FOOD	2,360	2,300	26,380	60,957	11	2,300	▼ -40.0
Consumer Goods			119,790	70,552	16	1061.57	▼ -5.23
MHC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	200	▲ 0
ATC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	920	▲ 0
YIACO	158	154	144,827	22,843	8	158	▲ 10
Health Care			144,827	22,843	8	950.84	▲ 7.19

Security	Trades		Volume	Value (KD)	Trades	Last	Change
	High	Low					
KCIN	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	1,120	▲ 0
KHOT	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	210	▲ 0
SULTAN	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	62	▲ 0
CABLETV	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	26.5	▲ 0
EYAS	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	385	▲ 0
IFAHR	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	192	▲ 0
QILAFUEL	112	110	135,494	15,171	12	110	▼ -2
MUNTAZAHAT	89	87	200	18	2	89	▲ 4
JAZERA	810	810	571	463	2	810	▲ 0
SOOR	112	112	11,622	1,302	11	112	▲ 0
FUTUREKID	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	110	▲ 0
ALNAVADI	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	84	▲ 0
ALRAI	134	130	60,004	7,843	6	134	▲ 0
ZIMAH</							

SARAJEVO JOINS AIR ARABIA'S GROWING EUROPEAN NETWORK

SHARJAH: Air Arabia, the first and largest low-cost carrier (LCC) in the Middle East and North Africa has added another European destination to its route network with the addition of direct flights between Sharjah and Sarajevo starting from March 18, 2016.

Sarajevo is the capital city of Bosnia and Herzegovina and is home to more than half a million people. The historic city, which was influenced by the Roman, Byzantine, Venetian, Ottoman, and Austro-Hungarian empires, is a popular tourism destination throughout the year.

The city centre boasts a wide array of attractions, shops, restaurants and cafes, while the hills and mountains which sur-

round Sarajevo offer a range of recreational and sporting activities, including a well-developed skiing industry.

Adel Al Ali, Group Chief Executive Officer of Air Arabia, said: "Following 12 months of significant expansion, Air Arabia is delighted to begin 2016 with the launch of a new European service. Sarajevo is a great all-year-round destination and we anticipate very healthy demand for the service when it launches in March."

Flights will operate on Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays, departing Sharjah International Airport at 08:15 arriving at Sarajevo International Airport at 12:20. Return flights will leave Sarajevo

International Airport at 13:10 and will land in the Sharjah International Airport at 20:35.

Air Arabia added 23 routes to its network in 2015, including becoming the first low-cost airline from the Middle East and Africa to enter the Chinese market with the launch of regular non-stop services to Urumqi, the largest city in Western China.

Sarajevo joins an array of Eastern European destinations served directly from Air Arabia's hub in Sharjah. The carrier also serves a range of cities in Western and Southern Europe through its Air Arabia Maroc operation based in Casablanca.



Official Opening of Pratt & Whitney Manufacturing Singapore

15 February 2016

Mr S Iswaran
Minister for Trade and Industry (Industry)



SINGAPORE: Bob Leduc (second left), president of US engine maker Pratt & Whitney, shakes hands with Singapore's Minister for Trade and Industry S Iswaran (second right) as P&W's senior vice president Danny Di Perma (left) and David Hess (right), the executive vice president and chief customer officer in aerospace for United Technologies, look on during the opening ceremony of Pratt & Whitney's first manufacturing facility in Singapore yesterday. —AFP

DEAL OR NO DEAL; HOW TO THINK AND WRITE ABOUT OPEC

LONDON: "Will Saudi Arabia, Iran and Russia reach a deal to boost oil prices by cutting production?" is precisely the sort of forecasting challenge tackled in Philip Tetlock's book on "Superforecasting". I have no idea if Tetlock and his colleagues have put this particular question to the panel of forecasters assembled by the Good Judgment Project but their views would be fascinating.

The question of whether there will be a deal has polarised opinion among oil analysts, traders and journalists, all of whom can cite reasons why an agreement will or will not be reached.

Passions run high on the subject and perspectives are becoming increasingly entrenched, which should make a neutral observer cautious about whether the professional forecasters are becoming overconfident.

Like all forecasts in politics, economics and international relations, any prediction about whether there will be a deal must be probabilistic ("Superforecasting: the art and science of prediction", Tetlock and Gardner, 2015). There is no clear answer. There must be some chance of a deal happening, however slim, so the probability must be greater than zero, but it is not certain to occur, so the probability must be less than one.

Most of the expert commentary at the moment employs phrases such as "unlikely", "highly unlikely" or "remains improbable" to convey the low probability of a deal.

The problem is that these words, common in everyday speech, can convey widely different estimates about the probability of an event happening. Does unlikely correspond to a probability of less than 50 percent, less than 40 percent, less than 30 percent or something else? What do highly unlikely and improbable actually mean?

The US intelligence community has been grappling with ambiguity in the way ordinary language is used to express probability for over 50 years ("Words of estimative probability", Kent, 1964).

Sherman Kent, the father of modern intelligence analysis, even tried to map the terms used in common writing by analysts into numerical probabilities (<http://tmsnrt.rs/1oDmZla>).

Kent's efforts were never entirely accepted but have powerfully shaped the way in which intelligence analysts think about and express their forecasts.

The best forecasts express likelihood and uncertainty in percentage terms so their accuracy can be evaluated after the fact and the forecasting process has

improved over time ("Verification of forecasts expressed in terms of probability", Brier, 1950).

Expressing forecasts in percentage terms becomes particularly important when the probability is likely to change over time in response to unfolding events. Good forecasts are regularly reviewed and updated in the light of new information that confirms or contradicts the original assessment ("Psychology of intelligence analysis", Heuer, 1999).

Any production-cutting deal between OPEC and non-OPEC countries could have a significant impact on oil prices if it were perceived as credible. So the probability of a deal must therefore weigh heavily in any forecast for oil prices even if the likelihood remains only 5 percent, 10 percent or 20 percent. The problem is that most major commentators have avoided issuing a forecast in percentage terms, making it hard to assess the consequences and accuracy.

Percentage forecasts would enable traders, investors and policymakers to understand how the forecast changes over time in response to comments from key participants and incoming data on supply, demand and stocks. If crude oil stocks around the world continue climbing, does that make a production-cutting deal more or less likely, and if so by how much?

If US shale output starts to fall more quickly, does that increase or reduce the chance of a production-cutting deal?

If Russia's economy slows more than expected, or Saudi Arabia's reserves fall faster than expected, what does that do to the prospect of a deal? The only way to think consistently about the oil market outlook is in terms of probabilities (and the degrees of uncertainty that surround them).

Given what we know about the past activities of the US intelligence community, it is probable or almost certain (using Kent's terminology) that an intelligence analyst in Washington has already been asked to produce an estimate of the chance of a production-cutting deal for the president and other senior policymakers.

The intelligence community's forecast is almost certainly couched in probabilistic terms. The public discussion in the media and the markets should follow the same track. The next time someone says a production deal is unlikely or growing more probable, challenge them to put a percentage figure on that statement, and ask what would cause them to update that assessment. —Reuters

INDIA FACES HURDLES DESPITE BETTER ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

Asiya Capital Investments Report

By Camille Accad

KUWAIT: The Indian economy has been resilient in an environment of slowing global growth and market volatility, with GDP growth estimated to accelerate to more than 7 percent YoY in the current fiscal year ending in March. The IMF and the Indian government expect GDP to keep accelerating next fiscal year. According to the IMF, lower commodity prices and a pickup in investment as a result of recent policy reforms will benefit growth. In our view, these projections may have to be trimmed down.

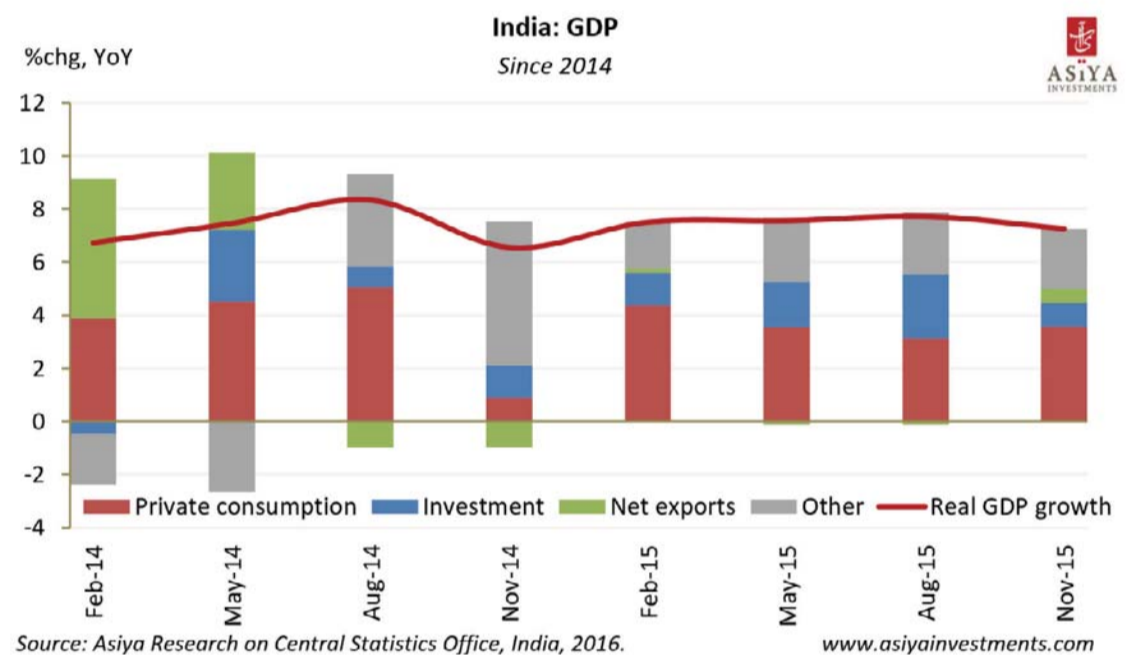
GDP for the fourth quarter of 2015 was released last week and registered a growth rate of 7.3 percent YoY, a deceleration from an upwardly revised 7.7 percent in the third quarter. Investments grew by the least in over a year, exports witnessed the sharpest decline in more than four years and imports contracted by the most in two years. The main positive take away from the latest release was the increase in private consumption growth. Also, imports contracted more than exports which led to an increase in the trade balance, an encouraging development regarding India's plans to reduce its current account deficit. Overall, the latest release of GDP showed that external factors were benefiting the economy - the IMF expects them to continue doing so - but that the domestic economy was facing hurdles, which in our view will hold back growth next fiscal year.

On the external front, two key factors will contribute positively to growth next fiscal year. First, as a net oil importer, the decline in the price of oil is benefiting India. The

government, which has been having to pay less for subsidies, will find it easier to reduce its fiscal deficit. Wholesale energy prices have also been falling sharply in the economy, which has helped boost manufacturing. Second, the Indian rupee depreciated around 10 percent in the last twelve months. The improvement in com-

reduce interest rates further in the first half of 2016, with potentially more cuts as the US economic slowdown delays the Federal Reserve's plans to raise interest rates. On the fiscal front, lower subsidy expenses will give room for the government to spend more freely on other matters, which should be confirmed in the budget

Janata Party (BJP), which leads the government, needs to hold a majority in the Rajya Sabha, India's upper house. The lack of a majority there has hampered the government's ability to implement large-scale reforms. State elections will continue to take place in the next fiscal year, which will determine whether the BJP will get hold of



Source: Asiya Research on Central Statistics Office, India, 2016.

www.asiyainvestments.com

petitiveness should help strengthen India's weak export sector. Major forecasters do not expect oil prices and the rupee to recover, which should continue to have a positive impact on growth in the fiscal year 2016-17.

Domestic economic conditions are a bit more mixed. Inflation and policy rates are at the lowest levels since the global financial crisis. The central bank is widely expected to

later this month. Moreover, an expected increase in public worker salaries will support household consumption growth, but the wage raises might take time to be implemented.

Monetary and fiscal policies will help create a business-friendly domestic environment. However, two key factors need to change in order for growth to pick up next fiscal year. First, the Bharatiya

the upper house majority. Second, more rainfalls are needed. Rural areas have suffered from two consecutive years of drought, hurting the agricultural sector. A better harvest would give a much-needed boost to the primary sector. Overall, both factors are out of the government's hands and will have to improve before the IMF's and the government's projections can materialize.

EU STEEL WORKERS PROTEST CHEAP CHINESE IMPORTS

BRUSSELS: Steel company managers joined thousands of their employees from across the European Union to protest yesterday against the import of cheap Chinese products and to warn the 28-nation bloc not to open the doors further

to Beijing. The European steel industry is accusing China of illegal export subsidies and selling products below production cost, all of which contributes to the crisis in the European steel sector. With whistles and firecrackers, the work-

ers ringed some of the EU institutions to push their demands to keep Chinese steel at bay. The industry argued that if the EU recognizes China as a market economy, a status that would allow for even more imports, it would cost tens of thousands of jobs.

"Everybody understands that there is a high need to act," said Geert Van Poelvoorde, president of the Eurofer industry group, which was behind the march. The EU currently has 37 trade and legal actions going to make sure that steel imports are fair and provide for a level playing field, something which is especially critical in an age of overproduction and dumping into the European markets. If China is given the recognition of a market economy it would become even more difficult to take action against trade which is deemed unfair. The European steel sector employs some 330,000 people but the industry official say hundreds of thousands of jobs are also at risk in the ceramics, glass, solar panels and other sectors. The Aegis alliance of major European industries says that three quarters of all EU anti-dumping measures involve China and that the complaints about Beijing are only increasing. A country might sell below production costs to gain market share or to clear out stock. "Market economy status to China would be a full license to dump whenever and in every sector China wants to do it," said Aegis spokesman Milan Nitzschke said. —AP



BRUSSELS: Steel workers hold placards reading "Stop China dumping" during a protest to demand urgent action against cheap Chinese imports, in front of the European Commission in Brussels yesterday. About 5,000 protesters asked the European Commission to ramp up tariffs on China to stop the dumping cut-price. —AFP

BOEING OFFICIAL: ASIAN CARRIERS MORE CAUTIOUS WITH ORDERS

SINGAPORE: Asian airlines which were famed in the past for multi-billion-dollar orders have become more cautious in the face of thinner profits and a global economic downturn, a Boeing executive said yesterday.

"Nobody has come to us and asked for any deferral," said Dinesh Keskar, senior vice president for sales at Boeing Commercial Airplanes covering the Asia-Pacific and India.

But Keskar, speaking on the eve of the

Singapore Airshow, said the time for big-ticket orders may be over, replaced by smaller buys with shorter replacement cycles. "From the Boeing point of view, we are in a good spot," said Keskar.

"In terms of the low-cost carrier market, our big customer here (in Southeast Asia) is Lion Air. We have delivered 165 airplanes for them and they continue to take deliveries on time," he told reporters. "When we look at airlines like Virgin Australia, Jet Airways or Spice Jet in India all of

them are doing fine. In fact some of them want their airplanes early, and our backlog is over 5,000 airplanes now so it's difficult to accelerate anybody's airplanes."

However, airlines had become more cautious. "You haven't seen any substantial orders from this part of the world (recently) and I think there was a time when a hundred-plane order was considered the fashion. It isn't the case right now," Keskar said.

In August last year, Indian airline IndiGo con-

firmed an order for 250 A320neo planes from Europe's Airbus in a deal worth \$26.5 billion at catalogue prices at that time.

Tony Tyler, director-general of the International Air Transport Association, said Sunday some airlines in the region may try to push back their orders due to softer profits.

He said that while airlines worldwide are expected to deliver \$36 billion in profits this year, up 10 percent from 2015, the majority of this

would be coming from North America.

Speaking at an aviation conference yesterday, Tyler said Asia-Pacific carriers are expected to generate \$6.6 billion in profit this year, equating to just over \$5.0 per passenger, compared to \$21 per passenger in North America. Airline savings from low fuel costs are being eroded by hedging losses and a strong dollar, Tyler said, noting that the greenback climbed 20 percent over the past 18 months. —AFP

CELEBRATE HALA FEBRUARY WITH NISSAN AL-BABTAIN GENUINE PARTS \$10,000 GRAND PRIZE & 10 WINNERS EVERY WEEK

KUWAIT: As always, Abdulmohsen Abdulaziz Al-Babtain Co (AABC), the exclusive agent of Nissan in the State of Kuwait, continues surprising their loyal customers with exclusive offers and gifts in celebration of Kuwait's National and Independence day. This exclusive Hala Feb offer gives all their customers the chance to win 10 weekly prizes and a grand raffle of 10,000\$ cash up until the 29th of February 2016.

With each purchase of KD20 or above, of Nissan Genuine parts from the Nissan Aftersales parts counter and service center,

the customer will be entitled to a coupon which gives them a chance to enter both the weekly and the grand draw.

This exclusive promotion offers 40 prizes that consist of 10 giveaways weekly, which include, a fully paid trip for two (Air tickets and Hotel accommodation to the destination of your choice), Two Iphone6s and seven 50KD Al-Babtain coupons, all on a weekly basis. Draws are on Mondays and as follow: 8th of February, 15th of February and 22nd of February.

Nissan Al-Babtain Genuine parts will hold a grand raffle draw at Nissan Al-Babtain showroom, Al-Rai to announce the \$10,000 cash prize lucky winner, as a finale for the celebration of the Hala February festival on Thursday March 16, 2016.

Nissan Al-Babtain Genuine Parts, is known for always providing the customers with exceptional offers throughout the year, the Hala February offer is a continuation of the years surprises.

Al-Babtain Group was founded in 1948, to present a model of honesty,

integrity and total dedication, gaining a solid reputation in the State of Kuwait and the Middle East area.

Today, Al-Babtain Group has licensing rights for some of the world's leading brands stretching the globe from the USA to the Far East. For more than 60 years, Al-Babtain Group has experienced continued success and a large measure of this success came from the Group's advanced flexible management style and long-term vision. These astounding results were achieved due to a versatile strategic formula focusing on growth amongst its

sphere of activities; including automotive, technology, investment, information technology, industrial and Finance.

The automotive sector is the main activity within Al-Babtain Group's business, which represents some of the best-selling brands in Kuwait, in addition to heavy equipment.

The Abdulmohsen Abdulaziz Al-Babtain Co. (AABC) is proud to be the exclusive agent and distributor of leading Japanese, European (French) and Chinese vehicles in Kuwait such as Nissan, Infiniti Renault & Citroen.

WADI ALSABEEL COMPLEX EXECUTED BY KFH ARM KUWAITI MANAGER OPENS BAHRAIN CP INAUGURATES COMPLEX BUILT AT A COST OF BHD 15M

KUWAIT: "Kuwait Finance House (KFH) is keen on assuming a significant role in supporting the development plans in the countries it operates in through the execution of several projects, be it directly or indirectly through one of its subsidiaries. KFH achieves civilizational and constructional value when executing vital development projects, mainly in the sector of real estate and urban development that is essential in energizing the market, yet offering job opportunities and luring investments," said Chairman at KFH, Hamad Abdulmohsen Al-Marzouq.

He added in a press release, ahead of the inauguration ceremony of Wadi Alsabeel Commercial

Complex executed by KFH's subsidiary "Kuwaiti Manager", in presence of Prince Salman bin Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa, Crown Prince of Bahrain, Deputy Supreme Commander and the First Deputy Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Bahrain, that the project is the first of three other projects owned by Bahraini Defense Forces and executed by KFH's subsidiary company "Kuwaiti Manager". He indicated, on the sideline of his participation in the inaugural ceremony, that such projects affirm KFH's interest in operating in the genuine economy where KFH views the Kingdom of Bahrain and Kuwait as one country and one market within the confines of the

GCC, and the cooperation framework among its peoples, reiterating KFH's confidence in the robust Bahraini economy that is characterized by an abundance of privileges and opportunities.

Meanwhile, Managing Director and CEO of KFH-Bahrain AbdulHakeem Al-Khayyat congratulated the Kingdom of Bahrain on this remarkable event represented by the opening of Wadi Alsabeel Commercial Complex that is considered as an added value to the retail sector. The complex has been designed in a unique style to create links between internal and external spaces. The complex encompasses three major sections which are restaurants, shops and

entertainment venues.

Al-Khayyat added that this project will contribute in flourishing the retail sector in the Kingdom, while increasing job opportunities. He extended his thanks to the government of Bahrain for its ceaseless efforts in consistently providing the highest level of services offered to citizens and expatriates.

For his part, GM of the Kuwaiti Manager Holding Company, Eng. Mohammad Hamed Alshalfan said that the company, specialized in executing and managing real estate projects, has executed the project in an area of 40,000 square meters through its subsidiary Kuwaiti Manager- Bahrain. The project was delivered ahead of schedule with the commitment to implementing the highest standards in terms of construction and finishing. He expressed his appreciation to the Defense Forces for their interest in the project and their role in overcoming obstacles which resulted in outstanding results.

He revealed that the company is currently implementing two other projects for the Defense Forces which are the specialized clinics and parking lots with a value of BHD 21 million and a medical training complex project with a value of BHD 7 million, in addition to other projects in the Kingdom.

It is noteworthy that the company executed many projects in Kuwait such as the Headquarters of the Ministry of Awqaf under the supervision of the Public Work Ministry, the public building and services in Alwafra project in favor of the Public Institution of Residential Care, Hanagers project owned to the National Guard, Kuwait National Museum Project and many others.



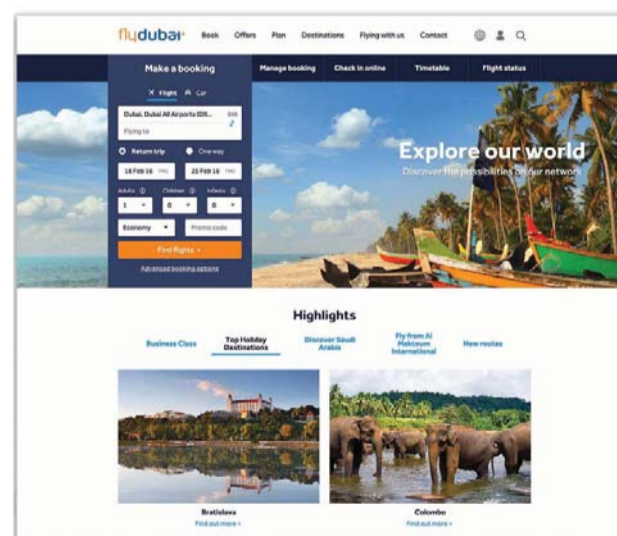
MANAMA: Al-Marzouq with Bahraini Crown Prince ahead of inaugurating Wadi Alsabeel Complex.

BE INSPIRED WITH FLYDUBAI.COM

KUWAIT: flydubai recently launched its new website, offering an enhanced browsing experience to inspire customers to explore its network of 89 destinations. The airline's new website, which is available in English, Arabic, and Russian, has been redesigned to offer a fresh look and feel and many new features. When visiting flydubai.com, customers are now offered a more personalized online experience by

receiving customized content based on their location and previous interaction with the site and a layout that automatically adjusts depending on the device being used. In addition, new destination guides and travel tips provide inspiration for planning the perfect trip, holiday or last-minute getaway to one of flydubai's hidden gems such as Bratislava, Tbilisi and Zanzibar.

Commenting on the new website Ramesh Venkat, Chief Information Officer (CIO) at flydubai, said, "We're excited to see the launch of our newly designed website. The recent relocation of our reservation system from Orlando to Dubai alongside the redesign of our website confirms our commitment to providing our customers with the best possible experience when navigating flydubai.com."



QALAA HOLDINGS IS PLATINUM SPONSOR OF COMESA'S AFRICA 2016 INVESTMENT FORUM

CAIRO: Qalaa Holdings (CCAPCA on the Egyptian Exchange), an African leader in energy and infrastructure, announced today its participation in the Africa 2016 Investment Forum, which will be held in Sharm El-Sheikh on 20-21 February under the patronage of President AbdelFattah El-Sisi.

The event will bring together government officials, private sector leaders and other stakeholders from the COMESA region who will collaborate to create a unified vision based on their collective experience ahead of the establishment of the Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA).

"African markets continue to offer unique investment opportunities. Despite the challenges, Africa has unmatched fundamentals and remarkable potential for growth that is commensurate with the aspirations of its young, growing population," said Ahmed Heikal, Founder and

Chairman of Qalaa Holdings. "However, this growth will be conditional upon the continent's ability to pool the global capital and expertise required to maximize efficiency and achieve sustainable and impactful growth that will advance Africa's competitiveness on the global economic arena."

"Africa has a clear US\$ 93 billion annual deficit in infrastructure spending and that's a massive opportunity by any count. With the continent set to become home to the world's largest working-age population within a few decades, there's never been a better time to invest in Africa, which stands today as a 1 billion-strong consumer market and home to seven out of the world's 10 fastest growing economies," said Heikal.

"In each of the industries in which we invest, we seek to address a specific value proposition that will help drive growth on

the African continent. These include energy deregulation, demand for infrastructure, population growth, and the favorable economics of exporting," said KarimSadek, Qalaa Holdings Managing Director and Head of Transportation and Logistics investments including railway operations in Kenya and Uganda through RVR and river transport investments in Egypt and South Sudan under the umbrella of Nile Logistics.

"Ongoing collaboration and aligned vision on the economic front is integral to achieving sustainable development in Africa. The lack of efficient modes of transport is one of the major hurdles that stand in the way of growing intra-regional trade volumes. Government efforts to coordinate and upgrade cross-border regulatory frameworks must go hand in hand with private sector investment to build new infrastructure that would facilitate the

transport of goods and reduce the cost intra-regional trade creating global export hubs within the region.

RVR is Qalaa Holdings' primary investment in the African rail transport sector with a 25-year concession to operate the Kenya-Uganda railway. Since the start of the USD 287 million capital investment and turnaround program that began in January 2012, RVR has invested in modern rail operating technology, rebuilding infrastructure, expanding haulage capacity and developing modern rail operating skills in the company's 2,000 strong workforce. The time that it takes to move a container by rail from Mombasa to Kampala has been reduced by more than half and trains are running on time for the first time in decades. RVR has also overhauled more than half of its fleet of locomotives and purchased 20 additional locomotives in addition to hundreds of new wagons.



GULF BANK LAUNCHES NEW SALARY PROMOTION

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank announces the launch of its new 2016 Salary offer for Kuwaiti salary customers. This new promotion is valid through 31 December 2016.

The offer is open to all Kuwaitis who transfer their salary payments to Gulf Bank. Customers gifts are based on the amount of their salary transfer and include either cash or Gulf Rewards incentives. Gulf Rewards is the fastest and most rewarding points program in Kuwait. It includes Gulf Points for free flights and hotels redemptions, as well as Gulf Bank Entertainer, Kuwait's first geolocator mobile application offering exclusive deals in Kuwait, UAE, and London.

Upon transferring their salary, customers will have a choice of prize depending on their salary range. If the salary amount transferred is between KD600 - KD800, the gift is either KD100 or 30,000 Gulf Points; if salary is between KD800 - KD1999, the choice is either KD200 or 60,000 Gulf Points;

for salaries at KD2000 and customers are entitled to a Gulf Bank Visa Signature credit card free for life. Additionally, all customers will have the chance to enter a monthly cash draw to win KD 1,000 and quarterly cash draws with the chance to win a new Cadillac.

In addition to these exciting prizes, Gulf Bank is also offering other benefits as part of its salary offer. These include an annual fee waiver on new Gulf Bank credit cards for the first year; loans of up to KD70, 000 payable over 15 years; and special vehicle discounts when financing the vehicle through Gulf Bank and available from the bank's dealership partners.

Using Gulf Points is easy as Gulf Bank created a dedicated webpage on its website www.e-gulfbank.com/gulfpoints-en where customers can view their points balances, redeem points instantly online for free flights and hotel stays, and benefit from special offers.

BURGAN BANK WINNERS OF YAWMI ACCOUNT

KUWAIT: Borgan Bank announced yesterday the names of the lucky winners of its Yawmi account draw, each taking home a prize of KD 5,000.

The lucky winners for the daily draws took home a cash-prize of KD 5,000 each, and they are:

1. Bader Ali Yaqoub Al-Wazzan
2. Mohammad Zeber Mohammad Naeem
3. Hussain Hameed Ahmad Mohammad
4. Sh: Nawal Mohd Al-Jaber Al-Sabah
5. Fatma Lilo Naif Shaded

To further add to the anticipation of Yawmi account customers, Borgan Bank now offers a Quarterly Draw with more chances to win higher rewards, entitling one lucky customer to win KD 125,000 every three months. The Yawmi Account now offers Daily and quarterly Draws, the Quarterly Draw requires customers to maintain a minimum amount of KD 500 in their account for 2 months prior to draw date. Additionally, every KD 10

in the account, will entitle customers to one chance of winning. If the account balance is KD 500 and above, the account holder will be qualified for both the quarterly and daily draws.

Borgan Bank encourages everyone to open a Yawmi account and/or increase their deposit to maximize their chances to becoming a winner. The more customers deposit, the higher the chances they receive of winning.

For more information on opening a Yawmi account or about the new quarterly draw, customers are urged to visit their nearest Borgan Bank branch and receive all the details, or simply call the bank's Call Center at 1804080 where customer service representatives will be delighted to assist with any questions on the Yawmi account or any of the bank's products and services. Customers can also log on to Borgan Bank's www.borgan.com for further information.

OGILVYONE MENA REINFORCES LONGSTANDING RELATIONSHIP WITH UNILEVER

KUWAIT: Unilever has aligned with OgilvyOne and Geometry Global to manage its digital and activation plans in the Gulf for three of its prominent brands: Dove, Rexona, and Signal.

The combined team of OgilvyOne Dubai and Geometry Global Dubai will lead the brands' 2016 digital plans, developing their strategies and content, as well as executing their campaigns across all digital and on ground channels. Following the appointment, Nabil Moutran, Regional Director of OgilvyOne MENA commented: "OgilvyOne enjoys a longstanding relationship with Unilever around the world. For us to have the opportunity to further build on that partnership on brands such as Dove, Rexona, and Signal is a tremendous achievement and honor".

OgilvyOne leverages ideas, knowledge, data, content and technology to deliver Customer Engagement solutions that help its clients grow their businesses and strengthen relationships with their customers. With this in mind, the agency brings the finest talents from specialized skills into one team to give its clients options that evolve with their business needs. This approach helps engaging OgilvyOne clients in an effective manner while also developing solid integrated solutions.

From his side, Nick Walsh, General Manager of Geometry Global in the UAE said: "We are excited to continue working on Unilever, and thanks to the collaborative

approach adopted by Geometry Global and OgilvyOne which was a massive contributing factor to the win. We will work closely with our colleagues at OgilvyOne to offer Unilever brands effective experiential and digital marketing services across all touch-points".

"The OgilvyOne MENA team showed a great understanding of our brand and culture. We were impressed by their clear strategy and creative ideas developed for the three brands' 2016 digital activities," affirmed Sabeen Fazli, Marketing Director at Unilever Gulf. "We are very excited to align the Unilever-Ogilvy global partnership in the Gulf region. Together, Unilever and Ogilvy have produced some iconic campaigns and we aim to replicate the same success in the Gulf".

Embracing a cohesive account management approach to ensure a consistent view of Unilever's 3 brands within the two agencies, OgilvyOne and Geometry Global built a consolidated team running by one account structure with a single point of contact. Bringing together planning and creative talents will enable the team to deliver greater value to the business as well as efficient response to the client's needs.

"It was a long yet very rewarding experience working with Sabeen and her team in bringing back Unilever under our umbrella. We are looking forward to revolutionizing the brand's digital presence through cutting-edge campaigns and help to support their business growth," concluded Nabil Moutran.

EMC ANNOUNCES GRADUATE PROJECT COMPETITION FOR MEA, TURKEY

DUBAI: EMC Middle East yesterday announced the successful initiation of the Annual EMC Graduate Project Competition for Middle East and Africa. Titled "Envision the Future" and sponsored by the EMC's Egyptian Centre of Excellence (COE), the competition is being judged by a panel of 10 esteemed industry leaders and academicians from across the globe. The competition which was open to senior undergraduate students from universities in Turkey, Middle East and Africa enrolled in the EMC Academic Alliance program is aimed at sparking innovation and creativity in IT education.

The EMC Graduate Project Competition was divided into five stages, kicking off with project abstract submission on the 15th of October and has since witnessed

over 65 projects from 272 participating students from across the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Morocco and Kenya. An astounding 40% of these entries were submitted by young women from across these countries.

Now in the semi-final stage, 30 projects have been shortlisted based on project abstract submissions that were created using only Open Source tools in areas related to cloud and social networking apps, multi-clouds and hybrid cloud, software defined data center and networks, technology for big data apps and domain specific big data applications.

Shortlisted candidates will now move into the next phase of the competition with guidance from professors to put together competitive projects which will be evaluated based on relevance, originality,

significance and expected impact. Winners of the EMC Graduate Project Competition will be announced on the 1st of September, 2016 and will stand a chance to win financial exciting prizes.

The competition is sponsored by the EMC's Egyptian Centre of Excellence (COE), which continues to focus investments in Universities' program, community activities, innovation and joint-research in a bid to build and leverage a regional talent pool. Through this exercise the Egypt COE also will identify and recruit aspiring professionals as part of its growth plan to make more significant regional impact.

The announcement aligns with the rapid expansion of the EMC Academic Alliance Program that has seen EMC partner with over 170 leading universities from across

the region. The program offers unique, "open" curriculum-based education that is aimed at helping students bridge the gap between what they are taught in universities and the skills needed to succeed in the steadily evolving IT industry.

As enterprises across the region continue to invest in third platform technologies such as cloud, social, mobile and big data to drive competitive differentiation and enhance service delivery, the EMC Academic Alliance is a first of its kind industry-academia partnership that is designed to help students acquire the education and practical skills required to manage and operate complex third platform driven infrastructure.

Over the last three years, over 5000 students across the region have availed of the

courses offered as part of the EMC Academic Alliance Program on topics including virtualization, cloud computing, big data analytics, information storage and management, and data protection. The courses based on truly "open" curriculum focuses on concepts and principles applicable to any vendor environment, enabling students to develop highly marketable knowledge and skills demanded by today's evolving IT industry.

In 2015, 1000 students have earned the prestigious EMC Academic Associate certification demonstrating their proficiency to potential employers, and aiding their progress to more advanced technology education courses and certifications from EMC-all designed to help fill the current shortage of skilled workers in the IT industry.



CHAPEL HILL: A toddler participates in a speech perception experiment in a laboratory at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill, NC. The toddler was conditioned to put a block in the bucket whenever she heard the "target" word. — AP

NEW RESEARCH FINDS NOISE HARDER ON KIDS THAN ADULTS

WASHINGTON: From the cacophony of day care to the buzz of TV and electronic toys, noise is more distracting to a child's brain than an adult's, and new research shows it can hinder how youngsters learn. In fact, one of the worst offenders when a tot's trying to listen is other voices babbling in the background, researchers said Saturday at a meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

"What a child hears in a noisy environment is not what an adult hears," said Dr. Lori Leibold of Boys Town National Research Hospital in Omaha, Nebraska.

That's a Catch-22 in our increasingly noisy lives because "young children learn language from hearing it," said Dr. Rochelle Newman of the University of Maryland. "They have a greater need for understanding speech around them but at the same time they're less equipped to deal with it."

It's not their ability to hear. For healthy children, the auditory system is pretty well developed by a few months of age. Consider how hard it is to carry on a conversation in a noisy restaurant. Researchers simulated that background in a series of experiments by playing recordings of people reading and talking while testing how easily children detected words they knew, such as "playground," when a new voice broke through the hubbub, or how easily they learned new words.

The youngest children could recognize one person's speech amid multiple talkers, but only at relatively soft noise levels, Newman said. Even the background noise during relatively quiet day care story time can be enough for tots to miss parts of what's read, she said. It's not just a concern for toddlers and preschoolers. The ability to understand and process speech against competing background noise doesn't mature until adolescence, Leibold said.

Nor is the challenge just to tune out the background buzz. Brief sudden noises - someone coughs, a car horn blares - can draw out part of a word or sentence. An adult's experienced brain automatically substitutes a logical choice, often well enough that the person doesn't notice, Newman said.

"Young children don't do this. Their brain doesn't fill in the gaps," she said. Children who were born prematurely may have an additional risk. When preemies

spend a long time in an incubator, their brains get used to the constant "white noise" of the machine's fan - different from a full-term baby who develops hearing mom's voice in the womb and thus is wired to pay more attention to voices, said Dr. Amir Lahav of Harvard Medical School. He had mothers of preemies record themselves singing lullabies or reading stories, and filtered them along with the sound of mom's heartbeat into the incubator three times a day when she wasn't otherwise visiting. The brain's auditory cortex became more developed in babies given that extra womb-like exposure compared with preemies with typical incubator care, Lahav found. Moreover, when those babies were big enough to leave the hospital, they paid more attention to speech, he said.

"Exposure to noises and sounds very early in life will spill over to affect how our brain is going to function," Lahav said. Noise also is a special challenge for children with hearing loss, who may need technology beyond standard hearing aids to cope, Leibold said, describing special receivers that can transmit a teacher's voice directly to the ear so it's not lost in classmates' chatter. The research has implications for classroom design, too, Leibold added, as the type of flooring or ceiling height can either soften kids' natural noise or bounce it around.

But learning starts at home, and University of Maryland child language specialist Nan Bernstein Ratner often has parents ask if they should stimulate a tot's environment with interactive toys and educational TV. "We tend to think bustling environments and creating background noise is stimulating for kids," she said. But, she said, "what's stimulating on the part of the parent may not be for the child."

Among the tips:

Don't leave the TV, radio and other electronics on in the background. It's not clear whether soft music is distracting, but lyrics might be, Ratner said.

* Speak clearly and make eye contact.

* Especially in noise, make sure tots see your face. They can pick up on mouth movements, Newman said.

* If the child doesn't understand, try again with simpler words.

* If a child's having school behavior problems, make sure being unable to hear in class isn't the problem. — AP

DRONES BECOMING 'REAL' THREAT TO COMMERCIAL AVIATION: IATA

INDUSTRY GROUP CALLS FOR REGULATIONS

SINGAPORE: Civilian drones are increasingly becoming a "real and growing threat" to the safety of commercial aviation, industry group IATA warned yesterday, calling for regulations to be put in place before any serious accidents occur. Tony Tyler, director-general of the International Air Transport Association, said the threat posed by unmanned aerial vehicles is still evolving as people are only starting to discover the many potential, non-military applications of the technology.

"I am as excited as you are about the prospect of having pizza delivered by a drone," he said at an aviation conference in Singapore on the eve of the Singapore Airshow. "They are here to stay. But we cannot allow them to be a hindrance or safety threat to commercial aviation," he told industry executives and air transport officials.

"We need a sensible approach to regulation and a pragmatic method of enforcement for those who disregard rules and regulations and put others in danger," he added. As the use of drones expand from military to commercial and even recreational purposes, experts fear that these radio-controlled flying devices, if not regulated, could one day collide with a commercial aircraft with dire consequences.

"The issue is real. We have plenty of pilot reports of drones where they were not expected, particularly at low altitudes around airports... There is no denying that there is a real and growing threat to the safety of civilian aircraft (coming from drones)," said Tyler.

Rob Eagles, an expert on drones in IATA, said the industry group did not have figures on the number of drones in operation worldwide but anecdotal evidence showed they were mushrooming. When the US Federal Aviation Administration ordered a registration of drones weighing up to 55 pounds (25 kilograms) last year, 300,000 were registered within just the first month in December, he said. While 55-pound drones are considered small, "this just gives you an indicator of the number of vehicles," Eagles



SINGAPORE: Tony Tyler, director general and CEO of the International Air Transport Association (IATA), speaks at the Singapore Airshow Aviation Leadership Summit in Singapore yesterday. — AFP

told AFP at the conference. "There's going to be an increase in vehicles across the whole scope and range from small to medium size to the larger unmanned vehicles."

'Close encounters'

IATA's primary concern are drones flying at low altitudes near airports which could threaten planes that are taking off or landing, Eagles said.

Aviation regulators also want to make sure that the radio spectrum used to control the drones does not interfere with air traffic control systems, he said. The Center for the Study of Drones at New York-based Bard College said in a report that it recorded 921 incidents involving drones and manned aircraft in US airspace between December 2013 and September 2015.

Thirty-six percent of these were considered as "close encounters", it said. "We found that over 90 percent of all incidents occurred above 400 feet, the maximum altitude at which drones are allowed to fly," said the report posted on the centre's website. In 28 of the incidents, the commercial pilot had to manoeuvre to avoid collision with a drone, it said. Of the 191 states within the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), 63 so far have regulations already in place for drones, Eagles said. Nine states have pending regulations, while five have banned their use, he said. "But there's not a consistency across the regulations," he said, adding IATA aims to help harmonize global rules. "There is an urgency associated with it because it's such a fast-moving industry," said Eagles. — AFP

1930S ELECTRICITY CO-OPS TAKE INTERNET INITIATIVE

DENVER: When sisters Caroline Clark and Dianne Rissman set up their quilt shop in the house on their family farm in Iowa 2004, vendors they would call about fabric or thread would helpfully tell them it would be easier to order online.

"And we'd say, 'Yeah, it would, if we could get on the Internet,'" Clark said and laughed. She remembered when it could take an hour to download a Web page using their old dial-up connection. Or, once they switched to satellite, waiting until the late-night period when service was cheaper to upload photos onto their own site.

Last fall, they signed up for a new broadband service from their Allamakee-Clayton Electric Cooperative, which serves a region with a population so scattered it has just four customers per mile of electric line.

Last year, their Forest Mills Quilt Shop shipped kits and materials to 27 states and Canada.

"And that's all done through the Internet," Clark said. Cooperatives that have been bringing electricity to rural America since the 1930s are getting into the broadband business, now that it's communication and information that power the economy.

Allamakee-Clayton cooperative general manager Paul Foxwell said high speed Internet connections could spur development and stem the flow of young people to the cities. His cooperative got a \$1.4 million grant under a 2014 federal program to build infrastructure that includes wireless stations and repeaters, and the Forest Mills Quilt Shop is among its first several hundred fixed wireless subscribers. "Rural America was being left in the dark with the extension of electricity outside the cities," said Jason Bronec, CEO of the Delta-Montrose Electric Association.

The group last year decided to offer broadband in response to frustrations on farms, ranches and small towns that being unconnected hurts business, hampers access to health care and leaves students behind.

Farmers in central Missouri were stuffing notes into their electric bills asking whether the 25,000-member Co-Mo could do anything to help with broadband, the cooperative's General Manager Ken Johnson said. Co-Mo started building its broadband network in 2013 and now has 11,000 subscribers.

Ryan Newlon got his Co-Mo connection just in time, before a Missouri National Guard deployment to Kosovo in 2014. It meant he was able to Skype with his children, then ages 4, 6 and 9.

Without it, he would have been largely limited to a much more old-fashioned way of staying part of his children's lives during the nine months he was in Kosovo. "The days of writing letters and waiting for them to arrive, a lot of people think those days are gone. But in rural America, they're not," he said.

Mike Keyser, CEO of a Virginia co-op that will be providing broadband within a year and a half, is convinced it is "up to the electric cooperatives to step up and provide. If they don't, then the customers won't get it." The Federal Communications Commission estimates 39 percent of America's rural population is without access to fixed broadband at a benchmark speed

of 25 Mbps for downloads and 3 Mbps for uploads, compared to 4 percent in urban areas.

The numbers are similar in Colorado, according to Brian Shepherd, who manages the broadband program of the state Office of Internet Technology.

Shepherd shared a story he heard from Delta, a town of just under 9,000 that is 300 miles west of Denver, of farm kids bringing homework to the library parking lot so they can do online research.

They log onto the wireless network the librarian thoughtfully left running when she closed up. Fiona Arnold, the director of the state's Office of Economic Development and Trade, said policy makers are concerned that the digital disconnect is increasing the "divide between haves and have nots, between rural and urban." Broadband companies that answer to shareholders say scattered populations and difficult access make business unprofitable in much of rural America. "Distance, density and terrain are always factors," said Mark Soltes, assistant vice president for public policy and government affairs for CenturyLink, the telecommunications firm which provides internet service in Colorado.

Broadband projects

Last year, CenturyLink got an FCC grant of just over \$500 million to use for rural broadband projects in 33 states. Similar grants have been made to other major carriers. Soltes said talking to potential customers has been part of preparing for the project in Colorado.

"We have been around the state, we have heard the frustration," he said. Making the math work despite the challenges is a concern for the 850 electricity cooperatives across the country who are members of the National Rural Telecommunications Cooperative, its CEO Tim Bryan said.

Bryan said numbers were hard to pin down, but that he believed about 10 percent of his electricity members were providing broadband service to consumers. In Colorado, Arnold said the state wanted to provide tax and other incentives to encourage the private sector to move into hard-to-reach areas of Colorado. As a measure of citizens' frustrations, she cited not only rural utility cooperatives' efforts, but elections last November in which voters in 43 rural and mountain Colorado communities called on their leaders to enter the broadband business. Colorado is one of 19 states with laws aimed at preventing governments from competing with telecommunications companies by providing Internet access. Here, the restrictions can be overturned by voters on a municipality-by-municipality basis.

The 43 measures on November ballots were the most since the Colorado law was passed in 2005. Better connectivity can have its downside. The Iowa quilting entrepreneur was responding to an order on Thanksgiving and wondering who would be shopping on a holiday. Then she realized the customer was in Canada. "It is good to be occasionally unplugged from work," Clark said. — AP

GOOGLE 'PROJECT LOON' BALLOON ENTERS SRI LANKA FOR INTERNET TESTS

COLOMBO: Google's balloon-powered high-speed Internet service known as "Project Loon" began its first tests in Sri Lanka yesterday ahead of a planned joint venture with Colombo, the country's top IT official said. One of three balloons that will be used in the trials entered Sri Lanka airspace yesterday, the Information and Communication Technology Agency chief Muhunthan Canagey said.

"The first balloon entered our airspace this morning. It was launched from South America," Canagey told AFP. "It is currently over southern Sri Lanka." He said a Google team was expected later this week to test flight controls, spectrum efficiency and other technical matters.

The government announced earlier this month it would take a 25 percent stake in a joint venture with Google to deliver a high-speed Internet service powered by helium-filled balloons.

Sri Lanka is not investing any capital, but will take the stake in return for allocating spectrum for the project. A further

10 percent of the joint venture would be offered to existing telephone service providers on the island.

It promises to extend coverage and cheaper rates for data services. Service providers will be able to access higher speeds and improve the quality of their existing service once the balloon project is up and running. The balloons, once in the stratosphere, will be twice as high as commercial airliners and barely visible to the naked eye. The balloons will have a lifespan of about 180 days, but can be recycled, according to Sri Lankan officials involved in the venture.

Official figures show there are 3.3 million mobile Internet connections and 630,000 fixed line Internet subscribers among Sri Lanka's more than 20 million population.

Sri Lanka became the first country in South Asia to introduce mobile phones in 1989 and the first to roll out a 3G network in 2004. It was also the first in the region to unveil a 4G network two years ago. — AFP



A Mexican worker assembles electric components for planes in one of the five Labinal Power Systems factories of the Safran group in Chihuahua, northern Mexico. — AFP

MYSTERY BRAIN DISORDER ROBBS PATIENTS OF THEIR WORDS

WASHINGTON: A mysterious brain disorder can be confused with early Alzheimer's disease although it isn't robbing patients of their memories but of the words to talk about them. It's called primary progressive aphasia, and researchers said Sunday they're finding better ways to diagnose the little-known syndrome. That will help people whose thoughts are lucid but who are verbally locked in to get the right kind of care. "I'm using a speech device to talk to you," Robert Voogt of Virginia Beach, Virginia, said by playing a recording from a phone-sized assistive device at a meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. "I have trouble speaking, but I can understand you."

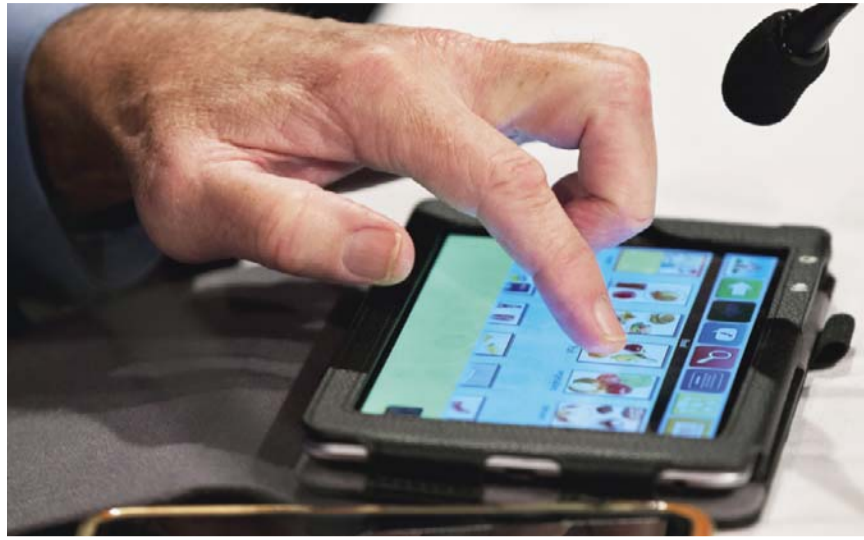
Even many doctors know little about this rare kind of aphasia, abbreviated PPA, but raising awareness is key to improve care - and because a new study is underway to try to slow the disease by electrically stimulating the affected brain region. PPA wasn't identified as a separate disorder until the 1980s, and while specialists estimate thousands of Americans may have it, there's no good count. Families may not even seek care because they assume a loved one's increasingly garbled attempts to communicate are because of age-related dementia, said Dr Argye Elizabeth Hillis of Johns Hopkins University. Often, it's when those people

reach neurologists who realize they aren't repeating questions or forgetting instructions that the diagnosis emerges.

Nobody's talking to them

"Nobody's talking to them, nobody's involving them. It's very sad," said Dr Margaret Rogers of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. Yet for many, "they can handle their own finances, they can drive, they can appreciate music. There's a lot that still works for them." Speech and language are hugely complex. Just to speak requires activating 100 muscles between the lungs and lips to produce at least 14 distinct sounds per second, said Dr Joseph Duffy of the Mayo Clinic. Stroke or brain injury patients often have trouble making sounds or retrieving words. PPA occurs for a different reason, because the brain regions that control language become diseased and degenerate, resulting in communication difficulties that may mimic broader dementia.

Special MRI scans can tell the difference, Hillis said. They also can help identify whose aphasia will worsen faster, and who has a subtype that can morph to become Alzheimer's-like, where they eventually do lose memory and the ability to understand language. Standard language therapy has patients match pictures to the correct word, to keep the



WASHINGTON: Robert Voogt uses the communication device MiniTalk to answer questions during a news conference in Washington. Voogt cannot speak because he suffers from primary progressive aphasia, a brain disorder sometimes confused with Alzheimer's. — AP

wiring involved as active as possible. Now, Hillis' team is testing if a kind of brain stimulation that sends electrical signals through the skull can rev up the effects of that treatment.

Medical treatment

In the first 19 patients tested, people did better retrieving the right words for

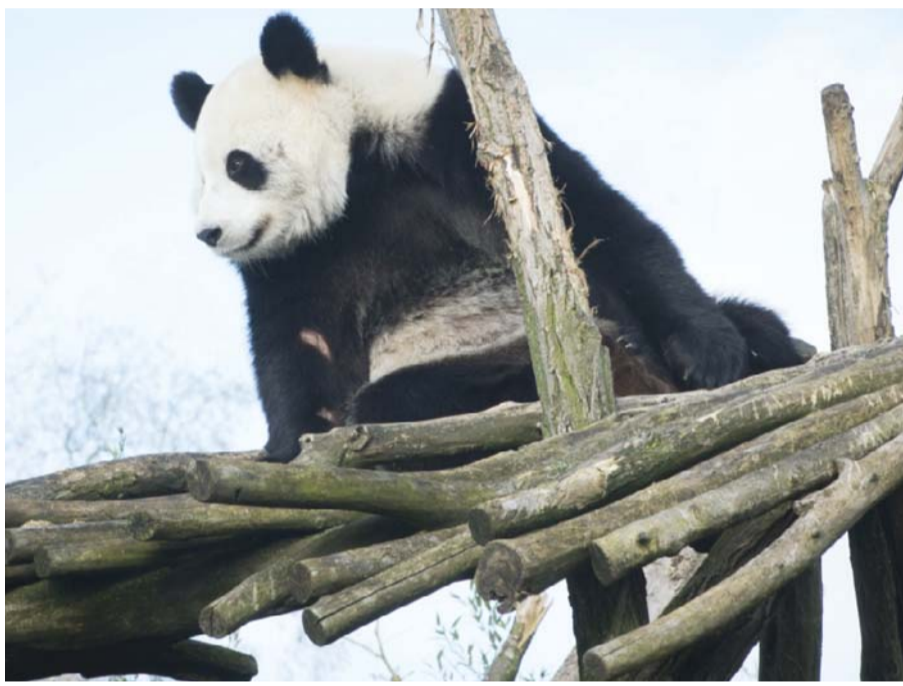
about two months after receiving the electrical stimulation than when they received sham zaps with their regular therapy, Hillis reported Sunday. They were more able to name objects they hadn't practiced, and brain scans showed better connectivity in the affected region. But it will take far more study to prove if the treatment produces last-

ing effects, she cautioned. Until there's better medical treatment, Voogt, the Virginia patient, illustrates how assistive communication devices can help patients' quality of life. Now 66, Voogt was diagnosed 10 years ago, with a form of PPA that makes him unable to say words even though he can understand and type them via email, text or his assistive device.

He owns a brain-injury rehabilitation center, and knew how to track down a specialist for diagnosis when he first had trouble retrieving words.

Sunday, Voogt patiently answered Hillis' questions by typing into a device called the MiniTalk, or calling up verbal phrases he'd pre-programmed into it. Asked to say "dog," Voogt forced out only a garble. But asked what cowboys ride, he typed horses and the device "said" the word. His form of PPA also impacts grammar so that he has difficulty forming full sentences, Hillis said.

Asked to write that's "it's a cold day in Washington," Voogt typed a minute or two and the device's recorder emitted "cold Washington DC." Voogt typed that he started relying on the device in 2012, but lives independently and travels internationally. But asked how difficult the loss of language is to live with, he typed out a pretty bad rating - 70 percent. — AP



BRUGELLETTE: Female giant Panda Hao Hao is pictured at Pairi Daiza animal park in Brugellette. Two Chinese experts have been called in to the animal park in Belgium to help two giant pandas Haoi Hao and Xing Hui reproduce. — AFP

UNBEAR-LIEVABLE: DOUBTS THE OVER MYANMAR 'RED PANDA'

YANGON: Doubts were cast yesterday over a poignant tale of a rescued panda donated to a Mandalay zoo, after an expert said a photo in Myanmar's state media showed a creature that more closely resembled a black bear. The "Himalayan panda"-a term sometimes used for the small copper-furred red panda-was found in a remote area of eastern Shan state near the border with Thailand, according to the state-backed Global New Light of Myanmar.

The "little panda was donated to the Mandalay Yadanaporn Zoological Garden," the report said citing local officials and the forestry department. But a photograph accompanying the article showed a creature that was black from snout to paws. "Looking at the news photo... it's not a panda. It's just a Himalayan bear commonly

found in Myanmar," an official from the forestry department's wildlife conservation section told AFP requesting anonymity.

Pandas are also not found in Shan state, he said. "We have red pandas in the northern part of the country... but I have no idea how many of them there are," he said. Scepticism also swiftly swirled on social media. According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) red list of threatened species, the red panda is only found in northern Kachin state near the Chinese border.

The panda confusion has revived memories of mistaken animal identity elsewhere. In 2013, a Chinese zoo tried to pass off a large Tibetan Mastiff as an "African lion"-but were rumbled when the hairy dog started barking. — AFP

BLOOD-BOOSTERS 'MAY GIVE' TINY PREEMIES DEVELOPMENTAL EDGE

CHICAGO: Two blood-building drugs injected soon after birth may give tiny preemies a lasting long-term edge, boosting brain development and IQ by age 4, a first-of-its-kind study found. The study was small but the implications are big if larger, longer studies prove the drugs help even the playing field for these at-risk children, the researchers and other experts say. Babies who got the medicine scored much better by age 4 on measures of intelligence, language and memory than preemies who didn't get it. The medicine group's scores on an important behavior measure were just as good as a control group of 4-year-olds born on time at a normal weight.

The results are "super exciting," said Dr. Robin Ohls, the lead author and a pediatrics professor at the University of New Mexico. She said it's the first evidence of long-term benefits of the drugs when compared to no blood-boosting treatment. Even though the treated youngsters didn't do as well as the normal-weight group on most measures, their scores were impressive and suggest greater brain development than the other preemies, Ohls said.

They scored about 12 points higher on average on IQ tests than the untreated kids but about 10 points lower than the normal-weight group. On tests measuring memory and impulsive behavior, the treated kids fared as well as those born at normal weight. Here's how those differences would show up in a preschool setting: The untreated group would be the kids who struggle a little in class, while the those who got the medicines would do OK but not as well as those born at a normal weight, said Dr. Michael Schreiber, a prematurity expert at the University of Chicago's Comer Children's Hospital.

Survival of extremely tiny preemies has improved dramatically in the past 50

years, but treatment for medical problems and developmental delays linked with prematurity has not kept pace, Schreiber said.

He was not involved in the study. He said larger studies including more diverse patient populations are needed to determine if the drugs can help a broader range of preemies. The study involved 53 children, most white or Hispanic, born more than a month premature and weighing less than 3 pounds at hospitals in New Mexico, Utah and Colorado. Two dozen normal-weight children were also included.

Results were published Monday in Pediatrics. Shortly after birth the preemies were randomly assigned to receive injections of either erythropoietin (EPO), three times weekly; darbepoetin once a week for several weeks; or no treatment.

The drugs build red blood cells and are approved to treat anemia caused by cancer treatment or resulting from other conditions. Preemies lack the ability to make new red blood cells and often need frequent blood transfusions to replace blood taken for lab tests. The drugs are now sometimes used to try to reduce their need for transfusions, in doses similar to the ones studied.

The drugs can increase endurance by boosting oxygen levels in the blood, and have been implicated in some sports doping scandals.

Dr Sandra Juul, a University of Washington pediatrics professor, is leading a larger multi-center study of both drugs in preemies and said it's too soon to recommend the medicines for treating developmental delays. Still, since almost half of infants born extremely early have significant developmental problems, any treatment that could improve their lives "is incredibly important," Juul said. — AP

STUDENTS TURN BRAINPOWER TOWARD SUICIDE PREVENTION

MIT LOOKING FOR THEIR OWN SOLUTIONS

CAMBRIDGE: After seven suicides in two years, students at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology are looking for their own solutions to prevent more deaths. The school unveiled a sweeping plan to bolster mental health last fall, adding staff psychologists and expanding counseling hours, among other measures. But students have added their own ingenuity in recent months, starting a wave of grassroots projects intended to defuse the stress of campus life before it leads to a crisis. One group of students launched a texting hotline called Lean On Me this month, letting students chat anonymously with trained student volunteers about anything that's troubling them. Other students plan to install artificial light boxes on campus, meant to treat depression that can take hold during dreary months.

By her count, sophomore Izzy Lloyd has handed out more than 4,000 specially made wristbands that say TMYAD. It's short for "tell me about your day," a message that aims to get students talking with one another. Lloyd started the project last year after two of her freshman classmates took their own lives in the same week. "It's suicide prevention by community building," said Lloyd, 19. "We're showing people who may feel like they have nothing left that they have a world of people who do care about them." Other projects take a lighter tone, like the new MIT Puppy Lab that will bring therapy dogs to campus this semester.

Campus officials recently awarded almost

\$50,000 in grants to support campus projects meant to improve mental health. They say the new work is a reflection of MIT's culture, marked by a drive to solve problems. But students said they're also meeting a demand for services that were missing on the campus of 11,000 students. "If we really solved the problem, we wouldn't be running into this same cycle of mental illness that we've been seeing," said Nikhil Buduma, who graduated last year and founded Lean On Me with two current students. The hotline, he added, lets students get help anonymously and avoid stigmas tied to mental illness.

Across the country, experts say, college students are playing a bigger role in suicide prevention. And more often, schools welcome that kind of help. "We have found time and again that students listen to students before they listen to anyone else," said Nance Roy, clinical director at the Jed Foundation, a nonprofit group based in New York that works to prevent suicide among college students. "These issues can no longer just fall to the counseling center."

Roy said there's no evidence that elite schools have disproportionately high suicide rates. But a national study suggests that MIT's rate was above average last year. The average suicide rate among college students was seven for every 100,000 students between 2004 and 2009, according to research from the University of Rochester. Three MIT students took their lives last year, translating to almost 27 for every 100,000. There have been at least seven student

suicides since 2014, according to reports from the school's student newspaper.

Sleep is for the Strong

Some students and alumni say that MIT's culture pushes students to extremes, sometimes at the expense of a social life or emotional health. "It's heroic and glorified to push oneself to the point of our boundaries, of our physical or bodily needs," said Sahar Hakim-Hashemi, a 2013 graduate who's filming a documentary called "Sleep is for the Strong," exploring mental health at MIT and ways to improve it. "It's like it shows how hardcore and strong someone is." And while students come with big ambitions, MIT officials said, they don't always have the skills to cope with the pressure. "We recognize that a lot of kids coming in today are not as well-prepared for these challenges," said Rosalind Picard, a professor of media arts and sciences who leads the school's campaign to support mental-health projects.

Picard says the new work on campus is a turning point. Beyond treating mental illness, she said, there's a new focus on preventing problems. Meanwhile, some of the new student projects have begun drawing interest elsewhere. Six other schools have bought Lloyd's TMYAD wristbands for their students, and dozens more have said they're interested. The team behind Lean On Me has received inquiries about the texting hotline from outside MIT, and they hope to bring it to other schools. "It's not a product built only for MIT students," Buduma said. "Our goal is really just to help people feel like they belong to a community." — AP

US HOUSE BACKS BILL TO EASE CALORIE LABELING

WASHINGTON: Fast-food chains would get some relief from government rules on listing calories for things like bacon-wrapped deep dish pizza or double cheeseburgers under legislation the House approved on Friday. The vote was 266-144. The legislation now heads to the Senate, where its fate is uncertain. The Obama administration said it opposes the measure though it stopped short of threatening a presidential veto.

Republicans say the calorie labeling rules scheduled to go into effect this year are too burdensome, and they have sought to ease the requirements and lessen potential financial penalties for businesses that have to comply. Many restaurants and other food retail outlets, such as grocery stores, will have to post the calorie labels by December. The FDA rules will require restaurants and other establishments that sell prepared foods and have 20 or more locations to post the calorie content of food "clearly and conspicuously" on their menus, menu boards and displays. That includes prepared foods at grocery and convenience stores and in movie theaters, bakeries, coffee shops, pizza delivery stores and amusement parks.

The bill by Rep Cathy McMorris Rodgers, R-Wash., would leave the Food and Drug Administration rules requiring the labeling in place but make it easier for some businesses to comply. "This bill at its very core is about flexibility," McMorris Rodgers said during House debate. Republican Rep Fred Upton, whose state of Michigan is home to Domino's Pizza, said it made no sense to require that calories be posted on a menu board at the fast-food chain's locations when some 90 percent of orders are placed online.

Democrats argued that people want more information, not less, when deciding what to eat. Rep Jan Schakowsky, D-Ill., who said she fought in the 1970s to get expiration dates on food, said the calorie labeling rules would help consumers make better decisions.

She said it is critical at a time when more than 70 million Americans are obese, at a cost estimated to be \$147 billion a year. Schakowsky said California, Vermont, New York City and some smaller cities and towns have already implemented the rules. "This unnecessary legislation would deny consumers critical information about the food they eat," she said.

The administration, in a statement this week, said the bill "would reduce consumers' access to nutrition information and likely create consumer confusion by introducing a great deal of variability into how calories are declared." The legislation

Signature SANDWICHES		CALORIES	
		YP2	WHOLE
new! salmon club on croissant	8.69	380	770
napa almond chicken salad on sesame semolina	6.89	340	680
chicken caesar on three cheese	6.99	360	710
chipotle chicken	6.99	500	990

The sandwich board at a Panera store with the calorie count for each item is seen in Brookline, Mass. The House has approved legislation to give supermarkets, fast-food chains and other food establishments some relief from government calorie labeling rules. — AP

would narrow labeling requirements for supermarkets, which have complained that the rules are confusing and broad, by allowing stores to use a menu or menu board in a prepared-foods area instead of putting labels on individual items.

It would also allow restaurants like pizza chains that receive most of their orders remotely to post calories online instead of at the retail location. Pizza restaurants would also have more flexibility in the

way they post calories, and restaurants and retailers could determine what constitutes a serving size, in some cases. In addition, the bill seeks to ensure that establishments aren't punished for mislabeling due to inadvertent human error. The menu labeling rules were first required by Congress in 2010, but FDA took several years to write them as the supermarkets, convenience stores and pizza companies aggressively lobbied against them. — AP

SEA SHEPHERD STRUGGLING TO FIND JAPANESE WHALING FLEET

SYDNEY: Environmental activist group Sea Shepherd admitted yesterday it was struggling to find Japanese whaling vessels in the vast Southern Ocean and urged the Australian government to help. Its flagship Steve Irwin left Western Australia for the remote area on January 18 to chase and disrupt the annual hunt, which resumed in December after a one-year pause despite a worldwide moratorium and widespread condemnation. After a decade of harassment by Sea Shepherd, Japan was forced to abandon its 2014-15 hunt after the International Court of Justice said the expedition was a commercial activity masquerading as research.

Tokyo maintains it is trying to prove the whale population is large enough to sustain a return to commercial hunting, and says it has to kill the mammals to carry out its "scientific research" properly. "The Japanese whaling fleet has greatly

expanded their area of illegal operations in the Southern Ocean. This makes finding them very difficult," said Sea Shepherd founder Paul Watson. Australia, which has led global efforts to persuade Japan to halt whaling, has previously floated the idea of sending a customs vessel to monitor the hunt in the Southern Ocean, but it appears not to have followed through.

"Sea Shepherd was expecting that Australia or New Zealand would uphold their obligations as responsible members of the International Whaling Commission, to send a ship to intercept the Japanese whaling fleet," said Watson. "This does not seem to be something Australia or New Zealand are willing to do." He called on Canberra to provide Sea Shepherd with the exact coordinates of the whaling fleet "so that Sea Shepherd can do the job that Australia and New Zealand refuse to do." — AP



LAGUNA: Farmers work in a rice field near the International Rice Research Institute in Laguna, south of Manila.



LAGUNA: Rice bugs are seen in a paddy field at the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) in Laguna, south of Manila. — AFP photos

DNA RICE BREAKTHROUGH RAISES 'GREEN REVOLUTION' HOPES

LOS BANOS: Rice-growing techniques learned through thousands of years of trial and error are about to be turbocharged with DNA technology in a breakthrough hailed by scientists as a potential second "green revolution". Over the next few years farmers are expected to have new genome sequencing technology at their disposal, helping to offset a myriad of problems that threaten to curtail production of the grain that feeds half of humanity. Drawing on a massive bank of varieties stored in the Philippines and state-of-the-art Chinese technology, scientists recently completed the DNA sequencing of more than 3,000 of the world's most significant types of rice.

With the huge pool of data unlocked, rice breeders will soon be able to produce higher-yielding varieties much more quickly and under increasingly stressful conditions, scientists involved with the project said. Other potential new varieties being dreamt about are ones that are resistant to certain pests and diseases, or types that pack more nutrients and vitamins. "This will be a big help to strengthen food security for rice eaters," said Kenneth McNally, an

American biochemist at the Philippines-based International Rice Research Institute (IRRI). Since rice was first domesticated thousands of years ago, farmers have improved yields through various planting techniques.

For the past century breeders have isolated traits, such as high yields and disease resistance, then developed them through cross breeding. However, they did not know which genes controlled which traits, leaving much of the effort to lengthy guesswork. The latest breakthroughs in molecular genetics promise to fast-track the process, eliminating much of the mystery, scientists involved in the project said. Better rice varieties can now be expected to be developed and passed on to farmers' hands in less than three years, compared with 12 without the guidance of DNA sequencing.

Genome sequencing involves decoding DNA, the hereditary material of all living cells and organisms. The process roughly compares with solving a giant jigsaw puzzle made up of billions of microscopic pieces. A multinational team undertook the four-year project with the DNA decoding primarily in China by BGI, the world's

biggest genome sequencing firm. Leaf tissue from the samples, drawn mostly from IRRI's gene bank of 127,000 varieties were ground by McNally's team at its laboratory in Los Banos, near Manila's southern outskirts, before being shipped for sequencing. A non-profit research outfit founded in 1960, IRRI works with governments to develop advanced varieties of the grain.

Threats to rice

Farmers and breeders will need the new DNA tools, which scientists take pains to say is not genetic modification, because of the increasingly stressful conditions for rice growing expected in the 21st Century. While there will be many more millions to feed, there is expected to be less land available for planting as farms are converted for urban development, destroyed by rising sea levels or converted to other crops. Rice-paddy destroying floods, drought and storms are also expected to worsen with climate change. Meanwhile, pests and diseases that evolve to resist herbicides and pesticides will be more difficult to kill.

And fresh water, vital for growing rice, is

expected to become an increasingly scarce commodity in many parts of the world. As scientists develop the tools necessary to harness the full advantages of the rice genome database, the hope is that new varieties can be developed to combat all those problems. "Essentially, you will be able to design what properties you want in rice, in terms of the drought resistance, resistance to diseases, high yields, and others," said Russian bioanalytics expert and IRRI team member Nikolai Alexandrov.

Food revolution

Scientists behind the project hope it will lead to a second "green revolution". The first began in the 1960s as the development of higher-yielding varieties of wheat and rice was credited with preventing massive global food shortages around the world. That giant leap to producing more food involved the cross-breeding of unrelated varieties to produce new ones that grew faster and produced higher yields, mainly by being able to respond better to fertilizer. But the massive gains of the earlier efforts, which earned US geneticist Norman Borlaug the Nobel Peace

Prize in 1970, have since reached a plateau. Although the DNA breakthrough has generated much optimism, IRRI scientists caution it is not a magic bullet for all rice-growing problems, and believe that genetically modifying is also necessary. They also warn that governments will still need to implement the right policies, such as in regards to land and water use.

One of the key priorities of IRRI is to pack more nutrients into rice, transforming it into a tool to fight ailments linked to inadequate diets in poor countries as well as lifestyle diseases in wealthier countries. "We're interested to understand the nutritional value... we're looking into the enrichment of micronutrients," Nese Sreenivasulu, the Indian head of the IRRI's grain quality and nutrition centre said. Nese believes Type-2 diabetes, which afflicts hundreds of million of people, can be checked by breeding for particular varieties of rice which when cooked will release sugar into the bloodstream more slowly. IRRI scientists are also hoping to breed rice varieties with a higher component of zinc, which prevents stunting and deaths from diarrhea in rice-eating Southeast Asia. — AFP



NSEZI: 13-year-old Prince Mpofu packs last year's harvest from the irrigated gardens for storage in the village of Nsezi in Matabeleland, southwestern Zimbabwe. — AFP

SEVERE DROUGHT AFFECTS 49 MILLION IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

HARARE: As many as 49 million people in southern Africa could be affected by a drought that has been worsened by the most severe and longest El Nino weather pattern in 35 years, the United Nations World Food Program (WFP) said yesterday. The WFP, which has already said 14 million people face hunger in the region, said the El Nino conditions had caused the lowest recorded rainfall between October and December since 1981.

The forecast for January to March indicated a high probability of below-normal rain-

fall in southern Africa, which would result in one of the worst droughts on record, it added. "It is estimated that 40 million rural people and 9 million poor urban people who live in drought-affected areas could be exposed," the WFP said in its latest report. The drought has hit much of the region, including the maize belt in South Africa, the continent's most advanced economy and the top producer of the staple grain. In Lesotho, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe, planting delayed by two months or more has severely impacted maize yields. — Reuters

CLIMBING HIV INFECTION RATES IN THE PHILIPPINES

WOMEN, INFANTS AT RISK OF HIV FROM 'DOWNSTREAM' INFECTIONS

CEBU: When Clarissa's younger sister died, she had little time to dwell on her own grief. There were the three young children left behind to think of, two of them HIV positive. Together with her own children, there are now seven youngsters crammed in her tiny, crumbling shanty in Cebu in central Philippines. Space and money are tight as they all depend on Clarissa's husband who is a day laborer. "The kids have no father or mother now. They have no one," said the slight 31-year-old.

Clarissa's sister and her partner both died from HIV-related complications traced back to injecting drugs. Clarissa suspects that it was her sister's partner that got her started on drugs. "Charity groups said the child who does not have HIV could be put up for adoption. But I couldn't bear for them to be separated. And who will make sure the two take their medication?" said Clarissa, who did not want to give her full name. Climbing HIV infection rates in the Philippines are bucking the global trend of decline. Along with Bangladesh, Indonesia, and Sri Lanka in the Asia-Pacific region, the Philippines saw the rate of new HIV infections increase by more than 25 percent from 2001 to 2011.

Increasing infections among injecting drug users combined with low condom use and high fertility rates have health experts worried about "downstream" HIV infections - when the virus spreads to people who are not typically at risk of

HIV, like children who acquire the virus through mother-to-child transmission. "Mother to child transmission is definitely an emerging problem," said Genesis Samonte, head of the Department of Health HIV/AIDS surveillance unit. Of the 84 children who acquired HIV through mother-to-child transmission since 1990, 17 - or one fifth - were reported in 2015 alone. "Judging from the number of pregnant women we see in the clinics who test positive, this is definitely an underreported number," Samonte said.

HIV rates climbing

In 2015 there were a total of 30,356 recorded HIV infections in the Philippines, more than 80 percent of which were reported since 2010. At this current rate, the health department predicts that the total number of HIV infections will grow to 133,000 by 2022. While majority of the infections cluster around men who have unprotected sex with men, HIV among injecting drug users is centered in Cebu City. In shooting galleries that dot shantytowns, a person can get a narcotic shot for 50 US cents and use a "service needle", a syringe that the dealer has on rotation for anyone to use for free.

Department of Health surveillance studies show that a service needle can be used four to six times before it gets too blunt out and can infect as just as many people.

Needle exchange programs aimed at ensuring drug users could access clean needles were criticized by Philippine legislators who said such programs promoted drug use. Citing the Dangerous Drugs Act which criminalizes the possession and distribution of drug paraphernalia like syringes and a late 1990s city order that banned the sale of syringes without a prescription, Cebu city officials suspended needle exchange programs in 2009. Drug users had little choice but to buy from the black market - or share. "Around this time we began seeing more HIV positive pregnant women," said Ilya Tac-an, head of the Cebu City Health Department HIV/STI Unit.

An injecting drug user is typically male, in his 20s or 30s. Despite his high-risk behavior, he is not likely to know his HIV status, making early detection of HIV among female partners difficult. "Women discover they are positive when they are offered an HIV test during their pre-natal exam," Tac-an said. "There is a missed opportunity for prevention and early detection because her partner did not disclose his status or does not know it."

Chamberlain Agtuca, Jr head of the Sotto HIV Treatment Hub in Cebu, said his clinic had treated 42 HIV positive pregnant women since 2010. He estimated that 60 percent of the women were housewives and partners of men with high-risk behavior. —Reuters

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JTC WINS EQUATE TRANSPORTATION HAULAGE CONTRACT FOR THIRD CONSECUTIVE PERIOD

Jassim Transport and Stevedoring Company W.L.L (JTC) has been awarded a three year contract from EQUATE Petrochemical Company, Kuwait's first international joint-venture in this industry, to provide haulage and local overland transportation services for their Shuaiba Port operations.

The contract went into effect from the 1st January, 2016 and is the third consecutive similar services contract between EQUATE and JTC.

Commenting on winning the bid, Adel Kohari, Chief Executive Officer for JTC said, "This is an extremely important and competitive win for JTC. We are delighted to have reaffirmed our longstanding partnership with EQUATE Petrochemical Company. Our commitment to excellence and quality in our service delivery and operational structure has once more led to a significantly renewed partnership with one of Kuwait's petrochemical giants and we look forward to providing high

quality logistical services to our esteemed client's local operations."

Kohari added, "JTC has been very successful in catering to the needs of the oil and gas industry with a number of major players. This contract is a testament to JTC's approach to delivering high levels of service and new and improved transportation solutions coordinated by a well-trained and equipped team that ensures our customer's needs are met and exceeded."



NBK CELEBRATES GRADUATION OF FOURTEENTH BATCH OF NBK ACADEMY

National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) celebrated the graduation of the fourteenth batch of newly hired young Kuwaitis from NBK Academy. NBK Academy aims to train and develop the professional skills of young Kuwaitis as part of NBK's strategy to attract and develop national human resources.

NBK organized a special ceremony for the graduation

of the newly hired young Kuwaitis. Salah Al-Fulajji, NBK CEO - Kuwait, attended the ceremony along with other NBK officials.

NBK Academy is the first initiative of its kind in the private sector in Kuwait and is part of NBK's strategy to attract young Kuwaitis by offering them a range of career and professional development opportunities.

NBK Academy programs run for four months and specially tailored to provide trainees with theoretical and practical skills covering the different aspects of the banking industry.

NBK maintains its leading position as one of the country's largest employers in the private sector and is committed to supporting Kuwaiti nationals and empowering

them to realize their potentials.

Annually, NBK offers many training programs for employees including Shabab program, and the first of its kind NBK High Fliers Program. NBK also organizes executive training programs in line with the bank's commitment to developing and investing in its key resource and human capital.



The Kuwaiti Positivity Group participated in National Holiday's celebrations organized recently by the Capital Governorate.



BSK STUDENTS VISIT NANOTECHNOLOGY CONFERENCE

The British School of Kuwait's (BSK) Year 12 and 13 students and teachers visited the 1st Kuwait International Nanotechnology

Conference and Exhibition (KINCE) 2016 held at the Regency Hotel. The students attended a lecture by Dr Yaser Abdullaheem, College of

Engineering Kuwait University, who spoke about the applications of Nanotechnology. Students were given the opportunity to tour the exhibition

and ask the international experts about their scientific innovations. The Conference Chairman, Professor Ali Bumajdad, Vice-Dean for Academic

and Graduate Studies Kuwait University, and his associates were generous in welcoming the students to this prestigious event.



ICSK AMMAN STUDENTS ACHIEVEMENTS

Students of ICSK Amman branch have brought laurels to the school in various competitions held in Kuwait. Master Akash Raju Cherian of Class X from Indian Community School Amman was awarded the first prize for other performing arts (Tabla) in the 'Sparsh Talent 2016' in Season I and II. Master Alvin Jerry of Class II C of Indian Community School Amman stood first in the Solo Junior category in IOC Art Festival 2015 held on 15-10-2015 at ICSK Senior School, Kuwait. The Principal of ICSK Amman Rajesh Nair applauded the winners for their efforts and commendable performance.

MAKE MARINA HOTEL KUWAIT YOUR ONE-STOP-DESTINATION FOR ALL WEDDINGS

KUWAIT: The magnificent Shaikha Salwa Sabah Al Ahmad Theater and Hall of Marina Hotel Kuwait, nestled in the heart of Salmiya with a spectacular sea-side location, is your one-stop-destination for all weddings. No matter what size wedding you are planning, Marina Hotel offers couples a truly memorable wedding to suit any type of wedding festivity.

Having a great layout and capacity of up to 500 persons, the Shaikha Salwa Sabah Al Ahmad Theater and Hall is an ideal place for your special event. The hall unravels beauty and flexibility with its expert wedding planning team who devote their attention to every detail ensuring that your wedding will surpass all expectations. The package is further complemented with an award winning culinary team comprising of dedicated chefs who constantly explore delivering tailor made menus and bringing to the hotel's guests a wide range of exciting experiences to each event. Wedding guests can enjoy the wide variety of scrumptious delicacies from the elaborate buffet at Shaikha Salwa Sabah Al Ahmad Theater and Hall.

The memories of your wedding day will last a lifetime and Marina Hotel Kuwait will ensure that your special day is perfect. The hotel is delighted to offer guests exclusive wedding packages across the year, which include accommodation for one night in a beautiful superior room and a romantic candle-lit dinner and breakfast in the room for the bride and groom. For the wedding celebrations, a custom-made, three-tier wedding cake is offered.

Such a momentous occasion that unites husband and wife must be conducted in a venue that can provide only the finest setting. This includes the most delightful cuisine and a magnificently decorated ballroom. With a venue that can also bring back treasured memories of lavish wedding celebrations from previous generations, today's weddings at the Shaikha Salwa Sabah Al-Ahmad Theater and Hall are among the most extravagant and memorable weddings imaginable.

Combining unparalleled excellence in service and hospitality with outstanding presentation and personal service, the hotel holds a reputation as an expert in turning your wedding celebration into a truly magnificent event. If you are looking for a beautiful wedding ceremony venue, the wedding package at Marina Hotel is available all through the year. For more information, please visit our website: www.marinahotel.com



NEW CAFE MEEM OPENS AT SEA VIEW IN MAHBOULA



The scent of freshly roasted coffee fills the restaurant, engulfing its visitors with nostalgic feelings associated with the early morning hours. Visitor's first take notice of the most delicious kinds of breakfast dishes that decorate their tables with fresh items imported specially from Lebanon, and bakery items prepared on demand that come to you directly from the oven. Cafe Meem presents a family atmosphere that makes you feel right at home.

With its charming ambiance, Cafe Meem at Sea View in Mahboula is the destination for gourmet and breakfast enthusiasts who are drawn by varieties of fresh food and coffee items. The Cafe was newly opened as part of MMC Catering's strategy to improve and develop its restaurants in accordance with the fast-evolving local community, in order to present a unique dining experience.

In this regard, Lamya Sebti, Director of

Marketing at MMC Catering said: "Cafe Meem is designed to inspire the taste buds with bold flavors brought to you straight from the oven, prepared with fresh ingredients to create a homey atmosphere"

"With its new look, Cafe Meem presents a wide variety of items, including main courses and side dishes prepared freshly, in addition to varieties of items imported specially from Lebanon," Sebti added.

And as Cafe Meem returns to its customers with a new look, the restaurant's management was keen on presenting a new menu, updated interior design while adding to the highest levels of innovation, quality and customer service the Cafe includes.

Cafe Meem is a completely new experience that will delight any food lover, while still remaining a go to location to relax, have a cup of coffee, and feel at home.



The Kuwait Banks Club (KBC) hosted its annual ceremony recently to award members of the social, sports and media committees for organizing KBC activities in 2015.

AMC

- 01:05 Hurlly Burlly
03:10 Monkey Shines: An Experiment In Fear
05:00 The Beast Of Hollow Mountain

ANIMAL PLANET HD

- 00:50 River Monsters (Best Of Series 1-5)
01:45 Swamp Brothers
02:15 Swamp Brothers

BBC ENTERTAINMENT

- 00:45 Doctor Foster
01:40 Doctor Foster
02:40 Ripper Street

- 13:50 Doctor Who
14:40 Casualty
15:35 Stella

Bloomberg TELEVISION

- 00:00 What'd You Miss?
01:00 Charlie Rose
02:00 First Up With Angie Lau

CCTV NEWS

- 00:00 News Update
00:30 Dialogue
01:00 News Update

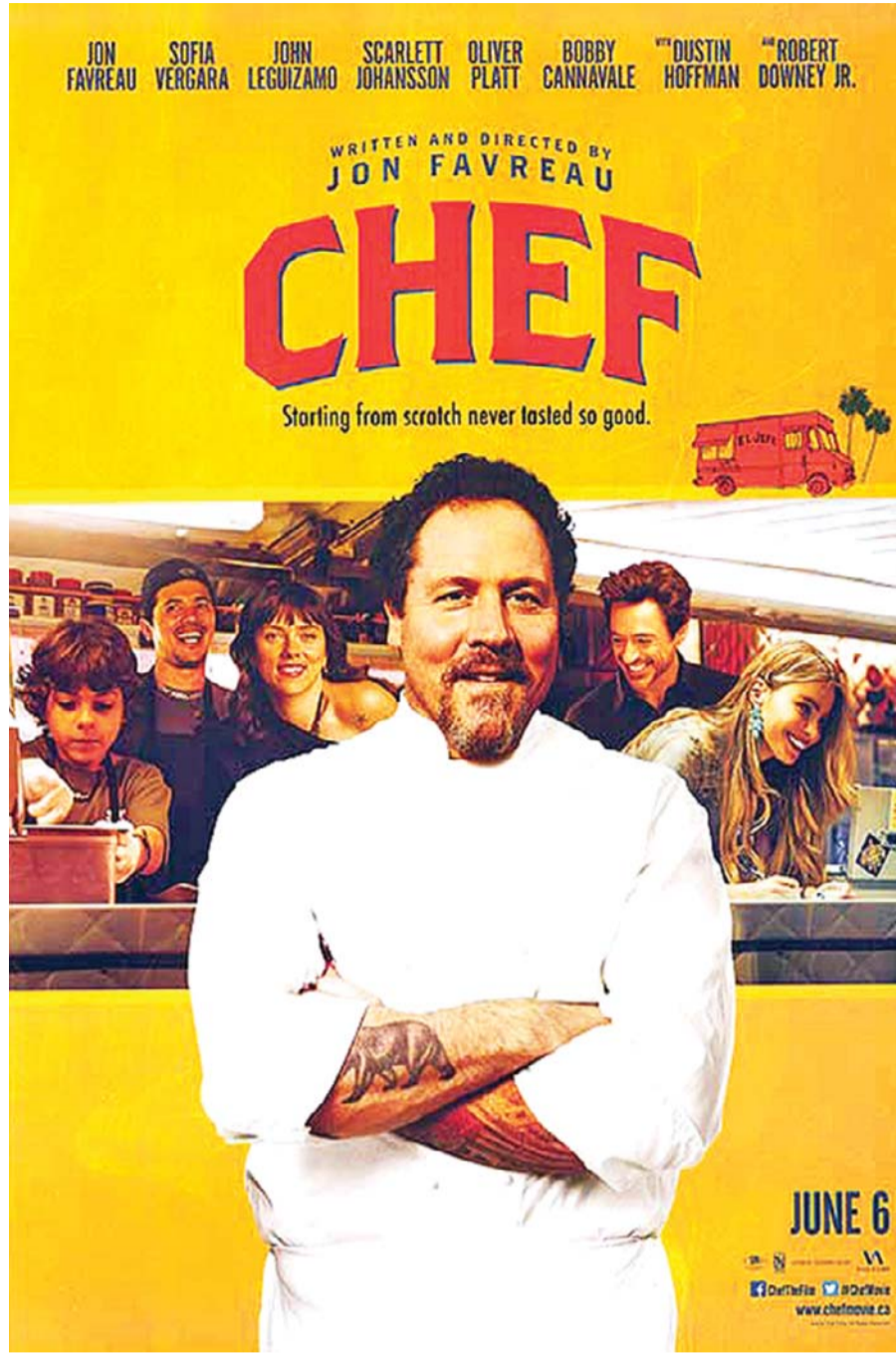
- 04:00 Killer Kids Specials
05:00 Beyond Scared Straight
06:00 Crime Stories

Discovery CHANNEL HD

- 00:20 Fast N' Loud
01:10 Gold Rush
02:00 Gold Divers

ID INVESTIGATION DISCOVERY

- 00:15 California Investigator
01:00 Who On Earth Did I Marry?
01:45 Who On Earth Did I Marry?



CHEF ON OSN MOVIES HD COMEDY

- 15:57 Mega Builders
16:44 Space Pioneer
17:31 Prototype This

Discovery world

- 00:40 Solved
01:30 Commander In Chief
02:20 Somali Pirate Takedown: The Real Story

Disney Junior

- 00:05 Henry Hugglemonster
00:30 Calmero
00:35 Zou

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC CHANNEL HD

- 00:10 Lawless Island
01:00 Primal Survivor
02:00 Rebuilding Taiwan: Beyond The Storm

NAT GEO people HD

- 00:10 Carnival Eats
00:35 Carnival Eats
07:30 Roadtrip With G. Garvin

- 01:00 Bangkok Airport
01:50 Valentine Warner Eats
02:15 Scandinavia

OSN FIRST HD COMEDY

- 00:00 Marry Me
00:30 Weird Loners
01:00 The Nightly Show With Larry Wilmore

OSN FIRST HD

- 00:00 Chicago Fire
01:00 Quantico
02:00 Rosewood

- 19:00 Complications
20:00 The Night Shift
21:00 The Night Shift

OSN MOVIES ACTION

- 00:00 Lone Survivor
02:15 Psycho
04:15 Biker Boyz

OSN MOVIES HD COMEDY

- 00:00 Adult World
02:00 Date Night
04:00 Beethoven's Treasure Tail

OSN MOVIES FESTIVAL

- 01:30 Sunshine On Leith
03:15 When A Man Loves A Woman

OSN MOVIES HD

- 01:00 Deliverance Creek
03:00 Veronica Mars
05:00 Closed Circuit

OSN MOVIES HD KIDS

- 01:00 Memory Loss
02:45 Blue Elephant 2
04:30 Egon And Donci

OSN SPORTS 1 HD

- 01:00 PGA Tour Highlights
02:00 PGA European Tour
03:00 EuroPro Tour

OSN SPORTS 2 HD

- 00:00 Live NHL
03:00 World Rugby
03:30 This Week In WWE

OSN SPORTS 3 HD

- 00:00 PGA European Tour
01:00 The Weber Cup
02:00 Welsh Open Snooker



ANDROID COP ON OSN MOVIES ACTION

- 08:35 Call The Midwife
09:30 Doctor Who
10:20 Casualty

CNBC

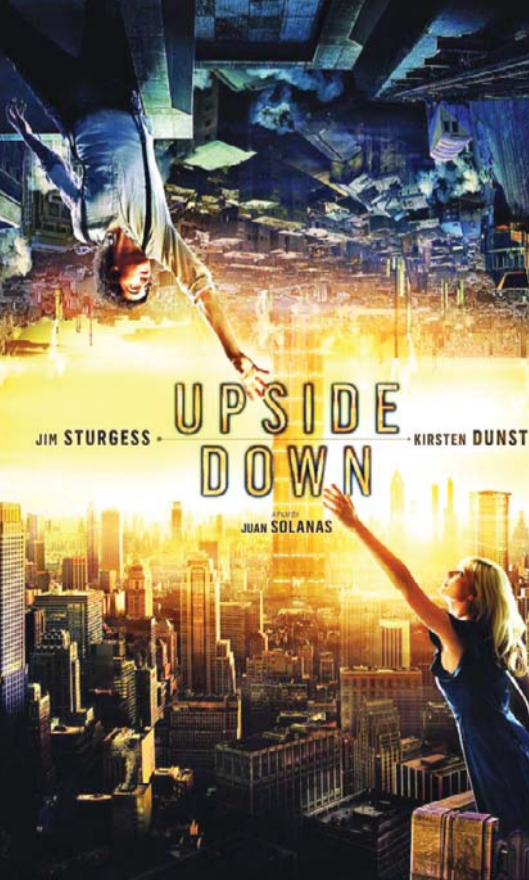
- 01:00 Inside China
01:30 Managing Asia
02:00 U.S. Squawk Alley

ci crime & investigation network

- 00:00 Ms. Murder
01:00 Measuring Evil: Britain's Worst Killers

Discovery science

- 00:35 Weird Or What?
01:20 Fire In The Sky: A Daily Planet Special



UPSIDE DOWN ON OSN MOVIES FESTIVAL

- 00:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
00:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
01:00 Staten Island Cakes

CLASSIFIEDS

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KNCC PROGRAMME FROM THURSDAY TO WEDNESDAY (11/02/2016 TO 17/02/2016)

SHARQIA-1	THE FINEST HOURS	1:00 PM
ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: THE ROAD CHIP	1:30 PM	
ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: THE ROAD CHIP	3:30 PM	
ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: THE ROAD CHIP	5:30 PM	
THE FINEST HOURS	7:30 PM	
THE FINEST HOURS	10:00 PM	
THE FINEST HOURS	12:30 AM	

SHARQIA-2	SHAKET DABOUS	11:45 AM
SHAKET DABOUS	1:45 PM	
SHAKET DABOUS	3:45 PM	
SHAKET DABOUS	5:45 PM	
SHAKET DABOUS	7:45 PM	
SHAKET DABOUS	9:45 PM	
SHAKET DABOUS	11:45 PM	

SHARQIA-3	PRIDE AND PREJUDICE AND ZOMBIES	11:30 AM
BROOKLYN	1:30 PM	
PRIDE AND PREJUDICE AND ZOMBIES	3:45 PM	
BROOKLYN	6:00 PM	
PRIDE AND PREJUDICE AND ZOMBIES	8:15 PM	
BROOKLYN	10:30 PM	
PRIDE AND PREJUDICE AND ZOMBIES	12:45 AM	

MUHALAB-1	THE FINEST HOURS	12:15 PM
ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: THE ROAD CHIP	2:45 PM	
ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: THE ROAD CHIP	4:45 PM	
THE FINEST HOURS	6:45 PM	
THE FINEST HOURS	9:15 PM	
THE FINEST HOURS	11:45 PM	

MUHALAB-2	PRIDE AND PREJUDICE AND ZOMBIES	12:45 PM
PRIDE AND PREJUDICE AND ZOMBIES	3:00 PM	
BROOKLYN	5:15 PM	
PRIDE AND PREJUDICE AND ZOMBIES	7:30 PM	
BROOKLYN	9:45 PM	
PRIDE AND PREJUDICE AND ZOMBIES	12:05 AM	

MUHALAB-3	SHAKET DABOUS	12:15 PM
SHAKET DABOUS	2:15 PM	
SHAKET DABOUS	4:15 PM	
SHAKET DABOUS	6:15 PM	
SHAKET DABOUS	8:15 PM	
SHAKET DABOUS	10:15 PM	
SHAKET DABOUS	12:15 AM	

FANAR-1	BROOKLYN	11:45 AM
BROOKLYN	2:00 PM	
THE BENEFACOR	4:15 PM	
BROOKLYN	6:15 PM	
THE BENEFACOR	8:30 PM	
BROOKLYN	10:30 PM	
THE BENEFACOR	12:45 AM	

FANAR-2	THE FINEST HOURS	1:00 PM
ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: THE ROAD CHIP	1:30 PM	
ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: THE ROAD CHIP	3:30 PM	

ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: THE ROAD CHIP	5:30 PM
THE FINEST HOURS	7:30 PM
THE FINEST HOURS	10:00 PM
THE FINEST HOURS	12:30 AM

FANAR-3	FITTOOR - Hindi	11:45 AM
THE DORAEMON MOVIE	2:30 PM	
THE DORAEMON MOVIE	4:30 PM	
FITTOOR - Hindi	6:30 PM	
FITTOOR - Hindi	9:15 PM	
MIN DAHAR RAGEL - Arabic	12:05 AM	

MARINA-1	PRIDE AND PREJUDICE AND ZOMBIES	11:30 AM
BROOKLYN	1:30 PM	
PRIDE AND PREJUDICE AND ZOMBIES	3:45 PM	
BROOKLYN	6:00 PM	
PRIDE AND PREJUDICE AND ZOMBIES	8:15 PM	
BROOKLYN	10:30 PM	
PRIDE AND PREJUDICE AND ZOMBIES	12:45 AM	

MARINA-2	THE FINEST HOURS	12:30 PM
THE FINEST HOURS	3:15 PM	
VERY BIG SHOT	5:45 PM	
VERY BIG SHOT	7:45 PM	
THE FINEST HOURS	9:45 PM	
THE FINEST HOURS	12:15 AM	

MARINA-3	SHAKET DABOUS	12:00 PM
SHAKET DABOUS	2:00 PM	
ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: THE ROAD CHIP	2:00 PM	
ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: THE ROAD CHIP	4:00 PM	
SHAKET DABOUS	6:00 PM	
SHAKET DABOUS	8:00 PM	
SHAKET DABOUS	10:00 PM	
SHAKET DABOUS	12:30 AM	

AVENUES-1	FITTOOR - Hindi	11:30 AM
FITTOOR - Hindi	2:30 PM	
FITTOOR - Hindi	5:30 PM	
FITTOOR - Hindi	8:30 PM	
THE REVENANT	11:30 PM	

AVENUES-2	BROOKLYN	12:00 PM
BROOKLYN	2:30 PM	
BROOKLYN	5:00 PM	
BROOKLYN	7:30 PM	
BROOKLYN	10:00 PM	
BROOKLYN	12:30 AM	

AVENUES-3	SHAKET DABOUS	11:30 AM
PRIDE AND PREJUDICE AND ZOMBIES	1:30 PM	
PRIDE AND PREJUDICE AND ZOMBIES	3:45 PM	
PRIDE AND PREJUDICE AND ZOMBIES	6:00 PM	
PRIDE AND PREJUDICE AND ZOMBIES	8:15 PM	
PRIDE AND PREJUDICE AND ZOMBIES	10:30 PM	
PRIDE AND PREJUDICE AND ZOMBIES	12:45 AM	

360-1	THE FINEST HOURS	12:00 PM
THE FINEST HOURS	2:30 PM	
THE FINEST HOURS	5:00 PM	
THE FINEST HOURS	7:30 PM	
THE FINEST HOURS	10:00 PM	
THE FINEST HOURS	12:30 AM	

360-2	BROOKLYN	1:30 PM
BROOKLYN	4:00 PM	
BROOKLYN	6:30 PM	
BROOKLYN	9:00 PM	
BROOKLYN	11:30 PM	

360-3	THE DORAEMON MOVIE-3D	1:00 PM
THE DORAEMON MOVIE	3:15 PM	
THE DORAEMON MOVIE-3D	5:30 PM	
VERY BIG SHOT	7:45 PM	
VERY BIG SHOT	10:00 PM	
VERY BIG SHOT	12:15 AM	

AL-KOUT.1	SHAKET DABOUS	12:15 PM
SHAKET DABOUS	2:15 PM	
SHAKET DABOUS	4:15 PM	
SHAKET DABOUS	6:15 PM	
SHAKET DABOUS	8:15 PM	
SHAKET DABOUS	10:15 PM	
SHAKET DABOUS	12:15 AM	

AL-KOUT.2	BROOKLYN	1:00 PM
THE BENEFACOR	1:30 PM	
THE BENEFACOR	3:30 PM	
BROOKLYN	5:30 PM	
JANE GOT A GUN	7:45 PM	
THE BENEFACOR	9:45 PM	
BROOKLYN	11:45 PM	

AL-KOUT.3	PRIDE AND PREJUDICE AND ZOMBIES	11:45 AM
PRIDE AND PREJUDICE AND ZOMBIES	2:00 PM	
VERY BIG SHOT	4:15 PM	
PRIDE AND PREJUDICE AND ZOMBIES	6:15 PM	
VERY BIG SHOT	8:30 PM	
PRIDE AND PREJUDICE AND ZOMBIES	10:30 PM	
PRIDE AND PREJUDICE AND ZOMBIES	12:45 AM	

BAIRAQ-1	THE FINEST HOURS	12:30 PM
THE DORAEMON MOVIE -3D	3:15 PM	
ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: THE ROAD CHIP	5:15 PM	
ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: THE ROAD CHIP	7:15 PM	
THE FINEST HOURS	9:15 PM	
THE FINEST HOURS	11:45 PM	

BAIRAQ-2	SHAKET DABOUS	12:45 PM
SHAKET DABOUS	2:45 PM	
SHAKET DABOUS	4:45 PM	

We are immediately looking for an **executive secretary (Female)** for a well reputed company in Kuwait. Must have the following skills

- Good Communication Skills
- Must be a graduate with minimum of 5 years experience
- Good Computer Skills with both Microsoft Office and Excel and handle correspondence independently
- Having a transferable Residence
- Must be good with both English and Arabic

Interested candidates can send their CV's to Email:
asyawiah@asyawiah.com

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Ghallester Valera De Jesus, Passport No. EC2905146. Petition for correction. Place of birth Adan Hospital, Kuwait GHAL LESTER to GHALLESTER. (C 5132)
14-2-2016
I, Kaleel S/o Mohamed Mohideen, holder of Indian Passport No. G3449357, residing at No. 2 Samayana Sheik Mohamed Moopan Street, Melapalayam, Tirunelveli Dist., Pin-627005, Tamilnadu. Shall henceforth be known as Kaleel Rahman. (C 5131)
11-2-2016

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 Email: Info@Eiglcoman.Com

ACCOMMODATION

Accommodation available for decent lady, couple, bachelor in Salmiya, Amman street, C-AC flat, new building. Contact: 55230154. (C 5133)
16-2-2016

EMERGENCY 112

Prayer timings

Fajr:	05:07
Shorook	06:27
Duhr:	12:02
Asr:	15:13
Maghrib:	17:38
Isha:	18:55

Flight Schedule

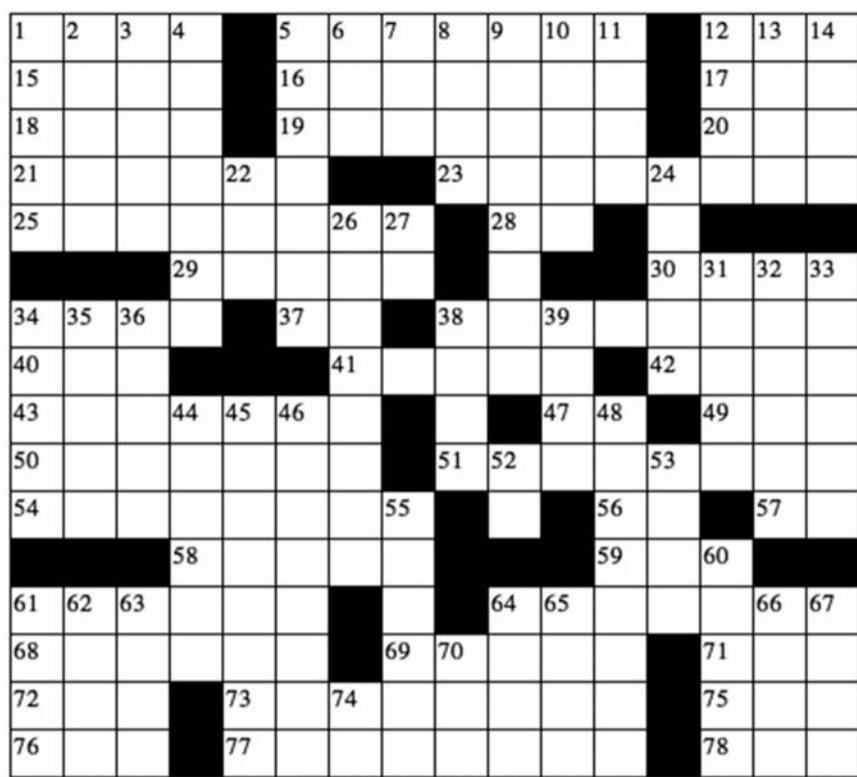
Arrival Flights on Tuesday 16/2/2016			
Airlines	Ft	Route	Time
BBC	143	Dhaka	00:05
MSC	415	Sohag	00:05
KLM	411	Amsterdam/Dammam	00:20
JZR	267	Beirut	00:30
JZR	539	Cairo	00:40
FDB	069	Dubai	00:55
THY	772	Istanbul	01:05
DLH	635	Doha	01:35
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	01:45
PGT	858	Istanbul	02:00
UAE	853	Dubai	02:30
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:30
OMA	643	Muscat	02:55
FDB	067	Dubai	03:05
RJA	644	Amman	03:05
MSR	612	Cairo	03:10
QTR	1076	Doha	03:15
KKK	6507	Istanbul	03:20
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:25
THY	6376	Istanbul	05:05
DHX	170	Bahrain	05:40
THY	770	Istanbul	05:55
FDB	5061	Dubai	06:30
BAW	157	London	06:40
PAL	668	Manila/Dubai	06:55
KAC	416	Jakarta/Kuala Lumpur	07:15
KAC	412	Manila/Bangkok	07:20
QTR	1086	Doha	07:40
FDB	053	Dubai	07:45
SVA	512	Riyadh	07:50
KAC	302	Mumbai	07:50
OMA	641	Muscat	08:00
KAC	382	Delhi	08:00
KAC	354	BLR	08:15
KAC	206	Islamabad	08:25
KAC	352	Kochi	08:30
UAE	855	Dubai	08:40
KAC	332	Trivandrum	08:50
KAC	362	Colombo	08:50
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:00
KAC	284	Dhaka	09:10
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	09:20
QTR	1070	Doha	09:25
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40
IRC	6507	Shiraz	10:30
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40
IRA	675	Lar	10:40
UAE	873	Dubai	11:05
RBG	553	Alexandria	11:15
JZR	165	Dubai	11:30
MEA	404	Beirut	11:55
SAW	701	Damascus	12:20
FDB	075	Dubai	12:25
MSC	401	Alexandria	12:30
JZR	561	Sohag	12:45
UAE	871	Dubai	12:50
MSR	610	Cairo	13:00
QTR	1078	Doha	14:10
FDB	057	Dubai	14:10
KAC	514	Tehran	14:10
FBA	831	Al Najaf	14:15

Departure Flights on Tuesday 16/2/2016			
Airlines	Ft	Route	Time
AIC	976	Goa/Chennai	00:05
FDB	072	Dubai	00:40
MSC	404	Asyut	00:55
JAI	573	Mumbai	00:55
MSC	416	Sohag	01:00
BBC	143	Chittagong/Dhaka	01:35
KLM	411	Amsterdam	01:35
THY	773	Istanbul	02:30
DLH	635	Frankfurt	02:35
ETH	621	Addis Ababa	02:45
UAE	854	Dubai	03:45
PGT	859	Istanbul	03:55
OMA	644	Muscat	03:55
FDB	068	Dubai	04:00
MSR	613	Cairo	04:10
ETD	306	Abu Dhabi	04:15
KKK	6508	Istanbul	04:20
QTR	1077	Doha	05:00
THY	765	Istanbul	05:15
JZR	560	Sohag	06:10
FDB	070	Dubai	06:30
THY	6376	Dubai/Istanbul	06:35
JZR	164	Dubai	06:55
RJA	645	Amman	07:05
THY	771	Istanbul	07:05
FDB	5062	Dubai	07:10
GFA	212	Bahrain	07:15
FDB	054	Dubai	08:30
QTR	1087	Doha	08:40
BAW	156	London	08:45
SVA	513	Riyadh	08:50
OMA	642	Muscat	08:55
KAC	787	Jeddah	09:25
ABY	126	Sharjah	09:40
KAC	513	Tehran	09:45
KAC	101	London/New York	09:55
KAC	541	Cairo	09:55
UAE	856	Dubai	09:55
KAC	561	Amman	10:00
KAC	671	Dubai	10:05
ETD	302	Abu Dhabi	10:25
KAC	501	Beirut	10:30
FDB	056	Dubai	10:35
KAC	165	Rome/Paris	11:00
QTR	1071	Doha	11:00
GFA	214	Bahrain	11:25
IRC	6508	Shiraz	11:30
IRA	674	Lar	11:40
RBG	554	Alexandria	11:55
JZR	776	Jeddah	12:20
UAE	874	Dubai	12:30
MEA	405	Beirut	12:55
KAC	785	Jeddah	13:00
KAC	679	Muscat	13:00
FDB	076	Dubai	13:10
MSC	402	Alexandria	13:30
SAW	702	Damascus	13:35
JZR	176	Dubai	13:45
MSR	611	Cairo	14:00
UAE	872	Dubai	14:15
JZR	324	Al Najaf	14:25

Directorate General of Civil Aviation Home Page (www.kuwait-airport.com.kw)
In case you are not travelling, your proper cancellation of bookings will help other passengers to use seats

DIAL161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

CROSSWORD 1170



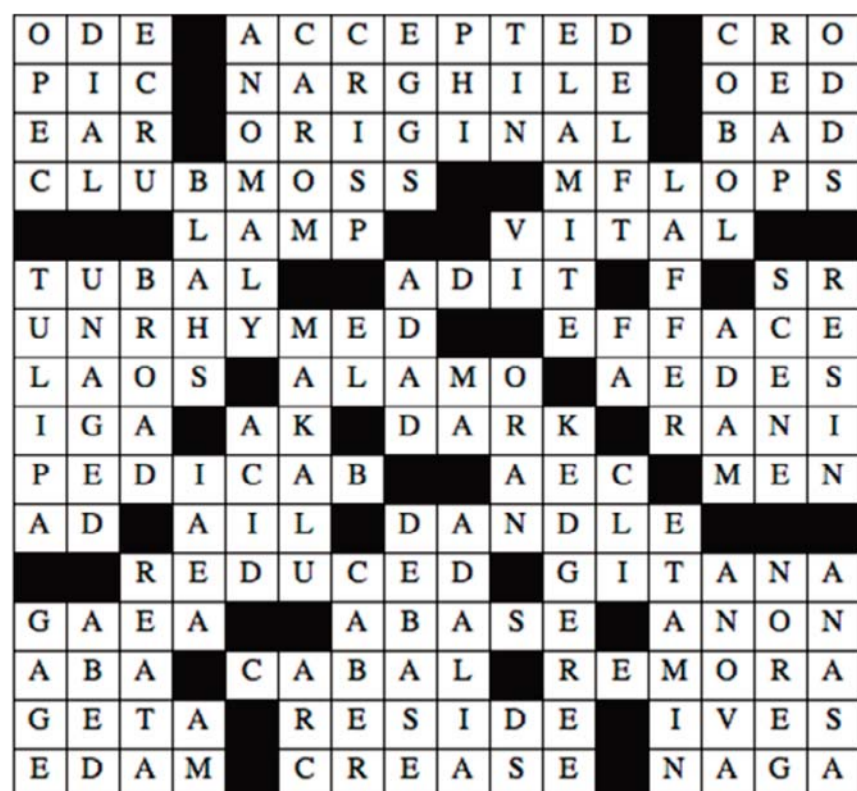
ACROSS

1. Cuddling and kissing.
5. A centare is 1/100th of an are.
12. A form of address for a married woman.
15. (Norse mythology) God of war and strife and son of Odin.
16. Regional and archaic.
17. A former agency (from 1946 to 1974) that was responsible for research into atomic energy and its peacetime uses in the United States.
18. A feeling of intense anger.
19. Cooked in steam.
20. A nucleic acid that transmits genetic information from DNA to the cytoplasm.
21. A genus of small kites of both Old and New Worlds.
23. The work of cleansing (usually with soap and water).
25. Low stinging nettle of Central and South America having velvety brownish-green toothed leaves and clusters of small green flowers.
28. A brittle gray crystalline element that is a semiconducting metalloid (resembling silicon) used in transistors.
29. An item of factual information derived from measurement or research.
30. Offering fun and gaiety.
34. A town and port in northwestern Israel in the eastern Mediterranean.
37. (Akkadian) God of wisdom.
40. The longer of the two telegraphic signals used in Morse code.
41. The limits within which something can be effective.
42. A short personal letter.
43. Of or relating to Aram or to its inhabitants or their culture or their language.
47. A radioactive element of the actinide series.
49. (Irish) The sea personified.
50. A department of northwestern France in the Pays de la Loire region.
51. A political system in which the supreme power lies in a body of citizens who can elect people to represent them.
54. Conforming to or constituting a standard of measurement or value.
56. A rare heavy polyvalent metallic element that resembles manganese chemically and is used in some alloys.
57. A colorless odorless gaseous element that give a red glow in a vacuum tube.
58. A shade of brown with a tinge of red.
59. Having undesirable or negative qualities.
61. Deliver a sermon.
68. A shout to attract attention.
69. (Norse mythology) God of poetry and music.
71. Aircraft landing in bad weather in which the pilot is talked down by ground control using precision approach radar.
72. The bureau of the Treasury Department responsible for tax collections.
73. Of a leaf shape.
75. A barrier constructed to contain the flow or water or to keep out the sea.
76. The 26th letter of the Roman alphabet.
77. A spread consisting of capers and black olives and anchovies made into a puree with olive oil.
78. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.

DOWN

1. Of or relating to or caused by streptococci.
2. City in Sudan.
3. A fully differentiated structural and functional unit in an animal that is specialized for some particular function.
4. An island state in the West Indies in the southeastern Caribbean Sea.
5. An ancient language spoken by the Kasite people.
6. A newt in its terrestrial stage of development.
7. (meaning literally 'born') Used to indicate the maiden or family name of a married woman.
8. An official language of the Republic of South Africa.
9. Dry brandy distilled in the Armagnac district of France.
10. Female ruff v 1.
11. Tropical starchy tuberous root.
12. A member of a rural Finnish people living in eastern Russia.
13. A city in western Nevada at the foot of the Sierra Nevada Mountains.
14. The act of scanning.
22. A benevolent aspect of Devi.
24. Offspring of a male tiger and a female lion.
26. Italian violin maker and grandson of Andrea Guarneri (1687-1745).
27. Before noon.
31. An island consisting of a circular coral reef surrounding a lagoon.
32. Yellow carotenoid pigments in plants and animal fats and egg yolks.
33. Punish with an arbitrary penalty.
35. The unit of measurement for the proportion of gold in an alloy.
36. African mahogany trees.
38. Of a temperature scale that registers the freezing point of water as 32 degrees F and the boiling point as 212 degrees F at one atmosphere of pressure.
39. A boy or man.
44. Used at the dining table.
45. Founder in 1629 of the Massachusetts Bay Colony (1588-1665).
46. Using a pronoun or other pro-word instead of repeating a word.
48. The side of a sidewalk that is bordered by a curb.
52. An international organization of European countries formed after World War II to reduce trade barriers and increase cooperation among its members.
53. A signal transmitted along a narrow path.
55. Dip a foot or hand briefly into a liquid.
60. (Irish) Chief god of the Tuatha De Danann.
62. Not widely known.
63. Other than what is under consideration or implied.
64. An amino acid that is found in the central nervous system.
65. Advanced in years.
66. Someone who works (or provides workers) during a strike.
67. God of love and erotic desire.
70. A Chadic language spoken in northern Nigeria.
74. The sciences concerned with gathering and manipulating and storing and retrieving and classifying recorded information.

Yesterday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

You are entering a phase of emotional directness, emotional beginnings, a fresh start, perhaps the establishment of new habit patterns. Some sort of change in the routine may have stressed everybody around your place of business. Taking time to make yourself clear and making sure you understand what others say will ease the tensions. This may be a time of experimenting with new concepts and putting aside the familiar for now. Again, clear communication is imperative. Ambition and achievement can be tough taskmasters just now. You win reward, recognition and authority through hard work and knowing the score. Now is the time to make a decision in the romance department. Say what you mean and mean what you say.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

This is a good day to make a deal favorable for any business, financial or legal ventures! Your mind is alert, your objectives are clear and your buoyant optimism will help win your way. Lunchtime may be a good time to jog with a co-worker or shoot some baskets. This afternoon you could complete or at least make great headway on those ongoing projects and clean off your desk. Stick to routine tasks this evening and avoid starting any new personal projects or heading out in new directions. A liberal and tolerant attitude is a very good thing to have on those winter days when you may feel trapped indoors. You may be thinking of a move or adding on to the present home site. A roomier, more spread out feeling is desired.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

You will probably pull away from associates who have slowed your progress. This may even mean a new job. Whatever the case, much can be accomplished before the noon break. Updating equipment or skills seems to be the focus for the afternoon. New, futuristic ideas are part of this, but it's much more than that: putting them into practice is essential. Any problems with personal relationships should melt away. Visiting with old friends will prove beneficial in that someone may offer you a chance to make some money. Charisma is high and first impressions are exciting. The accent this evening is on sociability, entertaining, love and affection. A new love interest could appear. You may be inspired to compose a bit of poetry.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

There is a tendency to be too strict with yourself. You will probably insist that whatever does not contribute to security and other long-term goals is trivial. Take your breaks-there is a need for the accuracy that you are so well known for, so estimate the time it will take you to complete a job in an accurate fashion-give yourself plenty of time. Your ambition is intensified. You feel a love of order and law-an appreciation for responsibilities and duty. Business is growing and your skills are in demand. Do not settle for a second-class job when you and your skills are first-class. Demand proper pay for your work. You may be shopping this afternoon-looking for that perfect suit for your perfect job. Have faith in your ability to attain your goals.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Emphasis today is on your work, profession or public image-not your private life. You may wish to reflect on long-range plans and determine just how well things are falling into place. This may be a good time to announce your plans or take a stand on some issue and get a dialogue going between yourself and others. Clarification is the key. Delays, cancellations, difference of opinion would not be unlikely this afternoon. Through the process of elimination you will find just where the problem started-this is where you will untangle and fix most any problem. Good choices are available this evening for whatever you want to achieve. Having and appreciating things of beauty and value plays a big role now. A few quality items are worthy investments.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

You are a positive influence to others as this workweek opens. There could even be an instance where others will change the wording of their sentences to a more upbeat and less corrupt content because of your presence. This is a lucky day, and along with your ability to make things run smoothly, it should produce some excellent results. If you are consulting others today, now would be a good day to take some extra time to mull over any financial questions. You encourage others to settle old debts and to finish projects before starting another one. This is an excellent time to emphasize practicality. This evening, you may be inclined to physical activities, like sports, especially with your close friends. Enjoy but do not overexert your energies.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

When dealing with groups, if changes are necessary, you will probably encourage sweeping changes. Whatever you do, your ability to make things run smoothly should produce excellent results. Remove the emotions and go with the facts, especially when it comes to difficulties in communication. You can turn a difficult situation at work into a positive one. You may stumble upon a remedy to some long-term problem. An extra step can be eliminated with the information you now have to offer. This may also mean an elimination of some transportation schedule, faster mail turnaround or better dialoging between departments. People close to you are optimistic. This evening, an older friend will advise you, if you ask.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

This should be one of those easygoing days when nothing is a really big deal. It might be a good time to seek a solution to any technical or emotional problems that hang over your head. You have an open mind and are able to see all aspects of a situation. Do not compromise away anything that is important to you, though it may seem easier to do so. Your good feelings may tempt you to overindulge-pull off any shopping until another day. If you are able to get together with friends for a while after work, do so... It is always good to have the opportunity to build on friendships. A secret may be revealed to you and will relieve your concerns from the past few days. Worry was not necessary-the secret was a frivolous one.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

New solutions or inventions are on the brink of discovery and you and your co-workers dig in for another exciting day. You are inventive, original and high tech. You enjoy new discoveries whether you or someone else is the one to have created the discovery. Push to obtain your goals but try not to overdo and go too far too fast. Let things take their natural course, which should be an easy one now. At times you are cautious with your co-worker friends but you look forward to the work projects as well as planned get-togethers where there are many personalities grouped together. You enjoy the cordial socializing and may be helpful in the planning of social gatherings. After such a busy day, consider bringing home dinner.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

You are learning to change the negative to the positive these days. It just takes too darn much time to stay in the worry zone or on the slow track-shake it and use your sense of humor around those that seem determined to have you worry! You could be irresistibly drawn to a fascinating new person this afternoon. To those of you who are single... This could be your future sweetheart. To those of you who are engaged... You should be at home! Use a quiet time at home this evening to gather what is needed to work on tax and estate issues. Solid achievement is in front of you-leave yourself time to enjoy each day to its fullest. Chase off the chill tonight with a fire in the fireplace, some toasted marshmallows, soft music and perhaps a shared massage.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

You may feel as though you are running a race. Also, you may tend to push yourself in order to race with others. Insights are flashing to you unexpectedly-keep notes! This is a great day for technical, scientific work or any kind of task that requires cleverness. Make it a point to slow yourself-up your work will be more valuable and you will better remember specific points. If you stop and think about where you were this time last year, regarding finances, you will find huge improvements have occurred. Lady luck seems determined to stay on your team this year. Without taking undue risk, there are opportunities to invest. Be diligent all year long in health matters; habitual exercise, sleep and a balanced diet are worth the effort.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

You may prefer to be alone this morning. No big deal-you probably just feel like tending to those business matters that need to be completed. If you must confer with others, you would rather it be over something important-saving the small talk for another time. You may have much to accomplish. If ever you needed a day for methodical or contemplative work, this is it. After the noon meal, however, your daily routine, which you normally do not think much about, should be upbeat and energized. You make an excellent listener, as anyone who comes to you for advice will know. After the workday has ended, you will have plenty of time to visit with a friend. Your sense of humor is sharpened and you enjoy your friends in the evening.

WORD SEARCH

Birds

Find and circle all of the birds that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell an additional bird.

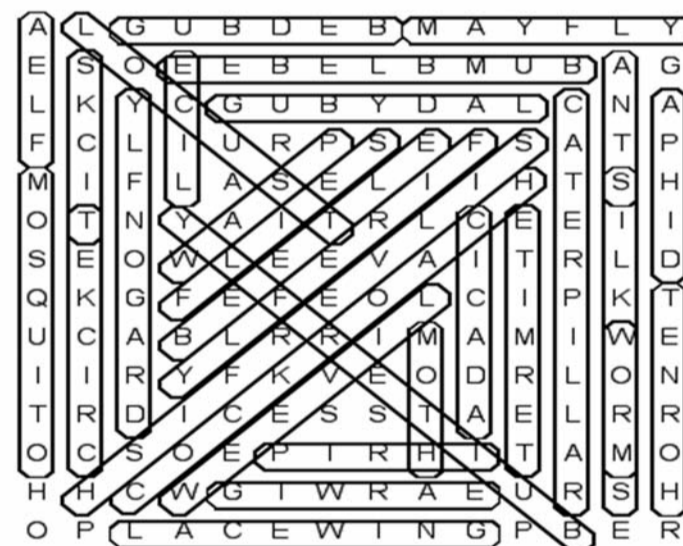


- | | | | |
|-----------|----------|-------------|------------|
| BLACKBIRD | EAGLE | MARTIN | ROBIN |
| BUDGIE | EMU | MOCKINGBIRD | SEAGULL |
| CANARY | FALCON | MYNA | SPARROW |
| CARDINAL | FINCH | OSTRICH | SWAN |
| CHICKEN | FLAMINGO | OWL | TURKEY |
| CRANE | GOOSE | PARAKEET | VULTURE |
| CROW | HAWK | PARROT | WOODPECKER |
| DODO | HERON | PELICAN | WREN |
| DOVE | JAY | PIGEON | |
| DUCK | MAGPIE | RAVEN | |

Yesterday Solution

Insects

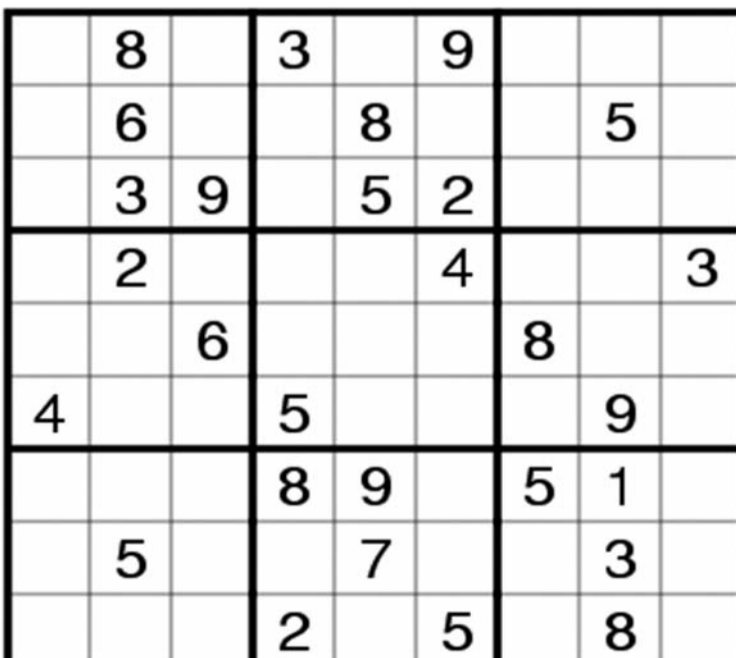
This is the solution to the puzzle located here.



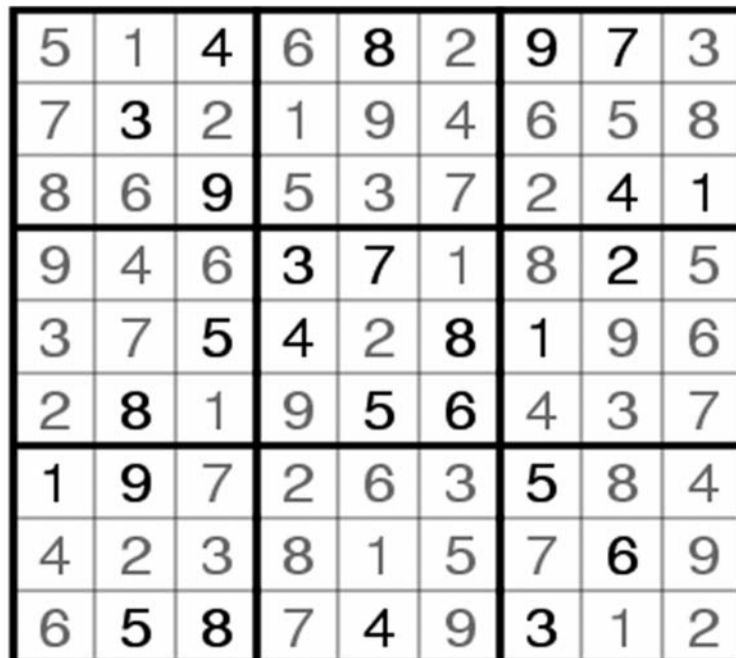
- | | | |
|-------------|----------|------------|
| ANTS | EARWIG | MOSQUITO |
| APHID | FIREFLY | MOTH |
| BEDBUG | FLEA | SILKWORM |
| BEETLE | FLIES | SILVERFISH |
| BUMBLEBEE | HORNET | TERMITE |
| BUTTERFLY | LACEWING | THRIP |
| CATERPILLAR | LADYBUG | TICKS |
| CICADA | LICE | WASP |
| COCKROACH | LOCUST | WEEVIL |
| CRICKET | MAYFLY | WORMS |
| DRAGONFLY | | |

The hidden message is: GRASSHOPPER

Daily SuDoku



Yesterday's Solution



For labor-related inquiries and complaints:
Call MSAL hotline 128

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
Khalidiya	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
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401
Jabriya	25316254
Maidan Hawally	25623444
Bayan	25388462
Mishref	25381200
W Hawally	22630786
Sabah	24810221
Jahra	24770319
New Jahra	24575755
West Jahra	24772608
South Jahra	24775066
North Jahra	24775992
North Jleeb	24311795
Ardhiya	24884079
Firdous	24892674
Omariya	24719048
N Khaitan	24710044
Fintas	23900322



PHARMACIES ON 24 HRS DUTY

GOVERNORATE	PHARMACY	ADDRESS	PHONE
Ahmadi	Sama Safwan Abu Halaifa Danat Al-Sultan	Fahaeel Makka St Abu Halaifa-Coastal Rd Mahboula Block 1, Coastal Rd	23915883 23715414 23726558
Jahra	Modern Jahra Madina Munawara	Jahra-Block 3 Lot 1 Jahra-Block 92	24575518 24566622
Capital	Ahlam Khaldiya Coop	Fahad Al-Salem St Khaldiya Coop	22436184 24833967
Farwaniya	New Shifa Ferdous Coop Modern Safwan	Farwaniya Block 40 Ferdous Coop Old Kheitan Block 11	24734000 24881201 24726638
Hawally	Tariq Hana Ikhlas Hawally & Rawdha Ghadeer Kindy Ibn Al-Nafis Mishrif Coop Salwa Coop	Salmiya-Hamad Mubarak St Salmiya-Amman St Hawally-Beirut St Hawally & Rawdha Coop Jabriya-Block 1A Jabriya-Block 3B Salmiya-Hamad Mubarak St Mishrif Coop Salwa Coop	25726265 25647075 22625999 22564549 25340559 25326554 25721264 25380581 25628241

INTERNATIONAL CALLS



Afghanistan	0093	Luxembourg	00352
Albania	00355	Macau	00853
Algeria	00213	Macedonia	00389
Andorra	00376	Madagascar	00261
Angola	00244	Majorca	0034
Anguilla	001264	Malawi	00265
Antigua	001268	Malaysia	00660
Argentina	0054	Maldives	00960
Armenia	00374	Mali	00223
Australia	0061	Malta	00356
Austria	0043	Marshall Islands	00692
Bahamas	001242	Martinique	00596
Bahrain	00973	Mauritania	00222
Bangladesh	00880	Mauritius	00230
Barbados	001246	Mayotte	00269
Belarus	00375	Mexico	0052
Belgium	0032	Micronesia	00691
Belize	00501	Moldova	00373
Benin	00229	Monaco	00377
Bermuda	001441	Mongolia	00976
Bhutan	00975	Montserrat	001664
Bolivia	00591	Morocco	00212
Bosnia	00387	Mozambique	00258
Botswana	00267	Myanmar (Burma)	0095
Brazil	0055	Namibia	00264
Brunei	00673	Nepal	00977
Bulgaria	00359	Netherlands	0031
Burkina	00226	Netherlands Antilles	00599
Burundi	00257	New Caledonia	00687
Cambodia	00855	New Zealand	0064
Cameroon	00237	Nicaragua	00505
Canada	001	Nigar	00227
Cape Verde	00238	Nigeria	00234
Cayman Islands	001345	Niue	00683
Central African	00236	Norfolk Island	00672
Chad	00235	N. Ireland (UK)	0044
Chile	0056	North Korea	00850
China	0086	Norway	0047
Colombia	0057	Oman	00968
Comoros	00269	Pakistan	0092
Congo	00242	Palau	00680
Cook Islands	00682	Panama	00507
Costa Rica	00506	Papua New Guinea	00675
Croatia	00385	Paraguay	00595
Cuba	0053	Peru	0051
Cyprus	00357	Philippines	0063
Cyprus (Northern)	0090392	Poland	0048
Czech Republic	00420	Portugal	00351
Denmark	0045	Puerto Rico	001787
Diego Garcia	00246	Qatar	00974
Djibouti	00253	Romania	0040
Dominica	001767	Russian Federation	007
Dominican Republic	001809	Rwanda	00250
Ecuador	00593	Saint Helena	00290
Egypt	0020	Saint Kitts	001869
El Salvador	00503	Saint Lucia	001758
England (UK)	0044	Saint Pierre	00508
Equatorial Guinea	00240	Saint Vincent	001784
Eritrea	00291	Samoa US	00684
Estonia	00372	Samoa West	00685
Ethiopia	00251	Sao Marino	00378
Falkland Islands	00500	Sao Tone	00239
Faroe Islands	00298	Saudi Arabia	00966
Fiji	00679	Scotland (UK)	0044
Finland	00358	Senegal	00221
France	0033	Seychelles	00284
French Guiana	00594	Sierra Leone	00232
French Polynesia	00689	Singapore	0065
Gabon	00241	Slovakia	00421
Gambia	00220	Slovenia	00386
Georgia	00995	Solomon Islands	00677
Germany	0049	Somalia	00252
Ghana	00233	South Africa	0027
Gibraltar	00350	South Korea	0082
Greece	0030	Spain	0034
Greenland	00299	Sri Lanka	0094
Grenada	001473	Sudan	00249
Guadeloupe	00590	Suriname	00597
Guam	001671	Swaziland	00268
Guatemala	00502	Sweden	0046
Guinea	00224	Switzerland	0041
Guyana	00592	Syria	00963
Haiti	00509	Serbia	00381
Holland (Netherlands)	0031	Taiwan	00886
Honduras	00504	Tanzania	00255
Hong Kong	00852	Thailand	0066
Hungary	0036	Toga	00228
Ibiza (Spain)	0034	Tonga	00676
Iceland	00354	Tokelau	00690
India	0091	Trinidad	001868
Indian Ocean	00873	Tunisia	00216
Indonesia	0062	Turkey	0090
Iran	0098	Tuvalu	00688
Iraq	00964	Uganda	00256
Ireland	00353	Ukraine	00380
Italy	0039	United Arab Emirates	00976
Ivory Coast	00225	United Kingdom	0044
Jamaica	001876	Uruguay	00598
Japan	0081	USA	001
Jordan	00962	Uzbekistan	00998
Kazakhstan	007	Vanuatu	00678
Kenya	00254	Venezuela	00582
Kiribati	00686	Vietnam	0084
Kuwait	00965	Virgin Islands UK	001284
Kyrgyzstan	00996	Virgin Islands US	001340
Laos	00856	Wales (UK)	0044
Latvia	00371	Yemen	00967
Lebanon	00961	Yugoslavia	00381
Liberia	00231	Zambia	00260
Libya	00218	Zimbabwe	00263
Lithuania	00370		

STATE OF KUWAIT DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT



Tel: (+965) 161 Ext: 2627 - 2630 Fax: (+965) 24348714 www.met.gov.kw

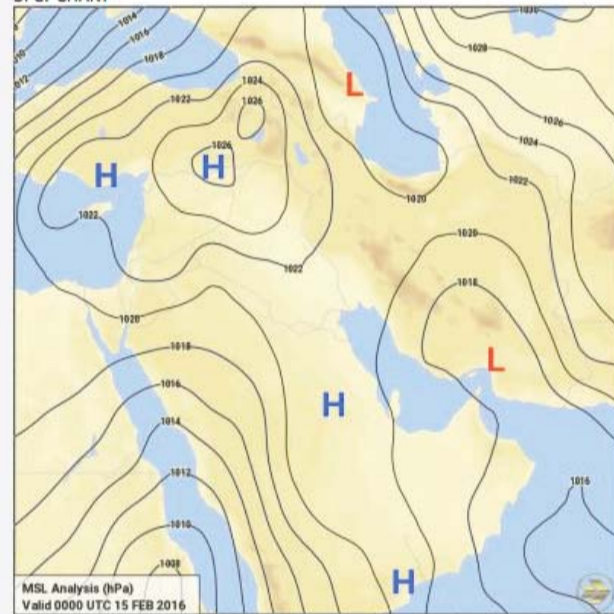
Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

Issued 15/02/2016-07:00 LT UTC +3hr

Max Temperature 26 °C

By Day : Warm with light to moderate north westerly wind, with speed of 08 - 30 km/h
By Night : Cool with light to moderate north westerly wind, with speed of 08 - 28 km/h

SFC. CHART



Four-Day Forecast

	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Expected Weather	Mostly sunny	warm	warm	warm
Min Temp °C	09	08	09	09
Max Temp °C	25	26	27	27
Wind Direction	north westerly	north westerly to light variable	north westerly to light variable	variable
Wind Speed km/h	15 - 40	06 - 26	06 - 22	06 - 20

All times are local time (GMT+3) unless otherwise stated

Warnings & Weather Watches

no warnings or weather watches

Kuwait Forecast

Station	MIN °C	REC	Max °C	EXP
KUWAIT CITY	15		25	
KUWAIT AIRPORT	08		26	
ABDALY	09		26	
BUBYAN	11		25	
JAHRA	12		26	
FAILAKA ISLAND	12		24	
SALMIYAH	16		23	
AHMADI	16		22	
JAL ALIYAH	10		24	
QAROH ISLAND	17		21	
UMM AL-MARADEM	17		21	
NUWAISIB	11		23	
WAFRA	08		26	
MANAGISH	10		24	
SALMY	10		25	
MUTRIBA	09		26	

Recorded Yesterday at Kuwait Airport

Max Temp (°C)	24
Min Temp (°C)	08
Max Rel Hum (%)	76
Min Rel Hum (%)	28
Max Wind Speed (km/h) and Direction	36 NW
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR	0 mm

Sunrise	06:27
Sunset	17:37

Prayer Times

Fajr	05:07
Sunrise	06:27
Zuhr	12:02
Asr	15:13
Sunset	17:37
Isha	18:55



PRIVATE CLINICS

Ophthalmologists	
Dr. Abdallah Al-Mansoor	25622444
Dr. Samy Al-Rabeea	25752222
Dr. Masoma Habeeb	25321171
Dr. Mubarak Al-Ajmy	25739999
Dr. Mohsen Abel	25757700
Dr. Adnan Hasan Alwayl	25732223
Dr. Abdallah Al-Baghly	25732223
Ear, Nose & Throat (ENT)	
Dr. Ahmed Fouad Mouner	24555050 Ext 510
Dr. Abdallah Al-Ali	25644660
Dr. Abd Al-Hameed Al-Taweel	25646478
Dr. Sanad Al-Fathalah	25311996
Dr. Mohammad Al-Daory	25731988
Dr. Ismail Al-Fodary	22620166
Dr. Mahmoud Al-Booz	25651426
General Practitioners	
Dr. Mohammed Y Majidi	24555050 Ext 123
Dr. Yousef Al-Omar	24719312
Dr. Tarek Al-Mikhaizeem	22636920
Dr. Kathem Maarafi	25730465
Dr. Abdallah Ahmad Eyadah	25655528
Dr. Nabeel Al-Ayoobi	24577781
Dr. Dina Abdallah Al-Rfae	25333501
Urologists	
Dr. Ali Naser Al-Serfy	22641534
Dr. Fawzi Taher Abul	22639955
Dr. Khaleel Abdallah Al-Awadi	22616660
Dr. Adel Al-Hunayan FRCS (C)	25313120
Dr. Leons Joseph	66703427

Plastic Surgeons	
Dr. Mohammad Al-Khalaf	22547272
Dr. Abdal-Redha Lari	22617700
Dr. Abdel Quttainah	25625030/60
Family Doctor	
Dr Divya Damodar	23729596/23729581
Psychiatrists	
Dr. Esam Al-Ansari	22635047
Dr Eisa M. Al-Balhan	22613623/0
Gynaecologists & Obstetricians	
Dr Adrian arbe	23729596/23729581
Dr. Verginia s.Marin	2572-6666 ext 8321
Dr. Fozeya Ali Al-Qatan	22655539
Dr. Majeda Khalefa Aliyami	25343406
Dr. Ahmad Al-Khooly	25739272
Dr. Salem soso	22618787
General Surgeons	
Dr. Amer Zawaz Al-Amer	22610044
Dr. Mohammad Yousef Basher	25327148
Internists, Chest & Heart	
Dr. Adnan Ebil	22639939
Dr. Mousa Khadada	22666300
Dr. Latefa Al-Duweisan	25728004
Dr. Nadem Al-Ghabra	25355515
Dr. Mobarak Aldoub	24726446
Dr Nasser Behbehani	25654300/3

Paediatricians	
Dr. Khaled Hamadi	25665898
Dr. Abd Al-Aziz Al-Rashed	25340300
Dr. Zahra Qabazard	25710444
Dr. Sohail Qamar	22621099
Dr. Snaa Maarroof	25713514
Dr. Pradip Gujare	23713100
Dr. Zacharias Mathew	24334282
Dermatology	
Dr. Mohammed Salam Bern University	23845955
Dentists	
Dr Anil Thomas	3729596/3729581
Dr. Shamah Al-Matar	22641071/2
Dr. Anesah Al-Rasheed	22562226
Dr. Abdallah Al-Amer	22561444
Dr. Faysal Al-Fozan	22619557
Dr. Abdallateef Al-Katrash	22525888
Dr. Abdallah Al-Duweisan	25653755
Dr. Bader Al-Ansari	25620111
Neurologists	
Dr. Sohal Najem Al-Shemeri	25633324
Dr. Jasem Mola Hassan	25345875
Gastrologists	
Dr. Sami Aman	22636464
Dr. Mohammad Al-Shamaly	25322030
Dr. Foad Abdallah Al-Ali	22633135

Endocrinologist	
Dr. Abd Al-Naser Al-Othman	25339330
Dr. Ahmad Al-Ansari	25658888
Dr. Kamal Al-Shomr	25329924
Physiotherapists & VD	
Dr. Deyaa Shehab	25722291
Dr. Mused Faraj Khamees	22666288
Rheumatologists:	
Dr. Adel Al-Awadi	25330060
Dr. Khaled Al-Jarallah	25722290
Internist, Chest & Heart	
DR.Mohammes Akkad	24555050 Ext 210
Consultant Cardiologist	
Dr. Mohammad Zubaid MB, ChB, FRCP, PACC Assistant Professor Of Medicine Head, Division of Cardiology Mubarak Al-Kabeer Hospital	25339667
Dr. Farida Al-Habib MD, PH.D, FACC	2611555-2622555
Inaya German Medical Center	Te: 2575077 Fax: 25723123

Psychologists /Psychotherapists	Soor Center Tel: 2290-1677 Fax: 2290 1688	info@soorcenter.com www.soorcenter.com	Kaizen center 25716707	Noor Clinic 23845955	William Schuilenberg, RPC 2290-1677 Zaina Al Zabin, M.Sc. 2290-1677
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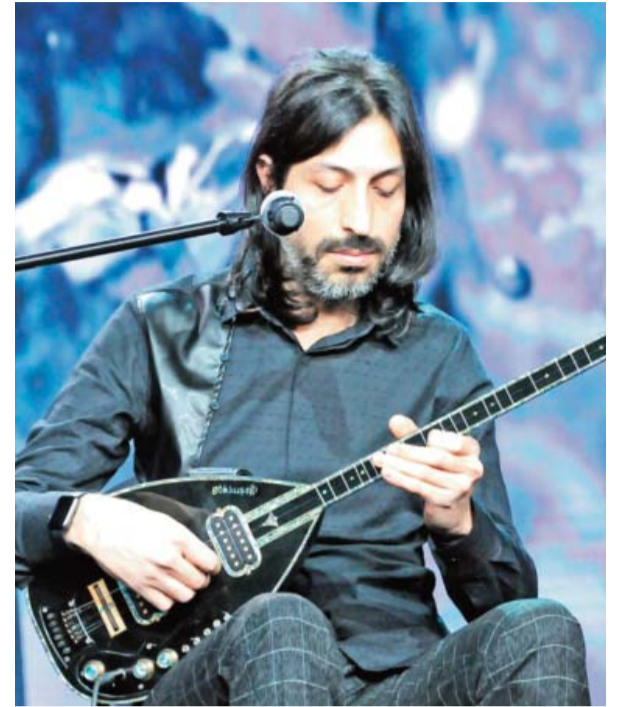


Taksim plays romantic music at Feb Kuwait festival

By Nawara Fattahova

As part of the Febrayer Al Kuwait festival, popular Turkish band Taksim Trio O2 performed on Sunday evening at the Crowne Plaza Hotel. The band, consisting of three members, began its performance at 9:00 pm and presented classical romantic music on the occasion of Valentine's Day, until 10:30 pm.

Hosni Senlendirici plays on the clarinet, AytaÁ Dogan plays on the zither and Ismail TunÁbilek plays on the buzuk (lute). The band released its first album in 2007, and also distributed music for many Arab singers, including a popular song by Kuwaiti veteran singer Abdullah Al-Ruwaished. This is not their first time performing in Kuwait. The band also sang part of Ruwaished's song. Dogan said that they are happy to be performing in Kuwait, especially since the audience interacts with them.



Valentine's Day gets pulses racing at frozen NY Fashion Week

New York Fashion Week got pulses racing on Valentine's Day, with boyish allure from Victoria Beckham, a dance party from Diane von Furstenberg and stunning magic realism from Prabal Gurung. Supermodel Karlie Kloss and Vogue editor in chief Anna Wintour led fashionistas braving 11 degrees Fahrenheit (12 Celsius) on one of the coldest weekends in 20 years in New York on day four of the style bonanza that wraps up Thursday.

Beckham began the day by sending a boyish yet fine-tailored feminine collection down a carpeted runway, with her English footballer husband David, and their children Brooklyn, Romeo, Cruz and Harper front row. Models strode the carpeted runway in checks, houndstooth and stripes in a collection that showcased Beckham's increasingly sophisticated and evolving personal style, her Spice Girls days long gone. Beckham's answer to wrapping up warm is layering up, so spaghetti strap dresses were paired with luscious ribbed knits, checked double-breasted coats with ribbed sleeves and knitted leggings.

"I don't know what to say, I feel quite overwhelmed, so I'm really happy," said the English designer backstage after winning praise from style editors, dressed unusually casually in white sneakers, tailored dark trousers and an oversized white sweater. "There are some more masculine fabrics, which I've used," she told reporters. "It feels like a very feminine collection to me but I love adding those menswear elements to really toughen it up." Beckham, whose second store opens in Hong Kong in weeks following the success of her Mayfair boutique in London, said she used light fabrics to take into consideration her clients in different climates. "Asia is my fastest-growing market," Beckham told AFP. "I really love Asian women, I feel that they really understand fashion and it seemed like the perfect place for the second store." There were coats galore but also plenty of bare shoulders.

Karlie, Gigi, Kendall

"I just wanted to look at what I've worn and what I love and just rework those pieces to make them feel new and fresh, and just show how my personal style has evolved," Beckham said. One well-wisher presented her with a beautifully crafted posy of pink and white roses backstage and wished her a happy Valentine's Day. But when asked if she had special plans later Sunday, the 41-year-old mother of four said: "I'll be working!" Diane von Furstenberg dispensed with the catwalk to invite her guests to celebrate Valentine's Day and "love power" by sipping champagne and nibbling vodka jelly hearts as models danced.

She hosted the event at her studios in the Meatpacking District, where Kloss wore a long golden wrap dress, and models of the moment Gigi Hadid and Kendall Jenner posed and



(From left) Lily Aldridge, Irina Shayk, Gigi Hadid, Kendall Jenner, Karlie Kloss, Jourdan Dunn, Elsa Hosk and Alanna Arrington pose wearing Diane Von Furstenberg Fall 2016 during New York Fashion Week on February 14, 2016 in New York City. — AP/AFP photos

danced in a little tableau. Von Furstenberg also joined them briefly, throwing a few shapes with the models to the strains of 1979 disco hit "We Are Family." Prabal Gurung, the New York-based Nepalese designer, summed up his collection as a fashion designer's take on magical realism inspired by French artist Henri Rousseau's 1905 oil painting "Woman Walking in an Exotic Forest" and the 1813 poem "She Walks in Beauty" by Lord Byron.

There were luxurious oversized coats with exaggerated fur collars. A designer who often finds inspiration in nature, he opened the show with models dressed in snow white, and intricate feather and leaf designs were picked out on coats in prints and hand-embroidered lace. Contrasting with snow were pewter, midnight, ivory, cherry, blackberry and pale blue sky, his classic east-meets-west approach mixed hand-knit Nepalese cashmere and printed, pleated leather.

His coats were breathtaking, such as a snow wool duffle coat with white fox fur trim, and an oversized pale blue jacket with an enormous pale blue and midnight blue fox fur trim collar running down the front. "Amazing," "wow," breathed members of the audience as Gurung appeared for a little wave at the end of the show and a burst of applause. — AFP



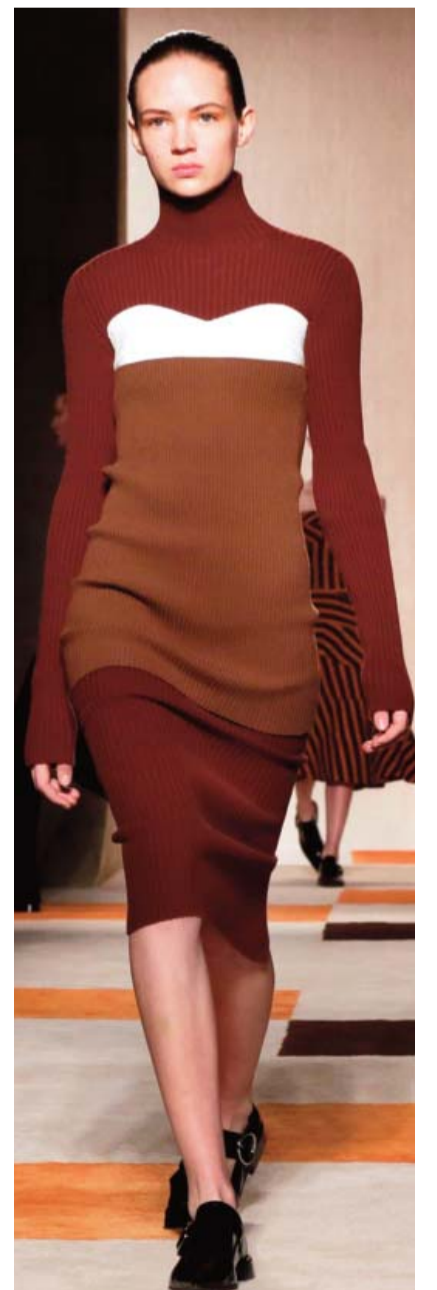
Model Coco Rocha



Model Jourdan Dunn



Fashion designer Diane Von Furstenberg (left) and editor-in-chief of American Vogue, Anna Wintour.



The Victoria Beckham Fall 2016 collection is modeled during Fashion Week in New York.

'The Revenant' and DiCaprio are winners at BAFTA film awards



Mexican director Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu poses with the award for a director for the film 'The Revenant' which won the award for best film at the BAFTA British Academy Film Awards. — AP/AFP photos



US actor Leonardo DiCaprio (right) poses with the award for a leading actor for his work on the film 'The Revenant' with award presenter US actor Tom Cruise (left).



Sound editors Chris Duesterdiek, Martin Hernandez, Frank A Montano, Jon Taylor and Randy Thom pose with their awards for sound for their work on the film 'The Revenant'.



Lily Donaldson



British actress Gwendoline Christie



British actor Idris Elba



British actor Eddie Redmayne



British actor John Boyega



British actor John Boyega



Award presenter British actor Sacha Baron Cohen



Award presenter British actor and director Stanley Tucci.



Argentinian director Damian Szifron (right) poses with the award for a film not in the English language for 'Wild Tales' with Hugo Sigman (second left) and award presenters Irish actor Domhnall Gleeson (left) and US actress Carrie Fisher (second right).



Director Naji Abu Nowar, left, and producer Rupert Lloyd pose with their awards for Outstanding Debut for the film 'Theeb'.

The UK film industry showered Valentine's Day love on "The Revenant" Sunday, awarding the endurance epic five prizes, including best picture and best actor, at the British Academy Film Awards. Leonardo DiCaprio cemented his Oscar-favorite status by taking the best-actor trophy for playing a bear-battling fur trapper in a brutally wild American West. Alejandro G Inarritu was named best director for what he called a "human and tender story," and "The Revenant" also won prizes for cinematography and sound.

DiCaprio, who has been nominated three times before at the British awards without winning, said in his acceptance speech that he was "absolutely humbled" to beat "The Martian" star Matt Damon, "Trumbo"'s Bryan Cranston, Michael Fassbender for "Steve Jobs," and Eddie Redmayne for "The Danish Girl." He cited the influence on his work of British actors including Tom Courtney, Peter O'Toole, Daniel Day Lewis and his "Revenant" co-star Tom Hardy, and sent thanks and greetings to his mother, whose birthday fell on Sunday.

The British awards, known as BAFTAs, are considered a portent of success at Hollywood's Feb 28 Academy Awards. "The Revenant" has earned DiCaprio his sixth Oscar nomination - and, many believe, his best shot at finally winning. DiCaprio said it was out of his hands, but expressed pride in what he called "not just a film, but an epic journey we all went on." "We put our heart and soul into this movie ... It's up to the world now and voters to decide," he said at a post-ceremony news conference. The best-actress trophy went to Brie Larson as a mother trying to shield her son from a terrible reality in "Room." She won out over Alicia Vikander for "The Danish Girl," Cate Blanchett for "Carol," Maggie Smith for "The Lady in the Van" and Saoirse Ronan for "Brooklyn."

Doubt themselves

Supporting performer prizes went to Mark Rylance, a soft-spoken Soviet agent in "Bridge of Spies," and Kate Winslet, an Apple executive in "Steve Jobs." Winslet dedicated the prize to "all those young women who doubt themselves," recalling that she once had been told to go for "the fat-girl parts." "Look at me now!" Winslet said. "The Revenant" beat several hotly tipped awards contenders, including Steven Spielberg's Cold War thriller "Bridge of Spies" and Todd Haynes' lesbian romance "Carol." Each had nine BAFTA nominations, but "Bridge of Spies" won only for Rylance's performance, while "Carol" was shut out.

Irish emigrant saga "Brooklyn" was named best British film, a distinct category, while the documentary prize went to "Amy," a powerful portrait of the rise and fall of singer Amy Winehouse. George Miller's dystopian thrill ride "Mad Max: Fury Road" took four prizes: editing, production design, costume design, and hair and makeup. Two leading Oscar contenders also won awards: "Spotlight," the drama about newspaper reporters investigating sex abuses in the Catholic Church, for original screenplay, and "The Big Short," the financial crisis dramedy, for adapted screenplay.

On a crisp, cool London winter evening, hundreds of fans gathered to watch the stars arrive at the Royal Opera House. Among the arrivals were nominees DiCaprio, Mark Ruffalo, Fassbender, Blanchett, Spielberg, Winslet, and "Star Wars" action hero John Boyega. Inside the plush auditorium, actor-comedian Stephen Fry hosted a ceremony that included a Valentine's-themed kiss-cam stunt which saw seatmates including DiCaprio and Maggie Smith smooch onscreen.

Boyega won the Rising Star award - decided by public vote - and dedicated it to "all the young dreamers who are hard-working, who are determined and who quite frankly are

amazing." "Star Wars: The Force Awakens" won the BAFTA for visual effects. The black comedy anthology "Wild Tales," written and directed by Argentine Damian Szifron, won for non-English language film. The famed Italian film composer, Ennio Morricone at age 87 received the music award for his score to Quentin Tarantino's "The Hateful Eight."

A lifetime achievement

The movie awards season has been dominated by debate about why the film industry remains dominated by white men. All the acting nominees for the Oscars both this year and last have been white. The BAFTAs are slightly more diverse, with two black actors nominated - Boyega and Idris Elba, a supporting-actor contender for "Beasts of No Nation." Pioneering black American actor Sidney Poitier - the first black best-actor Oscar winner, in 1963 - received a lifetime achievement award, the BAFTA fellowship.

A group called Creatives of Colour Network organized a protest beside the red carpet against a lack of racial diversity in show business. Demonstrators rallied under the hashtag #baftablackout, and distributed leaflets declaring the awards "male, pale and stale." The head of the British film academy said she supported the protesters' aims. "Our industry isn't diverse enough, so the pool of people to draw award winners from isn't diverse enough," chief executive Amanda Berry told the Daily Telegraph newspaper. Like Hollywood's Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, the British film academy says it will work to make sure its 6,500 voting members become a more diverse group. On the red carpet, Boyega said he was glad the issue was being aired. "I just think a larger conversation is being had and I think that's a very, very positive thing," he said. — AP



US actor Leonardo DiCaprio poses with the award for a leading actor for his work on the film 'The Revenant'.

Winners

- Film - "The Revenant"
- British Film - "Brooklyn"
- Director - Alejandro G Inarritu, "The Revenant"
- Actor - Leonardo DiCaprio, "The Revenant"
- Actress - Brie Larson, "Room"
- Supporting Actor - Mark Rylance, "Bridge of Spies"
- Supporting Actress - Kate Winslet, "Steve Jobs"
- Rising Star - John Boyega
- British Debut - Director/producer Naji Abu Nowar and producer Rupert Lloyd, "Theeb"
- Original Screenplay - "Spotlight"
- Adapted Screenplay - "The Big Short"
- Film Not in the English Language - "Wild Tales"
- Music - Ennio Morricone, "The Hateful Eight"
- Cinematography - Emmanuel Lubezki, "The Revenant"
- Editing - "Mad Max: Fury Road"
- Production Design - "Mad Max: Fury Road"
- Costume Design - "Mad Max: Fury Road"
- Sound - "The Revenant"
- Visual Effects - "Star Wars: The Force Awakens"
- Makeup and Hair - "Mad Max: Fury Road"
- Animated Feature - "Inside Out"
- Short Film - "Operator"
- Short Animation - "Edmond"
- Documentary - "Amy"
- Outstanding British Contribution to Cinema - Angels Costumes
- Academy Fellowship - Sidney Poitier.-AP



Producer Steve Golin (third right), Mexican director, writer and producer Alejandro G Inarritu (third left), winner also of the award for a director, US producer Mary Parent (second left) and US producer Keith Redmon (second right) and US actor Leonardo DiCaprio (right), winner of the leader actor award, pose with the award for best film for 'The Revenant' with award presenter Tom Cruise (left).



Sonoya Mizuno



Tori Kelly sings during the Clive Davis & The Recording Academy's 2016 Pre-Grammy Gala show in Beverly Hills, California. — AP/AFP photos



Adam Lambert



Elle King

Grammys set with Lamar, Swift in front



Andra Day

The music industry was set Monday to recognize its top artists at the Grammys, with socially conscious rapper Kendrick Lamar and pop superstar Taylor Swift leading nominations. The music world's annual extravaganza in Los Angeles kicked off with a gala late Sunday that brought a rare performance by the surviving members of Nirvana. Lamar, whose experimental rap opus "To Pimp a Butterfly" reflects on the state of race relations in contemporary America, stands to dominate the Grammys with nominations in 11 categories. The Grammy haul is the largest number of nominations for a single artist in one night since Michael Jackson following his massive "Thriller."

Lamar's "Alright" has emerged as an unofficial anthem of the Black Lives Matter movement against police brutality. Another track on the album, "How Much a Dollar Cost," a meditation inspired by a panhandler in South Africa, was named by President Barack Obama as his favorite song of 2015. But Lamar faces tough competition from his sometime collaborator Swift, whose album "1989" was by far the best-selling album for the period. The 26-year-old, who with "1989" fully transformed from country prodigy to pop superstar, is up for seven awards including Record of the Year and Song of the Year for her chart-topping single "Blank Space." Tied with Swift at seven nominations is Canadian R&B singer The Weeknd, who began his career in near anonymity in 2010 as he posted songs on the Internet but rose to fame last year with "Can't Feel My Face."



Verdine White, from left, Maurice White and Ralph Johnson of Earth, Wind and Fire perform.



Jason Scheff of the band Chicago performs.

'Uptown Funk'

But a favorite for Record of the Year—which recognizes overall singles, whereas Song of the Year awards writers—is "Uptown Funk," which spent a near-record 14 weeks at number one of the US chart. With vocals by Bruno Mars set to a funky beat reminiscent of early Prince, the song marked a breakthrough as a solo artist by 40-year-old veteran British producer Mark Ronson. In a sign of the wide appeal of "Uptown Funk," among those rooting for it to win is glam metal pioneer Alice Cooper, who said he was astounded by the production. "It's not my kind of music, but it's the best record of the year easily," Cooper told AFP. "Ronson did an amazing job on that record. He's the next big guy," Cooper said.

Cooper will perform at the Grammys in his group The Hollywood Vampires that features both Aerosmith's Joe Perry and actor Johnny Depp on guitars. Cooper—who described Depp as a "killer guitar player" despite being better known for movies—promised a loud rendition of Motorhead's "Ace of Spades" in memory of the metal band's late frontman Lemmy. The Grammys will pay tribute to a number of artists who recently died, chief among them the rock icon David Bowie. Lady Gaga, whose glittery outfits and sexual frankness bear a clear influence from Bowie, has promised a "multisensory" tribute to the Starman who died last month from a publicly undisclosed battle with cancer.

'For two geniuses'

Bowie was also honored on the eve of the Grammys at an annual party thrown by veteran music executive Clive Davis, with alternative rock great Beck playing with surviving members of Nirvana. "This is for two geniuses who are no longer with us," Beck said as he opened "The Man Who Saved The World"—a Bowie song famously covered acoustically by Nirvana shortly before frontman Kurt Cobain's suicide. Beck, who won Album of the Year in 2015, led the song with touches of both versions as Nirvana's Dave Grohl, now singer and guitarist of Foo Fighters, returned to drums.

Grohl and Nirvana bassist Krist Novoselic played a one-off show together at a New York bar in 2014 following Nirvana's induction into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, but talk of a broader reunion by the grunge icons has remained speculation. Other performers included the 70-year-old Carly Simon, who has played sparingly in recent years. She offered a spirited performance of her signature song, "You're So Vain," with her son Ben Taylor on guitar. Simon flew to Los Angeles at the last minute in anticipation of filling in for soft rock crooner Barry Manilow, who was rushed to a hospital last week for complications from oral surgery. But Manilow nonetheless performed at the party, appearing in good form and spirits. "We had no way of knowing until this very day, today, that he would be able to perform," Davis told the crowd.—AFP



Honoree Irving Azoff accepts the Recording Academy President's Merit Award.



Actor Sylvester Stallone (right) gestures as his wife Jennifer Flavin looks on.



Barry Manilow performs on stage.



Adam Lambert, left, and Jack Antonoff perform on stage.



Melissa Etheridge performs on stage.



US band Chicago performs on stage.



Pat Smear, from left, Dave Grohl, Beck, and Krist Novoselic perform on stage.

Kanye West says he's \$53 Million in debt

It wouldn't be a typical week in the Kanye West hype machine without some head-scratching moments—this time around they included a Bill Cosby endorsement and a second Taylor Swift feud. But on Saturday night, prior to releasing his eighth studio album and performing on "Saturday Night Live," the rapper disclosed perhaps his biggest shocker yet when he revealed that he was \$53 million in debt. The 38-year-old West made the claim on Twitter shortly before the highly-anticipated album premiered exclusively on Tidal and his website.

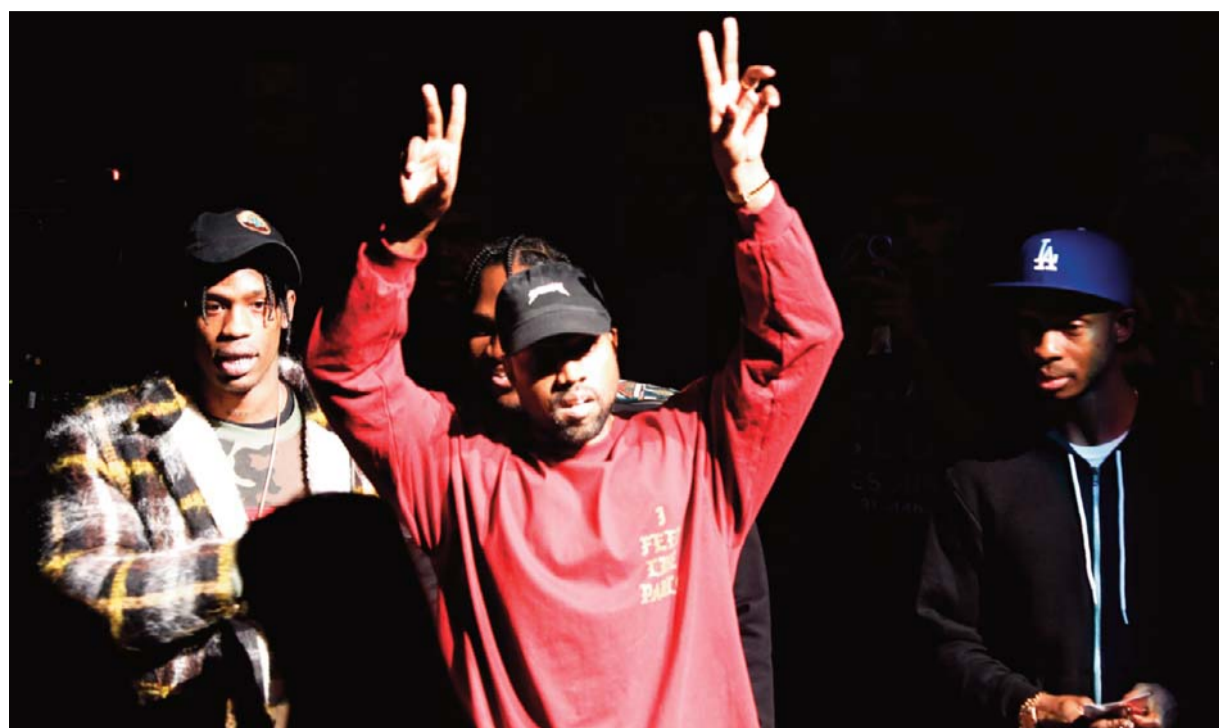
"I write this to you my brothers while still 53 million dollars in personal debt," he tweeted. "Please pray we overcome... This is my true heart." The "Life of Pablo" album download, however, was taken down quickly Sunday after less than 12 hours online, with the rapper explaining that he'd given the exclusive stream to Tidal for another week before going on sale to other outlets—a sign that the multi-Grammy-winner was likely in dire straits. After the "Life of Pablo" download link had disappeared, he wrote, "Please for all music lovers. Please subscribe to tidal!!! I decided not to sell my album for another week. Please subscribe to tidal!"

Tidal, the Jay-Z backed streaming service, recently paid Rihanna an undisclosed fee for her latest album, "Anti," though the February release was bungled when someone inside her camp leaked it online. Samsung reportedly paid \$25 million to be a part of the campaign. West, who's married to reality TV star Kim Kardashian, has been putting tens of millions into his

fashion label. According to Business Insider, his latest clothing line is selling high-end coats and jackets for as much as \$3,000 to \$4,000. The Kanye sweatpants alone cost \$510. In a 2015 interview with BET, the controversial rapper said he incurred \$16 million in debt from his fashion business.

"I was trying to play a sport that's a billionaire sport. It's not a millionaire sport and I'm proud of the debt," he boasted. West, on Sunday morning, asked Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg to invest \$1 billion in his ideas because he is "the greatest living artist and the greatest artist of all time." In yet another strange twist in the Kanye—"Life of Pablo" saga, pharmaceutical exec Martin Shkreli claimed he had been scammed out of \$15 million in an attempt to buy exclusive rights to West's new album. "Someone named Daquan said he was Kanye's boy and I signed the deal to buy 'Pablo' and sent the Bitcoin. Call the police, this is b——t," he wrote. , who was recently arrested on securities fraud charges, told his Twitter followers on Sunday that he'd been in touch with Bitcoin founder Satoshi Nakamoto, who promised to get his money back. — Reuters

File photo shows Kanye West gestures to the audience at the unveiling of the Yeezy collection and album release for his latest album, 'The Life of Pablo'. — AP



Sisters Tair (center), Liron (left) and Tagel (right) found musical inspiration from women in their family who sang Yemeni folk songs. — AFP

Girl band marries hip hop with 'Yemenite' folk

Three Israeli sisters have built up a passionate fan base at home and abroad with music where past meets present with a twist: A mix of "Yemenite" folk, hip-hop and Arabic. Looking rather like heroines from the Arabian Nights—apart from the tennis shoes—the sisters in traditional embroidered dresses who make up the band A-WA recreate a desert party at their energetic concerts. "We belong to an ancestral tribe, that of our grandparents who left Yemen to emigrate to Israel," said Tair Haim, at 32 the oldest of the trio that includes Liron, 30, and Tagel, 26.

The three sisters grew up in the desert village of Shaharut in southern Israel, near the borders of Jordan and Egypt, the daughters of an architect and holistic therapist. They found their musical inspiration in a past that came alive through the women in their family who sang Yemeni folk songs, an oral tradition handed down from generation to generation. They were discovered by Israeli musician Tomer Yosef of the band Balkan Beat Box and signed on as the opening act at his concerts, before they made their own impact on the music scene and he became their producer.

"I heard traditional Yemenite music for the first time when I was young, at a henna ceremony," a tradition at Jewish, Arab and Muslim weddings, Tair Haim told AFP. "I started to get excited about this tradition. I learned the songs by heart. I knew that I wanted to do something with it." In a secret operation dubbed "Flying Carpet" between 1949 and 1950, nearly all of Yemen's 45,000 Jews left to the newly-created state of Israel, the Haim family included.

Return to roots

Israel's cultural scene—not only in music, but also film and literature has undergone a recent trend of third-generation Jewish immigrants from Yemen or Morocco returning to their roots. In the spring of 2015, A-WA posted an online music video of "Habib Galbi" (Arabic for "Love of My Heart"), without mentioning they were Israeli Jews. Perched on a jeep cruising

over vast sands after slipping away from chores for an officer in military uniform sporting a whip, the girls appear in the video wearing bright pink veils and singing in an unidentified Arabic dialect, before joining a dance session with three boys. "We wanted people to come to us with an open mind," said Tair Haim. "We just wrote something like: 'We are bringing you a fresh desert breeze.'"

Army radio, the most listened to in Israel, helped make Habib Galbi a summer hit, a first for a song in Arabic in the Jewish state. Its "la-la-la" refrain has turned into a hit at Israeli marriages, at clubs and on car radios, with enthusiasts trying to replicate the girls' dance moves—blend of folk dancing and break-dance.

'Girl Power'

Two million Internet views later, A-WA (pronounced "aywa," or yes in Arabic) has also attracted a following in the Arab world, according to the sisters. "It's incredible that we have so many fans in the Arab world," said Liron Haim. In Europe, music festivals and radio stations are also discovering the trio, sometimes referred to as an "Israeli-Yemenite choir."

"I've been involved in the world music scene for 10 years, and something like them has simply been lacking. I've never seen anything like it," their producer Yosef told Haaretz newspaper. The three sisters—two of whom live together in Tel Aviv—have played several gigs in Europe since last summer. "We have telepathic moments on stage," said Liron. "It's like when we were small and we played together." A-WA is "a world of freedom and love and a combination of styles, old and new, traditional and modern, hip-hop and Yemenite folk, and girl power," Tair said. "But also a world where guys can feel comfortable in their own skins. It's a cool and happy world." —AFP

Long-awaited Charlie Chaplin museum to open in April

A museum showcasing the life and works of Charlie Chaplin will finally open at his former Swiss home on April 17 after more than 15 years of planning, organizers announced Monday. The opening of Chaplin's World in the village of Corsier-sur-Vevey will come a day after what would have been the British screen legend's 127th birthday. Chaplin spent the last 25 years of his life in Switzerland after he was barred from the United States in the 1950s over suspicions that he had communist sympathies, at the height of McCarthy-era paranoia about Soviet infiltration.

Overlooking Lake Geneva, the large manor where Chaplin lived with his wife Oona and their eight children will form half of the museum, while a separate building will house a mocked-up Hollywood studio where visitors can delve into his on-screen work. Visitors will also get a glimpse of the artist's humble beginnings in London and his spectacular rise to become one of the biggest, most influential legends in Hollywood history. The project has faced repeated stumbling blocks over more than 15 years of drawn-out negotiations.

It took seven years to get a building permit, and before that organizers had to wait five years to settle a lawsuit brought by a neighbor worried about the implications of the build. Empty

since 2008, the manor required major renovation work. Chaplin, who died in 1977, is buried in the nearby Corsier-sur-Vevey cemetery along with his wife. The site has been developed by French museum operator Grevin and will be the fourth international site operated by the group, which runs waxwork museums in Paris, Montreal, Seoul and Prague. — AFP



Producer says Grammys doesn't have Oscars diversity issue

A veteran Grammys executive producer says his awards show does not have a diversity issue like the Oscars and that it is not fair to compare the two programs. Ahead of yesterday's show, news outlets reported that the Grammys could be under fire since it planned to pay tribute to white performers such as David Bowie and The Eagles' Glenn Frey with live performances, though the legacy of black acts such as Natalie Cole and Maurice White of Earth, Wind & Fire recently passed and were not receiving the same treatment.

Ken Ehrlich said he first thought of booking a performer to honor Cole, but then he watched her 1992 Grammy performance of her singing in sync with her father, Nat King Cole, who appeared in video. It was the same year she won album of the year for "Unforgettable... with Love," which paid tribute to her father with reworked versions of some of his best-known songs. Ehrlich called the video of the performance "unbelievably touching" and said it will be played at the end of the "In Memorium" section of the awards show. Natalie Cole died Dec 31. Earth, Wind & Fire - who were set to receive a lifetime achievement award before White passed - will accept the honor on live TV, speak about White's legacy and present one of the top awards, record of the year, Ehrlich said. White died Feb. 4 and Ehrlich added that there will also be a surprise with Earth, Wind & Fire.

Same rules apply

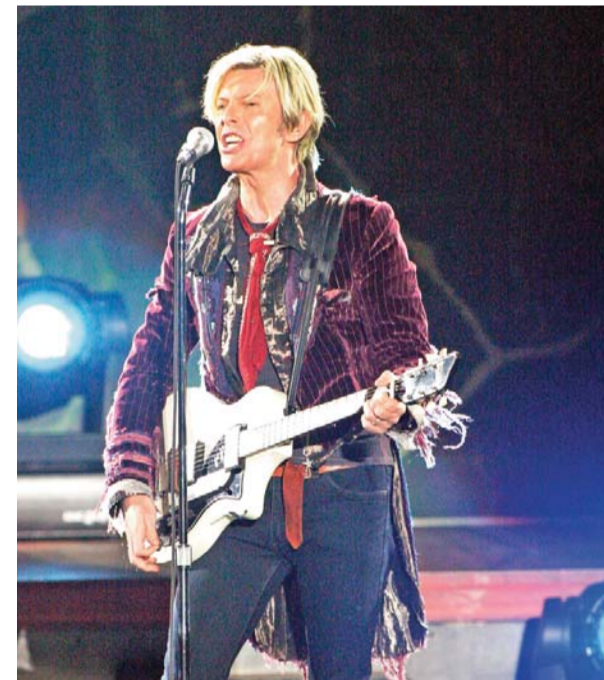
B.B. King, who died last year, will also be honored with a performance tribute by Bonnie Raitt, Gary Clark Jr and Chris Stapleton, Ehrlich said. The producer said though the Oscars have received a backlash for a second straight year of all-white acting nominees, the Grammys are not even comparable. "The fact of the matter is popular music is, it came from New Orleans, it came from Memphis, it came from Kansas City, it came from the Islands, it came from Africa, and the music we

listen to today, not just hip-hop, not just R&B, but all music has been influenced and been shaped by African-American culture, so I don't think the same rules apply," he said. "There wouldn't be a Grammy show today if it weren't for the great African-American artists who built the culture and wrote the music and we try to reflect that every year. I don't think it's fair to level criticism, the same kind of criticism against us that the Oscars are experiencing."

Ehrlich added that the music and movie industries are like apples and oranges: "They might be the same shape, they might get to you in the same form, but they're entirely different art forms and they come from entirely different places." Other performers at the Grammys, airing from Staples Center in Los Angeles, will include Adele, Rihanna, Taylor Swift, the Weeknd, Carrie Underwood and Kendrick Lamar, who is the top nominee with 11. Members of the Eagles and Jackson Browne will perform to honor Frey, who died on Jan 18. And Lady Gaga, who Ehrlich booked to perform on the show before Bowie died, said the pop star asked to sing in tribute to the icon who died on Jan 10. "She (said) to me, 'I would really love to do a David Bowie segment and (I said) to her, 'Of course. It couldn't be more appropriate,'" he recalled. The Grammys will air live on CBS at 8 pm Eastern. — AP



File photo shows Grammy winning singer-songwriter Natalie Cole poses for a portrait in promotion of her new album 'Natalie Cole en Espanol,' in New York. — AP photos



File photo shows David Bowie performs at Chastain Park Amphitheatre in Atlanta.

Emmanuel Lubezki wins ASC Award for 'The Revenant'

Emmanuel Lubezki earned top honors at the 30th annual American Society of Cinematographers Awards at the Century Plaza hotel on Sunday night for his work in "The Revenant." It was Lubezki's fourth win in the feature film category from the elite cinematographer organization, and his third consecutive triumph. The Mexican-born director of photography, known as "Chivo" to colleagues inside and outside DP circles, solidifies his frontrunner status in the Oscar cinematography race, which he also has won the last two years, for "Gravity" and "Birdman," the latter of which was directed by "Revenant" helmer Alejandro G Inarritu, who also hails from Mexico City.

In other wins, Vanja Cernjul ("Marco Polo") bested the competition in the TV series category, while Pierre Gill ("Casanova") won in the miniseries/pilot category. The fairly new Spotlight category, which recognizes work celebrated on the festival circuit or in limited release and presented for the third year, resulted in a tie between Adam Arkapaw ("Macbeth") and Matyas Erdely ("Son of Saul"). The win also places an exclamation point on the narrative surrounding "The Revenant," which has come to represent as much a physical endurance test as it does bravura filmmaking. In shooting the harrowing tale of survival and revenge in and around the Louisiana territories of the early 1800s (filming actually took place in Canada and Argentina), Lubezki and Inarritu placed the accent on natural light and absolute authenticity in terms of weather and hardship. Lubezki shot digitally, using the relatively new Arri Alexa 65, which uses a larger, 65 mm chip for wider image and higher, 6K resolution.

In perhaps a nod to D.P.s-not used to basking in the spotlight and their tendency to seize the microphone longer than is customary—a voice on the intercom early on goaded attendees to their tables with, "ladies and gentlemen, please take your seats; we only have the room until midnight." In the first-ever memorial tribute in the ceremony's history, such recently passed cinematographers as Vilmos Zsigmond, Haskell

Wexler and Andrew Lesnie, among others, were acknowledged for their immense contributions to the craft. John Toll received some of the biggest love of the evening as the recipient of the ASC's Lifetime Achievement Award for his work on such films as "The Thin Red Line," "Legends of the Fall" and "Braveheart," receiving a standing ovation from the assembled. He thanked such mentors as Jordan Cronenweth, adding that "we couldn't do what we do if we weren't just a little crazy."

Geena Davis presented the Governor's Award to director and D.P. favorite Ridley Scott ("The Martian") for his lush visual sensibility on such films as "Blade Runner," "Alien," "Gladiator" and "Thelma & Louise," in which she starred. In accepting his award, Scott, via a video clip, quoted Napoleon in stating his case for the cameraman's role in telling a story visually: "a good sketch is better than a long speech." Lowell Peterson ("Desperate Housewives," "Six Feet Under") accepted the Career Achievement in Television Award from actress Gina Rodriguez ("Jane the Virgin"), noting that one of his inspirations as an aspiring D.P. was seeing Douglas Sirk's "Written on the Wind" and talking about the deep bond between lensers and actors, going so far as studying facial anatomy in his training.

Winners list:

Film:
"The Revenant" (Emmanuel Lubezki)
TV, Regular Episode:
"Marco Polo" - "The Fourth Step" (Vanja Cernjul, ASC, HFS)
TV Movie, Mini-Series Or Pilot:
"Casanova" (Pierre Gill, CSC)
Spotlight Award (Tie):
Adam Arkapaw-"Macbeth"
Matyas Erdely-"Son of Saul"-Reuters

Lifestyle

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 2016

West says he's \$53 Million in debt

39



Members of the public admire the display at the UK Art Lantern Festival, installed at the Trafford Centre in Manchester, northern England, on February 12, 2016, in celebration of the Chinese New Year, which this year marks the beginning of the Year of the Monkey. — AFP

When mum and dad go back to rock school...



It is every teenager's worst nightmare—or so you would have thought. Mum and dad up on stage belting out rock anthems in front of your friends. The horror! A few days before they face the toughest audience imaginable—their children—the graduates of what is touted as the world's first rock class for parents are joking about what's the more nerve-racking, this or childbirth.

"Can't you see me shaking?" said Philippe Chabert-Marcon, whose 11 and 12-year-olds are already veterans of Paris' Park Slope Rock School. But it is too late. The tickets have been sold for their first gig at a hip venue in the French capital.

To pile on the pressure, British pop star Jarvis Cocker is in the audience, one of several musicians to have enrolled their children in the school. Yet when the moment comes, their kids are on their feet with everyone else as the parents tear into "Born to be Wild". "Wow! They were really great," shouts nine-year-old Matthew Langlois who had performed earlier on the bill, awe-struck by his mother Michelle, who said she hasn't sung with such abandon since she stood in front of the mirror as a teenager.

Struggling to be heard above the cheers, Langlois, 48, said, "It's a real high. I still can't believe how far we've come." When the group was put together less than four months before, only two band members could really play their instruments. And as Chabert-Marcon, also 48, admits, his "electric guitar has been gathering dust in the basement for nearly 30 years."

Can't believe their ears

But all had seen how their children started playing from the very first day at Park Slope Rock School, founded in Brooklyn by American musician Jason Domnarski in 2008 before he opened a branch in the French capital three years later. At first Langlois could not believe her eyes, nor her ears. "The kids came home playing straight away," she said. "It is not at all how music teaching used to be. So I thought, 'Why should they have all the fun?'" Laura Malone, on flute and lead guitar, had the same reaction. "After I saw my daughter play in her band and saw the way Jason worked with the kids, the first thing I thought was 'Why didn't this exist when I was young?'"

And so five parents on the wrong side of 40 came knocking on Domnarski's door asking if he could do for them what he had done for their kids. "I thought why not," Domnarski said, though he admits that he doubted if they would adapt to his mould-breaking approach as well as their children. "I thought they might be more worried about making mistakes, but they have been amazing from the get-go and so supportive of each other." Malone—a computer programmer who had never played guitar before—said the "dynamics of being in the band helps get you over hurdles" that you might balk at alone. "The band has built this amazing bond just from practicing together for an hour and a half a week. I would never have believed it had I not seen it myself."

'It's cool, Dad'

It also helps that many rock standards have only three chords, though as Domnarski said, "it is all about how you play them". The experience has also turned the usual parent-child relationships on their head. "I admit I'm scared," said Chabert-Marcon, an Internet company boss. "But my kids who have done it all before keep telling me, 'Dad, it's fine, you'll see.'" Bass player Luc Heinrich, a complete musical novice, knew he was hitting the groove when his son winked at him as he passed the bedroom door as he practiced. "That was priceless," he said.



Students of the Park Slope Rock School perform on stage at La Bellevilloise concert hall. — AFP photos

The same basic rules apply for children and adults, Domnarski insists. "It is about working as a team and sharing ideas and learning how to power through the nerves to get on stage and perform in front of hundreds of people. It's an amazing experience." For Langlois and the others, playing in a band has been a revelation. "I have tried to be a runner three or four times, but I never got the runner's high." "But doing this gets the adrenaline pumping and that emotional connection back to your teenage years, to goofing with the cassette recorder with your friends," he said. "You put that all away when you become an adult. When you get to be 40, you say 'OK, I am never going to be Madonna, I'm never going to the Olympics, and it's all kids and school and downhill from here.' But it doesn't need to be like that..." — AFP



Students of the Park Slope Rock School perform on stage.



Students of the Park Slope Rock School wait before performing on stage.



Students of the Park Slope Rock School perform on stage.