

MPs slam allowances for female expat teachers



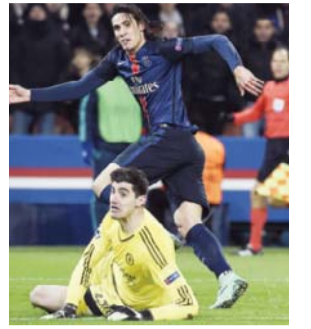
IS faces budget crunch, killing perks and slashing salaries



Lamar shut out as Swift, Mars, Sheeran win top Grammys



Cavani on target as PSG edge Chelsea



SAUDIS, RUSSIA AGREE OIL OUTPUT FREEZE, IRAN BALKS

KUWAIT COMMITTED TO DOHA DEAL PROVIDED OTHERS ARE



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EX-UN CHIEF BOUTROS-GHALI DIES AGED 93

UNITED NATIONS: Former UN secretary-general Boutros Boutros-Ghali, who led the world body from the hopeful times that emerged at the end of the Cold War to the massacres in Rwanda and Bosnia, has died at the age of 93, the United Nations announced yesterday. The Egyptian diplomat became the first secretary-general from the African continent in 1992, but his tenure ended abruptly after five years when the United States vetoed his second term.



Boutros-Ghali

Boutros-Ghali, who served as the United Nations' sixth secretary-general, died in Cairo, a UN spokesman said. UN Security Council members observed a moment of silence in memory of Boutros-Ghali during a meeting in New York.

A former Egyptian foreign minister, the veteran diplomat headed the world body during one of its most difficult times with crises in Somalia, Rwanda, the Middle East and the former Yugoslavia.

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DOHA: (From left) Venezuela's Minister of Petroleum and Mining Eulogio Del Pino, Saudi Arabia's Minister of Oil and Mineral Resources Ali Al-Naimi, Qatar's Minister of Energy and Industry Mohammed Saleh Al-Sada and Russia's Energy Minister Alexander Novak attend a press conference yesterday in the Qatari capital. — AFP

DOHA: Top global producers Saudi Arabia and Russia agreed yesterday to freeze oil output in a bid to shore up prices after a 70 percent drop due to chronic oversupply. Saudi Oil Minister Ali Al-Naimi said the move - which is conditional on other major producers joining in - was designed to stabilize the market following the dramatic price fall since mid-2014. Further talks involving Iran and Iraq are due in Tehran today. "We don't want significant gyrations in prices. We don't want a reduction in supply. We want to meet demand and we want a stable oil price," Naimi said.

The announcement followed a closed-door meeting in Doha between Saudi Arabia - the de facto leader of OPEC - Venezuela, Qatar and Russia, which does not belong to the oil cartel. "Following the meeting, all four countries are ready to freeze oil production at January levels, if other major producers do the same," said Russia's energy minister, Alexander Novak. The announcement marked the first move between OPEC and non-cartel producers to stem the price fall since the slide began nearly 19 months ago.

Kuwait is committed to the agreement to freeze output provided other producers back it, Kuwait's acting Oil Minister Anas Al-Saleh said yesterday. "Kuwait welcomes the Doha deal ... and confirms its commitment to what was agreed - to freeze production according to January 2016 levels - ... provided that the main producers from OPEC and outside OPEC are committed to it," he said in a statement. He said he hoped the agreement would provide a positive atmosphere to support oil prices and balance the oil market.

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PANEL WANTS TO CUT SPENDING BY 20%

MPs BLAST GOVT OVER CUTS IN OVERSEAS TREATMENT

By B Izzak

IAEA READY TO PROVIDE KUWAIT WITH NUKE TECH

KUWAIT: The International Atomic Energy Agency can provide nuclear technology to Kuwait and the rest of Gulf countries to improve the way they treat diseases, better use of water resources and help monitor sea environment, the IAEA chief said. Nuclear technology, which is totally different than nuclear power generation, can help diagnose and treat cancer, Director General Yukiya Amano said, explaining one of the uses of this technology.

In an interview with Kuwait News Agency (KUNA), Amano recalled that IAEA helped western African countries diagnose the Ebola virus and was now working on the Zika virus. "We will help in reducing the population of mosquitoes that transmit Zika virus," he added.

The IAEA can also help Kuwait and Gulf states to have a better understanding of their underground water resources, he noted. "I have seen a lot of drip irrigation," added Amano, "and by using nuclear technology, we can better understand the behavior of water ... and thus better use it." Seawater is also very important for the Gulf countries, said Amano, who noted that they have teams specialized in ocean environment who can help "monitor the sea environment through nuclear technology."

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Yukiya Amano



CAIRO: Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah Al-Sisi (right) and Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry (left) meet Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah at the Presidential Palace yesterday. — AFP

SISI PRAISES AMIR FOR BOOSTING ARAB UNITY

CAIRO: Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah Al-Sisi commended yesterday the role of HH the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah in promoting Arab unity. This came during a meeting with Kuwait's First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, in the presence of his Egyptian counterpart Sameh Shoukry.

Sisi asked the Kuwaiti official to convey his greetings and appreciations to the Amir, Alaa Youssef, presidential spokesman, said in a statement. Sisi indicated that the "Egyptian leadership and people" will never forget stances of the Amir in supporting Egypt and Kuwait's contributions to backing its development process, Youssef added.

Sisi stressed depth of brotherly rela-

tions between the two countries and their people, calling necessarily for evolving them on all levels, the spokesman noted. Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, who conveyed greetings of HH the Amir to Sisi, affirmed Egypt's pioneering status as the main pillar of maintaining security and stability in the Arab world.

The meeting discussed developments on the Arab arena and underlined the need to promote joint Arab action to overcome challenges and face risks as well as reach settlement of disputes and solve problems in the region, Youssef said. Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled referred to different frameworks of cooperation to be discussed during the Kuwait-Egypt joint committee's meeting with his Egyptian counterpart, Youssef pointed out.

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GEORGE W BUSH STUMPS FOR JEB

NORTH CHARLESTON: George W Bush, campaigning for his brother for the first time, says Jeb has the backbone and optimism to be president and that Americans should avoid nominating someone who "mirrors and inflames our frustration". The former president and his "big little brother" Jeb Bush tag-teamed Monday for a forceful denunciation of the man currently at the top of their Republican party's polls, the billionaire Donald Trump.

Bush the elder received a hero's welcome in South Carolina, where he remains a revered figure by many, and sought to steer the 2016 race away from the mudslinging and personal insults and toward character and judgment. With Jeb desperate to score a comeback victory after poor showings in early-voting Iowa and New Hampshire, he said the best applicant for the world's most powerful job was not necessarily the loudest, but the one who could best apply his skills.

"I've seen Jeb in action. He'll be a strong and steady hand when confronted with the unexpected," Bush said of his brother, who is seeking a boost to his fortunes in South Carolina. The southeastern state on Saturday

becomes the third to vote in the presidential nominating contest leading up to the November election. Trump's controversial remarks and policy positions - last year he called for a ban on Muslims entering the United States - have caused an uproar.

But he is an anti-establishment outsider seizing on voter anxiety and anger with Washington, and remains firmly at the top of the polls even after turning American political convention on its head. George W's message: Don't buy into it. "I understand that Americans are angry and frustrated, but we do not need someone in the Oval Office who mirrors and inflames our anger and frustration," Bush told some 3,000 people in North Charleston, one of Jeb's largest crowds since the Florida ex-governor launched his presidential bid last June.

"There seems to be a lot of name calling going on," Bush said. "Labels are for soup cans. The presidency is a serious job that requires sound judgment and good ideas," he added, stressing that his brother is the Republican candidate "who can win in November."

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NORTH CHARLESTON, South Carolina: Former US President George W Bush (right), Republican presidential candidate Jeb Bush and former First Lady Laura Bush arrive during a campaign rally on Monday. — AFP



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education Dr Bader Hamad Al-Essa and a number of newly appointed officials. — Amiri Diwan and KUNA photos



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education Dr Bader Hamad Al-Essa and a number of newly appointed officials.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with the outgoing Ambassador of Bangladesh to Kuwait Mohammad Ashab Uddin.



His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs and Acting Minister of Electricity and Water Sheikh Mohammad Al-Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, and a delegation from the Central Agency for Information Technology.

AMIR RECEIVES EDUCATION MINISTER, OFFICIALS

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education Bader Al-Essa at Bayan Palace yesterday. The Minister introduced His Highness Sheikh Sabah to the newly appointed chairman of Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR) Samira Al-Sayyid Omar, Secretary General of Kuwait University Mohammad Al-Faris and Assistant Undersecretary of scholarships affairs at the Ministry of Higher Education Fatma Al-Sannan. The Meeting was attended

by Deputy Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah. Minister Essa also introduced the newly appointed officials to His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

Outgoing ambassador
Meanwhile, His Highness the Amir received the outgoing Ambassador of Bangladesh to Kuwait Mohammad Ashab Uddin. The meet-

ing was attended by Deputy Minister of the Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah. His Highness the Prime Minister later met the outgoing ambassador.

Also yesterday, His Highness the Amir and His Highness the Crown Prince separately received His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. His Highness the Amir meanwhile met His Highness the Prime Minister, while His Highness the Crown Prince received Minister of State for Housing Affairs Yasser Abul.

CAIT delegation
In the meantime, His Highness the Prime Minister received Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs and Acting Minister of Electricity and Water Sheikh Mohammad Al-Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah who was accompanied by a delegation from the Central Agency for Information Technology (CAIT).

His Highness the Prime Minister lauded CAIT for winning an Arab regional award for information technology, affirming that such honor reflected Kuwait's youth inno-

vation and creativity. He called on CAIT to boost its efforts in the future, wishing the agency all the success on its upcoming endeavors.

Quran contest
In other news, His Highness the Amir is set today to sponsor and attend the awarding ceremony for Kuwait's 19th Grand Quran Memorization and Recitation Competition. The event takes place at 10:30 am in Bayan Palace. — KUNA



PARIS: French President Francois Hollande meets with Kuwaiti Ambassador to France Sami Al-Sulaiman. — KUNA

FRANCE LOOKS FORWARD TO PROMOTING TIES WITH KUWAIT

PARIS: French President Francois Hollande expressed his interest in boosting relations with Kuwait that have been witnessing development on different levels. This came during a meeting with Kuwait's Ambassador to France Sami Al-Sulaiman at the Elysee Palace late Monday, who submitted his credentials as an extraordinary ambassador to Hollande.

Hollande said that he would visit Kuwait as soon as possible upon an invitation of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

The French leader also stressed his government's keenness on supporting the Kuwaiti

ambassador to help him achieve his mission. Meanwhile, Sulaiman affirmed Kuwait's eagerness to enhance friendship bonds with France based on "distinguished" relations. Marking the 55th anniversary of its independence and the 25th of liberation, Kuwait appreciates the French stance when it joined the international coalition which backed Kuwait to liberate from the Iraqi invasion, he said.

He conveyed greetings of His Highness the Amir and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to the French President, wishing him good health and people welfare and progress. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Information Minister Sheikh Salman Al-Humoud Al-Sabah and Kyrgyzstan's Minister of Culture, Information and Tourism Altynbek Maksutov are seen after signing the agreement. — KUNA

KUWAIT, KYRGYZSTAN SIGN DEAL TO PROMOTE TIES

KUWAIT: Kuwait and Kyrgyzstan inked an agreement to enhance technical and cultural relations between the two countries. During the signing ceremony yesterday, Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Humoud Al-Sabah said the deal comes as Kuwait is marking "Kuwait Capital of Islamic Culture 2016", National Day, Liberation Day, and the passing of 10 years since His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah ascended to power and His Highness Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah became Crown Prince. Sheikh Salman, also Chairman of

National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters, expressed his joy as Kyrgyzstan is sharing Kuwait's national celebrations. He voiced his hope that relations with Kyrgyzstan would promote media, cultural and tourism fields, and his joy for the visit of Kyrgyzstan's delegation and signing the deal.

Meanwhile, Kyrgyzstan's Minister of Culture, Information and Tourism Altynbek Maksutov said in a similar statement signing the deal is a turning point towards boosting cooperation in these domains. He congratulated Kuwait on being chosen as the capital of Islamic culture for 2016. — KUNA

SPEAKER CONCLUDES VISIT TO TURKEY

KUWAIT: National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem and his accompanying parliamentary delegation arrived to Kuwait yesterday after concluding an official visit to Turkey at the invitation of his Turkish counterpart Ismail Kahraman. Ghanem was received on arrival by Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly MP Mubarak Al-Khuraimej, Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs Dr Ali Al-Omair, Parliament's Secretary General Allam Al-Kandari, and Turkish Ambassador to Kuwait Murat Tamir.

Upon departure from Ankara, Ghanem was seen off by Chairman of the Turkish-Kuwaiti Parliament Friendship Committee Mikael Arslan, the Dean of the Diplomatic Corps, Kuwaiti Ambassador to Turkey Abdullah Al-Thuwaikh, and senior staff at Kuwait Embassy. During a

meeting with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan at the presidential palace.

Earlier, Ghanem stressed the importance of coordinating efforts with Turkey to address all challenges facing the region. During a meeting with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan at the presidential palace, Ghanem added that the Turkish leadership affirmed its support to Kuwait, stressing that Ankara was committed to the security and stability of Kuwait.

The speaker noted that he had an excellent and fruitful meeting with the Turkish leader. He conveyed greetings on behalf of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to the Turkish President. Ghanem said that talks with Erdogan also touched on bilateral relations and critical security situation of the region. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Speaker of the National Assembly Marzouq Al-Ghanem returns home. — KUNA

OIC COMMITS TO UN CHARTER

NEW YORK: The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) reaffirmed the commitment of its members to the UN Charter, expressing determination to contribute to international peace and security. On part of the OIC, Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador Mansour Ayyad Al-Otaibi addressed the Security Council's open debate: "Respect for the principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter as a key element for the maintenance of international peace and security."

As the Chair of the second largest intergovernmental organization after the UN, Ambassador Otaibi said that within the Charter of the UN was a framework of modern international relations, that if applied and adhered to, would in no doubt lead to the ultimate goal of the organization and that of the Security Council.

"Sovereignty, settlement of disputes by peaceful means, refraining from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, non-interference in the domestic affairs of other states, are all lofty principles enshrined in both the UN and OIC Charter," he added.

Human suffering

Otaibi said that over the years, such principles and purposes have not been respected and adhered to, consequently leading to the conflicts and human suffering the world is witnessing today. In his speech, he referred to the continuing plight of the Palestinian people and condemned the illegal policies and practices of Israel, the occupying power, in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem.

The Member States of the OIC, he said, called for urgent measures, particularly by the UN Security Council, aimed at bringing an end without delay to the Israeli occupation and achieving a peaceful settlement that will guar-



Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador Mansour Ayyad Al-Otaibi

antee the fulfillment of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

Another example of the Security Council "paralysis" is the continuing Syrian crisis, he noted. In this regard, the members of the OIC are appalled by the humanitarian situation in Syria and the great suffering there.

Therefore, Kuwait called on behalf of the OIC, on all parties to implement relevant UN resolutions, in particular resolution 2254, that called for safe and unhindered humanitarian access to those in need, and stressed the need for a political solution to the crisis. The OIC then highlighted before the Council the matter of encouragement of regional and sub-regional organizations to take an active role in the settlement of conflicts.

Otaibi said that no longer were the security challenges restricted within borders, rather

they have become transnational. "As our world has become more interconnected and interdependent, so too have the challenges we face; requiring us to enhance our collective efforts to tackle these global threats," he said.

The OIC affirmed that it was not enough that these security challenges be tackled on a country-to-country level, but more importantly on a regional and sub-regional organizations level whereby such organizations coordinate and cooperate in a concerted effort in order to ensure the collective peace and security of the people.

Earlier yesterday, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon said in the same gathering, that 2015 was one of the most troubled and turbulent years in recent history, with civil war ravaging Syria and Yemen and violent extremism spreading. — KUNA

Crime

Report

POLICEMAN ARRESTED FOR RELEASING DETAINEES IN EXCHANGE OF MONEY

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: The Interior Ministry's Relations and Security Information Department said criminal detectives arrested an officer red-handed while receiving money to release detainees from a police station. The officer was referred to the public prosecution in addition to legal and disciplinary action against him. The department said this is an individual case and it will not tolerate anyone who may hurt the interior ministry.

Motorists hurt

Mishref fire center responded to a call about a vehicle ramming into the cement barrier on King Fahd Road. Two persons trapped in the car were freed and handed to paramedics in critical condition.

No injuries in fire

Fire broke out in one of Ahmadi Hospital's rooms, prompting Ahmadi fire center to respond. The fire was put out without spreading. No injuries were reported.



The scene after a fire was extinguished at a room inside Ahmadi Hospital.

Municipality meeting

The Higher Committee for Coordination and Planning at Kuwait Municipality held a meeting chaired by Director Gen Eng Ahmad Al-Manfouhi. The meeting was attended by Municipal Council's Secretary General Yousef Al-Suqoubi. Manfouhi said that an administrative revival must be seen in the near future that would correct the path of the municipality, as all requirements are available to meet this goal. The committee discussed several issues including 'construction violations in real-estate' in private residential areas. A decision was made to form an experts' committee to study the judicial rulings issued to restore power to the violating residences in order to find out the reason behind such rulings and decide how to deal with the matter. Manfouhi said that the committee also discussed the possibility of reducing cleaning contracts from seventeen to six contracts only, so each governorate will have one contract. He said employees must attend to their jobs on time, and added that officials and supervisors must set an example. "I will not accept any slackness, nor will I accept a wasta (connections) that will take an undeserved right," he said.

COUNCILOR SAYS ABANDONED CARS USED FOR ILLICIT PRACTICES

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: Municipal Council member and head of Farwaniya committee Nayef Al-Sour said Farwaniya governorate is full of abandoned vehicles in several areas, namely in open yards and outside the governorate's police stations. Sour added that nothing has been done so far by Kuwait Municipality or the Ministry of Interior to remove those vehicles although they give the area a bad image and are used for various illicit practices and crimes.

Water cut

The Ministry of Electricity and Water (MEW) recently announced that in collaboration with the Ministry of Public Works (MPW), and for the sake of conducting maintenance works and completion of the Jamal Abdul Nasser Road project, water supplies would be cut in 12 areas. MEW's Assistant Undersecretary for Water Operation and Maintenance Khalifa Mohammed Al-Furaj said after coordination with MPW concerning the contract of building and maintaining roads, passages, sewers, rain drainage and other services along Jamal Abdul Nasser Road, the ministry would connect freshwater and 600 and 400 mm low-saline water lines in sectors B and C of phase two of the project to the main water grid as well as maintain and replace 11 valves. Furaj explained that the process would start on Friday, Feb 19 for 14 hours starting at 8:00 pm and ending on 10:00 am the following morning. "This will lead to cutting water supplies in the psychological disease hospital, Al-Rashed allergy hospital, Al-Razi hospital, maternity and Sabah hospitals," he explained, noting that water would be also cut in the Sabah health zone, Doha, Sulaiyikhat, Granada, Andalus, Sulaiyiyah industrial and residential areas, Firdous, Ardiya, Riqae, Qairawan, Rai, Amghara water tanker station, Nahda and Rabiya.

LAWMAKERS SLAM DECISION TO INCREASE FEMALE EXPAT TEACHERS' ALLOWANCES

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: Several angry reactions responded to a government decision to retroactively increase rent allowance for female expatriate teachers from KD 60 to KD 150. A number of lawmakers slammed the government for taking such measure without increasing rent allowance for Kuwaitis. Meanwhile, MP Yousef Al-Zalzelah said that he had contacted Education Minister Badr Al-Essa, who explained that the decision was based on a ruling by the constitutional court. He added that the minister said: "We can only respect court orders and rulings." Al-Anbaa reported yesterday Deputy Premier and Finance Minister Anas Al-Salem issued a decision to amend the residence allowance of expatriate teachers to become KD 150 instead of KD 60, and pay them retroactively starting from April 1, 2011. The decision is an implementation of the constitutional court's ruling which renders the disparity of

allowance pay between male and female teachers unconstitutional. Implementing the decision retroactively means each female teacher would get KD 6,310 in total.

Paradox

Rapporteur of the parliament's women and family committee MP Mohammed Tana Al-Enezi criticized the decision and stressed that this has to stop, because Kuwaiti women married to non-Kuwaitis were deprived of rent allowances. "This paradox will be discussed by the committee even though it was made by court order," he added, calling for doing Kuwaiti women married to non-Kuwaitis some justice because the government has been ignoring their problems and showing more concern for expatriates.

Treatment overseas

MP Talal Al-Jallal slammed Finance Minister Anas Al-Saleh's decision to approve such increases at a time when the govern-



MP Mohammed Tana Al-Enezi

ment seeks to lift subsidies and reduce allowances allocated for treatment overseas with the excuse of a deficit. "How was the expats' increase approved retroactively?" he wondered, noting that in view of Saleh's statements about financial reform, the government increases expats' incentives despite the extra burden this would pose on the state budget in view of the deficit. Jallal urged Saleh not to take reform measures at the expense of citizens while expats are paid



MP Talal Al-Jallal

KD 150 in rent allowances and the government is talking about cutting expenditure.

Mental state

In other news, the criminal court yesterday referred an Egyptian blogger accused of slandering HH the Amir to the psychiatric diseases hospital to examine his mental state. Notably, speaking before the court, the defendant asked the judge: "My punishment is deportation, isn't it?". Separately, the court of appeals

yesterday sentenced a police officer to one-year imprisonment for second degree murder as he had killed a female citizen by shooting her during a pursuit from Salmiya all the way to Ghous street in Mubarak Al-Kabeer.

Project's delay

Kuwait Municipality explained that the delay in the Hawally traffic directorate project happened due to adjustments made to the project by the Municipal Council. Responding to a parliamentary inquiry by MP Ahmed Al-Fadhlah, the municipality stressed that the municipal council had made some amendments to the project and that all remarks had to be dealt with, which delayed the project's execution. In another concern, the municipality stressed that it has nothing to do with sand accumulating along Salmi and Wafra highways and its role is restricted to providing the machinery needed to remove the sand in collaboration with the Ministry of Public Works (MPW).

ALL AMBASSADORS STICK TO DIPLOMATIC RULES: MINISTRY

KUWAIT: The Foreign Ministry yesterday rebuffed recent claims by social communication networks and local press that a Kuwaiti diplomatic mission head had illegal activities and contacts that contradict normal diplomatic tasks.

An official source at the Ministry said in a statement that all ambassadors and representatives abroad do their jobs with high national responsibility, in line with diplomatic rules, norms and considerations and as per the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations. Kuwait's ambassadors and

representatives abroad always seek to attain their country's high interests through fervent efforts to establish bilateral relations between the State of Kuwait and other brotherly and friendly countries, the source said.

"Everyone is well aware of the proven and prestigious track record of Kuwaiti diplomacy," the source said, reaffirming that the reports that showed misunderstanding of the relationship between a Kuwaiti embassy in a certain country and a security official in the latter are totally inaccurate and were published in a way that

could not serve the State's higher interest and seriously undermines the distinguished brotherly relation between Kuwait and its brotherly countries.

This misunderstanding has been contained within the framework of firm fraternal relations with the brotherly country, the source said, urging everyone to take Kuwait's higher interest into account while covering issues and questions that are related to Kuwait's foreign relations and firm bonds with brotherly and friendly nations. — KUNA

TEAM EYES GULF SUPPORT FOR SCRAPPING KUWAIT'S FOOTBALL SUSPENSION: MP



MP Abdullah Al-Maayouf

MANAMA: The current Gulf tour by a Kuwaiti parliamentary sports delegation is mainly intended to rally up Gulf support for dropping Kuwait's football suspension, a visiting Kuwaiti MP said. Making a one-day tour to Manama, the delegation is seeking to drum up support for a FIFA vote due on February 26 against the decision suspending Kuwait's football activities, MP Abdullah Al-Maayouf said yesterday.

Maayouf, who is head of the National Assembly's youth and sports committee, said he had met with Bahraini Football Association Chairman Sheikh Ali Al Khalifa, quoting him as reiterating support for Kuwait in its bid to have the suspension decision cancelled. He

also quoted the Bahraini official as reaffirming that Bahrain would put all its potentials to serve the Kuwaiti sports issue, hailing Bahrain's position as reflecting Gulf solidarity.

The Kuwaiti MP noted that Bahrain was the first leg of the parliamentary sports delegation's GCC tour that also includes Qatar, UAE and Saudi Arabia.

Kuwait needs only 53 out of a total 209 votes to have its football suspension dropped during the next FIFA general assembly on February 26, he added. FIFA had suspended Kuwait last year for breaching rules that prevent government interference in football's independence. — KUNA

KNPC LAUNCHES FIRST BIOFUEL PRODUCTION UNITS COMPANY SEEKING \$10B LOAN FOR PROJECT

KUWAIT: Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC) has launched its first units to produce biofuel in Al-Ahmadi refinery, the company's CEO Mohammad Al-Mutairi said yesterday. The project contains new units with a production capacity of over 42,000 barrels per day, Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) quoted Mutairi as saying. The biofuel project is part of Kuwait's development plan and the 2030 strategic objectives of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC), he added.

Meanwhile, a number of senior officials in the company said that each unit will be put into performance once it was fully set up. The new units will increase the refin-

ery's profits, while also reducing pollution by providing low-sulfur products, they added.

The project will also produce high quality substances such as gasoline with competitive prices, they said, adding that the launching process was fully safe and no accidents occurred during the execution of the project.

Refining project

Meanwhile, a company official revealed that KNPC is seeking \$10 billion in financing from local and international banks to upgrade two refineries to produce cleaner burning fuel.

Local banks are due to agree to lend \$3 billion next month under favorable terms to Kuwait, according to Ahmad Al-Jemaz, a deputy chief executive officer at the state oil refiner. The rest of the \$10 billion needed will be sought from international lenders, including from South Korean banks, Bloomberg quoted Jemaz as saying. "We have seen a good response to our request for loans to finance the project," Jemaz told reporters in Dubai on Monday. The loans will be for Kuwait's Clean Fuels Project to upgrade the Mina Abdullah and Mina Al-Ahmadi refineries. The project, set to be completed by 2019, will produce diesel and jet fuel for domestic use and



KFSD DEPUTY DIRECTOR MEETS GCC EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT OFFICIAL

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Kuwait Fire Services Directorate (KFSD) Deputy Director for Human Resources Development Major General Khalid Al-Tarkeet and Public Relations and Information

Director Khalil Al-Amir visited the GCC emergency management center where he was received by Dr Adnan Al-Tameemi to discuss cooperation between the two sides.

Tameemi welcomed the invitation to participate in the 4th international

conference and exhibition on fire and safety to be held under the patronage of HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah from March 1 until March 3 under the slogan "best experience for safe future."

In my view

THE IMITATION OF SUCCESS

By Nada Bousesli

Throughout the diverse walks of life we are taught to raise our hand for presence and participation - as we enter the corporate world we are challenged - remaining in silent mode is an approach viewed and tested to target excellence revealing competitiveness among other individuals in the business or on a macro level viewing the competition amongst organizations. Whether publishing an idea or launching a new product/project or revealing change in all context and meaning.

Silence plays a huge role in effecting one's traits and interactions unconsciously, the length of conversations, screening of context and duration of messages. Interesting observations emerge as the C-Suite acts as a powerful hub and players in the field become driven by the fear of being unable to deliver excellence according to the market values. Yet we observe that excellence defined originally portrays a different context rather than projected. By transforming into an intellectual mode of silence, assessing productivity through means and measures encouraging the authoritarian power - paralysis and contradictions heavily influence actions generated towards crafted scenarios leading to "the imitation of success." The human mind deliberately changes gears to a different psychology based on contradicting interpretations fading from the realistic objectives designed to achieve positive engagement as once intended.

Today's NEO leaders elevate into diverse and multifunctional roles either within their corporation as well as in external entities depending on their personal interests towards their community, society, or penetrating a legacy overseen globally by partnering with other platforms in order to create that enriching experience of recognition. The standards of succession through observing the drivers of the business have changed tremendously as the influence of the quality and sense of urgency related to risk they encounter. The transformation today is greater than WWII and the times of unpredictability and ambiguity we experience either through changes effecting the business performance or identity and value entitled to the perception once defined as a "vision" has been disrupted with the pace and quality of life we face realistically.

Therefore, the focus and context sold as once upon a time 'Success' remains challenged today by leaders, are they able to define the measures of their success realistically?

Which is followed by another aspect do we have the ability to interact with others confidently through publishing our thoughts without being drained with lines of communication representing ambiguous targets?

Addressing relevancy to the scene of dysfunctional situations we live through where leaders aim to develop and prosper into the zone of anticipation and unknown realities through adapting to the silent treatment, actually works to their disadvantage without providing clear analysis that broadens better:

- * Human capital
- * Social capital
- * Financial capital
- * Economical capital

In order, to achieve a mind-set for leaders driven towards challenging their capabilities it is important to embed critical thinking - trial and error process. The emerging behaviors reflected which people interpret and act upon should be immediately distinguished to support leaders in achieving a sustainable decision making process resembling the strength of their personal knowledge mastery to solidify the aims of anchoring a long time legacy. Leaders often eliminate the continuous alignment mental cycle that is responsible for maintaining thoughts in parallel with sensible actions resulting in shared decisions. For this cycle to succeed leaders should invest in spending more time through the reflection phase - to enable purposeful forecasting and anticipation through reflecting to relax from crossing over the limits of contradiction which disrupts an improved process of powerful decision making.

The pace of competition through the vast integrated methods of communication have enabled people to extensively change at a speed where minimal effort is left to execute transformation that is reliable- proto typing provoked the era of stability and tolerance.

What is expected and how to cope accordingly is heavily relied on adaptive anticipation as mentioned previously. Silence on the other hand has enabled leaders to play trial and error but maintain a poker image that does not enhance their legacy longevity but otherwise focuses on achieving higher capabilities without sufficiently realizing their real-time performance. Therefore, the competitive advantage approach created delivering the ambiguous interpretations revealing the 'imitation of success' evolution happens to reflect the incorrect sense of commitment within leaders. Unfortunately, these results cause them to lose the proper means of communication to develop and prosper in their business accordingly.

In Brief

KD 5.2 MILLION ROADS DEAL SIGNED

KUWAIT: Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs Ali Al-Omar has signed a deal worth KD 5.2 million (\$17.3 million) for supervising establishment and maintenance of roads and intersections of the Fifth Ring Road. The deal includes setting up five bridges and a road for services on the sides of the Fifth Ring Road with two lanes extending 5.5 kilometers, the ministry said yesterday. Under the deal, other bridges will be established, the statement added. —KUNA



JABER BRIDGE 23% COMPLETE

KUWAIT: Assistant Undersecretary of the Ministry of Public Works for the Sector of Roads Ahmad Al-Hassan said yesterday that construction works of the KD 165.7 million Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Bridge has reached 23 percent. Once completed, the project would link between the northern area of Kuwait City with the densely populated central and southern areas, and will shorten distance between Kuwait and the city of Subbiya, he added. Furthermore, it will provide a strategic way that supports the future development plans of the northern region, he pointed out. — KUNA



OPEN DAY FOR JOURNALISTS

KUWAIT: Kuwait Journalists Association (KJA) invites journalists and their families to an open day to be hosted on Saturday, February 20, 2016 at the Sabah Al-Ahmad Heritage Village on the Salmi Road. Journalists and their families can take buses which will carry them from the square opposite to the Sheraton Hotel at 9:00 am, said Jassem Kamal, head of KJA's public relations committee. Several activities are set to be held during the open day in celebration of Kuwait's National Holidays, Kamal said.



Photo

of the day



KUWAIT: Vehicles overflow parking lots and left in no parking zones in Kuwait City. The lack of road expansion projects that accommodate with the rapid growth of construction ventures in the nation's capital has made finding a parking space there a daily struggle. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



KUWAIT: Minister of Information Sheikh Salman Al-Sabah opens the Islamic Art Gallery. — KUNA

INFO MINISTER OPENS ISLAMIC ART GALLERY

KUWAIT: The Islamic civilization served as a link bringing people with different cultures close to each other, Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Sheikh Salman Sabah Salem Al-Sabah said Monday evening.

Sheikh Salman, also president of the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL), made the comments on the sidelines of the opening ceremony of the Islamic Art Gallery of Wadhah Khaled Saud Al-Zaid. "The Islamic culture played a key role in promoting moderation and coexistence among all humanity," he said.

The gallery, being organized by NCCAL as part of Kuwait national celebrations and the celebrations marking the selection of Kuwait City as capital of Islamic Culture for 2016, displays several Islamic relics and manuscripts dating from various eras. Sheikh Salman voiced joy for the attendance at the opening of the gallery by Kyrgyz Minister of Culture, Information and Tourism Altynbek Maksutov.

"The Islamic culture which spread to all parts of the world linked the two friendly countries and made them share a lot of common values," Sheikh Salman pointed out. He spoke highly of the role NCCAL and Wadhah Al-Zaid's efforts in conserving the Islamic antiquities and holding

this gallery which coincides with the celebration marking Kuwait selection as Capital of Islamic Culture this year.

Maksutov said meanwhile that he is here to take part in the Kuwait-Kyrgyzstan cultural week which showcases a range of Kyrgyz artistic activities including folklore music and costumes. He noted that his visit to the gallery provided him with a chance to have an insight into the history of Kuwait and the contributions of Kuwaiti scholars,

who authored invaluable books, to the Islamic cultures.

Meanwhile, Wadhah Al-Zaid said the exhibits at the gallery include a number of relics he and his father kept, as well as a range of rare manuscripts dating from the 17th century. He expressed gratitude to Sheikh Salman and the Kyrgyz minister for their attendance at the gallery and spoke highly of the NCCAL efforts in conserving the Islamic heritage. — KUNA



INTERNATIONAL STUDENT NETWORK HOLDS EDUCATION FAIR IN KUWAIT

KUWAIT: On Thursday, February 18, 2016, the International Student Network (ISN) will return to Kuwait for an educational fair at the Regency Hotel from 6-9 p.m. US Ambassador to Kuwait Douglas Silliman will provide opening remarks. The fair will include representatives from twelve US colleges and universities who will provide information about their schools and answer questions from students and parents about educational opportunities in the United States. The three-hour educational fair is organized by ISN in cooperation with the US Embassy.

The following universities will attend the event: California State University, Christian Brothers University, Drury University, Illinois State University, New

Jersey Institute of Technology, Oklahoma City University, San Diego State University, Snow College, Stephen F. Austin State University, University of San Diego, University of South Florida, and Virginia Tech.

EducationUSA advisers will be present at the fair to answer students' questions about higher education in the US, including the admissions process. US Embassy consular officers will also be present to answer questions about the student visa application process.

Additional information about the fair can be found at http://www.studentlane.com/en_us/. For more information about studying in the United States please visit <http://www.educationusa.state.gov/>.

ZAKAT CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS ALMS ROLE IN SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY: MINISTER

KUWAIT: Minister of Justice and Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Yaqoub Al-Sane said yesterday that the International Zakat Conference aims at highlighting the role of alms-giving within social responsibility, particularly economic development.

Sane made his remarks while addressing the 10th International Zakat Conference, themed "Zakat's role and its institutions in social responsibility, and impact of strategic planning on it", which is organized by Kuwait's Zakat House.

The three-day event aims to draw upon the expertise and experiences of the participating Zakat institutions, he said, noting that

holding such conferences would consolidate cooperation and coordination ties among different Zakat institutions, and attain integration among them. Sane also said that holding these conferences would also help in keeping up with latest updates and developments, pointing out Zakat institutions' role in developing social relations among people that are based on cooperation, amity and affection. Zakat conferences can also help in attaining security and potentials for strategic planning, which has a significant impact on economic development, providing employment for all and eliminating poverty and unemployment, he noted. —KUNA

HALA FEBRUARY CULTURAL ACTIVITIES CONTINUE

KUWAIT: As part of Hala February cultural activities, the national festival in cooperation with Kuwait Writers Association, is continuing its series of lectures. The four-day event is themed 'Highlights from our National Unity'. The second day witnessed a number of lectures on the role of education and journalism in documenting national unity.

The first lecture was by Dr Abdullah Al-Hajeri, History professor at Kuwait University (KU), who talked about Kuwait's role in supporting the educational movement in the Gulf. He noted that the first regulated school in Kuwait was Al-Mubarakiyah, which opened in 1911, and before that, education was religion-based.

He added that out of Kuwait's keenness to help its fellow Gulf countries and due to scarce of schools in the Emirates (now the United Arab Emirates), late

Amir Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem responded to a call by Sharjah and Fujairah rulers to help spread education there.

Meanwhile, Dr Minawer Al-Rajehi of Media department at KU, said that Al-Bi'tha (scholarship) magazine was issued in 1946 from Cairo to help establish a bond among Kuwaiti students in Egypt. Historian Fahad Al-Abduljalil meanwhile stressed the role of foreign travelers in documenting the role of Kuwaiti national unity. He said that many of those travelers visited Kuwait in the 18th and 19th centuries and underlined the country's economic and social statuses.

Abduljalil noted that British John Beekingham was the first, as visited Kuwait in 1816 and described its people of being "courageous and free," as well as having a great harbor. A book fair and a stamps and coins exhibition would be held on the sidelines of the festival. —KUNA



ZAIN AWARDED 'BEST MOBILE OPERATOR' AND 'BEST INTERNET SERVICE PROVIDER' IN KUWAIT FOR 2015

KUWAIT: For the fourth time, Zain, the leading telecommunication company in Kuwait, was awarded the 'Best Mobile Operator' and 'Best Internet Service Provider' in Kuwait for the year 2015 from Service Hero, the creators of Kuwait's only customer satisfaction index. The company ranked first among the telecommunications sector in two categories for achieving the highest customer satisfaction scores by providing the best quality service standards.

The awards ceremony witnessed the attendance of many private sector leaders including senior Zain management. The award was received after an in-depth evaluation by an independent advisory council, which recognized Zain's role in launching advanced programs and exceptional promotions

for its customer base, as well as playing a leading role in the development of the telecommunications sector.

Zain received the 'Best Mobile Operator' award and 'Best Internet Service Provider' award for achieving high rates of customer satisfaction. The recognition from Service Hero for the fourth time demonstrates Zain's commitment in providing its customers with the highest levels of service.

Service Hero has appointed an Independent Advisory Council comprised of academic institutions as well as leading business professionals. As a neutral panel of experts, the Council's function is to supervise the assessment and ensure fair and empirical results that adhere to all procedures and norms.

This award reinforces Zain's commitment in maintaining the values of its brand. The company is motivated to continue its pledge in providing exclusive services to meet the needs of its customers as well as to facilitate their personal, professional, and business needs.

Service Hero was established by a team of professionals keen on identifying companies that are service leaders in their market. This team is backed by an Advisory Council, Academic & Independent, which assures results that are impartial, objective and accurately reflect people's preference. Service Hero's main goal is to measure the satisfaction level in the market by real consumers in order to help and empower companies to improve their service levels.

HEALTH MINISTRY KEEN ON PROVIDING TOP MEDICAL SERVICES IN KUWAIT: OFFICIAL

KUWAIT: Assistant Undersecretary of Ministry of Health (MoH) for Medical Services Dr Mohammad Al-Khashti confirmed MoH's keenness to provide best medical services for public, and enhance these services to build healthy society.

Khashti made his remarks Monday in a speech, on behalf of Health Minister Dr Ali Al-Obaidi, during the inauguration of the third annual Joint Congress of the Asian Musculoskeletal Society (AMS) and the Arabian Gulf Society of Skeletal Radiology (AGSSR), themed "Musculoskeletal Imaging: from Basic to Advanced."

The ministry sponsors a number of scientific activities and events to encourage steps and initiatives that help in improving and enhancing medical services in the country, he said, noting that medical conferences have a major effect in delivering accurate and credible information and in exchanging expertise with physicians from all around the world.

The ministry also strives to keep up with the latest modern technological developments in all medical specialties in order to provide top medical services, Khashti said, adding that the ministry continues to communicate with major and renowned international medical centers, and use their expertise to improve the performance of Kuwaiti physicians and the ministry's employees.

Dr Salwa Al-Kanderi, Head of Radiology Department at Al-Razi Hospital, said meanwhile that the AMS-AGSSR Joint Congress is a platform to support continuous education, and to bring together many of the world's leading experts in MSK imaging in order to present and share their vast clinical knowledge and latest clinical research findings in various aspects related to this specialty.

Cardiovascular diseases

In other news, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Health Dr Khaled Al-Sahlawi asserted Monday that the cardiovascular diseases prevention and treatment programs are top on the MoH's plan of action. Speaking to heads of the cardiovascular diseases departments at the ministry premises, Sahlawi said that the ministry is keen on controlling the cardiovascular diseases and its risk factors.

He clarified that the minister has instructed the medicines and medical equipment sector to provide cardiovascular departments with the state-of-the-art equipment and medicines. Kuwait's hospitals and healthcare centers' success in dealing with heart diseases and saving the lives of patients match that of the world's leading cardiovascular hospitals, he underlined.

Sahlawi noted that the meeting also tackled several proposals to increase the awareness about and control risks factors that lead to the spread of such diseases. According to the World Health Organization, the cardiovascular diseases (CVDs) are the number one cause of death globally: more people die annually from CVDs than from any other cause. Most cardiovascular diseases can be prevented by addressing behavioral risk factors such as tobacco use, unhealthy diet and obesity, physical inactivity and harmful use of alcohol using population-wide strategies. — KUNA

IICO SENDS 26 TONS OF RELIEF AID TO SYRIAN REFUGEES IN JORDAN

AMMAN: Over 26 tons of relief aid sent by the Kuwait-based International Islamic Charitable Organization (IICO) arrived in the Jordanian capital Monday on board a Kuwaiti military plane. The aid shipment—which includes food staff, medicine, blankets and clothes—was received at the airport by several Kuwaiti Embassy staff members and IICO staff in Jordan.

This is the second shipment sent by the IICO in the past days as a part of its "We are With You" campaign to ease the suffering of the displaced Syrians in Jordan. The first shipment which amounted to 19 tons of relief aid has already handed to the targeted people. The IICO's campaign target the most vulnerable Syrian refugees, Director General of the IICO Salem Hamada said.

He clarified that the new batch would be dispatched to refugees in the remote areas

on the Jordanian-Syrian-Iraqi borders. The Kuwaiti Embassy would supervise the distribution of the aid to the beneficiaries. Hamada thanked His Highness the Prime Minister of Kuwait Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah and Kuwait Military Office in Jordan and the Kuwaiti Ambassador in Jordan Hamad Al-Duaij for their help to deliver the two aid shipments.

Meanwhile, supervisor of the IICO's Bureau in Amman Khalil Hamad said that the aid are distributed to over 15,000 Syrians living outside refugee camps in remote towns, 500 kilometers from the Amman. Head of the relief department at the IICO Mohammad Jassem Al-Houli said in the meantime that the aid is a gift from the Kuwaiti people to the Syrian people. — KUNA



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Al-Anbaa

SAUDI-UAE SMART INITIATIVE

By Sami Al-Nisf

It does not require so much intelligence to realize that behind the scenes issues in the region are completely different from appearances, and that the expansion of the founding IS organization that no one dares to claim responsibility for in public and claim to be fighting in addition to creating an empire on which the sun never sets cannot be a coincidence. This organization and its ignorant followers have not manufactured the brand new shiny weapons, vehicles and tanks they use.

In addition, no one seems to understand why Maliki and Assad's armies relinquished vast areas of land and modern weapons without even fighting IS. No one also seems to understand how IS killers, directors, photographers and heavy equipment managed to flee the Levant's deserts a few days after burning the Jordanian pilot Muath Al-Kasasbeh alive to Libyan shores, where they slaughtered Coptic Egyptians and videoed the process. Obviously, they could not do that unless they were airborne in huge planes taking off and landing at well-known airports with the knowledge of the authorities controlling airspace those planes used because they would have been bombed down otherwise.

The Saudi-UAE initiative came to prove how smart Arab decision making can be. The initiative did not call for invading Damascus. It only set specific tasks for it as well as international troops including getting rid of IS. So, what makes the Syrian regime and its allies so angry, then, when it was they who had been justifying their crimes against the Syrian people, destruction of their cities, killing of hundreds of thousands and displacing millions with the excuse of fighting IS? This initiative really exposes credibility of fighting IS and reveals that IS powers are weaker than a spider's web.

Saudi Arabia and UAE conditioned that international community's land, marine and air forces should join it to form an international alliance under international leadership, like that mobilized in former Yugoslavia against the tyrant Slobodan Milosevic and Saddam Hussein who committed crimes against their own people. Then, the new world order declared that such tyrants would not be allowed to annihilate their peoples or any other peoples. So, if all the killing, terrorization, destruction and alternatively-happening displacement of millions Syrians by the regime and IS are not genocide against humanity, what can we call them?!

This smart mature initiative aims at either forming a real international coalition of Saudi, Emirati and other troops to liberate the occupied northern, eastern and southern Syrian lands from IS and foreign mercenaries so that over 90 percent of the refugees displaced to Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey and Europe could go back under full air and land protection pending a final political solution, or proving that despite all claims of fighting IS, nobody is really serious about doing so and IS was created to remain, get stronger and expand to regional countries to lead to dividing and fragmenting them.

— Translated by Kuwait Times



WARBA BANK HOSTS SEMINAR FOR GUST STUDENTS

KUWAIT: Driven by its keen commitment to reinforcing its corporate social responsibility strategy while exerting all needed efforts to empower college students with banking education and prepare them for the future carrier field; Warba bank, the fast-growing bank in Kuwait offering a wide spectrum of banking and investment services in accordance to Shariah compliant on local and international standards, hosted on Feb 10th and 11th, a training seminar for GUST students under the name: "Securitization Investment and Internal Audit".

Over 180 students attended the two days' seminar which included on the first day a lecture given by Thuwaini Al-Thuwaini, Executive Manager - Investments and Treasury - at Warba bank. During his presentation, Thuwaini gave an insight on the investment mechanism in securitization bonds and safe mediums in banking investment. From his end Ali Al-Emami, Head of Operational Assurance - Internal Audit for Warba branches' network, provided on the second day seminar, an overview on the internal auditing at the bank and applied auditing procedures, while

giving tangible examples as being an expert with over 25 years' experience in this field. Warba bank initiative comes as part of its overall platinum sponsorship for GUST Accounting Club activities scheduled for the academic year 2015/2016. The students actively participated at the seminar, had an insight on the banking industry and strongly benefited of the lecturers' rich experience in banking.

It is worth mentioning that since its inception, Warba bank has been

determined to play a key role in supporting students and youth whom, it strongly believes, they are the backbone of Kuwait economic prosperity and development in particular when they are well prepared to get incorporated in the banking sector which is a main pillar of the national economy.

Warba bank is to continue supporting all strategic in different areas including: education, health and culture, those tailor-made to serve the community and secure its prosperity.



Thuwaini Al-Thuwaini

KUWAIT PRESENTS SPORTS ROADMAP TO UN CHIEF

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Foreign Ministry wrote to United Nations' Secretary General Ban Ki-moon based on a letter from Information Minister and State Minister for Youth Affairs Sheikh Salman Al-Humoud Al-Sabah. The letter includes a roadmap prepared by sports officials as an answer to a similar roadmap proposed by UN envoy Wilfried Wiki during a meeting with Kuwait's delegation in Geneva on Jan 22 in the presence of International Olympic Committee representatives. During the meeting, Feb 25, 2016 was set as the deadline to receive the Kuwait government's answer to the proposal to remove the suspension of Kuwait sports that was imposed by IOC on Oct 27, 2015 and is still in effect. Sources said the Kuwaiti roadmap includes confirmation that local laws do not contradict international charters and rules, and there is no government interference in sports affairs. — Al-Rai

ZOUR COMPLEX CO PROJECT TO BE REVIEWED BY SPC SOON

KUWAIT: Well-informed oil sources recently stressed that final preparations to review the establishment of a company to run the Al-Zour petroleum complex project (with a total capital of \$30 billion) by the Supreme Petroleum Council (SPC) in its coming meeting were done after the project was approved by KPC. The sources explained that the company's capital would not be all paid in full and that there would be a special financial and auditing system to do that.

In addition, the sources said that execution of the KD 4.87 billion worth Al-Zour refinery, the KD 1 billion worth liquefied gas and the KD 4 billion worth petrochemical projects has already started. The sources also noted that plans had been set to build a comprehensive petroleum complex of economic value. "This is better than keeping Al-Zour refinery subjected to KNPC while it is a strategic project in the first place," stressed the sources.

Further, the sources expected that

the giant new company would be headed by KNPC Managing Director Hashim Hashim and would include a team of experts from KNPC, Kuwait Petrochemicals Co and other KPC subsidiary companies plus new recruits. The sources also expected the petrochemicals project feasibility study to be concluded this month to be reviewed by KPC board of directors for final decisions on the factories to be built jointly with a strategic partner from Japan or Korea, excluding Dow Chemical. — Al-Rai

ALAFCO COMPANY SIGNS SALE, LEASEBACK AGREEMENT WITH AEGEAN AIRLINES

KUWAIT: ALAFCO Aviation Lease and Finance Company announced that it signed an agreement with Aegean Airlines for the lease of two new Airbus A320-200 aircraft. The aircraft will be leased under a sale and leaseback agreement for a period of eight years. The recent agreement will increase the number of aircraft leased by ALAFCO to Aegean Airlines to four aircraft. Aegean Airlines is the flagship carrier of Greece and the largest airline in the country, currently operating a fleet of 45 aircraft comprising of Airbus A320-200 and A321-200. In 2013, Aegean Airlines acquired its domestic rival Olympic Air, making Olympic a subsidiary of Aegean.

ALAFCO Aviation Lease and Finance Company also announced the signing

of a sale agreement with Britain's Jet2.com airline for the sale of two Boeing 737-800 aircraft, previously leased to Russia's Transaero Airlines. ALAFCO had invested in the two aircraft since 2004, and had generated a return of 14.7 percent. The recent transactions are in line with ALAFCO's strategy to invest in new aircraft, while reducing the amount of aging aircraft in its fleet-enhancing ALAFCO's operating performance.

ALAFCO is a Kuwait-based aircraft leasing company that is listed on the Kuwait Stock Exchange. ALAFCO's portfolio consists of 50 Airbus and Boeing aircraft, leased to 14 airlines in 13 countries across Europe, Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Middle East.



KUWAIT: The Commercial Bank of Kuwait (CBK) sponsored a ceremony to award outstanding students in Jahra, which was held recently under the patronage of Jahra Governor Fahad Al-Amir.

Crime

Report

Abducting maids kidnapped, 'sold'

KUWAIT: Two abducting maids found themselves victims of an Ethiopian woman who sold them in cahoots with a taxi driver to two men, Indian and Bangladeshi, for KD 100 each. The victims, Sri Lankan and Nepalese, were both forced to get involved in immoral activities. Detectives were able to rescue them and arrested the two men. They are still looking for the Ethiopian and the driver.

Human trafficking

Residency detectives arrested a citizen who obtained several licenses based on one address and one office in order to bring in the largest possible number of workers in clear violation of the law. Residency detectives learned that a citizen got licenses for several companies all based on one address and civil ID number. When the information was confirmed, the citizen was arrested and confessed to getting the licenses to recruit the largest number of workers. The companies were placed on the sponsorship blacklist and workers registered under those companies are considered loose laborers.

Drunk officer makes hoax call

A police officer from the general security sector called operations and told them he saw a bus full of 'Daesh' militants. Bearing in mind where the call came from, it was taken seriously and state security, criminal detectives, and general security officers went to the area to take action. When they arrived at Abu Al-Hassaniya, they surveyed the area and searched around, but there was no bus to be seen. The call was determined to be a hoax. A security source said the officer, a lieutenant in Ahmadi security department, was found in the area, but was extremely drunk. He was arrested and taken to state security for questioning.

Kidnap, theft charges

Interior Ministry authorities began an investigation to find exactly what happened to a pregnant woman who claims that she was kidnapped and mugged. A security source said the woman said an unidentified person in women's clothes kidnapped her from in front of a commercial institution, took her to Umm Al-Haiman and dumped her in the open desert after robbing her money. The woman said she called her brothers who took her to Adan Hospital because she is pregnant. Meanwhile, the woman's husband accused her brothers of kidnapping her due to disputes between them, adding they had to return her because they knew he will not let things pass. — Al-Rai

NEARLY 2.6 MILLION EXPATS IN KUWAIT

KUWAIT: A security source revealed statistics of expatriates who have valid residency permits at the Interior Ministry's Residency Affairs Department, headed by Major General Talal Maarafi. The source said the number of expatriates registered in the database with valid residencies reached 2,599,541 expats excluding all violators of residency law, whose number is estimated at 110,000, besides those registered as illegal residents and Gulf nationals. The statistics prepared by the residency affairs department showed the number of workers in the government sector (article 17) is 107,698, and those in the private sector (article 18) number 1,300,285. Family visa holders (article 22) number 536,829. The number of domestic helpers (article 20) is 651,454, and article 19 holders (commercial licenses or Kuwaitis' partners) number 377. University students (Article 23) number 637, while 2,261 are self-sponsored. — Al-Anbaa

AGENCIES RECORD DROP IN TRAVEL DURING HOLIDAYS

KUWAIT: Several airline officials as well as travel agencies attributed the drop of travel demand during the national holidays to the economic situation the country is going through due to falling oil prices, and the government's intention to adopt austerity measures, reduce subsidies and cut employees' allowances. Airline companies were satisfied by increasing the capacities of their aircraft to meet demands without having to operate extra flights, except for Flydubai, which announced an additional 22 flights between Feb 23 and 27. Passengers prefer Dubai, Cairo, Beirut and Istanbul according to reservations, in addition to those who chose to go for umrah. — Al-Qabas

KD 7 MILLION STUDIES LEFT IN DRAWERS

KUWAIT: Informed sources said the value of contracts signed between Kuwaiti ministries and the World Bank as well as several other international consulting firms reached KD 7 million during the past two years. They said the contracts were made to set strategies or restructure the method of work and develop laws or prepare future plans for government bodies.

They said this amount of money is considered very high and is squandering of public funds, because a number of such studies have been left in drawers and are not implemented in reality. Also, some of them are made vertically and do not care for Kuwait's economic situation particularly.

The sources said the most impor-

tant government authorities concerned are the finance ministry and the bodies that belong to it, such as investment public authority, social security and others. The commerce ministry also signed contracts with foreign offices and international consulting firms to prepare a study on improving the business environment, in addition to contracts that concern its authorities such as a competition protection system and the industry public authority.

They said the firms that benefited the most from those contracts are World Bank, Ernest & Young, McKinsey, Protiviti, Maxwell Stamp and many others. The sources asked about the study and report by former

British premier Tony Blair and what was used from it, bearing in mind that it cost the country millions. The Blair report included diagnoses and proposals to develop Kuwait until 2035, and it proposed several measures to avoid development regression in Kuwait, the first of which is reviving Kuwait's heritage that is based on using all aspects of strength in Kuwait's economy and its resources.

The report that was written in 2009 warned against growing general spending which multiplied threefold in 10 years, adding that general revenues will not cover expenses within five to eight years, which will make Kuwait use its reserves, and this is what is going on now. — Al-Qabas

MINISTRY CAN'T MAKE DECISION ON BEDOON TEACHERS: ESSA

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Education is still studying the issue pertaining with 22 bedoon (stateless) public school teachers who were recently relieved of their duties, Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education Dr Bader Al-Essa said. He added that the issue can only be settled by the Central System for the Remedy of Status of Illegal Residents (CSRSIR). "We informed the parliament's human rights committee that the issue has been discussed with the CSRSIR," Essa said. "The Education Ministry does not mind retaining those teachers if a decision on that regard was made."

The minister explained that the

ministry had received a letter from the CSRSIR requesting that the 22 teachers' contracts are not renewed because their status has changed ever since they were hired. "Some of them have received the Kuwaiti nationality, other countries' nationality or have security restrictions against them," Essa noted.

In other news, Essa revealed that Kuwait University's supreme council will discuss during its meeting early March implementing the Constitutional Court's ruling with regards to co-education. The court had ruled last December to reject a challenge against the 19-year old legislation which bans

the mixing of male and female students at universities. Essa said that the council will request an interpretation for the ruling from the Fatwa and Legislation Department to implement it.

Separately, Secretary General of the Private Universities Council Dr Habib Abul revealed that this year's internal scholarship's budget reached KD80 million, including university fees, book allowances and social payments. The amount covers nearly 14,000 male and female students, with an annual average ranging between KD 7,000 and KD 8,000 per student, Abul said. — Al-Qabas, Al-Jarida, Al-Rai



Tornados in South, snow, sleet in East; record heat in West

PACQUIAO APOLOGIZES FOR COMPARING GAYS TO ANIMALS



RAMADI: Iraq government troops remove bombs planted in houses and streets in Ramadi's Husseiba eastern district yesterday, after retaking the city from the Islamic State group. — AFP

ISLAMIC STATE FACES ECONOMIC CRUNCH

TERROR GROUP SLASHES SALARIES ACROSS THE REGION

BEIRUT: Faced with a cash shortage in its so-called caliphate, the Islamic State group has slashed salaries across the region, asked Raqqa residents to pay utility bills in black market American dollars, and is now releasing detainees for a price of \$500 a person. The extremists who once bragged about minting their own currency are having a hard time meeting expenses, thanks to coalition airstrikes and other measures that have eroded millions from their finances since last fall. Having built up loyalty among militants with good salaries and honeymoon and baby bonuses, the group has stopped providing even the smaller perks: free energy drinks and Snickers bars.

Necessities are dwindling in its urban centers, leading to shortages and widespread inflation, according to exiles and those still suffering under its rule. Interviews gathered over several weeks included three exiles with networks of family and acquaintances still in the group's stronghold in Raqqa, residents in Mosul, and analysts who say IS is turning to alternative funding streams, including in Libya. In Raqqa, the group's stronghold in Syria, salaries have been halved since December, electricity is rationed, and prices for basics are spiraling out of reach, according to people exiled from the city.

"Not just the militants. Any civil servant, from the courts to the schools, they cut their salary by 50 percent," said a Raqqa activist now living in the Turkish city of Gaziantep, who remains in close contact with his native city. But that apparently wasn't enough close the gap for a group that needs money to replace weapons lost in airstrikes and battles, and pays its fighters first and foremost. Those two expenses account for two-thirds of its budget, according to an estimate by Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi, a researcher with the Middle East Forum who sources Islamic State documents.

Tax payments

Within the last two weeks, the extremist group started accepting only dollars for "tax" payments, water and electric bills, according to the Raqqa activist, who asked to be identified by his nom de guerre Abu Ahmad for his safety. "Everything is paid in dollars," he said. His account was bolstered by another ex-Raqqa resident, who, like Ahmad, also relies on communications with a network of family and acquaintances still in the city. Al-Tamimi came across a directive announcing the fighters' salary cuts in Raqqa: "On account of the exceptional circumstances the Islamic State is facing, it

has been decided to reduce the salaries that are paid to all mujahedeen by half, and it is not allowed for anyone to be exempted from this decision, whatever his position."

Those circumstances include the dramatic drop in global prices for oil - once a key source of income - airstrikes that have targeted cash stores and oil infrastructure, supply line cuts, and crucially, the Iraqi government's decision to stop paying civil servants in territory controlled by the extremists. A Russian-backed Syrian government offensive in Aleppo province, where IS controls major towns including Manbij, Jarablus and Al-Bab, is also putting pressure on IS. Government troops and allied militiamen have advanced toward the town, considered an IS bastion, leading many militants to send their families to Raqqa.

An exile from Al-Bab said low-level fighters there have begun to grumble, and townspeople have overheard Islamic State officials discussing crippling airstrikes on oil infrastructure in Syria and Iraq and the cutoff of supply lines and revenue sources. The resident, who asked only that his first name Oussama be used because he still has family in the city, said dozens of residents of Al-Bab have fled, ignoring orders from the extremists.

Morale is down

"You can sense the frustration, their morale is down," Oussama said of the fighters. A former Raqqa resident now living in Beirut said Syrians abroad are sending remittances in dollars to cover skyrocketing prices for vegetables and sugar. The resident, whose wife and baby still live in the city, did not want his name used for their safety. One of the other ex-residents, now living in Gaziantep, Turkey, said the road to Mosul was cut off late last year, and prices have risen swiftly - gas is up 25 percent, meat up nearly 70 percent, and sugar prices have doubled.

In Iraq, where Islamic State has slowly been losing ground over the past year, the Iraqi government in September cut off salaries to government workers within territory controlled by the extremists, after months of wavering about the humanitarian costs paid by those trapped in the region. Iraqi officials estimate that Islamic State taxed the salaries at rates ranging from 20 to 50 percent, and analysts and the government now estimate a loss of \$10 million minimum each month. Between the loss of that money - and the US-led bombing of cash warehouses - American officials are optimistic that the effect could diminish Islamic State's wealth.

"We are seeing our efforts having

some effect on their financial flows. And it's difficult to get a handle on just how much because of the different illicit ways in which they are handling their finances but you've seen the efforts that our military has taken to take out cash storage sites, and I think it is our hope and expectation that that will have demonstrable effects. On what order of magnitude, I think it's difficult to say," said Lisa Monaco, President Barack Obama's counterterrorism adviser.

In the Iraqi city of Fallujah, fighters who once made \$400 a month aren't being paid at all and their food rations have been cut to two meals a day, according to a resident. The account of the resident, who spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of death at the hands of extremists, was supported by that of another family trapped in Fallujah that said inhabitants can only leave the city if they pay \$1,000 - a sum well beyond the means of most in the Sunni-majority city that was the first in Iraq to fall to Islamic State in 2014.

Financial problems

IS is also allowing Fallujah residents to pay \$500 for the release of a detainee, the family in Fallujah told the AP, saying that they believed the new policy was put in place to help the group raise money - a system akin to bail. Mosul residents contacted by AP say IS has begun fining citizens who do not adhere to its strict dress code, rather than flogging them as before. The residents say they believe this is in response to financial problems in part because the group has already confiscated anything valuable, namely cars and other goods that are later resold in Syria.

American officials have said fighters are more constricted in their movements and spending than they have been in months. But the group still controls a vast amount of territory, and they say the Syrian government has made few gains against the extremists themselves. Islamic State, meanwhile, keeps up its deadly combination of threats and payments for anyone wavering in their support.

The Soufan Group, in a Jan 27 analysis, said the group is looking for alternative funding streams in Libya, where it is under less pressure - and doesn't face airstrikes. And fighters still get their food baskets and free electricity - even if, as one of the Raqqa exiles said, they no longer get Snickers bars and energy drinks. "I don't think this is fatal for IS," said Al-Tamimi. "I still don't see internal revolt as what's going to be the outcome. It's more like a scenario of gradual decay and decline." —AP



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PALESTINIANS RENOVATE CHURCH AT JESUS' BIRTHPLACE

BETHLEHEM: After two years of painstaking work, experts have completed the initial phase of a delicate restoration project at the Church of the Nativity, giving a much needed face-lift to one of Christianity's holiest sites. The project, partially funded by the Palestinians and conducted by a team of Palestinian and international experts, is the biggest restoration at the iconic church in some 600 years. The removal of centuries of dust has left Crusader-era mosaics sparkling in sunlight filtering through brand new windows. Structural repairs on the fragile rooftop and windows have been completed and art treasures have been returned to their delicate elegance.

Although the Palestinians are overwhelmingly Muslim, they consider the church a national treasure and one of their most visited tourist sites, and President Mahmoud Abbas has been actively involved in the project. Ziad Al-Bandak, who leads the Palestinian committee in charge of the restoration, calls what has been accomplished so far nothing short of "revolutionary." "For the first time you can see, when you go up, mosaics really magnificent and beautiful and unique in the whole world," he said.

The Church of the Nativity, located in the biblical West Bank town of Bethlehem, was built by Saint Helena in the 4th century over the grotto where the Virgin Mary is said to have given birth to Jesus. Despite its spiritual significance, the church was neglected for centuries and is listed as endangered by UNESCO, the United Nations cultural agency. Until two years ago, rain leaked through the severely damaged rooftop, threatening to harm priceless artworks inside.

Then, in 2013, the Palestinian Authority, the internationally backed self-rule government, took the lead in financing the



BETHLEHEM: Restoration experts work on the rooftop of the Church of the Nativity, in the West Bank city of Bethlehem. — AP photos

restoration. The rest has come from the Palestinian private sector, the Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox and Armenian churches and other countries. Al-Bandak said nearly \$8 million has already been spent. The renovation is being conducted by a joint team of engineers, restoration experts and workers - Palestinians as well as Italians from "Piacenti," a firm which specializes in the renovation of historical sites and has worked on dozens of villas, palaces, churches and monasteries in Italy and Russia. Over the past two years, specialists have replaced the most damaged of the ancient wood beams of the rooftop and put up a new cover. They also installed new wooden framed windows that prevent water infiltration. For the first time in almost 1,000 years the thousands of fine mosaics' tiles have been retouched. Mimmo Nucato, who heads the Italian

team restoring the mosaics, called the gold, green and pastel artworks "a unique example" made by skilled mosaicists at the end of the Crusader period. But he said that after centuries of neglect, the mosaics were in such a bad state that they almost disappeared from sight. "From underneath you could no longer see the colors, so much so that some people were wondering 'Do we really have mosaics in this church?'" Nucato said. While experts are still carrying out work 10 meters (32 feet) above ground, visitors and pilgrims will have to wait until the end of 2016 before being able to admire the winged creatures and brightly colored mosaics that have been brought back to rare brilliance.

After completing the mosaics in the central nave specialists are now renovating those in other areas of the church, working on wall plastering, restoring the external



BETHLEHEM: Renovated mosaics and windows are the Church of the Nativity, in the West Bank city of Bethlehem.

stone facade and repairing the wooden beams. The metal scaffolding will only be removed after these steps are completed, said Afif Tweme, the restoration's project manager. He said he hopes this will be done by the end of the year. The plan is also to install a microclimate system to control sunlight, temperature and humidity in the church, as well as new lights and a smoke detection system, Tweme said.

The Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox and Armenian churches share ownership of the church, and run it according to a 19th-century agreement that assigns responsibilities for upkeep that are jealously guarded by each denomination. The churches have traditionally viewed each other with suspicion and have had fraught relations. But Al-Bandak said they have all been "very cooperative" throughout the restoration, even allowing access to the

church in the dead of night to facilitate the work of experts. The full restoration will continue in phases and is expected to take at least another three years.

Additional projects will include work on stone capitals and columns as well as on the ancient floor mosaics currently covered by stone flooring. The work will depend on the availability of funds. Al-Bandak said an additional \$11 million is needed. The Palestinian Authority has already launched a campaign to raise the funds and Abbas has pledged to follow through. "He told me from the beginning: 'Even if you don't have all the money to go ahead, start. This is a holy place and money will come,'" Al-Bandak said. The completion of the first phase is already a source of pride. "We are very proud of it because when we protect our national heritage, our history, we protect our future," Al-Bandak said. — AP



SINGAPORE: South Korea's Black Eagles aerobatics team flying KAI T-50B aircraft perform an aerial display during the Singapore Airshow at the Changi exhibition centre in Singapore yesterday. — AFP

SOUTH KOREA SAYS IS TIME TO PLAY 'HARDBALL' WITH NORTH

SEOUL: South Korean President Park Geun-hye yesterday said a fundamentally new approach was needed to derail North Korea's nuclear weapons program, marked by an uncompromising, assertive response to Pyongyang's provocations. In a speech to the National Assembly, that seemed to have one eye on upcoming parliamentary elections, Park warned that South Koreans had, over the years, become "numb" to the threat from their northern neighbor, and said it was time to take a more courageous stand.

The speech came a week after Park took the unprecedented step of shutting down operations at the jointly run Kaesong industrial estate in North Korea, triggering an aggressive response from Pyongyang. "It has become clear that we cannot break North Korea's will to develop nuclear weapons through existing means and goodwill," Park said. "It's time to find a fundamental solution for bringing practical change in North Korea and to show courage in putting that into action," she added.

Stealth fighter mission

After her speech, the Yonhap news agency cited defense officials in Seoul as saying four US F-22 stealth fighter jets would fly a mission over South Korea today in a show of force aimed at Pyongyang. Citing the North's nuclear test last month and long-range rocket launch on February 7, which was widely viewed as a ballistic missile test, Park said it was clear Pyongyang had no intention of denuclearization.

"If time passes without any change, the Kim Jong-Un leadership—which is speeding without a brake—could deploy a nuclear-tipped missile and we will suffer," she said. Defending the closure of Kaesong, Park said it was "just the beginning" and signaled further steps that she argued were needed to derail the North's nuclear program. "The government will take stronger and more effective measures to make North Korea bitterly realize

that it cannot survive with nuclear development and that it will only speed up regime collapse," she said. A similar line is being pushed by the United States and Japan in an effort to secure a strong UN Security Council resolution that will include harsh new sanctions for North Korea.

The China problem

But Park's speech failed to address the problem the Security Council is having in drafting a resolution that has the support of all five veto-wielding permanent members. Despite Beijing's annoyance with North Korea's nuclear ambitions and its young maverick leader Kim Jong-Un, its priority has been to prevent chaos on China's border. As a result, it has resisted punitive measures that might push Kim's regime towards collapse. In her speech, Park indicated that South Korea should be more willing to act unilaterally if other countries lagged behind. "We must throw away the impotent feeling of relying on the international community's sanctions ... and mobilize all possible methods to solve the problem ourselves," she said.

South Korea is due to begin talks with the US this week on the possible deployment of an advanced US missile defense system that China and Russia have warned could undermine stability in East Asia.

Defense officials in Seoul and Washington say bringing the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense System (THAAD) to the South has become a clear necessity given the progress North Korea was making on its ballistic missile program.

But China sees it as a threat to its own nuclear deterrent and Vice Foreign Minister Zhang Yesui reiterated Beijing's concerns during meeting yesterday with his South Korean counterpart in Seoul. "We exchanged views on the THAAD issue and the Chinese side expressed its opposition," Zhang told reporters. "We hope the relevant sides will act prudently." — AFP

GLOOM BUT HOPE FOR LIBYA FIVE YEARS AFTER UPRISING

DIVIDED COUNTRY THREATENED BY JIHADIST EXPANSION

TRIPOLI: Five years after the uprising began against dictator Muammar Gaddafi, many Libyans have lost hope of seeing the rule of law return to a divided country threatened by jihadist expansion. The Islamic State (IS) group has exploited the chaos engulfing the oil-rich North African nation since the 2011 revolution to gain a foothold and expand its influence. Last June, it seized Gaddafi's coastal home town of Sirte - 450 kilometers east of Tripoli—and has since transformed it into a training camp for Libyan and foreign militants. "The Islamic State likely sees Libya as the most favorable country in which to establish a regional hub of its caliphate," Ludovico Carlini of the IHS Jane's think-tank said.

With a port and airport, there are growing fears that IS—which seized large parts of Syria and Iraq in 2014 — may try to use Sirte as a base from which to attack Europe. Despite the jihadist threat, there are also signs of hope on the political front. On Monday, a UN-backed council of rival factions announced the formation of a revised government of national unity line-up to be put to lawmakers. Approval of the cabinet-headed by prime minister-designate Fayez Al-Sarraj-would be a vital step in resolving Libya's political disarray, capping off months of difficult diplomacy. "The journey to peace and unity of the Libyan people has finally started," UN Libya envoy Martin Kobler wrote on Twitter.

Africa's largest oil reserves

Beyond Libya's current political and security vacuum, "the availability of large stockpiles of weapons and porous borders, made it the main transit point for North African militants seeking to reach Syria and Iraq to wage jihad there," Carlini said. The country also sits atop the largest oil reserves in Africa, estimated at 48 billion barrels, although output has slumped since 2011. "The presence of large oil assets, the existence of well-established and lucrative smuggling routes to sub-Saharan Africa, and porous borders all make Libya as attractive as Iraq and Syria to the Islamic State, if not more so," Carlini said. Last month, the group launched attacks from Sirte on facilities in the "oil crescent" along the coast. The Soufan Group think-tank in a report last month said jihadists exist in Libya under Gaddafi, but have thrived in the turmoil since his downfall. "Libya



TRIPOLI: This file photo shows Libyans celebrating the third anniversary of the Libyan uprising at Martyrs square in the capital Tripoli. — AFP

has a long violent jihadist tradition dating back to the Soviet Afghan War, though the oppressive and authoritarian Gaddafi regime was largely able to keep militant jihadist activities in check," it said. "With the collapse of the regime, the long-suppressed militant Islamist factions sought to fill the resulting vacuum." Since a coalition of Islamist-led militias overran Tripoli in August 2014, the country has had two administrations.

Living day to day

An Islamist-dominated legislature, the General National Congress, sits in Tripoli while the internationally recognized government has been driven to the country's far east. As Libya on Wednesday marks five years since the uprising began, its people are still waiting for a panel elected in February 2014 to draft their first constitution since Gaddafi seized power in 1969.

With anniversary preparations under way in Tripoli's Martyrs Square, the mood remains gloomy among many residents. "The last five

years have been nothing but one mistake after another," said Karima Leguel, a bank employee in her fifties. "Our daily lives have become increasingly difficult. We have to plough on despite the high prices, no proper health care, long power cuts and recently no cash at the bank." Libya's conflict has left 1.9 million people with serious health needs in a country that lacks medical professionals, medicines and vaccines, the World Health Organization said last month.

No foreign airline has flown to Tripoli since its airport was destroyed in summer 2014, and few countries allow Libyan aircraft to land on their soil. Libyans who want to travel abroad struggle to obtain the required visas as most foreign missions have been closed for 18 months. Florence, a Frenchwoman in her fifties who is married to a Libyan, said the cost of living was increasing and cashpoints were empty. "We live day to day," the mother-of-two said. "But if things don't get better we'll leave." "My greatest fear is that IS will reach Tripoli." — AFP

IRAN ALLOWS 6,229 TO STAND FOR PARLIAMENT

TEHRAN: Iran's protracted election vetting process ended yesterday with 6,229 candidates being allowed to stand for parliament, narrowing the battle lines for closely watched February 26 polls. The approvals, after seven weeks of scrutiny from the Guardian Council, a powerful constitutional watchdog with veto power, were granted to 51 percent of those who originally sought to become lawmakers.

Anyone wanting to become a member of parliament or Iran's Assembly of Experts, a committee of 88 clerics that will be elected on the same day as lawmakers, must be vetted by the council. The official campaign will start on Thursday, meaning candidates have only a week to convince voters. Thousands, including many reformists, were disqualified from running for parliament last month and of the 800 who aimed to run for the Assembly of Experts only 161 were given approval. The end of vetting and final numbers for parliament included 38 previously rejected candidates from across the country, Interior Ministry spokesman Hossein Ali Amiri told state television.

Reformists and moderates who protested

against a massive rejection of their candidates last month have pledged to fight on and plan to present candidates in all constituencies. Parliament is dominated by conservatives, partly because reformists mostly boycotted the last legislative elections four years ago in protest at then-president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's re-election in 2009. The two reformist candidates in that poll—Mir Hossein Mousavi and Mehdi Karubi—said Ahmadinejad's win was fraudulent, and they have been held under house arrest since 2011. With a population of more than 12 million, Tehran has 30 seats with each parliamentary bloc offering a list of 30 candidates, whereas many towns have only one lawmaker.

Reformists team up

Reformists, outnumbered otherwise, have formed an alliance with moderate parties close to President Hassan Rouhani, who succeeded Ahmadinejad in 2013. Iran does not follow a traditional political party system and instead relies on coalitions of candidates, with voting and campaigning usually centered on those lists rather than on individuals. A "grand coalition of principal-

ists" (conservatives) has already published its lists. In Tehran six women out of the group's 30 candidates have been nominated. Reformists, who will be led by Mohammad Reza Aref, a presidential candidate who stood aside in 2013 paving the way for Rouhani's victory, have yet to publish their final list. A third middle ground list has emerged: the Voice of the Nation. It is led by Ali Motehary, a moderate conservative lawmaker known for his controversial positions including opposition to the ongoing house arrest of Mousavi and Karubi.

Complex election rules however allow a candidate to be on more than one list, meaning they can draw support from across the political spectrum. The final number of parliamentary candidates saw a significant rise after government haggling convinced the Guardian Council to reauthorize many barred candidates. Rouhani hopes next week's parliamentary vote will give him a majority moderate-reformist chamber which could lead to modest reforms. He has sought to capitalize on a lifting of international sanctions in mid-January following the agreement reached in July 2015 with major powers regarding Iran's disputed nuclear program. — AFP

US AUTHORIZES UP TO 110 DAILY FLIGHTS TO CUBA

WASHINGTON: The United States and Cuba will sign a bilateral agreement authorizing up to 110 scheduled daily commercial flights to Havana and nine other destinations on the communist island. The deal restores regular flights between the two countries for the first time in more than half a century. Once the accord is signed, US authorities will immediately invite American airlines to submit applications to operate the flights, with routes due to be set at some point in the summer, officials said.

"The Cuban government (will give) thorough consideration to future requests from the US government to increase this level of service," US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Transportation Affairs Thomas Engle said. "The two governments reaffirm their commitment to strengthen their already close cooperation in aviation safety and security matters." The United States announced plans to resume the flights in December, on the one-year anniversary of the start of reconciliation

between Washington and Havana. Under the new arrangement, airlines in the two countries can now strike deals in such areas as code-sharing and aircraft leasing, the Cuban embassy said at the time.

However, tourist travel still remains illegal under the trade embargo that the Americans slapped on Cuba in 1960 after Fidel Castro came to power in a communist revolution. The US Treasury Department has, however, set 12 categories of authorized travel. "Initially, the US carriers will be allowed to fly 20 scheduled frequencies per day to Havana, the largest market, and remember that the current level is zero," Engle said. "And also allowed to fly 10 scheduled frequencies per day to any other city in Cuba that has an airport open to international service."

Besides Havana, flights will be allowed to Camaguey, Cayo Coco, Cayo Largo, Cienfuegos, Holguin, Manzanillo, Matanzas, Santa Clara and Santiago de Cuba. Deputy Assistant Secretary for Aviation and International Affairs Brandon



HAVANA: The airplane carrying US Secretary of State John Kerry prepares to depart the airport in Havana, Cuba in this file photo, after the reopening of the US Embassy after 54 years of broken diplomatic relations. — AP

Belford said Cuban airlines will still have to obtain their own licenses from US authorities. "So we do not anticipate Cuban owned aircraft serving the US in the near

future," he added. Commercial flights between Cuba and the United States were cancelled 53 years ago but since the mid-1970s authorized charter flights have been

allowed under certain conditions. The United States and Cuba formally restored diplomatic relations in July and re-opened embassies in each other's capitals. — AFP

MORE US GRANDPARENTS TAKING ON PARENTAL ROLE FOR GRANDCHILDREN

2.7 MILLION GRANDPARENTS RAISING GRANDCHILDREN

CHICAGO: When Debra Aldridge became her grandson's primary caregiver, she was making \$7.50 per hour as a cook. The alternative for the newborn, she was told, was to put him up for adoption. "I took one look at the little fella, and that was it," said Aldridge, now 62. "I couldn't let go." For more than 11 years, Aldridge, who is divorced and lives in Chicago, has struggled to feed, house and clothe her "baby," Mario. As she ages, she is sinking deeper into poverty.

Nationwide, there are 2.7 million grandparents raising grandchildren, and about one-fifth have incomes that fall below the poverty line, according to census figures. Their ranks are increasing. The number of grandparents raising grandchildren is up 7 percent from 2009. Experts say the trend is likely to continue as the nation responds to the opiate epidemic. Military deployment and a growth in the number of women incarcerated are other factors forcing grandparents to step into parental roles.

Kinship families

Already, child welfare agencies are reporting an increase in the number of children, especially infants, taken from parents battling drug addictions and mental health issues. After years of declines, children in foster care rose by nearly 1 percent in 2013 and by 3.5 percent in 2014 to more than 415,000. The increase comes as states are placing more foster children with relatives in response to research showing that children fare better with family rather than in foster care. There is an economic incentive, too. Generations United, a nonprofit that advocates for "kinship families," says taxpayers would see

significant savings by keeping children out of foster care and placing them with relatives.

But at the same time, the group says there is no comprehensive framework to keep these kinship families stable. Crucial programs, such as legal services and support groups, "exist only in small pockets of the country," it said. Those support services are something many grandparents raising grandchildren need. Many are living on fixed incomes and managing chronic illnesses. About a quarter of grandparents raising grandchildren have a disability. "People who step forward, step forward because there is a crisis in their family and apparently don't take into account their own limitations," said Esme Fuller-Thomson, a professor of social work at the University of Toronto, who has researched grandparent caregiving in the United States.

Free legal help

Maria Nanos, executive director of the Center for Law and Social Work in Chicago, said that when the state is involved, grandparents receive free legal help from the center, but informal caregivers navigate guardianship on their own. The center usually receives funds from the state's Department of Aging to help those grandparents, but Illinois has operated without a budget since July, so the center has not received the money this fiscal year. "We have to turn people down," Nanos said. Some states offer financial aid for informal kinship families. In Georgia, grandparents older than 55 can get a \$100 monthly subsidy per grandchild. They also have access to grants and could qualify for subsidies similar to those of foster parents (between

\$14.60 and \$18.80 per day). But access to the assistance, which is often housed in different agencies, can be tricky, if not impossible.

Financial help

To help relatives navigate the complex web of services, some states have created kinship navigators. Lynn Urvina, is one of about a dozen kinship navigators in Washington state. She said grandparents call her seeking information about support groups, obtaining guardianship and financial help to pay bills. Every year, her case files grow. "In our area, methamphetamines have had a huge impact," said Urvina, who is raising, along with her husband, a 12-year-old granddaughter. Navigators in Washington serve 30 of 39 counties, with multiple counties overseen by one person. Some counties include rural communities where grandparents have little access to services, Urvina said.

"If all grandparents walked away and say, 'we can't do it,' there would be no homes for these kids," Urvina said. To boost assistance to kinship families, Sens Orrin Hatch, R-Utah, and Ron Wyden, D-Ore., are working on a bipartisan bill that would reimburse states for a portion of money spent on such services as substance abuse prevention and kinship navigators. As her grandson enters his teens, Aldridge, the Chicago grandmother, said she knows she'll need more resources to clothe, feed and keep him out of trouble. To help make ends meet, she stands in food lines, taking two buses to reach the food depository. But she won't give up on Mario. — AP

TRUMP IS A -: WHITE HOUSE HOPEFUL PLAYS FILL-IN-THE-BLANKS WITH VOTERS

NEW YORK: Donald Trump speaks volumes in what he doesn't say. The Republican presidential hopeful often fails to finish his thoughts during his speeches, abruptly breaking off a sentence or substituting a vague word for a more precise one. Those half-finished sentences aren't throwaways. They're enmeshments, a rhetorical device at the heart of a persuasive speaking style that has helped catapult the billionaire to the top of national polls ahead of the November 2016 election.

To his supporters, Trump is a politician who doesn't sound like one: He says what he thinks, happily insults rivals and can appear unscripted, particularly when he leaves his thoughts to trail off unfinished or peppers sentences with ambiguities. Take his comments during a recent Republican debate in which he defended his call for a temporary ban on Muslims entering the United States: "I talked about Muslims," he said. "We have to have a temporary something, because there's something going on that's not good."

It was left up to the listener to decipher what Trump was saying. What this means in practice is that supporters can tailor his statements to their own beliefs, rhetoric professors said. It also allows Trump, consciously or not, to avoid boxing himself in with quotes that rivals can use against him. Strictly speaking an enthymeme is a form of argument in which at least one premise remains unstated. The concept isn't new - it was described by the Greek philosopher Aristotle - and has been used in American politics in the past.

In practice, enthymemes come in various forms, including dramatic pauses, unfinished sentences and the place-filling "somethings" Trump employs, according to the experts, who study U.S. public and political speech. In each case, listeners fill in the blanks. Trump has used enthymemes when taking on Fox News anchor Megyn Kelly and one-time rival Carly Fiorina; he has used them in describing his opposition to a New York City mosque; he routinely uses them in speeches when talking about subjects ranging from immigration to

trade wars. In the case of Kelly, Trump, recounting a heated exchange between them during a televised debate, said she had "blood coming out of her eyes, blood coming out of her - wherever."

His statement caused a furor among many who concluded Trump had meant Kelly was menstruating and hormonal and therefore irrational. Trump denied it and supporters came to his defense, pointing out he had never spoken the words. Trump's habit of leaving listeners to fill in the blanks isn't new; it's apparent in recorded interviews done well before his presidential bid. And it's not clear whether he does it consciously. His spokeswoman, Hope Hicks, called it a symptom of a racing mind. "People have said Trump's speeches are like a game of chess - an intricate web of great genius," she said.

When enthymemes backfire

Enthymemes can have a potent effect on listeners, said Baylor University rhetoric professor Martin Medhurst. "You have involved them psychologically and helped to persuade them by having them persuade themselves." But the rhetorical device carries risks, especially in instances where the unfinished thought is so vague that listeners can complete it with either a positive or a negative statement.

In a Jan. 29 speech, for example, Trump described his views that China is exploiting the United States. "They've taken our jobs, they've taken our base, they've taken our money, and I love China, they get along great with me, I told you I have all these people, I do business with China, they agree with me. They can't -." A clip of the statement was shown by Reuters to a group of students in a public policy class at New York's Hunter College, who disagreed among themselves about what Trump's next words would have been. One student, Alexandre Alvalade Ximenes, a freshman studying political science and philosophy, completed Trump's unfinished thought this way: "They can't believe how intellectually inferior we are." — Reuters

TORNADOS IN SOUTH, SNOW, SLEET IN EAST AND RECORD HEAT IN WEST

CENTURY: A treacherous mix of falling snow, sleet and freezing rain turned yesterday morning commutes to misery for many returning from a long holiday weekend in the Northeast, one day after suspected twisters tore through parts of the South. In the West, California and Arizona braced for another day of record warm temperatures after basking in the high 80s and low 90s on Monday. Millions along the East Coast, meanwhile, were still shivering from the deep freeze brought on by the latest winter storm.

In Washington, the federal government was opening three hours late after freezing rain coated the nation's capital and surrounding areas in hazardous ice. The US Office of Personnel Management, which sets leave policies for 300,000 federal workers, said government employees also had the option for unscheduled leave or telework. Freezing rain fell throughout the Washington area overnight after the major storm system had already dropped several inches of snow Monday, leaving roads and sidewalks slick. Many school systems in the Mid-Atlantic region were opening late or were closed for the day.

Winter storm

A mix of snow, sleet and freezing rain made driving dicey in upstate New York, with winter storm warnings and other advisories posted.



WASHINGTON: A plane is deiced on a snowy Presidents Day at Washington's Ronald Reagan National Airport. The bitter cold was replaced by snow, sleet and rain on Monday in the mid-Atlantic states and the South, but many residents were able to hunker down at home with federal offices and many businesses closed for Washington's Birthday. — AP



MORELIA: Religious men jump backwards as the crowd joins in a well known dance played over the loudspeakers, as they await the arrival of Pope Francis at Venustiano Carranza stadium in Morelia, Mexico yesterday. — AP

POPE FRANCIS VISITS MEXICAN CULT-LIKE CARTEL'S HOMELAND

MORELIA: Pope Francis arrived yesterday in Mexico's troublesome western state of Michoacan, where the cult-like Knights Templar drug cartel and its pseudo-messianic leader terrorized the population until farmers revolted against them. The 79-year-old pope will lead a mass with priests, nuns and seminarians in the state capital, Morelia, followed by a tour of the city's cathedral and a second mass with Mexican youths in a stadium.

Hundreds greeted him at the airport while some 2,000 swarmed the colonial plaza as they waited for a glimpse of the pope amid a heavy police contingent across the city. "I have faith that things will change after the pope's visit, that we will realize that violence is not the way to go," said Jose Rodriguez, a migrant who traveled from Los Angeles for the pope's visit. Michoacan endured some of the most gruesome episodes of Mexico's drug war, which has left 100,000 people dead or missing in the past decade.

Dozens of priests were killed in that span, including a handful in Michoacan, where one clergyman celebrated mass with a bulletproof vest. Francis has used his five-day cross-country trip, which ends Wednesday, to press Mexican leaders to provide "effective security" to their citizens. It was just steps away from Morelia's 17th century cathedral that two grenades blew up in a packed plaza during independence day festivi-

ties on September 15, 2008, killing eight people and injuring some 100. Drug cartels were the main suspects.

'The Craziest One'

While the massacre shocked the country, the gangs mainly afflicted rural areas of Michoacan, especially the fertile lime and avocado region known as "Tierra Caliente" ("Hot Land"). It was there in 2006 that the country came to know La Familia Michoacana after the cartel rolled five severed heads down a dance floor with a message promising "divine justice." The gang was founded by Nazario Moreno, alias "The Craziest One," a self-styled messiah who wrote the "Gospel of La Familia" - a religion-inspired rulebook banning gang members from consuming drugs or alcohol.

The government wrongly declared him dead after a 2010 gunfight with police. Troops killed him for good in 2014. After his first death, the Knights Templar cartel emerged and Moreno became a folk saint known as "San Nazario," with shrines in his honor dressed like a crusader with a red cross. While the Knights claimed to defend Michoacan against other cartels, the gang killed, kidnapped and extorted regular people.

Fed up with the police's inability or unwillingness to act, farmers formed vigilante groups in 2013. "We had to do a job that wasn't ours to do,"

Hipolito Mora, a lime grower and founder of the vigilante movement said. Even clergymen were not safe. In 2013, authorities provided security to a bishop who backed the vigilantes over fears of an imminent attack. Another pro-vigilante priest in Apatzingan, a former cartel bastion, wore a bulletproof vest during mass.

The New Family

The federal government deployed security forces to help the self-defense forces, leading to the capture or killing of the cartel's top leaders. "Francis will see a Michoacan that is very different than when we were hurt by drug trafficking," said Jaime Rivera, a security expert at Michoacana University. "But he will also find a financially broke government that hasn't been able to eliminate criminal cells that continue to commit crimes."

While the cartel was severely weakened, smaller gangs have emerged, including La Nueva Familia (The New Family). Meanwhile, the vigilantes were sullied by infighting and accusations that some were infiltrated by cartels. Authorities decided to fold the militias into a government-sanctioned rural defense force in 2014. Authorities are now integrating them into regular police units. "Hopefully the government will do its job well so that we don't have to take up arms again," Mora said. — AFP

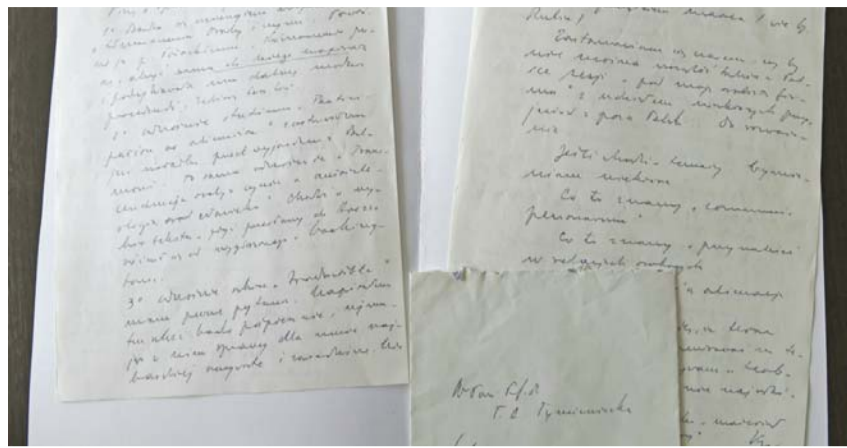
JOHN PAUL II 'INTIMATE LETTERS' REPORT A 'VALENTINE'S JOKE'

WARSAW: The director of Poland's national library yesterday dismissed a BBC report alleging that pope John Paul II had a close relationship with a married woman lasting 30 years as a "Valentine's Day joke." "It's a rather bad joke," said Tomasz Makowski of the BBC documentary aired Monday that was based on more than 350 letters written by Karol Wojtyla both as a cardinal and pope. The documentary sourced the letters from the library's archives in Warsaw, the first dated in 1973 and the last a few months before his death in 2005. Makowski noted that the Polish communist secret police, known as the SB, "had microphones everywhere spying on priests."

"If there was anything going on, the SB would have known and used it ... A British journalist managed to find information that the SB couldn't," he said. The documentary "says the pope did not

break his vows of celibacy, but at the same time it suggests exactly the opposite," said Makowski, adding that he has read all the letters in their original Polish. The BBC journalist who compiled the documentary said the Polish-born Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka and the future pope were "more than friends but less than lovers." The library director showed AFP two letters written by the pope to Tymieniecka, including one in which he sends his blessings to her husband and three children.

Makowski said photos of the pair shown by the BBC misrepresent them as being alone in secluded areas. In reality, the pictures were taken on kayaking and hiking trips that involved a larger group of friends, he said. Makowski also stressed that a term of endearment used by Wojtyla in which he referred to Tymieniecka as a gift from God, was



WARSAW: Picture shows a letter written in 1976 by Cardinal Karol Wojtyla, later Pope John Paul II, to Professor Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka. The director of Poland's national library dismissed a BBC report alleging that pope John Paul II had a close relationship with a married woman lasting 30 years as a 'Valentine's Day joke.' — AFP

something he said routinely to friends. "Those who don't understand this, will draw conclusions that have no basis in reality. John Paul wasn't afraid of being in contact with women, whether they be nuns or lay people, he was in the habit of holding their hands and caressing their cheeks."

A close associate of John Paul II told AFP on Monday it was "possible" the married philosopher had fallen in love with Wojtyla 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," Adam Boniecki, editor-in-chief of the progressive Tygodnik Powszechny Catholic weekly said. "If she was in love with Wojtyla, she was most likely not alone," said Boniecki, himself the author of a detailed account of the pope-turned-saint's life. — AFP

IN CONGO, A WAR FOR AFRICA'S ELEPHANTS

GARAMBA NATIONAL PARK: Andre Migifulyo and Djuma Uweko lived together, worked together and last October died together fighting to protect Congo's elephants from voracious ivory-seeking poachers. In the continental war to protect Africa's elephants, the rangers of Garamba National Park in north-eastern Democratic Republic of Congo are manning the front-line. The two men grew up in the same small town of Dunga and joined the park service in their early twenties, a good job that pays a decent monthly wage of around \$200 (180 euros).

Migifulyo became a ranger in 2011 and two years later Uweko followed. Both were quick to make friends with others and lived with their young families in Nagero, the park village by the Dunga River with its little red brick church and thatched homes. In his spare time Migifulyo, 26, enjoyed war films. Uweko, 27, liked a beer. Both earned reputations for discipline and courage in the field. On a sweltering Monday afternoon in early October they were part of a 10-man patrol that ran into a large gang of poachers in the north of the park. Almost as soon as the firefight began Uweko, armed with an AK-47, was shot. Migifulyo was fatally hit moments after firing off a rocket-propelled grenade.

Rhinosaurs slaughtered

Uweko dragged himself into the thick elephant grass where he lay bleeding until the poachers found him, and shot him dead. Two others also died: one in the initial exchange of fire while the other, like Uweko, was wounded then executed. Dieudonné Komorewa, 33 and a ranger for nearly eight years, was Migifulyo's close friend and second cousin. "I could tell he was a disciplined person, and brave, from the start," Komorewa said. "He was fun to be around."

The day before his friend was killed they had gone shopping together for baby clothes for Migifulyo's unborn child. Most days Komorewa takes up his dead friend's toddler son to play with his own children. "I love that kid so much," he said. Komorewa remains a determined ranger. "The enemy is the enemy and everything we do here is against them. We mustn't be scared of them, we must always be ready," he said. Who the enemy is varies. Sometimes it is members of the ragtag yet brutally effective rebel Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), more often it is armed groups from South Sudan or pastoralist-poachers from Sudan or Central

African Republic, or occasionally unknown shooters in helicopters who kill the elephants with a bullet in the top of the skull.

'If they see us they shoot'

Every year more than 30,000 elephants are poached in Africa, according to conservationists, leaving around 450,000 in the wild while the illegal ivory trade their tusks supply is estimated to be worth \$3 billion (2.7 billion euros) a year. The poachers are killers, so African Parks, the South Africa-based, European Union-backed conservation organization that manages Garamba, has brought in military trainers and a helicopter to help level the battlefield.

The 120 park rangers-a quarter of what's needed to patrol the 12,400 square kilometer park, about half the size of Wales-are looking more and more like the paramilitary force they must be to win the ivory war. In 2015 there were 28 firefights with poachers. Four rangers were killed and 114 elephants shot-almost one in 10 of those left in Garamba-but just 40 years ago there were 23,000 elephants here, plus close to 500 northern white rhinos. Poachers killed Garamba's last rhino a decade ago and the rangers are fighting to stop Garamba's elephants meeting the same end.

At the 50-metre (yard) firing range cut out of the thick bush, military trainers from Pretoria-based security company Noctuum are working on the rangers' marksmanship. A year ago rangers would shoot from the hip or, sometimes, over their heads holding the gun sideways like in a gangsta movie. Now they steady themselves in a low crouch, aim, exhale and squeeze the trigger. Lack of bullets means each ranger gets just five practice shots before each deployment.

'Bush justice'

The adjacent obstacle course is made out of rough branches and tree trunks. The teaching happens at the camp but the real learning is in the field, said one of the trainers who did not want to be identified. "Here you can only tell them what to do. In the bush you show them," he said. Garamba's security advisor Peter Philippot, a 45-year old French former soldier, says weapons and ammunition are his priority. The armoury is mostly filled with battered and ageing AK-47 rifles with an effective range of 100 meters, but in the park's thick, tall grass and forests most firefights begin at frighteningly short range. "In the bush you can't see nothing after 20 meters and most fights start at 10 metres. — AFP



A young female Elephant is fitted with a geographical positioning system (GPS) collar at the Garamba National Park in north-eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. — AFP

4 OF GREECE'S 5 'HOTSPOT' MIGRANT CENTERS READY

ATHENS: Four of Greece's five new migrant registration centers are "ready to function and welcome refugees," Defense Minister Panos Kammenos said yesterday, as Athens comes under intense pressure to control the massive influx to Europe. The four long-delayed "hotspot" centers will open on the islands of Lesbos, Chios, Leros and Samos, which have been struggling to cope with a relentless flow of migrants landing from Turkey.

A fifth centre on the island of Kos will be ready "in five days" despite strong opposition from the local mayor and residents over the impact on the vital tourism industry, Kammenos told reporters in Athens. Each of the facilities will have enough prefabricated housing to accommodate 1,000 migrants, who will spend three days being registered, having their fingerprints taken and being sorted between those eligible for asylum

in the EU and economic migrants facing eventual deportation. One aim will be to help spot jihadists using the migrant crisis to enter Europe—a pressing concern after two of the men who carried out November's attacks in Paris sneaked in via Greece, posing as refugees.

More than 850,000 migrants, fleeing war and poverty in the Middle East and elsewhere, transited through Greece last year on their way to northern Europe. Athens has faced heavy pressure from fellow EU members to better control its borders, with the bloc giving Greece a three-month ultimatum last week to remedy "deficiencies" or face effective suspension from the Schengen passport-free zone. However, visiting EU President Donald Tusk said that removing Greece from the Schengen bloc "solves none of our problems" as he met Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras. — AFP



KAMPALA: Ugandan presidential candidate and opposition leader Kizza Besigye waves to supporters as his convoy drives towards Kampala yesterday. — AFP

UGANDA RIVALS HOLD FINAL RALLIES AHEAD OF ELECTION

MUSEVENI LOOKS TO A FOURTH DECADE IN POWER

KAMPALA: Uganda's presidential contenders held their final rallies yesterday, a day after opposition supporters clashed with police leaving at least one dead. Key opposition candidate Kizza Besigye, a three-time loser who was briefly detained by police in chaotic protests on Monday, said he was still confident of ending veteran President Yoweri Museveni's three-decade grip on power in the East African nation. "The election cannot be free or fair, but it doesn't mean it can't be won," Besigye said, saying he was still aiming for an "outright win", not a second round run-off in which the opposition might unify.

At least one person was killed Monday as police fought running battles with Besigye supporters from the Forum for Democratic Change (FDC) party. "We believe we can win the unfair and unfair election, that's what we are trying to do," Besigye said before heading towards the city centre accompanied by some 300 supporters to hold rallies. Many were riding motorbikes, waving tree branches and blowing whistles and horns, and wearing shirts with Besigye's face emblazoned on the front.

'They want change'

"If rigged, as we expect, we will continue the struggle for democracy," Besigye said. "The strug-

gle will simply continue." Museveni is widely predicted to win a fifth term in power in Thursday's polls, and warned at a rally against voting for his rivals. "It would be a blunder to entrust liars with power," Museveni told supporters, the Daily Monitor newspaper reported Tuesday. "The opposition leaders are liars."

They just talk." Both Museveni and Amama Mbabazi, a former prime minister and ruling party stalwart now running as an independent, are also holding rallies yesterday. Campaigning is banned today. Over 15 million Ugandans are registered to vote, casting ballots in over 28,000 polling stations for both a president and member of parliament, with 290 seats being contested by candidates from 29 political parties. "In two days the nightmare will be over - there's absolutely no doubt we are winning this election," Besigye said, saying his supporters did not want a leader entering his fourth decade in power. "They gave us a simple message, they want change. They not only need change, but they deserve change," Besigye said.

'Rampage'

Seven opposition candidates are vying to deny veteran leader Museveni a fourth decade in power at the February 18 election and there are fears violence could mar the vote, with all

sides accusing each other of arming militias to press their claims. Police spokesman Fred Enanga said Besigye had been "in total disregard of his authorized program" on Monday, and that one person had died in clashes with protestors as they went on the "rampage, yelling, threatening, looting and damaging property," and hurling bricks at police. "The police have a duty to protect the safety of the public, together with the right to protect themselves, and had to act accordingly, given the intensity of the attacks they faced," Enanga said. Police said 19 people were wounded, including a policewoman, and 22 people arrested.

Elections in 2006 and 2011 were marred by violent, and occasionally deadly, street protests and the liberal use of tear gas by heavy-handed police. However, apart from Monday's violence, campaigning has been relatively peaceful. The US State Department on Monday stressed the need for a "peaceful, transparent and credible electoral process" and called on all sides to "refrain from provocative actions or rhetoric that raise tensions." Museveni, who seized power in 1986, is one of Africa's longest serving leaders, after Equatorial Guinea's President Theodore Obiang Nguema, Angola's Jose Eduardo Dos Santos, Zimbabwe's President Robert Mugabe and Cameroon's Paul Biya. — AFP

'NO PLAN B' AS BRITAIN'S PM HOLDS CRUNCH BREXIT TALKS

BRUSSELS: European Commission chief Jean-Claude Juncker said yesterday that a British exit from the EU was not an option, saying there was "no plan B" as Prime Minister David Cameron held key talks in Brussels to avert a "Brexit". Cameron, who wants the EU to carry out controversial reforms before he holds a referendum on Britain's membership, held talks with European Parliament chief Martin Schulz to drum up support for his proposals. Schulz said there were "concerns to raise" as Cameron arrived, pledging that the parliament would be an "honest partner" in the talks.

The discussions are part of a frenetic merry-go-round of diplomacy ahead of a crucial summit of all 28 EU leaders Thursday and Friday which will be dominated by the 'Brexit' issue. Juncker, who is also due to meet with Cameron, refused to even entertain the idea of Britain leaving the bloc. "If I would say now that we have a plan B, this would indicate a kind of willingness of the commission to envisage seriously that Britain could leave the European Union," Juncker said. "So I am not entering into the details of a plan B, because we don't have a plan B, we have a plan A. Britain will stay in the European Union as a constructive and active member of the Union." Cameron is due to meet the heads of the two largest groups in parliament to deliver his message that the reforms are in Britain's and the bloc's best interests.

But he came under fire after cutting back plans to meet all of the parliament's



BRUSSELS: British Prime Minister David Cameron (left) is welcomed by European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker at the European Commission in Brussels yesterday. — AFP

political groups, with Nigel Farage, leader of the anti-EU UK Independence Party, accusing the prime minister of being a "chicken" for pulling out. EU chief Donald Tusk warned Monday that the EU was at a "critical moment," needing to resolve the 'Brexit' stand-off and manage Europe's worst migrant crisis since World War II at the same time. "The risk of break-up is real because this process is indeed very fragile," Tusk said.

Four demands

Cameron has four key demands,

including controversial restrictions over four years on welfare payments to EU citizens working in Britain. His demand, however, that non-euro countries such as Britain should be safeguarded against closer integration of the single currency area has now run into serious opposition from France. Equally, an opt-out from the EU's mission of "ever closer union" and strengthened national sovereignty are also facing unexpected opposition, but these are still widely seen as easier issues to settle. Cameron has said that if he wins agreement on his reforms, he will campaign for

Britain to stay in the EU in a referendum promised by the end of 2017. It is widely expected that if he gets what he wants at the EU leaders' summit, he will push for a vote in June.

The prime minister agreed to hold the referendum largely to head off gains by UKIP which was exploiting sharp differences over Europe within his own Conservative Party. This political backdrop is little changed and Cameron is mindful of the minefield he must negotiate to get a deal. The Daily Telegraph reported Monday that the prime minister could announce the referendum date on Friday if a deal is agreed in Brussels, under pressure from ministers who want to immediately declare they are against the deal and join the pro-Brexit campaign.

Cameron met French President Francois Hollande late Monday in Paris for last minute talks ahead of the summit. Downing Street said the two men "agreed that we are making good progress on the UK renegotiation and that the draft text from the European Council provides a firm basis to reach agreement at this week's summit."

A French official had warned earlier that while there was "political willingness" to clinch an agreement, "more work is needed, particularly on economic governance." France, which along with Germany is a key decision-maker in the bloc, is hostile to any agreement which would give Britain a veto over the future of the euro-zone. — AFP

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145-YEAR-OLD LETTER, DELIVERED BY BALLOON, TURNS UP IN AUSTRALIA

SYDNEY: A letter from a man to his mother flown out of Paris by hot air balloon during the Prussian siege in 1870 has turned up in Australia's National Archives, which said yesterday it was keen to discover the family's fate. The Franco-Prussian War saw the Germans completely surround Paris for more than four months that year. Balloon mail was the only way communications from Paris could reach the rest of France, with dozens of flights made, mostly at night, and hundreds of thousands of letters delivered. One of them has been discovered by the National Archives.

It was penned in French on December 6, 1870 by a man named Charles Mesnier (or Mesmier) to his mother, care of Monsieur Grussin (or Grossin) at 8 Place de la Ville, Pont-Audemer, in Normandy. "It's a intriguing human element to an important piece of history," National Archives assistant director-

general Louise Doyle said. "We're not sure how it ended up in Australia, but it would be fascinating to know more. If people see this it would be interesting to have more context in relation to this record."

The letter was transferred to the archive's Brisbane office from the former Queensland Post and Telegraph Museum in 2001, but there is no information about its origin. It came to light recently as part of a joint project between the National Archives of Australia and the Archives Nationales in France. In the letter, which is full of fervour, the man assures his mother he is in good health. "We don't have meat every day and when we do get some it is not very much, but we can easily get by as things are and no one in our household is complaining," he wrote. Mesnier added: "The desire to repulse the Prussians is right now the solitary concern of Paris. Any suffering can be borne

rather than opening the gates of the capital to them."

Hopes dashed

He goes on to speak of "some real battles" around the city between November 29 and December 1 in which "our young soldiers have beaten the seasoned Prussian army". "We have taken their cannon and captured 1,000 prisoners—these days of good fortune have raised the morale of the fearful," he said. "We cannot succeed in all our attacks but I have the firm conviction, my good mother, that the ultimate success will be for our just cause." His hopes were dashed, with the city surrendering in late January 1871 after sustained bombardment. Mesnier could not have expected a reply from his family. While the prevailing winds sent the balloons over the heads of the Prussian army towards French lines, they could not go the other way. — AFP



CANBERRA: An undated handout photo released yesterday shows a tiny letter from a man to his mother flown out of Paris by hot air balloon during the Prussian siege and which has turned up in Australia's National Archives. — AFP



CALIFORNIA: US President Barack Obama (center) takes part in a plenary session on innovation and entrepreneurship during a meeting of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) at Sunnylands estate in Rancho Mirage, California. — AFP

PRESIDENT OBAMA HOSTS
SOUTHEAST ASIAN LEADERS

TALKS FOCUS ON HOW TO COUNTERBALANCE CHINA'S INCREASING MUSCLE

RANCHO MIRAGE: President Barack Obama welcomed Southeast Asian leaders for a California desert retreat Monday, with talks focused on how to counterbalance China's increasing muscle in the region. Obama hosted representatives from 10 ASEAN countries at Sunnylands, a secluded, sprawling resort beloved by US presidents since Dwight Eisenhower. Hoping to increase pressure on China over land grabs in the South China Sea, Obama opened the meeting by declaring a US-ASEAN "shared goal of building a regional order where all nations play by the same rules."

The White House sees this summit, and the prestigious venue, as an opportunity to champion Obama's "pivot to Asia" and ASEAN's growing importance, before the president leaves the White House in January 2017. "As president I've insisted that even as the United States confronts urgent threats around the world, our foreign policy also has to seize on new opportunities, and few regions present more opportunity in the 21st century than the Asia-Pacific," Obama said opening the summit. "That is why early in my presidency I decided that the

United States, as a Pacific nation, would rebalance our foreign policy and play a larger and long term role in the Asia-Pacific."

But the more immediate aim will be to secure a united front against China's island-building and military build-up in areas that are subject to myriad territorial claims. The White House, betting that China does not want to be seen as a regional bully, has mustered an informal coalition of Pacific allies to demand that Beijing respect the rule of law. That effort will deepen at Sunnylands on Tuesday, where leaders are expected to discuss a common response to a key UN court ruling on the issue that is expected in April or May.

The UN's Permanent Court of Arbitration will decide whether China's claim to a vast expanse of sea inside a "nine dash line" has legal merit. A collective US-ASEAN endorsement of the court's verdict—whatever the outcome—would heap pressure on China, which refuses to recognize the court. They "hope that, if not immediately, then over time, the Chinese will not want to be isolated and an international pariah, a country that doesn't agree with

international law," said Ernest Bower of the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

Strong pushback

But the summit comes as ASEAN and US officials report increasingly strong pushback from Beijing, which is using diplomatic and economic muscle to weaken criticism. Officials say Cambodia and Laos—two ASEAN countries which have no claims in the South China Sea—are coming under particular pressure to break ranks. Those countries are also the destination for large flows of Chinese investment. "The message is fall in line, or else," said one South East Asian diplomat. "China has leverage." But some see signs that pressure is beginning to backfire—forcing ASEAN countries to turn further toward the United States. That is something Obama will hope to capitalize on at Sunnylands.

In Myanmar, Beijing's long-held influence waned as military leaders feared becoming overly dependent on China, opening the way for better relations with Washington. Myanmar's outgoing leader Thein Sein did not be at the summit. He decided to remain at

home as talks inside the regime intensify over whether to change the constitution to allow Aung San Suu Kyi to become president. Vietnamese Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung did attend, after initially cancelling amid a power shakeup within Vietnam's ruling Communist Party. At home, Obama's latest effort to champion his pivot is likely to be overshadowed by the death of Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia.

But the White House will hope to at least send a message to the region that Washington will remain engaged. "It's the first time we have hosted ASEAN leaders here in the United States for this kind of meeting," said Rice. "That we have succeeded in doing so reflects a return on seven years of significant and sustained investment by this administration and by president Obama personally." "It demonstrates our enduring commitment to this vital region." Presidential trips to Vietnam and Laos are expected later this year to reinforce the point. On Monday, the White House said that Obama would visit Vietnam in May when he travels to Japan for the G-7 Summit. — AFP

INDONESIA TOUGHENS
ANTI-TERRORISM LAWS
ISLAMIST RADICALIZATION IN
PRISON TO BE ADDRESSED

JAKARTA: Indonesia has drawn up plans for tougher anti-terrorism laws following last month's militant attack on the capital, including detention without trial for up to three months compared with a week now, government sources said yesterday. The proposals are likely to draw fire from human rights activists, who have warned against jeopardizing hard-won freedoms over nearly two decades since the end of authoritarian president Suharto's rule.

However, officials anticipate little opposition in parliament to the legislation, which would not be as strict as counter-terrorism laws passed in recent years by neighbors Australia and Malaysia. President Joko Widodo's government moved quickly to reform the country's 2003 anti-terrorism law after Jan. 14, when four men attacked Jakarta's business district with guns and explosives. Islamic State claimed responsibility for the assault, in which the militants and four others died.

Details of the overhaul have been kept confidential, but two government sources with direct knowledge of the draft law said it would broaden the definition of terrorism and make it easier to both arrest and detain suspects. The sources declined to be named because the legislation, which could be passed within the next few months, is still under consideration by parliament, where Widodo enjoys strong cross-party support. "The new definition of terrorism includes the possession, distribution and trade of any weapons ... or potential material that can be used as weapons for terrorism acts," said one.

Evidence in court

The maximum period allowed for detention without trial will be lifted to 90 days and for preventive detention to 120 days, both from a current limit of one week. The law will also allow authorities to target anyone who recruits members for, or cooperates with a militant group, and to use electronic communications, intelligence reports and financial transactions as evidence in court against suspects. Indonesians who have joined militant training or participated in terrorist acts in a foreign country will be stripped of their citizenship. Security officials say about 500 Indonesians have travelled to Syria and Iraq to join the radical group Islamic State and they estimate that about one in five of these has returned, although most did not see frontline combat. Over the past two months, Indonesian counter-terrorism forces have arrested dozens of men suspected of plotting attacks on government targets and major landmarks, and last week seven men were jailed for being sympathizers of Islamic State. But police have long complained that even when they are aware of radical activities, they are unable to detain known militants unless they threaten or actually carry out an attack. The new law will allow the arrest of people merely "if they assemble to discuss terrorist and radical acts". The International Commission of Jurists last month urged the government not to undermine the process of justice by making it easier for authorities to arrest people irrespective of whether there is sufficient evidence of criminal activity. — Reuters

PACQUIAO APOLOGIZES FOR DESCRIBING
HOMOSEXUALS AS 'WORSE THAN ANIMALS'

MANILA: Eight-time world boxing champion Manny Pacquiao apologized yesterday for describing homosexuals as "worse than animals" after his remarks sparked a firestorm of criticism in his native Philippines. Nearing the end of a glorious decades-long boxing career, the 37-year-old is reinventing himself as a conservative Bible-bearing politician before the country's May elections, when he is running for a senate seat.

"I'm sorry for comparing homosexuals to animals. Please forgive me for those I've hurt," Pacquiao said in a video post on Instagram, his arms crossed. Pacquiao said he was not condemning homosexuals but was standing by his conservative Christian faith. "I love you all with the love of the Lord. I am praying for you." Pacquiao told television station TV5 earlier this week: "It's common sense. Do you see animals mating with the same sex? Animals are better because they can distinguish male from female."

"If men mate with men and women mate with women, they are worse than animals." Gay marriage is outlawed in the Philippines due to strong opposition from the Catholic Church and 80 percent of the



Manny Pacquiao

country's 100 million people subscribe to the faith. Gay marriages are officiated at small churches but are not recognized by the mainstream church or the state. The country's most popular gay comedian, Vice Ganda, posted #PrayForMannyPacquiao to his 6.7 million followers on Twitter as he tore into the boxer. "Some people think they can judge people, like God, just because they've attended a prayer meeting and read the Bible," he said. "The Senate needs experts on politics and law, not blind prophets," Vice Ganda added.

Singer Aiza Seguerra, who recently married her actress-girlfriend, called on voters to boycott Pacquiao, who is also preparing for his last boxing fight in April, calling him an "ignorant, bigoted hypocrite". "You might have done our country proud but with your statement, you just showed the whole country why we shouldn't vote for you," Seguerra said in a post on Instagram. Pacquiao gave the television interview as part of his campaign for one of 12 seats in the nationally-elected senate. The most recent surveys suggest he would win. He currently represents his wife's impoverished home province of Sarangani in the House of Representatives but is notorious for his chronic absences, favoring boxing training over legislation.

In one of the rare times he spoke at the legislature, Pacquiao quoted heavily from the Bible as he vigorously contested a proposed law, since passed, granting free condoms to the poor. He credits his renewed Christian faith for transforming him from a free-spending womanizer and gambler into a devoted family man who can recite Bible verses. "Outside the boxing ring, I don't think Manny Pacquiao should be taken seriously. It struck me first as funny. I pity him," Kakay Pamaran, a pastor at one of Manila's gay churches said. "I would advise him to talk to more LGBT (lesbian gay bisexual and transgender) persons, meet them and not just reduce his concept of LGBT to the sexual act." — AFP

News

in brief

Ailing Thai king under doctors' close watch

BANGKOK: Thailand's venerated but ailing 88-year-old monarch Bhumibol Adulyadej has been treated for heart trouble, high blood pressure and irregular breathing in recent weeks, the palace said in a statement yesterday. The king is worshipped by many Thais as a near-deity, and his frail health is a subject of significant public concern. He has spent most of the past two years hospitalized for a series of ailments, with few public appearances or speeches. In a statement released Tuesday evening Thailand's Royal Household Bureau said the king was being monitored for a high fever after doctors discovered diastolic dysfunction and high blood pressure in his lung last week. "A team of royal physicians periodically administered antibiotic solution intravenously and also continuously provided oxygen," the statement said. Doctors are now "closely monitoring his condition" while they seek an explanation for irregular breathing and a high temperature detected yesterday, according to the palace, which tightly controls information about the royal family. Bhumibol is the world's longest-reigning monarch with nearly seven decades on the throne, and most Thais have never known life under another king.

Iraq military copter crashes, killing nine

BAGHDAD: An Iraqi military helicopter crashed south of Baghdad yesterday killing nine people due to a "technical problem", a security spokesman said. "A military helicopter of the Mi-17 type crashed because of a technical problem, killing its crew of nine, two of them officers, Brigadier General Yahya Rasool said. The Soviet-designed helicopter, which is intended for transport but can also be equipped with weapons, was en route from Iraq's main southern city of Basra to the city of Kut, southeast of Baghdad, Rasool said. A Kut police captain said the crash occurred in an area east of the city. Iraq has lost multiple helicopters to accidents and ground fire in recent years, while others have been damaged. In October 2014, militants shot down a Bell 407 north of Baghdad, killing two crew, five days after an Mi-35 was shot down in the same area, while jihadists destroyed another helicopter on the ground earlier in the year. An overloaded helicopter crashed after delivering aid to people besieged by the Islamic State jihadist group on Mount Sinjar in August 2014, killing its pilot and injuring passengers, including a member of parliament.

Former nursing home worker 'throws resident off balcony'

TOKYO: A former nursing home worker has been arrested for allegedly throwing an 87-year-old resident from a balcony to his death, police said yesterday. Hayato Imai, 23, was arrested late Monday on suspicion of killing Tamio Ushizawa at the nursing home in Kawasaki southwest of Tokyo in November 2014, according to a spokesman for the Kanagawa Prefectural Police Department. Police suspect the victim died of ruptured organs after being hurled by Imai from the fourth-floor balcony, the spokesman said, adding that further details including his motive were not available. The Asahi Shimbun daily and other local media reported that the suspect also admitted killing two more residents in their 80s and 90s by throwing them from balconies in 2014. "I did it to kill him," Imai was quoted as telling police about the death of Ushizawa, Kyodo News reported. Imai was fired last year after being arrested on suspicion of stealing cash and jewelry from the room of a female resident at the facility. The elderly are traditionally respected in Japan and there is even a national holiday reserved for honoring senior citizens.

**Burundi government bans motorbikes in after attacks**

NAIROBI: Burundi banned motorbikes from the centre of the capital Bujumbura yesterday after a string of grenade attacks by insurgents on motorcycles, the mayor said. On Monday, men on bikes threw three grenades in the heart of the city, while two other blasts were reported in a northern suburb, killing at least one child and wounding scores. "Having seen that it is these motorcycle taxis that often carry the criminals who explode grenades in the city, we decided to ban them from the centre of Bujumbura," city mayor Freddy Mbonimpa said. Medics from Doctors without Borders (MSF) on Tuesday said they had treated over 60 people wounded in the latest blasts, days after treating another 55 wounded on February 11. Burundi plunged into crisis in April when President Pierre Nkurunziza ran for and won a controversial third term, sparking street protests, a failed coup, regular killings and a nascent rebellion. Hundreds have been killed in the violence and at least 230,000 have fled the country. Grenade blasts have become commonplace in the city, but it remains unclear who carries out the attacks, which have increased in the past two weeks. Security forces, rebels and opposition all blame each other for the killings.

TURKEY WANTS SYRIA GROUND OP WITH ALLIES

ISTANBUL: Turkey called yesterday for a ground operation with its international allies to end the war in Syria, as a UN envoy held talks in Damascus aimed at salvaging an increasingly beleaguered ceasefire plan. Tensions escalated over Russia's air war in support of Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad, with Ankara branding the bombing "barbaric" and EU President Donald Tusk saying it "leaves little hope" of a solution. Turkey sees the ouster of Assad as essential to ending a five-year conflict that has killed more than 260,000 people, and is highly critical of Iran and Russia over their support for the Damascus regime.

"We want a ground operation with our international allies," a senior Turkish official told reporters in Istanbul, adding such an operation would require the involvement of the United States and Gulf states. "There is not going to be a unilateral military operation from Turkey to Syria," the official emphasized, but added: "Without a ground operation it is impossible to stop the fighting in Syria."

Analysts fear that any ground incursion by Turkey and its NATO allies could lead to a dangerous confrontation with Russia. Saudi Arabia, another fierce critic of Assad, has said it is ready to send special forces to Syria to take part in ground operations against the Islamic State (IS)

group. Turkey and Syria analyst Aaron Stein said the declarations did not mark a new strategy for Ankara, adding that Turkey would be hard pressed to commit ground troops.

"This latest talk about a Turkish ground operation is a reiteration of long-standing Turkish policy," said Stein, non-resident Fellow at the Atlantic Council's Rafik Hariri Center for the Middle East. "It is unlikely that Turkey will put ground troops in Syria," he said, noting that Turkey would want both UN Security Council approval and US support. The United Nations said Monday that nearly 50 civilians, including children, had died in the bombings of at least five medical facilities and two schools in northern Syria. The region around Syria's second city of Aleppo has been the target of a major anti-rebel offensive by Syrian government troops, backed by Russian warplanes, which has sent tens of thousands fleeing to the Turkish border. Russia denied it had bombed any hospital, calling such reports "unsubstantiated accusations".

UN envoy Staffan de Mistura met Syrian Foreign Minister Walid Muallem in Damascus yesterday to try to keep alive the proposal announced in Munich Friday for a "cessation of hostilities" in Syria within a week. — AFP

GEORGE W BUSH STUMPS FOR JEB

Continued from Page 1

It was a polished speech, filled with Dubya's trademark Texas twang, by a controversial politician whose family remains highly popular in South Carolina. Some attendees openly admitted they had come to see the former president, not necessarily to hear Jeb Bush.

With the elder Bush brother launching into the caustic Republican nomination fray, Trump unleashed a new round of invective at his challengers. Trump rounded on the former president during Saturday's debate in a bid to blunt any Bush progress, and he continued the assault Monday at a press conference, slamming George W, who was president during the 9/11, 2001 terror attacks. "So you had that. You obviously had the war which was a big mistake. I think few people would say the war in Iraq was a positive," Trump said.

Jeb Bush, for his part, argued that Americans should want an experienced hand in charge, especially when it came to national security. "Who is going to be the steady hand to keep us safe?" he said. Trump also scolded Senator Ted Cruz, his current closest competitor, as "totally unstable" and a "liar" for attacking Trump's earlier, liberal positions on abortion and healthcare. And he repeated his threat to sue Cruz

over his eligibility to be president. Trump is insisting that Cruz, who was born in Canada, is not a natural born citizen as the US Constitution requires candidates to be.

At an event in Mount Pleasant, the brash billionaire lashed out at the party itself, calling the Republican National Committee a "disgrace" after he was loudly booed at Saturday's Republican debate by an audience that Trump said was stacked with establishment lobbyists and donors. "The RNC better get its act together," he said. Trump leads by a stunning 20 points over Cruz in the Palmetto State, known for its brutal political atmosphere.

Senator Marco Rubio, seeking a resurrection after finishing fifth in New Hampshire, is third at 14.3 percent, followed by 10.5 percent for Ohio Governor John Kasich, whose impressive second place New Hampshire finish was helping him surge here. Bush is fifth at 10 percent, with former neurosurgeon Ben Carson at just 4.5 percent support. South Carolina voter Wendy Johnson, who attended the Bush rally, said she was torn between Trump, Rubio and Bush, but that she was growing tired of Trump's insults and thought he might be "too hot-headed". As for Bush, "he's a good guy," the 44-year-old stay-at-home mom told AFP. "I just don't know if he has the fire in him that his brother had." — AFP

SAUDIS, RUSSIA AGREE OIL OUTPUT FREEZE...

Continued from Page 1

Saudi Arabia and other OPEC producers have been refusing to reduce output in an attempt to drive less competitive players, in particular US shale oil producers, out of the market. Riyadh has said it would consider output cuts only if other producers agree to follow suit, and pressure has been building as drops in oil revenues hit government coffers. Russia in particular has seen its recession-hit economy damaged by the slump, though even Saudi Arabia has announced a record budget deficit. Naimi said yesterday's decision was "the beginning of a process which we will assess in the next few months and decide whether we need other steps to stabilize... the market".

Qatar's Energy Minister Mohammed bin Saleh Al-Sada said "intensive communications" would start immediately with other OPEC and non-OPEC producers, including Iraq and Iran, to win their support. Iran said it would host talks with Iraq and Venezuela in Tehran on today, and left the door open to joining efforts to stabilize the market. "There's room for discussion and examination of this issue," Oil Minister Bijan Zanganeh said. But he insisted Iran intends to maintain its share of the market. "What is important first of all is that right now the oil market faces an output surplus and, secondly, Iran won't relinquish its share," Zanganeh said. Prices have come under renewed pressure by the return of Iran to world markets after the lifting of international sanctions linked to its nuclear program.

The fact that output from OPEC kingpin Saudi Arabia and non-OPEC Russia - the world's two top producers and exporters - is near record highs complicates any agreement since Iran is producing at least 1 million barrels per day below its capacity and pre-sanctions levels. However, two non-Iranian sources close to OPEC discussions told Reuters that Iran may be offered special terms as part of the output freeze deal. "Iran is returning to the market and needs to be given a

special chance but it also needs to make some calculations," said one source.

The effort to bring other producers on board may prove complicated and the market response was muted. Prices had risen after news of yesterday's meeting broke on hopes that a production cut would be unveiled, but there was disappointment after only a conditional freeze was announced. In early afternoon London deals, Brent North Sea crude for delivery in April was up 50 cents at \$33.89 per barrel. US benchmark West Texas Intermediate for March delivery added 41 cents to \$29.85 a barrel from Monday's closing level.

"The news has actually disappointed the market slightly because some people had hoped to see a cut rather than a production freeze," said City Index analyst Fawad Razaqada. In a research note, Danske Bank said the move would have little impact on reducing oversupply as "recent estimates suggest that both Russia and Saudi Arabia produced at levels close to a record high in January." "The two leading oil producers have basically committed not to take any imminent action to reduce the current global overproduction," it said.

And Natis analyst Abhishek Deshpande told AFP there was a "low probability" that Iran and Iraq would quickly agree to a freeze. "That essentially is a production cut for them" as both were planning to boost output this year, he said.

OPEC has been quarrelling for decades over output levels and Russia, which last agreed to cooperate with OPEC back in 2001, never followed through on its pledge and raised exports instead. Also complicating any potential agreement is the geopolitical rivalry in the Middle East between Sunni Muslim power Saudi Arabia and Shiite Iran. Saudi Arabia and its Gulf allies are fighting proxy conflicts with Russia and Iran in the region, including in Syria and Yemen. In Syria's five-year-old civil war, Riyadh politically and financially backs some rebel groups battling President Bashar Al-Assad's government, which has gained the upper hand with the help of Russian warplanes and Iranian-backed Shiite militias. — Agencies

IAEA READY TO PROVIDE KUWAIT WITH NUKE...

Continued from Page 1

Amano said that Gulf countries "need nuclear technology to help their nationals, (treat) cancer, (better use of) water and protect seawater, but in order to do that, countries in the region should cooperate, and IAEA can provide technology unilaterally and collectively." As for Kuwait, he said that "we would like to know what you need, and if you decide we can tell how we can help. This type of cooperation is very much needed." "We would like to contribute to a better life by nuclear technology," said Amano.

Amano said the IAEA could help regional countries with the proper use of the nuclear power only if they decided to build nuclear power stations, "but safety must come first." Amano took part in a seminar co-organized by Kuwait and the Vienna-based IAEA on nuclear applications for sustainable development in the six Gulf Cooperation Council countries. Asked about the nuclear agreement between Iran and the P5+1 Group that was agreed upon in July 2015, Amano said IAEA was monitoring preparatory steps by Iran to execute the agreement until Jan 18, the implementation day, when the agency announced that the Islamic Republic was fully abiding by the deal. "We are monitoring and verifying the Iranian commitment related to nuclear activities," said Amano.

The Iranian nuclear agreement had been concluded following marathon negotiations between Tehran and the international community. The agreement curbs Iran's nuclear capabilities by reducing the number of centrifuges and the country's stocks of highly enriched uranium. In return, economic sanctions will be lifted. Amano affirmed that enriched uranium and heavy water were shipped out of Iran. "Implementation (of the Iran's nuclear deal) is taking place well, but we need to work very hard to see everything been done properly," said Amano.

Amano was asked about the safety of Iran's Bushehr nuclear reactor, which overlooks the Arabian Gulf, and said he was discussing the issue with governments of Iran and the GCC, the latter has expressed concern over the safety of the reactor. "I take it very seriously that Gulf states are concerned about the safety of Bushehr," he underlined. "It is

very important for Iran to enhance safety of Bushehr; therefore we are ready to cooperate with Iran to enhance the safety of Bushehr," he said.

With the concern of the proliferation of nuclear weapons, Amano said the IAEA was supporting the creation of a nuclear weapon-free zone in the Middle East, a request that has been repeatedly tabled by the Arab group to the IAEA, but failed to win enough support. "IAEA is a technical organization working in a very political environment," explained Amano.

On North Korea's recent rocket launch, Amano called on Pyongyang to implement relevant UN Security Council (UNSC) resolutions, should not conduct nuclear tests nor launch missiles. North Korea asked IAEA inspectors to leave the country in 2009, but the organization maintained capacity to monitor the country's nuclear activities. Amano said North Korea was not an IAEA member but it was obliged to implement the organization's safeguards with regards to nuclear activities.

During his stay in Kuwait, Amano met HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. He also met First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and discussed ways of cooperation between the two sides.

Amano, addressing yesterday's seminar, said IAEA's efforts were at the forefront 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.

IAEA is currently seeking to develop its laboratories so as to cope with modern advancements, he said, thanking the State of Kuwait for its recent three million euro donation, along with its regular contributions to the IAEA's technical cooperation fund. Kuwait has signed all IAEA agreements, including the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), since it joined the agency in 1964, the minister said, appreciating the IAEA's contribution to achieving world peace and security through its mainly role and efforts. — KUNA

SISI PRAISES AMIR FOR BOOSTING ARAB UNITY

Continued from Page 1

Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled's meeting with the Egyptian president came on the sidelines of his visit to Cairo leading a Kuwaiti delegation participating in the 11th Kuwait-Egypt Joint Committee meeting, which concluded yesterday. During the meeting, Sisi praised deep and historic relations between the two countries, expressing appreciation for Kuwait's support to Egypt amid ongoing challenges. Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled renewed Kuwait's commitment and stance toward Egypt, supporting everything that would protect Egypt's security and stability. Later, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled and Egyptian Prime Minister Sharif Ismail discussed ways of

further promoting and developing bilateral relations. During the meeting, they welcomed the level of bilateral relations and addressed the regional and international developments. The Egyptian premier hailed Kuwait's vital and tangible role in supporting Egypt while facing its recent challenges and crises.

The two sides also discussed the latest regional and international developments. They explored ways of reinforcing bilateral cooperation for the common interest of both sides, while stressing the significance of maintaining this high level of relations and even pushing it to wider horizons. During the meeting, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled congratulated Egypt anew on the completion of its democratic roadmap. — KUNA

EX-UN CHIEF BOUTROS-GHALI DIES AGED 93

Continued from Page 1

After a series of clashes with the US administration, Washington turned against Boutros-Ghali and decided to back Ghanaian Kofi Annan for the top post. Relations with the United States began to sour in late 1993, when a US-led operation in Somalia led to major casualties among American troops. The operation, part of an overall UN effort to provide humanitarian aid that was being blocked by a civil conflict, led to acrimony between the US authorities and the world body.

Further problems emerged during peacekeeping operations in the former Yugoslavia, and after the genocidal massacres of 1994 in Rwanda, which the United Nations failed to halt. There was also friction over UN sanctions against the regime of Saddam Hussein in Iraq, which had invaded and then been ejected from Kuwait a year before Boutros-Ghali took up his post. Washington's then ambassador to the United Nations, Madeleine Albright, argued that Boutros-Ghali had failed to enact reforms needed to make the world body

more efficient.

When his candidacy to serve a second term was vetoed by Washington, Boutros-Ghali felt that he was being punished for pushing UN member states to pay their membership arrears - an issue on which the United States has long been a laggard - and for condemning Israeli actions in southern Lebanon. After leaving the United Nations, Boutros-Ghali served as secretary-general of the Francophonie group of French-speaking nations.

Boutros-Ghali was born on Nov 14, 1922 into a Coptic Christian family in Cairo. He was educated at Cairo University and in Paris, where he established a life-long connection with France. After a university career centered on international relations, including a spell at Columbia University in New York, he became Egypt's foreign minister in 1977, under president Anwar Al-Sadat. He accompanied Sadat on his ground-breaking trip to Jerusalem in that year, an event which both forged a peace agreement between Egypt and Israel and led to Sadat's assassination four years later. — AFP



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Issues

RUSSIA PRESSES AIR BLITZ IN SYRIA TO DICTATE PEACE

By Vladimir Isachenkov

Moscow joined the fight in Syria to return to relevance in international diplomacy. It has succeeded by anyone's measure - and Russia hopes to use its air power to dictate the terms of a cease-fire and prospective peace talks. Russian warplanes have helped the Syrian army make broad advances and close in on the country's biggest city, Aleppo. Meanwhile, the Western-backed opposition is fractured and weakened.

So as talk turns to a ceasefire, Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad, Moscow's sole ally in the region, is in a stronger position than he has been in years. What's more, Russia has cast itself as an indispensable global player that holds the key to the settlement of a nearly five-year conflict that has flooded Europe with refugees. And the United States can't hope to push forward its agenda of ending the war without overtures to Russia. Not that there aren't challenges ahead for Russian President Vladimir Putin. Turkey, Saudi Arabia and other regional players that have backed Assad's foes are loath to see the Syrian ruler strengthen his grip on power. They have been mulling the deployment of ground troops to Syria, which could trigger broader hostilities and raise the threat of confrontation between their forces and the Russian military. For its part, the US sees Assad as the chief obstacle to peace and has been reluctant to engage in any military-to-military dialogue with Russia.

Still, Putin appears eager to raise the stakes, hoping that Assad's siege of Aleppo will further strengthen Russia's hand. The impact of Moscow's air strikes appears particularly significant given the modest size of the Russian force - just a few dozen jets. But they have operated at a frenetic pace, each flying several sorties a day for a total of more than 6,000 combat missions in 41/2 months. The campaign, Russia's first military operation outside the former Soviet Union since the 1991 Soviet collapse, has demonstrated the new capability of the nation's resurgent military and allowed Russia to test its latest weapons in combat for the first time.

In one example, the military tested its new long-range cruise missiles, firing them from all possible launch platforms - strategic bombers, surface warships in the Caspian Sea and a submarine near Syria. Moscow has denied any intention to open more air bases in Syria in addition to the Hemeimeem air base in Syria's coastal province of Latakia, the well-protected heartland of Assad's Alawite sect. The Russian military says it makes little sense to allocate extra assets since it takes just 15 minutes for Russian warplanes from Hemeimeem to reach any area in Syria. Russia has deployed an unidentified number of advisers to train Syrian troops to use Russian weapons and help coordinate air attacks, but Putin has firmly ruled out ground action. By operating from Hemeimeem, which lies deep inside government-controlled territory, Moscow has minimized the risk of casualties from militant incursions. So far, the Russian military has lost three men in Syria: a pilot killed when his warplane was downed by a Turkish jet in November, a marine who died on a mission to rescue that pilot's crewmate, and a Russian military adviser who died in mortar shelling at the front line.

Reservoir of Patience

By limiting its presence in Syria, the Kremlin has been able to keep spending on its military action to an estimated \$2 million to \$4 million a day, an amount easily sustainable even for the crisis-stricken Russian economy. At such costs, the Kremlin could maintain its air campaign indefinitely. There is no such reservoir of patience among America's European allies, who struggle to cope with the continuing influx of refugees from the conflict.

Russia began its air campaign on Sept 30, nearly five years after the war began, and the impact soon became visible as Assad's military launched a multi-pronged offensive. The main Syrian army efforts are now focusing on Aleppo, Syria's largest city and commercial capital, which has been split between the government and its opponents since 2012. In recent weeks, Assad's troops backed by Hezbollah and Iranian forces have methodically cut supply lines, forcing more than 50,000 civilians to flee to the nearby Turkish border. Russian warplanes flying up to 70 sorties a day have maintained constant pressure on the anti-government forces, striking their strongholds and depots and chasing their convoys. There are risks to the strategy, as can be seen in Russian-Turkish tensions after NATO member Turkey shot down the Russian jet. And in the crowded skies over Syria, US officials say Russian pilots often perform risky maneuvers, flying extremely close to the US warplanes. Moscow and Washington have agreed to exchange information about air operations over Syria to prevent incidents, but Russia has pushed for broader coordination. Putin apparently hopes that engaging the U.S. in military-to-military cooperation in Syria could help ease the strain in relations and also cast Moscow as a power equaling the US. — AP

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US - ASEAN SUMMIT



CRACKING DOWN ON PYONGYANG IS DIFFICULT

By Tim Sullivan

Repeatedly over the past six weeks, since the morning North Korea surprised the world with its fourth nuclear test, the United States, South Korea, Japan and their allies have vowed to get tough on Pyongyang. "Reckless and dangerous," US Secretary of State John Kerry said of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's actions. In Japan, the military was put on alert when Pyongyang vowed to follow the nuclear test with a rocket launch - which it did a month later. In Seoul, the government said it would ensure North Korea faces "strong and effective" UN sanctions.

But what have North Korea's critics actually done? Not very much so far, it turns out, and even less that has been strong and effective. Cracking down on Pyongyang is much tougher than it sounds. Here's why.

SANCTIONS

Much of the talk about North Korean sanctions comes from Seoul and Washington, but it's Beijing that holds most of the cards. Late last week, after the Jan 6 nuclear test and the Feb 7 rocket launch, Congress tightened a series of existing sanctions, seeking to deny North Korea money for its weapons programs. The US president already has sweeping powers to impose sanctions on companies and banks that do illicit business with North Korea, which is prohibited by the United Nations from nuclear and ballistic missile tests. The new legislation, which requires President Barack Obama's signature, takes it up a notch by making it mandatory to blacklist entities engaged with Pyongyang in the nuclear and missile technology trade.

Sanctions on North Korea have been around for years - imposed both by individual countries and the UN - but Pyongyang's weapons programs have grown only more sophisticated. While additional sanctions will hurt, North Korea has long been economically insulated by its relationship with China, its northern neighbor and main trade partner,

DIPLOMACY

Is North Korea a nuclear state? That question has largely paralyzed major diplomatic efforts on the Korean Peninsula for years. The main diplomatic forum to try to get Pyongyang to abandon its nuclear program, the so-called six-party talks, hasn't met since 2008. Washington insists that Pyongyang show it's willing to end its nuclear program for the talks to begin again. Pyongyang, meanwhile, insists it is now a full-fledged nuclear power and demands that the world - and especially Washington - treat it as such.

Washington did engage directly with the North in 2012, but a painstakingly negotiated food-for-nuclear-disarmament deal fell apart weeks later when the North staged a rocket launch that Washington says was a banned missile test. That hardened the positions of many North Korea specialists in Washington. Some in the international community now believe that North Korea will never abandon its

nuclear program, and say the only way to negotiate with the North is to accept it as a nuclear power and work on a freeze, and then gradual arms reductions. But with Washington steadfastly refusing to accept North Korea as a nuclear state - and North Korea steadfastly insisting it is one - diplomacy remains frozen.

MILITARY RESPONSE

What about simply erasing North Korea's weapons programs, launching missiles to

destroy its weapons facilities? That strategy worked for Israel, some argue, when it sent bombers to destroy Iraq's Osirak nuclear reactor in 1981. Since the 1950s, though, the South Korea and the United States have wrestled - both internally and sometimes with each other - over how to respond to North Korea aggressions, from the 1968 guerrilla attack on South Korea's presidential palace to the 2010 shelling of the South Korean island of Yeonpyeong. — AP

SOUTH KOREA, ITS RIVAL AND POWER OF WORDS

By Foster Klug

Don't believe in the power that words hold on the edgy Korean Peninsula? Consider, then, how many verbal red lines South Korea's president stomped across yesterday when she let fly against North Korean leader Kim Jong Un. She warned, in the bluntest possible way, of the authoritarian North's worst nightmare - "regime collapse". She invoked the North Korean leader's "extreme reign of terror". Extraordinarily, President Park Geun-hye even used Kim's name three times in her speech to parliament, something usually avoided at her level.

These words signal a tough new stance from the South in an already anxious standoff that began with North Korea's nuclear test last month. To make the combination of jabs sting even more, Park's comments came on the birthday of Kim's late dictator father, Kim Jong Il, a revered national holiday in the North. Happy birthday, Kim family.

Park's nationally televised parliamentary address was meant to defend her decision last week to shut down the Korea's last major cooperation project, a jointly run factory park in the North Korean border city of Kaesong. Park and her deputies maintain that South

Korean payments to workers at Kaesong - \$110 million last year alone - have gone in large part straight to the leaders who oversee North Korea's nuclear bomb and missile programs.

The brusque tone of Park's comments directly challenge the powerful, ubiquitous North Korean propaganda machine's portrayal of the dictators who have run the country since its founding in 1948 as infallible and able to stand up to the vicious enemies that surround the tiny, proud North. Any high-level talk of regime collapse by the conservative president of rival South Korea - and by the daughter of one of the North's most hated enemies, late South Korean dictator Park Chung-hee - amounts to fighting words.

The harsh rhetoric cuts both ways. North Korea regularly condemns Park in sexist and violent language, including recently saying that she lives upon "the groin of her American boss". Park's move to shut down Kaesong, which prompted Pyongyang to freeze South Korean assets there and put the park under military control, came in response to the North's latest rocket launch, which Seoul and Washington see as a cover to test banned missile technology, and just weeks after the North's fourth nuclear test. — AP

SCANDINAVIA WARILY EYES RECORD IMMIGRATION

By Alister Doyle and Simon Johnson

Norwegian officials called the school guards "extra supervision". Critics said the plan to post security personnel near an Oslo school in case of assaults by newly arrived refugees was an ugly euphemism for intolerance. Across the border in the far northern Swedish town of Kalix, a traditional bastion of centre-left politics, over 100 residents signed a petition against plans to turn a 19th century country house into a reception centre for unaccompanied minors. The debate among these liberal Scandinavian stalwarts would have been unheard of a year ago, underscoring how concern about a record influx of immigrants is percolating into the Nordics' mainstream from the populist fringes.

Anti-immigrant, populist parties have gained support since some 250,000 refugees entered the Nordics last year. A record 163,000 refugees arrived in Sweden and the far right is vying for top spot in polls. In Denmark, the anti-immigration Danish People's Party is the second largest in parliament. But it is a backlash among the mainstream that may be the biggest change. There are signs that voters may be broadly supportive of immigrants but not in their own backyard. From welfare cuts to new ID checks, it is a trend that shows the limits of even some of Europe's most open societies, and may represent a sea change for politics in Scandinavia.

"It's a big change happening close to us. In all neighbourhoods there are concerns," said Pia Almvang, head of the parents' association at Lysaker primary school in a leafy well-to-do area of villas near Oslo, cut through by a motorway with cheaper four-storey blocks of flats built

alongside. "The parents just want to look after their kids." The town council agreed to parents' requests for extra security by a motorway underpass near a refugee centre for 600 people that opened this month. After criticisms of "asylum guards" the proposal was withdrawn, but it had already polarized this middle class community.

A February survey showed immigration as the main concern for 40 percent of Swedes, easily trumping worries over failing schools, joblessness and welfare. The change over half a year was the biggest opinion swing in the poll's history. From taking in Vietnam draft dodgers in the 1960s to Balkans war refugees in the 1990s, Sweden has been proud of its open door policy for decades. Norway has been among the leaders in helping refugees worldwide with aid. While the asylum situation has led to an outpouring of support from many Swedes - charities reported record donations last year - it has also led others to worry about the effect on schools, crime and the country's welfare state.

Tension at Home

In Kalix, hit by a decline in the paper industry but still a bastion of Social Democrat support, residents have petitioned the council to abandon plans for a centre for around 30 unaccompanied children. "I have a big heart and I believe we have to help, so it's not about that, but enough is enough," said Anne-Maj Ostlund, a 75-year-old retired school teacher who lives close to the yellow-painted wooden villa in Kalix, being used as a hostel "I have lived in heaven here ... it is peaceful," said Ostlund, who has lived in the same house since 1948. "What is going to be left?"

Middle class neighborhoods in Stockholm

and Gothenburg have seen meetings where furious citizens have questioned politicians over refugees' housing. Police were called to one meeting in Haninge, near Stockholm, where the local authority had gathered residents and parents of pupils at a nearby school to inform them about plans for a centre for unaccompanied minors. Council workers were met by shouts of "they are going to rape our children," and "who will take responsibility when someone dies".

Mainstream parties in Sweden are now proposing measures against immigration that were only the ground of the far right a few years ago. Prime Minister Stefan Lofven, who once told crowds that "My Europe does not build walls", tightened asylum rules and border controls with ID checks. In Denmark a bill tightening immigration laws, including the confiscation of refugees' valuables, passed with overwhelming support including the centre-left Social Democrats. Sweden's Moderate Party, the biggest of the centre-right opposition, wants to limit asylum seekers' access to welfare.

It was a sign of the times that when Sweden's centre left interior minister said the government would deport 80,000 immigrants this year, former Foreign Minister Carl Bildt tweeted the "probable aim is to send a signal that new ones are not welcome". The concerns are not just related to security but that the Nordic state is under threat from the high fiscal cost of newcomers and the sense that civic trust which underpins a culture of high taxes is being eroded.

Nordic nations have the highest percentage of people agreeing that "most people can be trusted" when asked in international surveys, helping drive a consensus for high taxes and

extensive welfare. "The Nordic welfare state works due to trust. You have to trust that people work and pay taxes when they are able to do so," said Gert Tinggaard, professor of political science at Denmark's Aarhus University. "The second condition is that you also have to trust the politicians," he added. "You get a bang for your buck."

The IMF estimates that Sweden will spend 1.0 percent of its gross domestic product on asylum seekers in 2016, by far the highest of 19 European nations surveyed. Last year, Sweden had to find an extra 70,000 school places due to asylum seekers, on top of 100,000 pupils that normally enter the school system for the first time in any given year. In a country where speaking out against immigration is still taboo for many, Scandinavians privately voice concerns about signs of crowded emergency rooms and larger school classes. Newspapers are increasingly full of reports of money being spent on refugees and reports of crime involving asylum seekers, although crime figures do not bear out these concerns.

Lofven - who admits Sweden faces increased polarization - has seen his government's support fall to record lows in polls due to a sense his government is helpless to stop a migrant influx. For Ylva Johansson, Swedish minister for employment and integration issues, the problem is that thousands of refugees, many young men, are not integrated into the workforce, instead languishing in asylum centres in villages and towns. "Most Swedes are not racist," she said. "But when there is this special asylum housing when they cannot work, and cannot be part of society this is really a tension. This is a dangerous situation," she added. "We have a lot of people in no man's land... living outside society." — Reuters.

BRAZIL COURT FREEZES NEYMAR'S ASSETS

SAO PAULO: Brazilian authorities have blocked assets of Barcelona star Neymar, including a yacht, a jet and several properties worth almost \$50 million. A Sao Paulo federal court rejected an appeal from the Brazilian striker last week and started issuing warrants to freeze the assets worth 192 million reais (almost \$50 million), Brazilian media reported on Monday. Last year, Neymar, his family and related businesses were found guilty of evading 63 million reais in taxes (almost \$16 million) between 2011 and 2013 when he was playing for Brazilian club Santos. He has denied any wrongdoing. The 23-year-old Neymar used the jet to travel to Brazil for World Cup qualifying matches and holidays. Lagaro Jung Martins, an auditor with Brazil's federal tax agency, told The Associated Press that Neymar isn't likely to go to jail if he pays what regulators say he owes. "He can still appeal that decision, but it is a step forward," Martins told the AP. "Nothing changed to what was in place last year: if he pays what he owes, the case is closed.—AP



AUSTRALIAN BACK TURNER JOINS EXETER FROM TOULON

LONDON: Exeter yesterday announced the signing of Australian international utility back Lachie Turner with immediate effect. The 28-year-old played for Toulon for the duration of the Rugby World Cup and signed a two-and-a-half-year deal with the English Premiership side high-flyers Exeter. The signing comes at an opportune time for Exeter, who sit second in the Premiership table and will take on Wasps in the European Champions Cup quarter-finals next month. "We're really pleased to have Lachie on board," Exeter coach Rob Baxter said. "We've tracked him for some time now and, once we knew he had finished his time with Toulon, where he was on World Cup cover, we started the process of having a real good look at him. "Immediately you could see he was a very good rugby player and, having really looked at his game, we believe he can really add something to us in terms of our back-three options. "Now he's here, we will look to ease him gently following his flight over and then as the week progresses, gradually introduce him into full training with the squad." Former Waratahs and Reds speedster Turner needed little convincing to join Exeter. "It's something when the opportunity arose that I jumped at," Turner said.—AFP

SHENHUA TERMINATES CAHILL'S CONTRACT

SHANGHAI: Australia's top goalscorer Tim Cahill has had his contract terminated by Chinese club Shanghai Greenland Shenhua, he said yesterday, a year after he joined. The 36-year-old veteran and former Everton star agreed to extend his stay just months ago, but said on Instagram: "I'm very sorry to announce that I have reached an agreement with Shanghai Shenhua to terminate my contract." "I'm not part of the new coach Manzano's plans for the 2016 season," he said he had been told. A spokesman for Shenhua did not immediately respond to request for comment. Cahill, one of the biggest foreign names in the Chinese Super League (CSL), said in the posting he was "very sad", adding: "Regardless of whether my contract is being honoured and paid out in full, I would much rather have seen it out." He did not reveal his future plans, but said he would share more information once "final details" are completed.—AFP



RUSSIA: BIATHLON IS CLEAN DESPITE SOCHI DOPING PROBE

MOSCOW: Russia's biathlon chief, speaking after the International Biathlon Union (IBU) said it would investigate possible cheating at the 2014 Winter Olympics, said yesterday that the winter sport was free of doping in his country.

IBU Vice President James Carrabre said on Monday he was concerned about doping in general at the 2014 Games in Sochi after a report by the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) exposed widespread cheating and corruption in Russian athletics.

"The conclusion from the WADA report is that all winter federations who were at the Sochi Olympics should be concerned," Carrabre told Norwegian NRK television. "I am concerned, that is why I will launch an investigation."

Evidence of doping in Sochi would further tarnish Russia's image as a sporting superpower and successful Olympic host nation - a matter of acute national pride.

Russian Biathlon Union President Alexander Kravtsov said he had not been informed about an investigation by WADA or the IBU.

"I can say that now, more than ever, Russian athletes are checked for doping and there are no problems. Our biathlon is clean," Kravtsov was quoted as saying by R-Sport news agency.

Russia's Olympic Committee declined

to comment. Biathlon, a gruelling combination of long-distance skiing and rifle shooting, is one of Russia's most popular winter sports and a symbol of the country's past sporting triumphs.

Soviet biathletes repeatedly topped Olympic and World Championship medals podiums in 1960s and 1970s. But the sport is also vulnerable to the forms of drugs cheating and blood doping sometimes used in endurance competitions.

Ekaterina Iourieva, who was world champion in 2008, is currently serving a 12-year doping ban and four-time world youth champion Alexander Loginov was suspended last year after testing positive for the oxygen-boosting drug erythropoietin.

According to Russian Anti-doping Agency (RUSADA) records reviewed by Reuters in November, the Moscow laboratory at the centre of Russia's athletics doping scandal was also used to process tests for at least 20 other sports, including biathlon.

Sergei Kushchenko, former executive director at the RBU, said the latest cheating allegations were groundless. "These accusations are unfounded," R-Sport quoted him as saying. "Concerning the Russian team, during the Olympic Games we were sure that our sportsmen had no such problems. — Reuters

CEO OF ATHLETICS KENYA STEPS ASIDE OVER BRIBERY ALLEGATIONS

NAIROBI: The chief executive of the track and field governing body in Kenya has taken temporary leave after two athletes alleged in an interview with The Associated Press that he asked them for a bribe to reduce their doping bans.

Athletics Kenya CEO Isaac Mwangi said in a letter to the federation's acting president that the allegations by 400-meter runner Joy Sakari and hurdler Francisca Koki Manunga were "unsubstantiated" and "have caused me a lot of mental anguish."

He asked for 21 days' leave while the allegations are investigated. In the AP interview, Sakari and Manunga alleged that Mwangi asked them each for a \$24,000 bribe in an Oct. 16 meeting, but that they could not raise the money. The athletes, both police officers in Kenya, tested positive for a banned diuretic at the 2015 world championships in Beijing. They are serving four-year bans.

The athletes told AP they never filed a criminal complaint alleging wrongdoing by Mwangi because they had no proof to back up their bribery accusation and also feared repercussions. In a separate AP interview, Mwangi dismissed the allegations as "just a joke," denied ever meeting privately with the runners and said Athletics Kenya has no power to shave time off athletes' bans.

In his letter to AK's president, Jackson Tuwei, dated Monday, Mwangi asked for AK's disciplinary panel to investigate. "I am anxious to have my name cleared," he wrote in the letter, a copy of which was seen by AP. "It is my hope that the investigations will be expeditious, fair and should include relevant authorities."

The world governing body of track and field, the IAAF, has referred the allegations to its ethics



NAIROBI: In this file photo taken Monday, Feb. 8, 2016, Athletics Kenya CEO Isaac Mwangi holds up a copy of the IAAF Competition Rules book, to illustrate his denial that Athletics Kenya would have the power to shave time off athletes' bans, during an interview with The Associated Press at his office in Nairobi, Kenya. The chief executive of the track and field governing body in running powerhouse Kenya has temporarily stepped aside after two athletes alleged in an interview with AP that he asked them for a bribe to reduce their doping bans. — AP

commission. It already was investigating allegations that AK officials sought to subvert anti-doping in Kenya, solicited bribes and offered athletes reduced bans. The probe has led to the suspensions of AK's president, Isaiah Kiplagat, a vice president, David Okeyo, and AK's former treasurer, Joseph Kinyua.

Sharad Rao, a former director of prosecutions in Kenya who also has adjudicated cases for the Court of Arbitration for Sport, is leading the ethics investigation for the International Association of Athletics Federations.

Sakari and Manunga told AP they would be willing to testify to the commission. As many as a half-dozen banned athletes have privately indicated to the commission that AK officials sought to extort them and that they feel their sanctions might have been less if they had paid bribes, Rao said.

AP's interview with Sakari and Manunga was the first time Kenyan athletes have detailed such allegations publicly. That information would, of course, be very, very significant, very important for us," Rao said. — AP

CIPRIANI TO REJOIN WASPS

LONDON: Sale Sharks fly-half Danny Cipriani revealed yesterday he has agreed to rejoin former club Wasps from next season. The 28-year-old had a season left to run on his existing Sale deal, but has chosen to exercise a break clause and return to Wasps on a reported two-year deal.

"I'm excited about returning to Wasps next season, for me, it really does feel like coming home," said Cipriani.

"In the professional era, players naturally move clubs more frequently than they used to, but I still feel such a strong connection with Wasps." Cipriani left Wasps for Australian Super Rugby franchise Melbourne Rebels in 2011, but returned to England to join Sale a year later. The 14-times capped England fly-half rejected triple European champions Toulon to sign a contract extension at Sale in February, but will now leave a year early this summer.

"It's where I learned my trade, alongside incredible players like Lawrence Dallaglio, Joe Worsley, Alex King, Fraser Waters, Josh Lewsey and Paul Sackey," he said.

"I have such good memories of that period in my life, I feel much more

equipped to handle and deal with the expectation that comes when you put on the black and gold jersey.

"I feel next season will be the right time for a new challenge, at a club which in my heart will always feel like a second home, where I know I will settle quickly."

Wasps won two European Cups, Cipriani featuring in the 2007 triumph, before the club slipped to the brink of administration. Owner Derek Richardson has since guided Wasps to financial security through the relocation to Coventry, however, leaving Cipriani impressed with that turnaround.

"It's brilliant to see how the club has rebuilt over the past couple of seasons," he said.

"The potential of the squad that Dai (Young) has developed is really exciting and I have been impressed by the ambition Wasps has shown since Derek Richardson took over and stabilised things.

"I'm really looking forward to playing alongside guys I started my career with, like James Haskell, Joe Simpson, Christian Wade and Elliot Daly, in a squad that loves to play attacking, expansive rugby." — AFP

MCILROY, FOWLER SET FOR PRIMETIME MATCH

NEW YORK: For the first time in more than a decade, golf is getting another prime-time exhibition. Except this one will be live - under the lights. Quicken Loans is finalizing details for a match involving Rory McIlroy and Rickie Fowler a week before the US Open, a person familiar with the negotiations told The Associated Press on Monday.

The person spoke on condition of anonymity because the match has not been announced. The match would be at Detroit Golf Club on June 7, the Tuesday before US Open week begins at Oakmont outside of Pittsburgh.

The first two hours would be televised live by Golf Channel, followed by the 9-11 pm slot shown live on CBS. It was not clear how many holes would be broadcast under the lights. Unlike the Monday night matches involving Tiger Woods in 1999 and 2000, there would be a celebrity component with this exhibition. The person said it would be "Team Rory" against "Team Rickie."

Still to be determined are the celebrities and the format. Quicken Loans, the Detroit-based mortgage company, is no stranger to offbeat sporting challenges. It already has staged the first college basketball game on an active aircraft carrier, and two years ago offered \$1 billion to anyone who completed a perfect bracket in the NCAA college basketball bracket.

In golf, it became title sponsor of the Quicken Loans National, hosted by Woods, in

2014 and has a personal endorsement deal with Fowler. As part of its PGA Tour involvement, Quicken Loans has a sweepstakes in which it pays someone's mortgage for a year when a PGA Tour player makes a hole-in-one.

McIlroy, who is No. 3 in the world going into the Northern Trust Open this week at Riviera, and Fowler (No. 4 in the world) are two of the most popular figures in golf. Both live in South Florida, and Fowler last year played in the Irish Open to help out McIlroy because of McIlroy's involvement.

Golf has a heritage of such exhibitions. A century ago, the value of winning a major was to be selected to compete in such exhibitions, where the prize money was greater than anything won at a major. Woods resurged that concept in 1999 with the "Showdown at Sherwood" against David Duval (they were No. 1 and No. 2 in the world at the time), and a year later against Sergio Garcia.

Those Monday night exhibitions got away from head-to-head matches and switched to team events that included women and seniors. They stopped in 2005. The rating peaked in 2000 at 7.6, and dropped to 3.0 in 2005 when Woods and John Daly played Phil Mickelson and Retief Goosen at the Bridges on Rancho Santa Fe. Lights were only used at those matches when it got too dark.

Woods and McIlroy played a stroke-play exhibition in 2012 in China that was available through live streaming in America.—AFP



TOKYO: Ozeki-ranked, or champion, sumo wrestler Kotoshogiku (R) is escorted to his seat — two chairs stuck together with packing tape — as he arrives to attend a press conference in Tokyo yesterday. Kotoshogiku captured the Emperor's Cup at the New Year Grand Sumo tournament in January, becoming the first Japanese-born wrestler to win a top-tier sumo tournament for a decade. — AFP

SUMO: 'GREED' THE KEY TO LOST MOJO, SAYS JAPAN CHAMPION

TOKYO: Japan's giant sumo wrestlers lack the mean streak needed to repel the flood of foreigners who have dominated the roly-poly sport in recent years, according to the country's first homegrown champion in a decade.

Kotoshogiku, who last month ended an excruciating wait for a Japanese-born winner, said Tuesday it was no accident that Mongolians had taken over Japan's ancient sport over the past decade and a half.

"All the Japanese wrestlers want to win championships," the 32-year-old told a news conference.

"We eat the same meat and vegetables as them," he added. "But sumo is about winning. Maybe we Japanese are too set in our ways, maybe we lack the greed to win at all costs."

The foreign invasion began in earnest with Hawaiian behemoth Konishiki, who was nicknamed the "Dump Truck" and tipped the scales at a whopping 285 kilograms, and other hulking Pacific islanders in the 1990s.

But the subsequent rise of the Mongolians, led by the brilliant but temperamental Asashoryu and latterly by Hakuho, who has

racked up a record 35 Emperor's Cup victories since 2006, has tormented sumo traditionalists in the absence of a serious Japanese challenge.

"We can learn from them," insisted Kotoshogiku, wearing a grey kimono and perched precariously on two chairs hastily bound together with sticky tape.

"Hakuho has so many weapons, like his fleetness of foot and how he puts you off balance. For many Japanese wrestlers, sumo is a test of strength and we charge head first."

"There are things we could definitely learn from," he added. "Like the angle of attack, coming in from lower down. You can understand why (Mongolian wrestlers) are so strong."

DAMAGING SCANDALS

Japan has been without a homegrown yokozuna, or grand champion, since Takanohana retired in 2003 while three Mongolians currently occupy sumo's elite rank, with Harumafuji having won seven titles and Kakuryu two.

But Kotoshogiku, who stands 5 feet 11 inches (1.80 metres) and weighs a meaty 180 kilos,

beat all three in January and believes his victory, though unexpected, was no flash in the pan.

"I've cried my eyes out in front of my mum and dad," said the Fukuoka native, who currently holds the second-highest rank of ozeki.

"But I've never once thought of quitting sumo," he added. "I'm calm about the future, I want to win more championships."

Many inside the cloistered world of sumo, which historians agree dates back some 2,000 years, will hope Kotoshogiku's emergence ushers in a new era after years of damaging scandals, including allegations of gambling and drug abuse, bout-fixing and underworld links.

One of the most immediate results of Kotoshogiku's new-found fame is being constantly asked to squeeze toddlers for good luck, like a benevolent deity.

"I get a lot of mothers asking me to cuddle their children to protect them from colds or whatever," he said, smiling. "And pregnant woman ask me to rub their bellies for a safe child birth."

Their interest in me reminds me that I have done something very special." — AFP

KUWAIT OPEN TENNIS COMMITTEE ANNOUNCES EXTENSION OF REGISTRATION

KUWAIT: The Higher Organizing Committee of Kuwait 7th Open Tennis Tournament announced the extension of registration one more day in order to allow the largest number possible of players to register in the tournament that will last from 1st until 7th March. The deadline for registration will now be 7:00 pm on Sunday 28/3 at Kuwait Tennis Association premises located at Yarmouk Sports Club in

Mishref. The HOC, on the occasion of Kuwait's celebration of its national days, urged all those who wish to participate to register before the National and Liberation days holidays, adding that sports clubs began submitting players' registration forms.

Chairman of HOC, Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah said "due to the success of Kuwait Open which enjoys every year, as it is the largest tourna-

ment organized by the association during the season, and enjoys the participation of the largest number of tennis players in Kuwait both citizens and expats, with number expected to reach more than 350 of both genders. Ten categories were designated, they are buds under 11 years (those born in 2005 and after), cubs singles under 13 (those born in 2003). Singles juniors 17 years (born in 1999), pioneers sin-

gles above 55 years (born in 1961) pioneers doubles over 45 years (born in 1971).

Men's singles, men's doubles, girls singles under 18 years (born in 1998 and after), ladies singles, and diplomats singles.

HOC said there will be financial prizes for winning players in the various categories due to the patronage the tournament enjoys.



Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah



DUBAI: Serbian tennis player Ana Ivanovic returns the ball to Australian player Daria Gavrilova during the first round of the WTA Dubai Open tennis competition yesterday. Ivanovic beat Gavrilova 6-1, 6-0. — AFP



DUBAI: Swiss Belinda Bencic returns the ball to Serbian Jelena Jankovic during their WTA tennis match on the second day of the Dubai Duty Free Tennis Championships yesterday in Dubai. — AFP

IVANOVIC STARTS DUBAI WITH CRUSHING DEFEAT OF GAVRILOVA

DUBAI: Ana Ivanovic followed up last week's semi-final in Russia with a dynamic start at the Dubai Tennis Championships as the former world number one crushed Australian Daria Gavrilova 6-1, 6-0.

The first-round rout for the Serb required just 53 minutes as she showed no mercy to her Russian-born opponent, who thrilled her new home audience in Melbourne by reaching the Australian Open fourth round.

Ivanovic reached the final four in St Petersburg at the weekend, losing to US Open

finalist Roberta Vinci. "Last week I played some great tennis. Obviously it's a little bit tough, different conditions here completely," Ivanovic said. "I had only one practice here. But still I'm very happy.

"I know I've done the work, and now it's just about executing and also enjoying the competition." Ivanovic, a three-time Dubai quarter-finalist, broke six times as Gavrilova committed 22 unforced errors. The challenger was playing the event for the first time after losing in qualifying three years ago.

2008 French Open winner Ivanovic, ranked 17th, will face top seed Simona Halep in the second round at the Aviation Club. "I expected a very tough match because of the (three-set, second-round) battle (won by Gavrilova) we had in Rome on clay," Ivanovic said. "I really tried to step it up today and be aggressive.

"Especially here in the desert I feel that the ball sometimes flies a little bit through the air quicker, so I tried to use that in my advantage. So I'm very pleased overall."

Ukrainian Elina Svitolina won a battle with

Slovak Jana Cepelova, posting a 6-3, 6-1 result to next take on second seed and 2015 semi-finalist Garbine Muguruza of Spain.

"It was a good start but then I struggled a little bit to finish the set. But I'm really happy that a good finish with two sets and only gave up four games. It was a good start." Svitolina, now taking advice from former number one Justine Henin in an arrangement put into place recently, won a massive 17-minute game to earn a 4-1 lead in the second set on the way to her sweep.

The 21-year-old said having another voice in her tennis can only be a huge help. "It's great to have Justine in my team, I worked with her in offseason for a little bit, and now she's gonna join us for some tournaments.

"I'm looking forward to it, I'm looking forward to hard work. Of course there have been some small changes, but we are trying to do something new what can refresh my game. That's it"

Czech Barbora Strycova beat qualifier Tsvetana Pironkova 6-4, 6-3. — AFP

WATSON CONFIDENT OF FITNESS FOR WORLD T20

MELBOURNE: Australia all-rounder Shane Watson is confident he will be fit for the World Twenty20 in India despite an abdominal strain cutting short his campaign in the Pakistan Super League.

The 34-year-old suffered the injury bowling for Islamabad in the T20 tournament in the United Arab Emirates and immediately withdrew to fly home to Sydney for scans and an assessment.

"It's going to take me a couple of weeks to get back into batting and bowling," Watson told The Australian newspaper, adding that the injury was "not major".

"We got it before it did too much damage. I'm very confident I'll be right for the World Cup. That's still three or four weeks away ... It's not like a side strain or anything like that. If everything goes to plan, I'll be right."

Watson's fitness has been under the microscope throughout his 14-year international career, with a succession of soft tissue injuries robbing him of time in the middle in recent seasons.

Watson put his latest injury down to a vigorous delivery and playing three matches in successive days in the Pakistan Super League's compressed three-week schedule.

"I tried to bowl a slower ball but put too many revs on it and it twinged a bit," said Watson, who drew the highest bid of 95 million rupees (\$1.39 million) at the Indian Premier League (IPL) player auctions earlier this month.

Injury aside, Watson's selection in the World T20 squad seemed improbable only a few weeks ago. Having retired from test cricket after being dropped following the Ashes series-opener in England, Watson was overlooked for the one-day international series against India last month and had a poor start in the domestic Big Bash T20 tournament for Sydney Thunder.

However, he found form at the right time to be picked for the home T20 series against India and blasted a century in defeat when leading the side in place of injured former skipper Aaron Finch during the third and final match in Sydney.

He was subsequently picked in Steve Smith's squad for the World T20 and brings vital experience of conditions in the subcontinent as an enthusiastic IPL veteran.

"The T20 selection felt like the added bonus on top of what had happened for the previous six weeks," said Watson. The World T20 starts on March 8. —Reuters



Serena Williams

FLU FORCES SERENA OUT OF QATAR OPEN

DOHA: World number one Serena Williams yesterday became the latest high-profile name to pull out of the Qatar Open, citing flu for her withdrawal.

It is the latest blow for organisers coming less than a week after Maria Sharapova pulled out of the Doha tournament which starts on February 21 with an arm injury.

"I unfortunately have to withdraw from the Qatar Total Open as I have come down with the flu and do not feel 100 percent," said Williams in

a statement released through the Qatar Tennis Federation.

"I need to take this time to recover but I do look forward to returning to Doha and seeing my fans soon." Tournament Director Saad Al-Mohannadi admitted the competition would "miss the presence" of Williams.

The American was a finalist at the 2013 tournament where she lost in three sets to Victoria Azarenka. Earlier this week it was announced that the 34-year-old had pulled-out of the Dubai

Duty Free Tennis tournament, currently taking place in the UAE, because of flu.

Her withdrawal rules out any chance of an immediate possible revenge clash against Angelique Kerber, the German who beat Williams at the Australian Open final in January.

Simona Halep, the world number two, replaces Williams as the Qatar Open number one seed. Other players scheduled to start in Doha include Garbine Muguruza, Agnieszka Radwanska and Petra Kvitova. — AFP



Shane Watson

AUSTRALIA REBUILD ON TRACK, MUST BUILD ON WIN: LEHMANN

WELLINGTON: Australia coach Darren Lehmann had little to complain about after his team wrapped up the first test against New Zealand inside four days but he says the challenge for his young squad will be to build on that victory in the second match next week.

A superb bowling effort on the first day, and a double century from Adam Voges that drove them to a mammoth first innings of 562, helped the visitors to an innings and 52 run victory on Monday at the Basin

Reserve. While Australia can take top spot from India in the test world rankings if they avoid defeat in the second match, Lehmann knows the hosts will be fired up for the game in Christchurch starting on Feb. 20.

"The challenge for a young group is how they play away from home and I'm pleased with the way we have started this tour," Lehmann told reporters. "The challenge is to back that up next week in Christchurch.

"New Zealand will come back at us hard and we need to prepare for a side that plays

very well at home and need to back up that performance again."

Lehmann's team is in the midst of a rebuild following the retirements of batsmen Chris Rogers and Michael Clarke, wicketkeeper Brad Haddin, all-rounder Shane Watson and pace bowlers Mitchell Johnson and Ryan Harris in the last year.

Captain Steve Smith felt the team was 'gelling well' after successive series wins at home against New Zealand and West Indies, and said players such as Usman Khawaja

were making the most of their opportunities.

Khawaja, who has scored four test centuries since his return against New Zealand in Brisbane last November, said his confidence had been helped with the knowledge he would get the chance to prove himself because the team was rebuilding.

With quality waiting in the wings, Lehmann said the players still needed to perform if they wanted to cement their place. "With the retirements it gave people a

little bit of a run at it for a couple of series," he added. "You can go speak to them and confidently say 'you're going to get a good run without chopping and changing'."

"We're happy with our top six. We are leaving a bloke out who made 182 in his last test match and that is tough on Shaun Marsh, so you have to keep making runs when you have blokes sitting on the sideline, there's no doubt about that.

"Everyone needs to do their job day in and day out." —Reuters

BROGDON SCORES 22 AND NO 7 VIRGINIA BEATS NC STATE 73-53

CHARLOTTEVILLE: Malcolm Brogdon scored 22 points and No. 7 Virginia took command with a 13-2 run to begin the second half and beat North Carolina State 73-53 on Monday night, the Cavaliers' 18th consecutive victory at home. Brogdon had five points in the key burst, which broke a 31-all halftime tie. London Perrantes added 19 points for Virginia (21-5, 10-4 Atlantic Coast Conference), which was coming off a

controversial last-second loss at Duke. Brogdon and Perrantes each also had five assists, and Isaiah Wilkins grabbed 13 rebounds. The Cavaliers built their lead to as many as 24 points before emptying their bench. ACC scoring leader Cat Barber led the Wolfpack (13-13, 3-10) with 14 points, but was blanketed for most of the game by Brogdon and never got into any rhythm. He finished 4 for 11 from the field. Cody Martin added 12 points,

Lennard Freeman had nine and Beejay Anya eight. Brogdon (4-for-7) and Perrantes (5-for-8) finished a combined 9 of 15 from 3-point range. The Wolfpack started fast, hitting their first six shots from the field, but made just 13 of 41 the rest of the way (31.7 percent). Virginia used a 10-2 run to take a 31-27 lead with 2:49 left in the first half, then didn't score again as the Wolfpack pulled even by halftime.

TIP INS
N.C. State: The Wolfpack scored on their first seven possessions, then had five turnovers, four one-and-done missed shots and a 3-pointer by Caleb Martin on their next 10 trips. ... One of 16 schools to have played in the last four NCAA tournaments, the Wolfpack will need to put something together down the stretch, or win the ACC tournament, to extend that streak. Virginia: Gill, Virginia's No. 2 scorer

(14.2) got his first points on a dunk at the 18:14 mark of the second half. ... Justin Anderson, who left Virginia after last season to enter the NBA Draft, was in the crowd. He's spent some of the season with the Dallas Mavericks and some with their developmental league team.
UP NEXT
The Wolfpack is at home against Clemson on Saturday, Virginia plays at Miami next Monday night. — AP

TENSIONS MOUNT AS LIGUE 1 BASTIA REFUSE KICK-OFF TIME CHANGE

PARIS: French club Bastia have "categorically refused" an order by the French Professional League (LFP) to advance the kick-off time of their Ligue 1 game against Nantes next Saturday amid security fears in Corsica.

"Having at no time been consulted on the reasons which motivated this unilateral decision and finding such practices unacceptable, the club has just informed the LFP of its categorical refusal to confirm with this diktat," Bastia said in a statement.

"The doors of the stadium will therefore remain close at the time imposed by authorities," it added. The decision to bring the game forward from 20:00 local time (1900GMT) to 14:00 (1300GMT) was requested by police on the French Mediterranean island after violence sparked by Corsican fans during last Saturday's league game at Reims.

Fans threw fireworks at police before and after the match in the Champagne region with the violence spilling into the town when a 22-year-old Corsican suffered a serious eye injury while being pursued by police.
Seven Bastia supporters on Monday

received summons for trial on March 22 following the incidents in Reims. Violence also broke out in Corsica on Sunday night when a rally to support the injured fan outside Bastia's police station degenerated with missiles and Molotov cocktails thrown. A riot police officer received a head wound.

On Monday night in Corte, some 500 people again gathered in front of the police station, throwing various missiles. As French Interior Minister Bernard Cazeneuve strongly condemned "these unacceptable acts" the case took a political turn with the President of Corsica's executive council Gilles Simeoni, questioning the "official version" of the injury suffered by Bastia supporter.

According to the Reims public prosecutor, the fan was seriously injured while fleeing police after damaging one of their cars, and hurt himself when he fell. The victim claims he was wounded by a rubber bullet, and "that's what a certain number of witnesses are saying", said Simeoni. The tension comes amid unrest on the island following regional elections in mid-December which saw Corsica's nationalist party winning power for the first time. — AFP



NEW YORK: Detroit Red Wings' Brad Richards, left, takes a shot past New York Islanders' John Tavares during the first period of an NHL hockey game, Monday, in New York. — AP

ISLANDERS THRASH RED WINGS 4-1

NEW YORK: Brock Nelson had a goal and an assist to key a three-goal second period, helping the New York Islanders beat the Detroit Red Wings 4-1 on Monday. Josh Bailey, Marek Zidlicky and Ryan Strome also scored to help New York win for the fourth time in five games overall and fourth straight at home. Thomas Greiss stopped 28 shots to win his fifth straight start and seventh of his last eight, improving to 16-6-2 on the season. Pavel Datsyuk scored and Jimmy Howard also finished with 28 saves while falling to 0-5-3 in his last nine starts for the Red Wings, who were coming off a 4-0-1 homestand.

was stopped by Nashville goaltender Carter Hutton. Seguin then poked the rebound over to the right side, where Janmark had an easy tap-in for the winner. Craig Smith and Filip Forsberg scored for Nashville. The Predators have lost three of four.

onslaught of goals against Montreal goalie Mike Condon, matching the three previous games combined with a season high in goals. The Coyotes had 13 different players notch a point and (six) different goal scorers. Martin Hanzal scored his third goal in four games and Anthony Duclair had a goal in the first period. Brad Richardson, Kevin Connauton and Ekman-Larsson scored in the second, with Antoine Vermette capping the scoring burst with a goal in the third.

DUCKS 6, FLAMES 4

Corey Perry had a goal and two assists, and the Ducks went a perfect 3 for 3 on the power play. The Flames led 3-2 after an action-packed first period, but with Johnny Gaudreau in the penalty box, Perry banged Cam Fowler's rebound past Jonas Hiller to tie it early in the second. The Ducks went right back to the man advantage and needed only 11 seconds to convert, with a rebound deflecting off several players and going in off the skate of Sami Vatanen to put Anaheim into the lead for good. Mike Santorelli, with a pair of goals, Hampus Lindholm and Rickard Rakell also scored for Anaheim. The Ducks, 9-1-1 in their last 11 games, leapfrogged San Jose into second place in the Pacific Division. Jiri Hudler had two goals and an assist to lead Calgary.

BLACKHAWKS 7, MAPLE LEAFS 2

Patrick Kane had a goal and three assists, helping Chicago stop a three-game slide with a victory over Toronto. Andrew Shaw, Brent Seabrook, Artemi Panarin and Teuvo Teravainen each had a power-play goal, helping Chicago salvage the finale of disappointing four-game homestand. It was the Blackhawks' first game since they lost Marian Hossa to a left leg injury, likely sidelining the veteran forward for a couple of weeks. Scott Darling got the start in place of a resting Corey Crawford and made 35 saves, including an outstanding sprawling stop on Nick Spaling in the second period. Two of Darling's six wins this season have come against lowly Toronto.

COYOTES 6, CANADIENS 2

Oliver Ekman-Larsson had a goal and two assists, and Arizona rolled over Montreal to complete a season sweep over the Canadiens for the first time in 36 seasons as a franchise. Arizona broke out of a scoring slump with an

POCHETTINO HAS TOTTENHAM DARING TO DREAM OF ENGLISH CHAMPIONS

LONDON: When Mauricio Pochettino first set foot in White Hart Lane, the future Tottenham manager was struck by the simple message emblazoned all around the middle tier of the stadium.

"To Dare is to Do", translated from the latin 'Audere Est Facere', has been Tottenham's motto since long before Pochettino arrived in north London, but it serves as the perfect summary of the team's mission statement under the highly driven Argentine.

Although Pochettino left the Lane that afternoon in March 2014 frustrated after his Southampton side slumped to a 3-2 defeat, the young manager's first encounter with the slogan which resonated so much would foreshadow greater things to come.

Just two months after that, Pochettino was announced as Tottenham's new manager and only two years later he already has his club positioned to end their long wait to be crowned English champions.

Tottenham's dashing 2-1 win at title rivals Manchester City on Sunday moved them within two points of Premier League leaders Leicester with 12 games remaining, prompting Pochettino to admit fans were right to start dreaming of a first top-flight title since 1961.

To come within touching distance of emulating the heroics of Bill Nicholson's team, who boasted Tottenham greats Danny Blanchflower, Dave Mackay, Cliff Jones and Bobby Smith, Pochettino has infused a club for so long derided as serial underachievers with a genuine belief they can beat anyone and the results have been remarkable.

At the start of the season, few outside the Tottenham dressing room expected more than a challenge for a top four place from a club whose last major trophy was the 2008 League Cup.

But those doubters missed the quiet revolution masterminded by the softly-spoken Pochettino at Tottenham's new training headquarters in the north London suburb of Enfield.

ROCK SOLID

It is at that state-of-the-art facility where the 43-year-old former Argentina international has drilled his players to master his relentless, high-tempo pressing game that wears opponents down, while convincing them to buy into his team-first ethos.

After making his name in the Premier League by turning Southampton's crop of young English players from prodigies with potential to top-level stars, Pochettino has achieved a similar feat with Tottenham.

Enthusied by their manager's confidence and given a road map to success by his tactical knowledge, the likes of Harry Kane, 22, Dele Alli, 19, and Eric Dier, 22, have developed into England internationals.

Kane's predatory finishing has been key to Tottenham's success, but the composure and class of Belgium defenders Jan Vertonghen and Toby Alderweireld has also been crucial in providing a solid foundation for the youngsters to thrive.

Pochettino's side have been beaten only three times in the league this season and boast the division's best defensive record, with just 20 goals conceded from 26 games.

Alderweireld, signed by Pochettino from Atletico Madrid after he had impressed on loan at Southampton last year, has been rock solid at the heart of Tottenham's defence and the 26-year-old feels the organisation of the team is key to their success. "We feel if we work very hard, with everyone doing their job, we can beat any team," he said.

"It is not arrogance - we don't have arrogance, we just have confidence, and that is the difference.

"In every game this season we have had good organisation, and even when things are not going the way you want, you can fall back on that organisation.

"Then try to go up front and make a goal, like we did against City. "We have a good team that sticks together, and that is important!" — AFP



TEXAS: Puerto Rico defender Kelley Alexis Johnson (2) looks on as goalkeeper Karly Marie Gustafson (1) is unable to stop a shot for a goal from United States midfielder Samantha Mewis, not pictured, during the second half of a women's Olympic qualifying soccer match, Monday in Frisco, Texas. United States won 10-0. — AP

PANTHERS 2, PENGUINS 1, SO

Jussi Jokinen scored the winning goal in a shootout to lead Florida over Pittsburgh. Nick Bjugstad also scored in the shootout and in regulation for the Panthers. Al Montoya made 31 saves. The Panthers won for the first time in three games, and beat Pittsburgh for the first time in three games this season. After Jokinen scored, Montoya stopped Matt Cullen in the fifth round of the shootout to seal the win. Sidney Crosby scored in the shootout for the Penguins. Chris Kunitz scored in regulation for the Panthers and Marc-Andre Fleury stopped 27 shots.

STARS 3, PREDATORS 2, OT

Mattias Janmark scored at 3:49 of overtime to give the Dallas Stars a 3-2 win over Nashville. Cody Eakin and Ales Hemsky also scored for Dallas, which has won straight. In overtime, Tyler Seguin's shot from the left side

NHL results/standings

NY Islanders 4, Detroit 1; Anaheim 6, Calgary 4; Florida 2, Pittsburgh 1 (SO); Dallas 3, Nashville 2 (OT); Chicago 7, Toronto 2; Arizona 6, Montreal 2; Minnesota 5, Vancouver 2.

Western Conference							Eastern Conference						
Central Division							Atlantic Division						
W	L	OTL	GF	GA	PTS	W	L	OTL	GF	GA	PTS		
Dallas	37	15	5	187	154	79	Detroit	29	19	9	146	147	67
Chicago	37	18	5	170	139	79	Boston	30	20	6	172	157	66
St. Louis	32	17	9	143	138	73	Tampa Bay	30	21	4	147	135	64
Nashville	26	21	10	151	152	62	Montreal	27	26	4	157	158	58
Colorado	29	26	4	158	164	62	Ottawa	25	26	6	163	181	56
Minnesota	24	22	10	140	142	58	Buffalo	23	28	6	136	160	52
Winnipeg	25	27	3	142	160	53	Toronto	20	26	9	134	163	49
Pacific Division							Metropolitan Division						
Los Angeles	33	19	3	153	131	69	Washington	40	10	4	181	125	84
Anaheim	28	19	8	131	134	64	NY Rangers	32	18	6	163	143	70
San Jose	29	20	5	160	146	63	NY Islanders	30	19	6	161	141	66
Arizona	26	24	6	151	171	58	New Jersey	29	21	7	127	130	65
Vancouver	22	22	12	133	157	56	Pittsburgh	28	19	8	142	141	64
Calgary	25	27	3	150	168	53	Carolina	25	21	10	137	149	60
Edmonton	22	29	6	143	171	50	Philadelphia	24	21	10	131	148	58
Atlantic Division							Columbus	23	28	6	148	178	52
Florida	33	18	6	160	134	72	Note: Overtime losses (OTL) are worth one point in the standings and are not included in the loss column (L).						

SAUDI ROW COULD SEE IRAN CLUBS QUIT CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

TEHRAN: Iran may withdraw its teams from Asia's biggest club tournament if they are blocked from hosting matches against Saudi Arabian clubs due to the breakdown in relations between the regional rivals, an official with Iranian soccer champions Sepahan said.

Four Saudi clubs complained to the Asian Football Confederation last month that it was unsafe for them to play AFC Champions League matches in Iran. The AFC is considering having the matches played on neutral territory. "I hope there will be a resolution, but we are considering to withdraw from the Champions League if they insist on a third place (neutral venue)," Sepahan team manager Rassol Khorvash told Reuters on Monday.

Saudi Arabia cut all ties with Iran last

month after its embassy in Tehran was attacked following Saudi's execution of a prominent Shi'ite cleric. The AFC said last month that if "normal relations" had not resumed by March 15, fixtures between the two countries' clubs would be played at neutral venues.

"We are waiting to see what the AFC decides," Khorvash told Reuters. "All the managers of the clubs had a meeting and this was one of the ideas discussed."

Khorvash said the three Iranian clubs in this year's ACL-Sepahan, Tractor Sazi and Isfahan-based Zob Ahan had also spoken with the Iranian Football Federation and the Foreign Ministry about the matter.

The AFC last month pushed back six group-stage Saudi-Iran fixtures to allow more time for independent evaluations

on safety and security issues between Saudi Arabia and Iran. But it dismissed a motion from the United Arab Emirates Football Association to move Emirati club fixtures out of Iran, and Khorvash said the Saudi complaint should also be rejected. "They are looking for excuses, whatever politically happened should not get involved with the sport," he said. "We do not have any problem to host them, we have been hosting them for many years and never ever anything happened to them, nor any Arab country or any other club in the world or national team coming to Iran."

MORE DANGEROUS

Saudi Arabian giants Al-Hilal dispute that, however. The 13-times domestic champions, twice winners of the

Champions League in its former guise, the Asian Club Championship, said they had problems last year after playing a match away to Iran's Foolad Khuzestan.

Media reported at the time that police arrested several fans after clashes between local ethnic Arab supporters of the visiting Saudi team and a group of Persian fans of the home team.

"Then this year there's been the political issues between the two countries and we think it's more dangerous than last year," team spokesman Sami Abu Khudair told Reuters. The president of the Iran Football League Organization, Mehdi Taj told Press TV last month that Al Hilal had previously protested over alleged racist chanting when they played in Tehran and complained that their water bottles had been spiked in

another match in Isfahan.

Saudi Arabia had a World Cup qualifying match moved from the Palestinian territories to Jordan last year following a row involving FIFA and the AFC. Al-Hilal's Khudair said he wanted his side's May 3 Group C fixture at Tractor Sazi moved to "Qatar, Oman or wherever".

Tractor director Majid Abbasi expressed his disappointment and questioned whether the Saudis were breaching the rules of world governing body FIFA regarding political interference in the sport.

"This is not an issue about if the country is safe. This is about politics," he told Reuters. "Our Saudi counterparts, it's quite a political issue, interfering into sports, which is not allowed by FIFA." — Reuters



GENT: Gent's Belgian head coach Hein Vanhaezebrouck (L) and Serbian defender Stefan Mitrovic attend a press conference on the eve of their last 16, first-leg UEFA Champions League football match against VfL Wolfsburg, yesterday in Gent. — AFP

WOLFSBURG PRIMED FOR GENT TEST AFTER ENDING POOR RUN

BERLIN: VfL Wolfsburg are hoping a morale-boosting Bundesliga win that ended a poor run of results will help their confidence for the Champions League last 16 first-leg game at Gent today. Last year's German league runners-up and Cup winners are eighth in the standings after a 2-0 victory over Ingolstadt on Saturday, their first win in eight Bundesliga games.

"We have to accept the criticism directed against us," Wolfsburg left back Marcel Schaefer said. "The past weeks have not been as all of us had imagined them. That is why it was important to win against Ingolstadt as it was also a sign that we are prepared to fight over 90 minutes as a team."

The victory over the Bavarian club will be key for Wolfsburg's confidence as they find themselves in uncharted territory in Europe, according to coach Dieter Hecking. "What is important is that we have now snapped our bad run," Hecking said. "We have won and that is what matters. This win can do a lot for us in the future."

Wolfsburg did not get past the group stage in their only other Champions League appearance in 2009. Gent, in the Champions League for the first time after being crowned Belgian champions in 2015, were the surprise runners-up in Group H, beating Valencia and Zenit St. Petersburg at home as well as Olympique Lyonnais away.

They became the first Belgian side to reach the round of 16 in the Champions

League since Anderlecht 15 years ago.

Gent's recent results in the Belgian league, however, have been disappointing after finishing the first half of the season on top. Club Brugge have caught up, beating Gent twice in quick succession, in the Cup and the league.

Gent also needed 85 minutes to struggle past bottom side Mouscron on Friday with a powerful strike by Mbark Boussoufa, who is not on their Champions League squad, and another goal from Danijel Milicevic.

Boussoufa is on loan from Lokomotiv Moscow but because of doubts over his fitness the Morocco international was not included in the Champions League squad, a decision manager Hein Vanhaezebrouck now regrets.

"Boussoufa is much better physically and mentally than I was told. It's a shame about that list, I admit that," he said. — Reuters



Live Matches on TV
(Local Timings)

UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE	
AS Roma v Real Madrid	22:45
beIN SPORTS 1 HD	
beIN SPORTS 11 HD	
KAA Gent v Wolfsburg	22:45
beIN SPORTS 2 HD	
beIN SPORTS 12 HD	

CONFIDENCE KEY FOR KEITA AS ROMA AWAIT ZIDANE'S REAL

MILAN: The prospect of spoiling Zinedine Zidane's Champions League coaching debut with Real Madrid may be formidable, but Roma midfielder Seydou Keita believes his side can upset the 10-time record champions in their last 16, first leg clash.

"How we line up against them is down to the coach, but for me, we have to believe in ourselves and go on the pitch convinced," said the Malian ahead of today's tie in Rome's Stadio Olimpico. Former Barcelona midfielder Keita knows his opponents well having won 11 matches with the Catalans in the 17 times he played against the arch Liga rivals.

"This game will be difficult, but not impossible," added Keita of Real's miserable record against Italian teams in the competition. Roma coach Luciano Spalletti, brought back to the club recently following the sacking of Frenchman Rudi Garcia, was at the helm when the Italians prevailed over two legs in 2008.

Roma beat Real 2-1 at home, a score they would repeat at the Santiago Bernabeu before being humbled 3-0 by eventual winners Manchester United in the quarter-finals.

Real have made it to the semi-finals of the competition the past five seasons, claiming their historic 10th title, 'La Decima', in 2014 when current manager Zidane was assistant to Carlo Ancelotti.

Efforts to go one step further last year were rebuffed when Juventus claimed a 2-1 win in Turin and booked their final place against Barcelona thanks to a 1-1 draw at the Bernabeu.

But there is little chance Zidane is entertaining another early exit and the former France and Juventus great comes to Rome with only one defeat from his six-game tenure so far, during which Real have scored 23 goals.

Champions League

Despite it being his Champions League debut as coach, Zidane's past experience in the competition gives him the knowledge of what it takes to succeed in Europe's premier club competition.

"When you're a player, you dream of playing in the World Cup, but you can dream of the Champions League every year," said Zidane. "We are prepared and we want to do some-



ROME: Real Madrid's French head coach Zinedine Zidane looks on during a press conference at the Olympic Stadium in Rome yesterday, on the eve of their UEFA Champions League round of sixteen first leg football match against AS Roma. — AFP

thing important in this competition." Although Welsh winger Gareth Bale remains sidelined with a calf strain, Real welcomed left-back Marcelo, who missed a 4-2 win over Athletic Bilbao at the weekend due to a dislocated shoulder, back to their matchday squad.

With central defender Pepe sidelined, Raphael Varane will keep his place alongside Sergio Ramos despite being sent off in a poor display at the weekend when Cristiano Ronaldo hit a brace and James Rodriguez and Toni Kroos added their names to the scoresheet.

NO PLAIN SAILING

Karim Benzema, who set up Ronaldo for his first on Saturday, admits it won't be all plain sailing. "The key to the tie is us. If we are on top form we will win," said the French striker.

"We have to take into account the speed of

their forwards, but we are Real Madrid, for me the best team in the world, and we have the best defenders in the world."

Roma, it seems, have been warned. Despite Keita's call for confidence, fans will be hoping Roma at least produce the kind of display that held Barcelona to a 1-1 draw in the group stages earlier this season, and not one that led to a 7-1 humiliation at the hands of Bayern Munich in Rome last year.

On the plus side, Roma claimed a fourth consecutive league win last weekend for the first time since October. Argentinian midfielder Diego Perotti admits, Bayern, Barcelona and Real are "all favourites for the title".

But it seems Keita's words are already rubbing off. "They're not going to find it easy against us. We'll be giving it our all, and we have possibilities to cause an upset in this tie." — AFP



SAN JOAN DESPI: FC Barcelona's Luis Suarez, second left, talks with his teammates during a training session at the Sports Center FC Barcelona Joan Gamper in San Joan Despi, Spain, yesterday. — AP

UNITED NEED TO WIN TROPHY TO SAVE SEASON

LONDON: Manchester United need to end their trophy drought by winning either the Europa League or the FA Cup and finish in the Premier League's top four this season to get the fans back on board, captain Wayne Rooney said.

Knocked out of the Champions League and six points behind Manchester City at fourth in the Premier League, United face Danish side FC Midtjylland in the Europa League on Thursday before a trip to third-tier Shrewsbury Town in the FA Cup.

The club last won a trophy in 2012-13, when they romped to the Premier League title in Alex Ferguson's last season in charge, and have struggled so far under manager Louis van Gaal.

Saturday's 2-1 defeat by Sunderland led the Dutchman to all but rule out their chances of finishing in the Champions League positions. "The important thing now, I feel, is to win

trophies again this season," Rooney told British media.

"Obviously the Champions League is massive for this club and it was disappointing to go out of it. But our main aim has to be to make sure we can get in that top four."

United failed to emerge from the Champions League group stages and slipped into the Europa League, an outcome derided by fans and former players alike.

Rooney, however, said the club could not afford to take the opportunity to win silverware lightly.

"It would be great if we can win (the Europa League)," he added. "It's not where we wanted to be at the start of the season but it's where we've found ourselves so why not go and try to win it."

"This is more or less a new team so for ourselves, as a team, we need to win something. The fans want to see us win something again." — Reuters

BARCELONA AND LUIS SUAREZ LEAD AP GLOBAL FOOTBALL 10

LONDON: Barcelona and Luis Suarez reclaimed leading honors in the Associated Press Global Football 10 yesterday after an emphatic 6-1 win over Celta Vigo in the Spanish League.

Suarez propelled Barcelona to victory at the weekend with a hat trick, which was sealed with a close range finish after Lionel Messi passed his penalty forward for his teammate to run on to instead of shooting.

"Luis Suarez had a hand in five of Barcelona's six goals last Sunday, scoring three himself and providing two assists as Celta Vigo were thrashed," Jonathan Johnson of beIN Sports USA, in France, said. "His insatiable form continues and he now leads the scoring charts in La Liga with 23 goals, only one of those was a penalty." Messi is runner up to Suarez in the player vote after also scoring two in the victory, as well as providing the inventive assist for Suarez.

Cristiano Ronaldo of Real Madrid takes third after scoring a double to guide his team to a 4-2 victory at home to Athletic Bilbao.

Robert Lewandowski is fourth after notching four goals across two games in a week for Bayern Munich, leading the team to wins in the German Cup and Bundesliga.

"Four goals in two matches from Robert Lewandowski were crucial as Bayern Munich continued their ongoing march to the Bundesliga title," Marco Monteverde of News Corp. Australia said. Christian Eriksen, Danny Welbeck, Pedro Rodriguez, Philippe Coutinho, Andre Barzagli and Juan Cuadrado round out the top 10 players this week.

Arsenal polled second to Barcelona in the team vote after securing a dramatic 2-1 win against Premier League title rival and current leader, Leicester, the team which also won last

week's poll. Juventus is third after defeating Napoli 1-0 to move first in the Serie A standings, extending its astounding winning run to 15 matches in Italy's top tier.

"Juventus are showing it's their winning mentality that makes them unstoppable - the mentality that saw them reach the Serie A summit remarkably for the first time this season with victory over previous leaders Napoli," Umaid Wasim of Dawn Newspaper in Pakistan said.

Tottenham enters this week's poll in fourth after it also recorded a 2-1 victory against Manchester City in the other clash between two of the Premier League title hopefuls in England.

Bayern Munich is fifth after winning 3-1 away to Augsburg in the German Bundesliga and 3-0 at Bochum. Real Madrid, Chelsea, Liverpool, Fiorentina and Atletico Madrid complete the top 10 teams in this week's vote. — AP

Sports

CEO of Athletics
Kenya steps aside
over bribery
allegations



Confidence key
for Keita as
Roma await
Zidane's Real



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ISLANDERS THRASH RED WINGS 4-1

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PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain's Brazilian defender Thiago Silva (R) jumps for the ball during the Champions League round of 16 first leg football match between Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) and Chelsea FC yesterday, at the Parc des Princes stadium. — AFP

CAVANI ON TARGET AS PSG EDGE CHELSEA

PARIS: The much-maligned Edinson Cavani came off the bench to score the winner as Paris Saint-Germain edged Chelsea 2-1 in the first leg of their Champions League last-16 tie yesterday.

Cavani beat the excellent Thibaut Courtois in the 78th minute at the Parc des Princes, just four minutes after coming off the bench, to give the French champions the advantage ahead of the second leg on March 9.

Zlatan Ibrahimovic had earlier given Paris the lead from a deflected free-kick only for a rare John Obi Mikel goal on the stroke of half-time to bring Chelsea level.

PSG's win in what was a high-quality encounter means they have still lost just once to Real Madrid in 40 games this season, while it was a first defeat for Chelsea since Guus Hiddink replaced the sacked Jose Mourinho in December. With John Terry absent, Chelsea's reshuffled

defence featured skipper for the night Branislav Ivanovic in the middle alongside Gary Cahill with Cesar Azpilicueta at right-back and Baba Rahman on the other side.

Marquinhos started at right-back for PSG after Serge Aurier was ruled out by the club for disciplinary reasons, while Marco Verratti returned to the starting line-up after a month of fitness struggles.

With the Italian midfielder pulling the strings from the off, Paris started strongly, asphyxiating Chelsea with their high press. Such a bright opening led to chances, with Verratti seeing his shot from 20 yards beaten away by Courtois and Lucas hitting one narrowly wide inside the first five minutes.

Ibrahimovic sent a free-kick off target as Chelsea weathered the early storm and gradually grew into the game. They should have opened the scoring, too, but

when Baba Rahman's inviting cross from the left found Diego Costa, his header from point-blank range was instinctively palmed onto the bar and over by Kevin Trapp in the home goal.

That was a key moment as Paris went on to open the scoring in the 39th minute. Mikel was booked for halting a rampaging run by Lucas at the gates of the penalty box and Ibrahimovic stepped up to smash the resulting free-kick into the net, with the aid of a deflection off the wall, for his 28th goal of the season. However, the French champions were unable to hold onto their lead until the interval as Chelsea equalised with the final kick of the first half. Willian's delivery from the right was not cut out at the near post and Mikel gleefully prodded home from six yards for a rare goal.

It could have been worse for the home side as Trapp

was forced to make himself big and save from Costa four minutes into the second half following a counterattack led by Willian. A long spell of Paris domination followed but they were thwarted several times in their attempts to find a winner as Courtois produced an array of outstanding saves. The Belgian tipped over a long-range thumper by Angel Di Maria and denied Lucas after the Brazilian had played a one-two with Ibrahimovic and accelerated towards the area.

He then stretched his huge frame across goal to turn behind a net-bound Di Maria free-kick, but there was nothing he could do to stop Cavani's winner. The Uruguayan, who has lost his place as a regular starter in the PSG side due to a poor start to 2016, played the role of super sub as he kept his cool to meet Di Maria's flighted ball into the box with a low first-time finish. — AFP



LISBON: Benfica's Brazilian forward Jonas Oliveira (L) vies with Zenit's Argentine defender Ezequiel Garay (R) during the UEFA Champions League round of 16 football match SL Benfica vs FC Zenith Saint-Petersburg at the Luz stadium in Lisbon yesterday. — AFP

JONAS SEIZE STOPPAGE-TIME WIN FOR BENFICA OVER ZENIT

LISBON: Jonas struck with a stoppage-time header to end 90 minutes of frustration for Benfica as they beat an ultra-cautious Zenit St Petersburg 1-0 at home in the first leg of their Champions League last-16 tie yesterday.

Nicolas Gaitan floated a free kick into the area and the Brazilian rose to break the deadlock. Zenit defender Domenico Criscito had been sent off for a second yellow card for the foul which led to the free kick.

The first half had been an unsightly slog with 16 fouls, seven offsides and four bookings. Benfica came

to life in the second half but still struggled to create chances against a tightly-packed, well-drilled Zenit, who were playing their first competitive match since Dec. 9.

Jonas had the best effort of the first half when the Benfica forward unleashed a shot from the edge of the area but Zenit's Nicolas Lombaerts just got his head to the ball and his touch forced it centimetres wide of the post.

Zenit had to wait until the 36th minute for their first shot on goal but Hulk, who got little change out of Benfica's Eliseu, fired a low effort wide from

25 metres. Benfica goalkeeper Julio Cesar finally made a save in the 52nd minute when he parried a dangerous shot from Axel Witsel. He also had to stop a header from the Belgian midfielder from the resulting corner. The hosts nearly went ahead in the 69th minute when Gaitan skipped past a defender, but saw his shot stopped at point-blank range by keeper Yuri Lodygin. Benfica continued to dominate and Gaitan was foiled again by Lodygin before his team mate Jardel turned the ball wide after Victor Lindelof headed down Renato Sanchez's cross. — Reuters

DISGRACED BLATTER RETURNS TO REVERSE BAN IN FIFA APPEAL

ZURICH: FIFA's disgraced president Sepp Blatter returned to the headquarters of world football's governing on body yesterday to face an appeals committee he hopes will overturn his eight-year ban from the sport.

Blatter arrived at FIFA's Zurich compound for his 9:00 am (0800 GMT) hearing roughly 90 minutes early, dodging the crowd of reporters that would later assemble outside, according to a FIFA security guard. Blatter's hearing came a day after Michel Platini, the head of European football who has also been suspended for eight years, met with the same appeals body in a bid to reverse a conviction for ethics violations issued by a FIFA tribunal in December.

Platini, also a FIFA vice president, and Blatter were found to have abused their positions over a mysterious 2 million Swiss franc (\$2 million, 1.8 million euros) payment made in 2011.

Both men have argued that the funds paid by Blatter to Platini were part of a legitimate oral contract for consulting work done by Platini a decade earlier, but FIFA's ethics judges dismissed that explanation. 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. Platini's arrival at FIFA on Monday was starkly different to that of Blatter's, with the Frenchman walking the final 100 metres (330 feet) to FIFA's gate, sporadically answering questions from reporters. After a marathon session, Platini said he was "happy" and that his appeal was heard by "sincere" people.

One of two witnesses the ex-Juventus star presented was Frenchman Jacques



Sepp Blatter

Lambert, the president of the Euro-2016 organising committee, who purportedly had evidence supporting the existence of the famous oral contract. Lambert also returned to FIFA on Tuesday, possibly to present similar evidence of behalf of Blatter. Platini had been the favourite to replace Blatter at FIFA's February 26 presidential vote, but he withdrew from the race after he was banned from football.

If the appeals committee rules in his favour, the Frenchman would reclaim his post as president of European confederation UEFA. For Blatter, a Swiss national who turns 80 next month, an appeals win could allow him to preside over next week's FIFA congress, where his successor will be chosen.

If their appeals are rejected, both are expected to take their case to the Court of Arbitration for Sport in Lausanne. 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. — AFP

OPENING TODAY

6th Lulu Hypermarket in Kuwait



Sama Mall, Egaila, Kuwait



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Fresh Vegetables

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Seafood

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Dairy & Cheese



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Europe shares steady
as oil firms gain

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Lexus absolute luxury
models test-driven
at Al-Corniche

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ITALY'S MINI-BOND RULES MAY BE ADAPTED TO ISLAMIC FINANCE

Page 22



SINGAPORE: South Korea's Black Eagles aerobatics team performs an aerial display forming a Ying and Yang logo during the Singapore Airshow at Changi exhibition center in Singapore yesterday. —AFP

AIRBUS CHIEF BRUSHES OFF DOWNTURN FEARS

QATAR AIRWAYS THREATENS TO CANCEL P&W ENGINE ORDER

SINGAPORE: The chief executive of Airbus said yesterday that growth in airline passengers in Asia is likely to remain strong despite the current uncertainty about global economic growth prospects.

Speaking at the Singapore Airshow, Fabrice Bregier said that Airbus and its competitors are not facing a downturn in orders from airlines. Stock markets and oil have slumped since the beginning of the year, in a sign of investor anxiety about the health of the world economy. "I think it is simple and it is clear that there are tensions around the world. And so people try to project themselves into the future and impact on air traffic," he said. "As a matter of fact, we don't see it, our competitors don't see it, our customers don't see it. We've never been so healthy."

The company forecasts demand for 12,810 new airplanes in the Asia-Pacific area, valued at \$2 trillion over the next 20 years. That represents 40 percent of forecast global demand for about 32,600 airplanes over the same period.

Passenger numbers in Asia are expected by Airbus to grow by 5.6 percent annually, with China forecast to post double digit growth. Bregier was presenting the manufacturer's latest outlook on the first day of the Singapore Airshow, which ends Feb. 21. More than 1,000 companies, including Airbus and Boeing are participants. The previous show in 2014 generated deals worth \$32 billion.

John Leahy, an Airbus chief operating officer, said the manufacturer was not seeing any deferrals of jet orders in the region, whose middle class is driving growth in the airline industry.

"They fly for business, they have disposable income, they fly for pleasure, and they are the ones who are sitting in the seats of airliners around the world," he said. "There's a growing middle class in China. The middle class in Asia Pacific will be driving the world going forward." Airbus adjusted its 2015 numbers, saying it had 1,080 net orders compared with the previously announced 1,036. It has a backlog of 6,831 orders worth \$1 trillion at list prices, though customers usually negotiate discounts.

Boeing said Monday that it had no deferrals in Asia and forecasts demand for 3,750 new airplanes in Southeast Asia alone, valued at \$550 billion over the next 20 years. Of the forecast demand, 76 percent will be for single-aisle aircraft such as the Boeing 737 and Airbus A320.

Order cancellation

Qatar Airways threatened to cancel an order for Pratt & Whitney engines for a fleet of Airbus narrow-body jets yesterday, saying the newly developed powerplants had "a lot of problems".

The Gulf airline has ordered 50 A320neo-family aircraft and was originally due to take the first delivery in December, but rejected the jet due to what it called an engine problem and the first jet went last month to Lufthansa instead. Asked at the Singapore Airshow to describe his concerns, Qatar Airways Chief Executive Akbar Al Baker said: "There are a lot of things wrong with A320neo, with the engines. So we have refused to accept those airplanes."

"Let me be very clear: it is not the fault of Airbus. Airbus has delivered all their part, and as you know,

no airplane can fly without an engine. And they have huge issues with the engine," he said in a group interview.

"I don't want to get into the detail but Qatar Airways will not accept an aircraft with those

engines unless they are very much corrected. Otherwise we have no alternative but to look at an alternate engine supply."

Pratt & Whitney competes with CFM International, co-owned by General Electric and

France's Safran, to supply engines for the narrow-body Airbus jet family. Pratt & Whitney has acknowledged teething problems on the engine but says they do not affect its 15-percent fuel savings. "We will not cancel the A320neo order. Our relations with Airbus are very strong. We have full confidence in the neo program but yes, we could cancel the entire Pratt & Whitney order," Al Baker told reporters.

Al Baker, who has a record of criticizing manufacturers at air shows over the airline's exacting quality standards, said engines had been delivered without the desired performance. "According to them, they're on the way to correct these issues, but I have no confidence unless I see it really happen."

Asked whether Qatar Airways had set a deadline for the problems to be resolved, he said, "Yes we have given them a deadline...Months". Pratt & Whitney officials could not immediately be reached for comment. In an interview with Reuters earlier, Pratt & Whitney President Bob Leduc gave further details of two problems which have affected engine startup times and faulty engine software messages, but said these were being resolved.

Pratt & Whitney is delivering according to the latest schedule, he said. Airbus and Pratt & Whitney officials said the schedule had been slowed in the first half of the year to ensure a smooth production ramp-up. Leduc said some 60-65 percent of the 200 Geared Turbofan engines that Pratt intends to build in 2016 would be delivered in the second half of the year. — Agencies



SINGAPORE: Airbus CEO Fabrice Bregier speaks to the media during a press conference at the Singapore Airshow at the Changi exhibition centre in Singapore yesterday. — AFP

OIL OUTPUT FREEZE ONLY THE FIRST STEP: EXPERT

LONDON: Oil ministers from Saudi Arabia, Russia, Venezuela and Qatar announced yesterday an agreement to freeze their oil output levels provided other major producers follow suit.

The deal would freeze Saudi and Russian production at the record rates reported in January and is unlikely to be accepted by Iran in its current form since the country escaped from sanctions only last month. The agreement is provisional (depending on adherence from other oil producers) and unambitious (freezing rather than cutting production), which has led some commentators to dismiss its importance.

But experience suggests production agreements are normally reached in stages, often after several earlier attempts have failed or been only partially fruitful.

Successful agreements often exploit the temporary weakness of specific producing countries and at least some past participants have reserved the right to increase output beyond agreed levels in future. Successful production agreements are usually of limited scope and duration, deferring more complicated and intractable issues about production allocations for later.

In that sense, the production freeze

announced in Doha could be seen as a stepping stone towards a more ambitious and comprehensive deal in a few months' time.

A GOOD SWEATING

The depth and duration of the price slump have taken all producers by surprise and are inflicting intense pain on all oil companies and exporting countries. OPEC's original strategy of maintaining high production envisioned a modest and brief drop in prices that would quickly curb output from U.S. shale formations and other high-cost producers and then restore the organisation's market share.

The strategy may now be working, with reports of a downturn in US shale output and a sharp drop in non-OPEC exploration and production spending. But the strategy has proved far slower and costlier than any OPEC member thought when prices started to slide in 2014.

There are still doubts about how quickly the market will rebalance and whether prices will recover, with most observers predicting no rebalancing until the second half of 2016, 2017 or even 2018.

OPEC's strategy has inflicted a "good sweating" on the oil market but also on

members of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries itself.

The good sweating has in turn made most OPEC and non-OPEC producers more flexible and amenable to the idea of a production agreement, at least in principle.

DECLARING VICTORY

There is a strong incentive to declare the current strategy a success - and then quietly modify it. Key oil producers have already travelled some distance along this path. Saudi Arabia and its close allies the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait have stressed in recent weeks the strategy is working, and that they can weather the downturn, but indicated greater openness to production cuts in future.

Russia has also signalled it might be prepared to join in any eventual production agreement in some unspecified way. Venezuela, one of the hardest-hit producers, has been marshalling support for a modest production-freezing agreement, culminating in Tuesday's Doha deal.

If most countries have sent mixed and confusing signals about their willingness to reach a deal, that reflects sound negotiating strategy as well as the extent of the remaining disagreements. — Reuters

MARKETS ADVANCE ON OIL PRICE HOPES

DUBAI: A return of some risk appetite to global equity markets and a recovery in oil prices helped lift major Middle East stock markets. Riyadh's index rose 0.9 percent to 5,740 points in heavy trade, its second straight day of gains since news that the central bank lifted local banks' maximum loan-to-deposit ratio to 90 percent from 85 percent to ease liquidity in the sector.

But the index came off its high of 5,848 points after Saudi Arabia, Russia, Qatar and Venezuela agreed yesterday to freeze their oil output at January levels, providing other major producers followed suit. Oil prices rose in anticipation of the announcement and fell back slightly afterwards.

The agreement may support global oil prices but it "is unlikely to significantly alter the economic outlook for the Gulf Cooperation Council", London-based Capital Economics said in a report.

There are doubts about whether the agreement will hold, with Iran keen to reclaim its share of the global oil market after sanctions were lifted. In any case, oil prices look unlikely to rise far enough to end pressure on state finances in the Gulf. Capital Economics predicts regional

MIDEAST STOCK MARKETS

economic growth of just 1 to 2 percent this year and next.

Saudi Basic Industries, the largest petrochemical producer, closed up 1.5 percent. The banking sector, which helped lift the main index 2.4 percent on Monday, added a further 0.3 percent.

Dar Al Arkan fell 1.1 percent after rating agency Moody's lowered its credit rating of the real estate developer to B1 with a negative outlook from BA3 with a stable outlook. Rehan Akbar, a Moody's assistant vice-president, said: "The rating downgrade and negative outlook reflect our view of the interlinkages and macroeconomic environment that could continue to negatively impact Dar Al Arkan."

Egypt's main benchmark rose 1.6 percent with Orascom Telecom, the most traded stock, adding 1.8 percent after gaining 3.7 percent on Monday. Beltone Financial soared 10 percent for a fourth straight trading day. The financial firm is advising on 10 mergers and acquisitions this year worth over 60 billion Egyptian pounds (\$7.66 billion), its managing

director said on Monday, as investors seek pockets of opportunity amid economic gloom. But the chronic dollar shortage in Cairo, which has fuelled foreign investors' capital flight from the Egyptian stock market for several months, has not improved.

The Egyptian pound weakened to 9 against the dollar on the black market for the first time on Monday from 8.85 a day earlier, as people rushed to buy the US currency, two traders told Reuters.

UAE, QATAR

Dubai's benchmark rose 2.0 percent to 3,065 points in active trade, cutting its losses in 2016 to 2.7 percent and making it the best-performing bourse amongst its regional peers. Volume was concentrated in mid-cap stocks which are usually thinly traded, including Deyaar Development and amusement park developer Dubai Park and Resorts, which gained 5.0 and 3.5 percent respectively. In Abu Dhabi the index added 0.8 percent, trimming its year-to-date losses to 3.9 percent. Real estate shares were the main support, with Eshraq Properties and Aldar Properties each gaining 1.7 percent. — Reuters

News

in brief

US dollar at KD 0.298, euro drops to KD 0.333

KUWAIT: The exchange rate of the US dollar was stable at KD 0.298 yesterday, while the euro dropped to KD 0.333 compared to Monday. Meanwhile, the Sterling dropped to KD 0.431, the Swiss franc dropped to KD 0.302 while the Japanese yen was unchanged at KD 0.002, said the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) in its daily bulletin.

Bahrain narrows pricing guidance for \$500m bond

DUBAI: Bahrain has narrowed pricing guidance for its \$500 million two-part bond re-opening, which it plans to close later yesterday, a document from lead arrangers showed. The kingdom narrowed price thoughts for the re-tap, split between five- and 10-year portions, to a range of between 5.70 and 5.80 percent and 7.40 and 7.50 percent respectively. They had set initial price thoughts, earlier in the day, at 5.875 percent area for the five-year tranche and 7.5 percent area for the 10-year tranche. Bank ABC, BNP Paribas, Citigroup, HSBC and JP Morgan, which arranged its original \$1.5 billion bond in November, are leading the bond re-tap.

Abu Dhabi fund's arm buys into Peru energy

DUBAI: A subsidiary of the Abu Dhabi Investment Authority has purchased a stake in a Peruvian thermoelectric power generating company in Lima for \$786 million. The sovereign wealth fund made an announcement yesterday that the purchase by its subsidiary Blue Bolt Ltd. represented a 36-percent stake in Fenix Power Peru. The statement said Fenix Power Peru produces some 10 percent of all energy consumed in the South American nation. It said the Peruvian investment fund SIGMA holds a 13-percent stake in the company.

Dubai Jan inflation falls to 1.9% as gasoline drops

DUBAI: The Dubai Statistics Center released the following January consumer price data for the Gulf Arab Emirate yesterday. Transport costs, which account for about 9 percent of total inflation, fell 4.1 percent year-on-year in January as the United Arab Emirates cut gasoline prices in line with falling global oil prices. Housing and utility costs, which account for almost 44 percent of consumer expenses, rose 4.4 percent from a year earlier; food and beverage prices, which account for just over 11 percent, climbed 3.1 percent.

Egyptian pound steady at forex sale

CAIRO: The Egyptian pound held steady against the dollar at an official foreign currency auction yesterday but weakened on the black market, after reports that the central bank raised a cap on foreign currency deposits at banks to support exports. Egypt, which depends heavily on imports, is facing a foreign currency crisis and is under increasing pressure to devalue the pound, but the bank surprised markets when it strengthened the pound by 20 piasters in November and held it steady ever since. In a bid to fight a black market for dollars, the central bank imposed a cap of \$50,000 a month on deposits at banks a year ago. It later raised that to \$250,000 for the imports of essential goods.



KUALA LUMPUR: A Malaysian woman is silhouetted as she walks past a store at a shopping mall in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. — AFP

ITALY'S MINI-BOND RULES MAY BE ADAPTED TO ISLAMIC FINANCE YET TO MAKE MAJOR INROADS IN EUROPE

ROME: A law firm and an Islamic finance advisory firm are working to adapt Italy's "mini-bonds" legislation to provide sharia-compliant funding options as an alternative to bank lending.

Three years of recession have limited funding for Italian companies, in particular for smaller firms, which is encouraging the use of less traditional funding sources such as those found in Islamic finance.

More than 95 percent of Italian companies have fewer than 10 employees and rely on banks for most of their financing; the government wants to encourage them to use the capital markets more.

Islamic finance has made only marginal

inroads in continental Europe, partly because of a lack of a benign tax environment for its asset-based transactions, which are vulnerable to double taxation under conventional accounting methods. No Islamic finance deals have been publicly recorded in Italy. But Italy's mini-bonds legislation could provide a way around the obstacles as it allows unlisted companies to use securitisation vehicles while extending tax breaks to the institutional investors that can buy such instruments. The government introduced the legislation in 2012 to help smaller companies widen their funding options, with additional legislation in 2013 easing collateral restrictions and introduc-

ing tax incentives. "We have decided to start working from what we already have in the law and make a little bit of reverse engineering in order to combine it with Islamic finance techniques," said Stefano Padovani, partner and head of banking and finance at Milan-based law firm Nctm Studio Legale.

Earlier this month, Nctm hired Bahrain-based Syariah Review Bureau to help design the structure of a financing instrument that could be used in Italy. "We are now at the end of the structuring phase of the instrument and once this will be certified, it will go live on the market, so that we would expect to have deals within this year - but this also depends on market conditions."

Italian firms issuing mini-bonds, which must have tenors greater than three years, might use them to attract Islamic investors from the Gulf region.

The structure will accommodate products with an equity or quasi-equity nature, Padovani said. That suggests the products would be classified as hybrid instruments rather than sukuk (Islamic bonds) under the definition of the Bahrain-based Accounting and Auditing Organization for Islamic Financial Institutions (AAOIFI), a key global standard-setting body. If the instruments are successful, however, they could pave the way for developing sukuk structures, Padovani said. — Reuters

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GOLD SNAPS 2-DAY FALL AS EQUITIES RETREAT

LONDON: Gold rose yesterday, snapping two days of losses and recovering from an early dive below \$1,200 an ounce as stock markets swung lower, boosting interest in the metal as a haven from risk Spot gold was up 0.2 percent at \$1,211.68 an ounce by 1045 GMT, having earlier fallen as low as \$1,190.40. It shed 2.3 percent on Monday, its biggest one-day loss since mid-July.

Prices reversed that move yesterday after European stocks shed earlier gains to turn 0.3 percent lower, shrugging off a positive session in Asia overnight. Gold hit a one-year high of \$1,260.60 last week as worries over the global economy prompted heavy selling of assets seen as higher risk, such as stocks and cyclical commodities.

Heightened stock market volatility and fears that a slowdown in China could spill into the wider markets has led investors to cut the number of interest rate increases they expect from the US Federal Reserve this year. The prospect of higher US rates was a key factor driving gold prices down 10 percent last year. "It's really all about confidence here - confidence in the Fed, confidence in the PBOC, confidence in the ability of financial markets generally to withstand the kind of stress that they're under,"

said ICBC Standard Bank analyst Tom Kendall.

"To get gold to make sustainable gains above \$1,250 and up towards \$1,300, you do need that sense of fear and concern more widely to be sustained, and for assets like equities to come under even more stress."

A correction lower in gold prices had been expected after they rose quickly over a short period of time. The metal has gained \$200 from its January lows, with last week being its best since 2011.

Goldman Sachs's recommendation to short gold, prompted by the bank's belief that the recent fear-induced rally has been overdone, fed into more cautious sentiment for the metal.

"Fears around China, oil and negative interest rates have likely been overstated in the gold price and other financial markets," it said in a Monday-dated note. US gold futures for April delivery were down 2.1 percent from late on Friday at \$1,213.20. US markets were closed on Monday for Presidents' Day. Among other precious metals, silver was flat at \$15.34 an ounce, while platinum rose by 0.1 percent to \$933.56 and palladium fell 0.3 percent to \$508.94. — Reuters

UAE MONEY EXCHANGERS RAISE GROWTH WORRIES

ABU DHABI: Money exchange houses in the United Arab Emirates are holding talks with the central bank about planned new capital requirements, amid concern that they might crimp growth in the industry. Dubai is the region's main centre for exchanging foreign currencies, sending large amounts of money to and accepting transfers from the Middle East, Asia and parts of Europe.

The central bank has been tightening rules for the industry to try to combat money laundering and weed out weaker companies. There are around 140 money exchange houses in the UAE, a country of about 9 million people.

New guidelines for minimum capital came into effect on Jan 1. Under the rules, companies are required to hold at least 5 million dirhams (\$1.4 million) if they offer remittance services, up from the previous level of 2 million dirhams. Firms handling wage payments must have at least 10 million dirhams. Implementation of another new rule related to the opening of additional branches has been delayed amid confusion about the requirement.

The rule says paid-up capital of exchange houses should be raised by 10 percent for the opening of each additional branch.

Osama al Rahma, chairman of the Foreign Exchange and Remittance Group, an industry body, said the group was seeking clarification from the regulator on whether the 10 percent increase was based on an exchange house's capital under the previous rules or under the new requirements.

"We need a balance between the growth in the number of branches which has to take place and the capital requirements, so that we allow business to grow and at the same time don't burden the business with unnecessary financial requirements," he said in an interview.

A central bank spokesman did not return calls seeking comment. But in a circular sent to exchange houses and seen by Reuters, the central bank said it had decided to postpone implementation of the new capital requirements related to additional branches until the end of the second quarter of 2016. It did not give any reason. — Reuters

EXCHANGE RATES

AL-MUZAINI EXCHANGE CO.

ASIAN COUNTRIES	
Japanese Yen	2.611
Indian Rupees	4.397
Pakistani Rupees	2.860
Sri Lankan Rupees	2.084
Nepali Rupees	2.746
Singapore Dollar	214.150
Hongkong Dollar	38.477
Bangladesh Taka	3.818
Philippine Peso	6.316
Thai Baht	8.424
GCC COUNTRIES	
Saudi Riyal	79.963
Qatari Riyal	82.369
Omani Riyal	778.846
Bahraini Dinar	796.330
UAE Dirham	81.640
ARAB COUNTRIES	
Egyptian Pound - Cash	36.250
Egyptian Pound - Transfer	38.340
Yemen Riyal/for 1000	1.399
Tunisian Dinar	149.480
Jordanian Dinar	422.620
Lebanese Lira/for 1000	1.998
Syrian Lira	2.137
Morocco Dirham	31.219
EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES	
US Dollar Transfer	299.700
Euro	336.110
Sterling Pound	433.670
Canadian dollar	218.600
Turkish lira	101.770
Swiss Franc	304.570
Australian Dollar	215.630
US Dollar Buying	298.500

GOLD

20 Gram	241.140
10 Gram	123.490
5 Gram	62.590

UAE EXCHANGE CENTRE WLL

CURRENCIES	TELEX TRANSFER PER 1000
Australian Dollar	202.54
Canadian Dollar	221.23
Swiss Franc	307.56
Euro	337.35
US Dollar	299.90
Sterling Pound	435.37
Japanese Yen	2.65
Bangladesh Taka	3.817
Indian Rupee	4.393
Sri Lankan Rupee	2.083
Nepali Rupee	2.744
Pakistani Rupee	2.862
UAE Dirhams	0.08161
Bahraini Dinar	0.7970
Egyptian Pound	0.03819
Jordanian Dinar	0.4265
Omani Riyal	0.7788
Qatari Riyal	0.08269
Saudi Riyal	0.07994

DOLLARCO EXCHANGE CO. LTD

Rate for Transfer	Selling Rate
US Dollar	299.950
Canadian Dollar	219.785
Sterling Pound	433.535
Euro	335.480
Swiss Franc	297.260
Bahrain Dinar	793.510
UAE Dirhams	81.905
Qatari Riyals	83.115

Saudi Riyals	80.665
Jordanian Dinar	422.535
Egyptian Pound	38.195
Sri Lankan Rupees	2.086
Indian Rupees	4.390
Pakistani Rupees	2.859
Bangladesh Taka	3.810
Philippines Peso	6.3608
Cyprus pound	571.300
Japanese Yen	3.605
Syrian Pound	2.360
Nepalese Rupees	3.740
Malaysian Ringgit	72.865
Chinese Yuan Renminbi	46.425
Thai Bhat	9.380
Turkish Lira	101.840

BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY

COUNTRY	SELL CASH Europe	SELLDRAFT
British Pound	0.425397	0.434397
Czech Korune	0.004336	0.016336
Danish Krone	0.040664	0.045664
Euro	0.328355	0.336355
Norwegian Krone	0.030720	0.035920
Romanian Leu	0.074618	0.074618
Slovakia	0.008881	0.018881
Swedish Krona	0.031238	0.036238
Swiss Franc	0.296509	0.306709
Turkish Lira	0.095901	0.106201
Australian Dollar	0.205785	0.217285
New Zealand Dollar	0.191161	0.200661
Canadian Dollar	0.212376	0.220876
US Dollars	0.295600	0.300100

US Dollars Mint		0.296100	0.300100
Asia			
Bangladesh Taka	0.003432	0.004032	
Chinese Yuan	0.044500	0.048000	
Hong Kong Dollar	0.036394	0.039144	
Indian Rupee	0.004170	0.004560	
Indonesian Rupiah	0.000018	0.000024	
Japanese Yen	0.002525	0.002705	
Kenyan Shilling	0.002937	0.0032937	
Korean Won	0.000235	0.000250	
Malaysian Ringgit	0.068048	0.074048	
Nepalese Rupee	0.002840	0.003010	
Pakistan Rupee	0.002708	0.002988	
Philippine Peso	0.006258	0.006538	
Sierra Leone	0.000070	0.000076	
Singapore Dollar	0.209933	0.215933	
South African Rand	0.013016	0.021516	
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001731	0.002311	
Taiwan	0.008913	0.009093	
Thai Baht	0.008092	0.008642	
Arab			
Bahraini Dinar	0.788078	0.796078	
Egyptian Pound	0.033683	0.038019	
Iranian Riyal	0.000083	0.000084	
Iraqi Dinar	0.000197	0.000257	
Jordanian Dinar	0.418683	0.426183	
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000	1.000000	
Lebanese Pound	0.000148	0.000248	
Moroccan Dirhams	0.020324	0.044324	
Nigerian Naira	0.001230	0.001865	
Omani Riyal	0.772023	0.777703	
Qatar Riyal	0.081609	0.082822	
Saudi Riyal	0.079033	0.079983	
Syrian Pound	0.001269	0.001489	
Tunisian Dinar	0.147163	0.155163	
Turkish Lira	0.095901	0.106201	
UAE Dirhams	0.080616	0.081765	
Yemeni Riyal	0.001354	0.001434	

Volkswagen Kuwait presents innovative design and technology with new 2016 Passat

2016 Passat will be available in Kuwait in four stylish configurations – S, SE, SEL and Sport



Behbehani Motors, the sole distributor for Volkswagen cars in Kuwait today unveils the 2016 Passat, with a striking new design, innovative technology and enhanced value.

The 2016 Passat will be available in Kuwait in four configurations - S, SE, SEL and Sport - and features more aggressive styling than its predecessor, with a new hood, front fenders, grille, front and rear bumpers, trunk lid and LED headlights and taillights.

Mr Abdullah Ali, General Manager of Volkswagen Kuwait said, "The new Passat 2016 is the epitome of a perfectly balanced model – combining great features, enhanced value and a refined driving experience. The striking new design evokes passion and excitement and is a package of perfect German engineering, innovative technology and safety features."

The new exterior offers slimmer headlights, a more substantial four-bar grille, and a muscular, domed hood, with all features blending harmoniously to give the Passat a wider, more planted stance at the front end. Additionally, a new chrome strip on the trunk ensures the rear lights appear lower, enhancing the grounded appearance, while chrome on the window surrounds, bumpers, and door trim complements the more premium nature of the design upgrade.

Inside, the 2016 Passat showcases an extensively upgraded interior, for a more sophisticated look and feel including a new steering wheel and two-tone décor panels, and refined chrome and piano black trim.

The Passat features the second-generation in-car infotainment system, also known as MIB II by Volkswagen. The system features touchscreens as standard equipment on all models. On most models, the display utilizes a capacitive touch sensor (similar to smartphone and

tablet technology) enabling gesture controls like swiping and pinch-zooming rather than the resistive touchscreens that require pressure and have slightly longer response times. Most infotainment units also feature a proximity sensor, which detects when a hand is nearby and automatically switches its display to allow easier selection of specific features. USB and Bluetooth® connectivity are standard on all 2016 Passat models.

Featuring the three major smartphone integration platforms—Apple CarPlay®, Android Auto™ and MirrorLink®, the in-car infotainment system allows seamless integration with the vast majority of smartphones available today.

Volkswagen also offers a combination of new safety and driver assistance systems in the 2016 Passat. The Automatic Post-Collision Braking System, standard on all 2016 Passat models, builds on the premise that a collision is rarely a single, instantaneous action, but rather a series of events that follow the initial impact—which

can cause additional collisions. The system helps address this by applying the brakes after a primary collision is detected by the airbag sensors, thus helping to reduce residual kinetic energy and, in turn, reduce the chance of additional damage.

Passat S

The entry level model, Passat S, features 16" Steel wheels with wheel covers, cruise control, air conditioning system and multifunction steering wheel. The new model features the Radio "Composition Media", including CD-player, SD-Card reader, AUX-IN, USB interface as well as the latest Mirrorlink technology. Other new features include mobile phone preparation (Bluetooth) including voice control and park distance control, front and rear.

Passat SE

In addition to the features of the Passat S, the SE model includes 17" "Carolina" alloy wheels, front fog lamps with static cornering lights, leather wrapped multifunc-

tion steering wheel, auto dimming rear view mirror and rear view camera.

Passat SEL

The Passat SEL model's distinguishing features include 17" "Knoxville" alloy wheels, two-zone climatronic air conditioning and Fender sound system with subwoofer. The new dramatic LED headlights and taillights provide better lighting performance with reduced energy consumption.

Passat Sport

In addition to the features of the S, SE and SEL, the top line model - Passat SEL boasts of 18" "Chattanooga" alloy wheels, leather sport seats, navigation system "Discover Media" including CD-player, SD-Card reader, AUX-IN, 2x USB interface and easy-open keyless access that opens the trunk via moving a foot near the rear of the vehicle. The model also allows electric seat adjustment 8-way for the driver and 6-way for passenger.





Lexus absolute luxury models test-driven at Al-Corniche

Al-Sayer Lexus Sponsored 8th Fitness Convention Kuwait 2015

KUWAIT: Mohamed Naser Al-Sayer and Lexus held a test drive at Al-Corniche Club exclusively for its members as part of sponsoring the 8th fitness convention 2015. The test drive was a grand success with strong participation from club members who grabbed the opportunity to explore the distinctive driving experience of the iconic Lexus cars. In addition to the experience, participants also got a chance to receive annual club membership renewal benefits.

Recently launched LX and RX iconic luxury SUVs, compact luxury cross over NX, flagship model LS and the striking RC were the absolute luxury Lexus models test driven at Arabian Gulf Road track.

Lexus initiative to support the fitness industry

Overall 2015 has been a spectacular year for Lexus and this initiative couldn't have come at a better time. Lexus has been named the top brand in the annual Consumer Reports Reliability Survey. All seven vehicle lines offered by Lexus received top reliability marks. Moreover in Kuwait Lexus won first of its kind, prestigious award for excellence in public relations and customer service under the patronage of His Highness The Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

The Lexus Brand in Motion

Lexus is creating amazing in motion driving



positive changes within the luxury automotive industry. Lexus continues to evolve with an increased emphasis on design, performance, art, fashion and digital communications and aims to highest level of product quality, and an experience beyond compare in any industry.

Mr. Simon Frith Business Director Lexus Kuwait said "We are pleased to have offered Al-Corniche club members test-drive experi-

ence of the top luxury Lexus models. Over the last 12 months Lexus has brought more of that experience to its customers launching incredible new models. The RC and RCF revolutionized the sports coupe segment, setting a new benchmark for the Luxury high performance car segment.

In 2015 Lexus entered the cross-over segment with the all new NX the ultimate premium crossover offering both coolness and supercharged capability, and in no time came the great news - the NX took home the award for 'Best Compact Premium SUV' at the 2015



Middle East Car of the Year Awards"

Bader Musaed Al-Sayer, Deputy Business Director Lexus Kuwait, said "Recently launched LX and RX, iconic luxury SUV's have been a roaring success. Ever since the LX and RX was introduced in Kuwait, they have been top selling models in their respective segments for

over a decade meanwhile the LS 460 is a sublime blend of exhilarating performance and visionary innovation"

The Fitness Convention included seminars conducted by renowned professionals, covering topics of how to improve the awareness of health and wellness in Kuwait.



Infiniti, the 1st place - Golden country winner. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Boubyan Bank, the 2nd place- Silver country winner.

Service Hero announces Kuwait's top performing service providers for 2015

1st place Infiniti, 2nd place Boubyan Bank, 3rd place Caribou Coffee

KUWAIT: Service Hero, the Arab World's only 100 percent consumer powered customer satisfaction index, honored Kuwait's top performing companies at the 2015 Customer Service Assessment Awards Ceremony, which took place at the JW Marriott - Kuwait city, on 15 February, 2016. The overall country winners are: 1st place -Infiniti, 2nd place -Boubyan Bank, 3rd place - Caribou Coffee.

The 16 industry categories that were rated in the 2015 Customer Service Assessment included cafés, casual dining, car service, clothes, electronics, fast food, fine dining, home furniture, Islamic Banks, retail banks, ISP, mobile operators, new car sale, private hospitals, regional Arab airlines and supermarkets. Each industry category was measured by Kuwait's consumers on a ten-point scale across eight service dimensions, which are reliability, speed, product quality, staff quality, value for money, location, call center and website quality.

The table below highlights the winner from each industry category, as announced at the awards ceremony. Eight of the winners are local, two are regional and six are international. Based on these findings, local operators outperform international franchises.

The results are based on an authenticated dataset of 14,860 records that give a 95 percent confidence level with a +/- 3 percent error margin.

From over 300 brands assessed, only 8 score above 8.5 on a 10 point scale which suggests exceptional focus on service excellence in these brands.



Faten Abu-Ghazaleh, Service Hero President.

Five companies are winning for the sixth time. These are Caribou Coffee, Mais Alghanim, McDonald's, Boubyan Bank and the Royal Hayat Hospital Four brands are awarded first place in their category for the first time in 2015 and these are: Zain in the ISP category, Saveco, Sakura Japanese Restaurant, and the Home Center.

Commenting on this year's results, Service Hero President Faten Abu-Ghazaleh, said: "I would like to congratulate the winners of the Service Hero 2015 Customer Satisfaction Index Awards and every other company with us here today as they represent the top 10 percent of companies in Kuwait in terms of

customer service standards from among over 300 listed in our index. While we award the winners tonight, I would like to stress that excellence is not about an award. Excellence is about companies making a strategic decision to be customer centric. That means that they understand the concept of the three peaks. The first peak is the ability to fully understand customer Expectations and needs. The second peak is the ability to deliver Satisfaction compared to what customers expect. And the third peak is the connection with consumers so that they like and recommend a brand. These strategic efforts require discipline and perseverance but once a company starts on the journey of building loyal and satisfied customers it will result in long term-financial gains.

"I look forward to this year's round of assessments, as it will be an exciting one with the recent launch of our newly revamped and transparent website; the main voting platform, and our recent expansion to the UAE. Just like any other service provider, we are keen to develop our offering and continuously present our customers with a better and more satisfying service, while extending our reach to tap into a new market that will not only allow us to cater to a larger audience but will also add to the credibility and value of the index". Abu-Ghazaleh added.

The 2016 assessments have already started since January 1st of this year and will continue till the end of the year.

The guest speaker of the evening was Jumana Abu-Ghazaleh, CEO & Founder of betwixtus, a digital startup for professional networking. With more than 25 years of experience in the business, brand and product and marketing field, and as a leader in development, strategy, positioning, innovation and forecasting, Jumana spoke about the direct correlation of having a high-level of staff engagement with high customer satisfaction levels. She shared a statistic that 70 percent of engaged employees offer strong customer services versus 17 percent of disengaged



KUWAIT: Caribou Coffee, the 3rd place- Bronze country winner.



KUWAIT: Group picture of the representatives of the companies winning with Service Hero team.

employees. Jumana shared experiences from Virgin Airways who work on creating employee brand ambassadors as well as Apple who have introduced "empathy geniuses". Her work with some of the world's most renowned brands such as Yahoo and Coca-Cola is used as case studies at Stanford University and has been featured in leading international publications. Service Hero adheres to ESOMAR principles (the European Society of Opinion & Market Research). It aims to collect a robust and rigorous sample exceed-

ing 10,000 validated assessments that reflect key demographic groups. Assessments are predominantly collected online asking 20 questions using a 10 point scale, and it deploys key processes before reporting validated and authenticated data to ensure its integrity. All scores are vetted by the well-respected American Customer Satisfaction Index, who is Service Hero's partner in the Arab world. Results are also overseen by an independent Advisory Council comprising the American University of Kuwait, Gulf University of Science & Technology, the Australian College of Kuwait, and the Kuwait Community College as well as neutral professionals from leading organizations, including the American Customer Satisfaction Index, the Boston Consulting Group, and Noor Investment Co.

Winner from each industry category:

Service Hero Category	The Best Customer Service Company	# of wins
1. Café	Caribou Coffee	6
1. Car Service	Infiniti	3
1. New Car Sale	Infiniti	2
1. Casual Dining	Mais Alghanim	6
1. Clothes	American Eagle	5
1. Electronics	X-Cite, Alghanim Electronics	2
1. Fast Food	McDonald's	6
1. Fine Dining	Sakura Japanese	New
1. Home Furniture	Home Center	New
10. Islamic Banks	Boubyan Bank	6
11. ISP	Zain	New
12. Mobile Operators		4
13. Private Hospitals	Royal Hayat Hospital	6
14. Regional Arab Airline	Emirates	4
15. Retail Bank	National Bank of Kuwait	5
16. Super Market	Saveco	New

Overall country winners of the Service Hero 2015 Award for First Place in Customer Satisfaction among over 300 companies are:

1. Infiniti	First place	Golden country winner for 1st time
1. Boubyan Bank	Second place	Silver country winner for 1st time
1. Caribou Cafe	Third place	Bronze country winner for 1st

TOP 10 PREDICTIONS FOR HOLIDAY HOTSPOTS IN 2016

LONDON: New routes and old favourites dominate British Airways' eagerly awaited annual list of predictions for 2016 holiday hotspots. Top travel experts at British Airways have scoured the world looking for the latest hot-to-trot destinations for the year ahead for travellers from the Middle East and selected 10 of the top picks for 2016.

According to British Airways, interest in exotic Costa Rica is rocketing with wildlife galore for adventurers of all ages, eager to explore the country's rainforests and relax on its stunning beaches. Lima, in Peru is also attracting increasing numbers of discerning travellers, keen to walk the world-famous Inca Trail and see the stunning ruins of Machu Picchu. British Airways flights to both look set to open Central and South America to a whole new generation of travellers.

Rio de Janeiro in Brazil stays firmly on the

Middle East, Africa and Central Asia said: "Sifting through scores of destinations around the world to choose the 10 we believe will make brilliant business routes and unbeatable holiday destinations for British Airways customers is no easy task! Thanks to our extensive worldwide network we have top travel experts in almost every corner of globe, with unrivalled experience of the countries that we fly to. Our shortlist plays a part in the detailed planning for our new routes this year, which includes rugged Costa Rica, fascinating Lima in Peru and San José in California's heart of Silicon Valley.

"We think we have a brilliant mix of new and ever-popular destinations that we believe will be a hit for holidaymakers from the Middle East in 2016, whatever kind of break they're looking for and however big their budget."

Top long haul destinations in 2016 predict-

leave visitors wanting to explore more of this amazing continent.

San Jose, Costa Rica

Adventurers and nature lovers will go wild for British Airways' new flights to exotic Costa Rica in 2016. Starting on April 27, British Airways will offer non-stop flights between London and the Costa Rican capital of San José. The country offers an incredible array of places to visit and experience, with everything from its incredible wildlife, rugged rainforests and volcanic peaks, as well as stunning beaches

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

As the start of spectacular 2016 Rio Olympics and Paralympic Games nears, visitor numbers to this incredible South American city - and the rest of Brazil are expected to soar. The celebrations kick-off in February with the start of the world's most famous carnival huge numbers of visitors from the UK look set to attend. Then the country plays host to the whole world later in the year as everyone looks to Brazil to host the brightest and the best for the Summer Olympics in August 2016 and the Paralympics a month later in September.

San Jose, California

California dreaming becomes even more of a reality when British Airways starts new daily flights on its 787-9 Dreamliner with its new First cabin to the capital of Silicon Valley, San José on May 4, 2016. It is the world's software power-house and home to household hi-tech giants such as Apple, eBay and Google, as well as to thousands of tech start-up companies and world-famous Stanford University in nearby Palo Alto. San Jose is also the gateway to nearby Carmel and Monterey on the rugged central coast along highway one, and provides easy access to the unrivalled splendour of Yosemite National Park. With A380 superjumbo services to San Francisco and Los Angeles and First cabins now to San Diego, America's dazzling west coast is shining even brighter in 2016.

Tampa, Florida

Tampa looks certain to remain a popular destination on the British Airways network, as family-friendly Florida pulls out all the stops to make 2016 the year to visit. The warm waters



of the Gulf of Mexico, extensive beaches and sultry climate make this a must-visit for a relaxing break in the sun. Daily flights from Gatwick make Tampa easy to reach, with a vast array of places to stay, whatever the budget.

Salzburg, Austria

Skiing favourite, Salzburg just got a lot closer thanks to the start of new services to the Austrian city, from both Heathrow and Glasgow. Historic Salzburg is a firm favourite, while skiers head to any one of the dozens of resorts within easy travelling distance, Salzburg, with its world-famous Alpine setting and historic baroque buildings and architecture offers just as much for those determined not to step on a slippery slope. For the music-minded, Salzburg served as the backdrop to the multiple award-winning Julie Andrews musical, The Sound of Music, as well as being the birthplace of top classical composer, Mozart.

Reykjavik, Iceland

Just hours away from the UK, but a lifetime away from the ordinary, Iceland's dramatic volcanic landscape of lava fields, geysers, glaciers, waterfalls and black-sand beaches make it a popular tourist destination, especially to watch the astonishing Aurora Borealis. New British Airways flights are sure to boost visitors, drawn to this amazing island. But there's more to see than just snow and ice, not least Reykjavik itself; the world's most northerly and quirky capital, with its cosmopolitan atmosphere which makes a great base to explore this fascinating country.

Valencia, Spain

Spain's third biggest city looks set to draw admiring visitors with the start of direct flights from Gatwick on November 6. Starting just four flights a week, they will rise to six a week for summer 2016, making it British Airways' 15th Spanish route to the sun. Brilliant nearby beaches make this a popular destination for families. Culture vultures also flock to Valencia, which is famous for its numerous festivals, fine historic buildings, striking futuristic architecture and great museums. Valencia's thriving nightlife is also a strong draw once the sun goes down and the drinks start flowing.

Vienna, Austria

Few European cities offer so much culture, history and charm with so many amazing cafes, museums and world-class music festivals as Vienna. Having celebrated 150 years of the stunning Ringstrasse - the most beautiful and well-known boulevard - British Airways new Heathrow service, which started in September 2015, looks set to see even more customers veering to Vienna for the ultimate city break.

Krakow, Poland

Krakow will have its turn in the spotlight this year with the Pope set to visit the southern Polish city to celebrate World Youth Day. With the opening of a new express train station last year the transfer time from airport to city centre is just 18 minutes. Soak up the restaurants and bars in the vast Rynek Glowny, Europe's largest market square.



Costa Rica.

map for leisure travellers, with the Olympics and Paralympics making it a must-see destination for 2016. Hi-tech, social media-savvy business travellers and California-dreaming holidaymakers are both set to find their way to San José, thanks to British Airways' new daily flights to the capital of Silicon Valley.

But popular European destinations mean British Airways customers in the Middle East don't need to fly far to enjoy fun in the sun on a different continent.

Paolo De Renzis, Head of Sales for the

map for leisure travellers from the Middle East include...

Lima, Peru

With the world-famous Inca Trail and the incredible citadel of Machu Picchu, there's nowhere quite like Peru. Its rich cultural heritage make it one of the most popular places in South America to visit and explore thanks to British Airways offering the only direct services between London and Lima from May 4, 2016. Lima is a fantastic gateway to some of the most dramatic places to visit in South America

INNOVATIVE SMARTPHONE APP SAVES FORD FACTORY WORKERS DAILY 1-KM WALK

DUBAI: More than a century after Henry Ford started the first moving assembly line, Ford Motor Company is bringing his pioneering invention into the smartphone age.

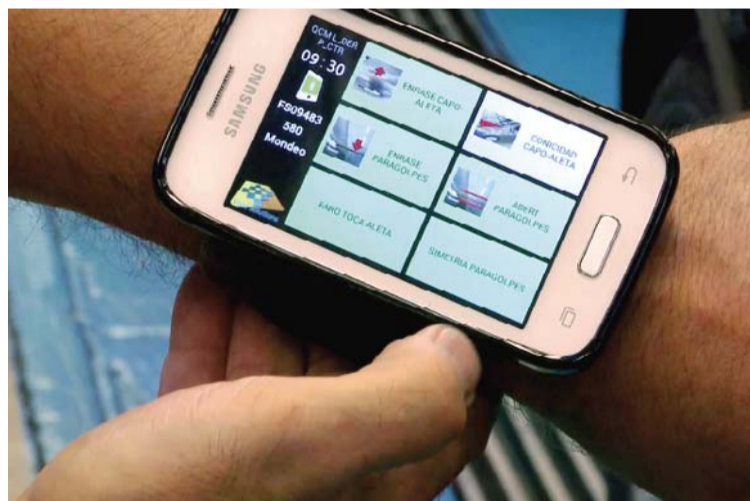
Ford has developed a wearable device, which connected to a smartphone app, enables production line workers to make faster and more accurate quality checks on new vehicles.

Previously, workers at Ford's manufacturing facility in Valencia, Spain, used a paper-based system that involved walking back and forth more than one kilometer daily to access information on desktop PCs. Now, a new Android app means specification and quality checks can be made on the spot using a wrist-worn Portable Quality Assurance Device believed to be an industry-first and the moving assembly line can be stopped immediately as needed.

We have varied options and features across our vehicle range and digital innovation in our plants helps to generate lean methods within the manufacturing process, said Linda Cash, vice president, Manufacturing, Ford of Europe. The ability to simply consult a smartphone screen to check any aspect of a vehicle's quality and specification helps to guarantee highest levels of product quality, and improves work processes and manufacturing efficiency.

The Bluetooth-enabled device recognizes the exact quality inspection requirements for each vehicle that passes along the assembly line. These are displayed on the touchscreen of the

wrist-worn device, and team members are then able to instantly follow up and approve. The new system has helped to reduce human error by 7 percent while at the same time making each vehicle check seven seconds quicker. In Valencia alone, where the number of vehicles produced this year is expected to exceed 400,000 units, this represents a substantial time saving that allows



additional quality inspections.

Ford builds six nameplates and even more body styles in Valencia that include hundreds of different vehicle specifications. These include the Mondeo sedan, the Mondeo Vignale, Kuga SUV, Transit Connect light commercial vehicle, Tourneo Connect people-mover, all-new S-MAX multi-activity vehicle, and Galaxy seven-seat people-

mover. The company recently announced it is completing the final part of a 2.3 billion investment in manufacturing operations in Valencia, transforming the facility into one of the world's most advanced, flexible and productive auto plants.

Ford production manager Ramon Garcia proposed the wearable device connected to a smartphone app to the

me that we could apply similar technology to the workplace and improve the automotive production process, Garcia said. This technology helps us to better handle the increased complexity of more vehicles and more vehicle specifications being produced on a single assembly line.

The initial feedback from production line workers has been very positive and we are actively looking at other areas in the process where we could deploy digital innovation and further increase quality and efficiency, Garcia said. Following a successful pilot project, Ford is now looking into rolling out the Portable Quality Assurance Devices to other plants.

As more consumers embrace wearable devices such as smart watches, glasses and fitness trackers, Ford this year opened the Automotive Wearables Experience lab at its Research and Innovation Center in Dearborn. Here, scientists and engineers are working to integrate wearable devices and vehicles to enable driver-assist technologies to be more aware of the driver behind the wheel particularly when that driver is stressed or sleepy.

Valencia also is among Ford facilities in Europe that has introduced an advanced wi-fi network for the flexible installation of vehicles on production lines of the software required for voice-activated connectivity system SYNC 2. This enables assembly workers to download vehicle-specific language and navigation packs as required for each vehicle.

plants management team after observing his colleagues and family increasingly using smartphone and tablet apps on lunch breaks and at home. Ford, in partnership with local software company Visia Solutions S.L., developed the Android-powered app.

Smart mobile technology increasingly helps my colleagues and my family organize our personal lives. It struck

me that we could apply similar technology to the workplace and improve the automotive production process, Garcia said. This technology helps us to better handle the increased complexity of more vehicles and more vehicle specifications being produced on a single assembly line.

The initial feedback from production line workers has been very positive and we are actively looking at other areas in the process where we could deploy digital innovation and further increase quality and efficiency, Garcia said.

Following a successful pilot project, Ford is now looking into rolling out the Portable Quality Assurance Devices to other plants.

As more consumers embrace wearable devices such as smart watches, glasses and fitness trackers, Ford this year opened the Automotive Wearables Experience lab at its Research and Innovation Center in Dearborn. Here, scientists and engineers are working to integrate wearable devices and vehicles to enable driver-assist technologies to be more aware of the driver behind the wheel particularly when that driver is stressed or sleepy.

Valencia also is among Ford facilities in Europe that has introduced an advanced wi-fi network for the flexible installation of vehicles on production lines of the software required for voice-activated connectivity system SYNC 2. This enables assembly workers to download vehicle-specific language and navigation packs as required for each vehicle.

VIVA LAUNCHES BLACKBERRY PRIV WITH POSTPAID VOICE PLANS

KUWAIT: VIVA, Kuwait's fastest-growing and most developed telecom operator, launched the BlackBerry PRIV device for the first time in the Kuwaiti market, with postpaid voice plans.

PRIV combines everything you have come to expect from BlackBerry with the full ecosystem of Android and its apps. It features a slide-out keyboard. Schneider-Kreuznach certified camera and the best-integrated messaging experience on Android. Added security lets you know when you could be at risk, so you can easily take action to improve your privacy. It comes with a 5.4 inch dual-curved screen, 22.5 hours of battery life under mixed use, 18 MP dual flash camera and 32 GB internal storage space, in addition to faci-

ties to view, prioritize, and respond to all your messages in one location with BlackBerry Hub. In addition, it allows to enjoy the freedom to choose between a virtual or a physical keyboard for speed and accuracy. VIVA's customers will be able to experience combined voice and internet traffic seamlessly and simultaneously on LTE network and conduct high-quality calls and video calls with no buffering and less background noise. VIVA aims to provide its customers with an integrated and complete voice and data solution that offers them the opportunity to enjoy uninterrupted voice call and data streaming, and its commitment to offering its customers the latest in the world of technology.

AHLI UNITED BANK ANNOUNCES WINNERS IN AL-HASSAD ISLAMIC SAVING PROGRAM

KUWAIT: Ahli United Bank held its weekly draw of Al-Hassad Islamic Saving program on February 10, 2016. This program offers the biggest prize amount to the largest number of winners. The prize program succeeded in becoming the first and only prize account in Kuwait compliant with the Islamic Sharia principles. The program has been developed to fulfil the needs of the Bank customers and increase their opportunities in winning sizeable and attractive prizes in addition to enjoying the latest banking advantages that Ahli United Bank provides.

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

The winner of the weekly grand prize in the amount of KD 25,000/- is: BADER HUSAIN ABDULLAH.

The winners of the KD 1,000 prize each: LATIFAH SAYED EBRAHIM, ELHAM ABDULBARI HASAN, AYMAN MOHAMMAD AL NASSAR, EMTEYAZ ALI KAGZI, ALYA SHWAISH AL AZMI, ADEL HASAN ALI, MOHD KALEFA AL GAREEB, FATMA HASAN ALI AL SAFFAR, TALAL NAYEF RASHEED, RUBA SHERIF AL ALAMI, NADA ABDULLATEEF AL KULAIB, EISSA ABDULLAH AL KHALEEL, ABDULRAHEEM



ABDULKAREEM ABDULGHAFAR, SARA AHMAD AL-QURAINI, MUNEEARAH ABDULLAH AL DEWEESH, TAYSEER NAZEH MOHAMED, FATEMAH HUSSEIN ALI, MAHMOOD HAMEED SALMAN, MAZIN ISMAIL MOHAMMED, HUDA A.RASOOL AL ZEERA, HUSAIN ALI HASAN, NOORJAHAN HATAM A.QADER, MOHD HASAN SALEH, ABBAS A.KARIM ABDULLA, SARAH HELAL ABDULLA.

The Prize program of "Al-Hassad Islamic Saving" from Ahli United Bank offers a weekly grand prize worth KD 25,000 in addition to 25 weekly prizes worth a total of KD 25,000 distributed to 25 prizes, KD 1,000 for each winner.

In addition, prizes of Al-Hassad Islamic saving program from Ahli United Bank offer 4 quarterly grand prizes announced in quarterly draws. Each is a "Salary for Life" prize which is worth KD 25,000.

In general, Ahli United Bank continues to offer innovative tools and means to meet the needs of its customers to match the Bank's long history of distinctive services which extend over 73 years during which the Bank managed to take the lead among local banks.

THREE KD 5,000 WINNERS IN NBK'S AL-JAWHARA WEEKLY DRAWS FOR FEBRUARY

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) announced three lucky winners in Al-Jawhara weekly draws during the month of February. The draws were conducted under the supervision of Ministry of Commerce Representatives.

Mansour Jafar Al-Mesri, Abdul Naser Mubarak Al-Fulaifi, and the minor Narjes Ali Ashkanani each won KD 5,000. The winners expressed their gratitude and thanked NBK for its great services and promotions.

The upcoming winner of Al-Jawhara KWD 125,000 monthly draw will be announced live on Marina FM on Tuesday, 23rd of February 2016.

NBK has doubled customers' chances to win in the weekly, monthly and quarterly draws when they do not withdraw or transfer from their accounts.

NBK customers have chances to win KD 5,000 weekly, KD 125,000 monthly

and a grand prize of KD 250,000 quarterly. Each KD 50 in a customer's account entitles them to one entry in the draw, thus more money in an account means more chances in each draw. The new feature introduced to Al-Jawhara Account enables customers to double their chances when maintaining their balance without withdrawing or transferring from Al-Jawhara account.

Al-Jawhara is the most popular prize-giving account in Kuwait. Al-Jawhara account entitles account holders to enter the weekly, monthly and quarterly Al-Jawhara draws. All prizes are automatically credited to the winners' accounts the day after the draw.

Al-Jawhara accounts are available for both Kuwaitis and expats and can be opened at any of NBK's branches around Kuwait, or through NBK website for existing customers.

TECH STOCKS SELLOFF MAY TURN IPO CHILL INTO FREEZE

SAN FRANCISCO: This winter was supposed to be Nutanix's time to shine. The high-tech computing and storage company filed for a hotly anticipated initial public offering in December, ready to woo investors early in the New Year. But so far, Nutanix hasn't been able to shake the chill of what is shaping up to be a largely barren season for IPOs. And with the battering technology stocks have suffered in the past couple of weeks, and the dismal performance of technology IPOs in the past couple of years, any idea of a springtime busy with technology offerings may also be wishful thinking.

Eric Jensen, an IPO attorney for Cooley LLP, said his firm has "a pretty significant pipeline of deals," with about 32 companies that have filed with regulators for IPOs, either confidentially or publicly. But he said plans by the five or so technology firms with a \$1 billion-plus valuation in that queue, "are all stalled out."

The cratering in technology stocks has also helped to push down the valuations of private tech companies and interest in investing in them, say capital markets experts. Fewer options for capital raising means that high-flying companies may need to rein in spending, delay some ambitious expansion plans and even lay off staff, according to investors and tech consultants.

IPO experts also say they expect more startups will get acquired cheaply, and go the way of Good Technology, a mobile security company once valued at \$1 billion and last year sold to BlackBerry for \$425 million. It had planned an IPO but that never got off the ground. "A lot of these companies are going to have to rein in their costs in order to survive," said Matt Brady, co-founder and chief operating officer of investment firm Militello Capital.

The markets tanked just as Apptus, which makes sales software for businesses, was putting the finishing touches on its IPO filing. CEO Kirk Krappe told Reuters he is still anticipating a debut in the second or third quarter. But he is running the company a little leaner, slowing down on hiring, and making sure there are ample cash reserves so he can be flexible with his IPO timing.

India Expansion Plan

In the seven years since it was launched, Nutanix has attracted more than \$300 million from investors including Khosla Ventures and Fidelity Investments. It had \$241 million in rev-

enue for the fiscal year ending July 31, 2015, selling servers and storage systems to customers such as Nasdaq Inc, Nintendo Co Ltd and Nordstrom Inc. Last year, it set out on a well-trodden path for high-growth tech startups, filing paperwork for an IPO that was expected to value the company at around \$2.5 billion, and with its eye on a January debut, according to two people familiar with the matter.

And yet, come mid-February, that hasn't happened. Nutanix hasn't offered a price range for the sale, which usually precedes a week or two of investor presentations known as the roadshow, making the earliest possibility for a public debut weeks away. It is unclear what the delays will mean for Nutanix's growth plans. The company declined to comment for this article. Nutanix has been seeking to expand its customer base quickly, particularly among the large global companies, to hire aggressively and expand in developing nations such as India, according to regulatory filings and previous statements from the company. Employees will also have to wait longer to cash in their stock options, a hefty part of many tech employees' compensation. From Aug 2012 through Nov 2015, Nutanix granted more than 35 million shares of common stock at a price ranging from \$1.22 to \$15.06 to officers, directors and employees at the company, according to its IPO filing. It also granted more than six million restricted stock units.

Nor has an IPO happened for any technology company so far this year. None have even priced. Indeed, January marked the first month since Sept 2011 without an IPO of any kind, according to Renaissance Capital, manager of IPO-focused funds. Some had certainly been hoping to come to market. Cloud communications company Twilio filed for an IPO confidentially last year, while both security company Okta and cloud software startup Coupa have been in talks with bankers for an IPO, according to two people familiar with the matter. "Those that wanted to go out in January, now they're stuck," Jensen said. Coupa declined to comment. Twilio and Okta did not respond to requests for comment.

In 2014, there were two tech IPOs in January and February, according to market intelligence firm Ipreo. Last year, a slow year for deals, there was still one deal in January. Even after this year got off to a rocky start, with low oil prices sending the stock market lower, many tech companies and bankers had bet on the IPO window

opening in the second quarter. Now, those involved in bringing deals to market are worried that might not happen.

"It's quite possible that we will have volatility for the remainder of the year," said Nate Gallon, a partner who leads IPO deals for law firm Hogan Lovells. "People are bracing themselves." Companies face risks if they wait longer than six months between filing for an IPO and listing. Investors can lose interest, management teams can lose momentum and the offering can become anticlimactic, said Karim Anani, IPO west region leader for consulting firm EY.

Volatility Index Warning

To be sure, the US stock market could stabilize and recover - it rallied on Friday - and a rebound in technology stock prices would increase the appeal of an IPO for companies like Nutanix. But experts say the number of public tech companies scaling back their revenue growth forecasts, bloated valuations in the private market and concern that the global economy is still on very shaky ground have created roadblocks. IPO advisers say a company should not go public when the volatility index, or VIX, which measures the market's expectation of price volatility, is above 20. The index has closed above 20 every day but two so far this year. Last year, it only closed above that level 42 times. Securities analysts are concerned that market conditions will also be roiled later in the year by concerns over who will win the US presidential election and what their budget and tax policies will be, especially if Donald Trump is the Republican candidate or Bernie Sanders gets the Democrats' nomination.

Further eroding investor confidence is the weak performance of tech IPOs from the last couple of years. Of the 87 tech IPOs that debuted over 2014-2015, about 80 percent are underwater from their IPO price. Payments technology company First Data Corp, the biggest IPO of 2015, fell as much as 21 percent on Wednesday after missing earnings estimates. It closed Friday at \$9.44, a 41 percent drop from its IPO price. Big data company Hortonworks this month tried to sell shares at \$16.57 in a follow-on offer and ended up getting only enough demand to price at \$9.50, according to Ipreo. Its shares ended Friday at \$8.43, against a \$16 IPO price. IPO stock buyers "are nursing their wounds," said Josh Stein, a partner at firm DFJ Venture. —Reuters



VANCOUVER: The prestigious TED Conference known for brilliant minds and heady topics gets under way as attendees are welcomed at the Convention Center on Monday. — AFP

VISIONS OF THE FUTURE UNLEASHED AT TED

VANCOUVER: Dreams and nightmares that could shape the future took center stage Monday at the TED gathering known for brilliant minds exploring potentially world-changing ideas. Astro Teller of the boundary-pushing X lab run by Google parent company Alphabet, and television producer and writer Shonda Rhimes were among those who took to the intimate stage during the opening session of the five-day event. "This year's TED program includes speakers with truly extraordinary visions of the future," said Chris Anderson, curator of the Technology, Entertainment, Design Conference. "We'll hear ideas - some hopeful, some frightening - that will jolt us awake."

Teller, playfully nicknamed "captain of moonshots", shared insight on the inner workings of the lab known for projects including self-driving cars and wireless Internet streamed from high-altitude balloons. Google has long sponsored TED, and its founders have spoken at the conference. Teller predicted that efforts by X and others would eventually see billions of people in remote or rural areas getting life-changing Internet access within the coming decade.

The X team's high-speed Internet service known as "Project Loon" began its first tests in Sri Lanka on Monday ahead of a planned joint venture with the government there, the country's top IT official told AFP. Teller said he expected Project Loon balloons to be tested over Indonesia this year. The project, he quipped, might be the craziest to date at the X lab, which was once part of Google but became a separate unit with a restructuring that created parent company Alphabet. "Our balloons today do everything we need," Teller said. "So we are going to keep going."

'Banquet for Whole World'

Some 1,400 people from 58 countries are

DARK SKIES AHEAD FOR NEW BOMBARDIER JET

MONTREAL: With sales of its new CSeries jetliner failing to take off and a sinking share price, despite a multi-billion dollar government cash injection, the horizon is darkening for Bombardier. Suddenly, the Canadian manufacturer's dream - going head to head with the workhorses of the aviation market, the Airbus A320 and Boeing 737, in its first foray outside business and regional passenger aircraft into the category of medium-range, single-aisle jets - is turning into a nightmare.

The first completely new aircraft design in the 100- to 150-seat category in more than 25 years was supposed to offer significant fuel savings over its rivals. But a two-year delay in its development allowed both Airbus and Boeing to freshen up their respective lineups with the launch of the A320neo and 737 Max, which are similar to their old planes but with new fuel-saving engines. The first neo rolled off the assembly line in January, while Boeing expects to deliver its first Max in late 2017.

Bombardier is expected to make the first delivery of its CSeries to Lufthansa subsidiary Swiss in the coming months. But it can no longer boast of 20 percent fuel savings over competitors. At best, the CSeries is 10 percent more fuel efficient than the neo or Max, Bombardier has acknowledged. Considering that airlines would also have to shell out money to train pilots on the new aircraft, that makes the CSeries less attractive to potential buyers.

Meanwhile, development costs have soared to US\$5.4 billion, nearly double the amount Bombardier had budgeted. The CSeries "was an attractive purchase when oil cost \$120 a barrel, but at \$29, the argument for fuel savings falls apart," Mehran Ebrahimi, an aeronautics professor at the University of Quebec in Montreal (UQAM) told AFP. But the fact remains that the CSeries is "incredibly quiet," which is a welcome design improvement for people who live near an airport, commented Isabelle Dostaler, another aviation expert at Concordia University in Montreal.

expected to attend the annual TED event at which more than 70 speakers or artists will deliver compact, powerful talks or performances centered on a "Dream" theme. "Speakers will explore some of the greatest ideas we're capable of dreaming up today, as well as a few nightmares worthy of our attention," TED organizers promised. The rich roster of speakers ranged from the founders of ride-sharing service Uber and home-sharing startup Airbnb to France's "Lady Gaga of mathematics" Cedric Villani and Wanda Diaz Merced, a blind astrophysicist who uses sound to study the stars.

Television producer and free-speech champion Norman Lear also plans an on-stage chat. Video of the talks, released free online, have won a global following. In a first, the opening session of the conference was streamed live to select movie theaters in North America where people could watch for the price of a ticket. Recorded versions of the session will be shown in theaters in Europe on Feb 16 and in Australia on March 2.

The conference born in Northern California in 1984 during what was supposed to be a one-off event has grown into a global forum for heady "ideas worth spreading". TED is known for trademark "talks" during which the brilliant, innovative, artistic or accomplished deliver thought-sparking presentations in 18 minutes or less. In 2006, TED began to record talks and post them online. As TED talks were posted in more languages, traffic to the website soared. Talks have spread to television and radio. Captivating TED speakers have become Internet stars. Richard Saul Wurman, who started the gatherings that Anderson's non-profit Sapling Foundation transformed into the TED of today, has described the gathering as a dinner party that has turned into "a banquet for the whole world". — AFP

Ebrahimi noted that Airbus and Boeing are trying to undercut Bombardier and hold onto their duopoly in this segment by offering deep discounts on their new jetliners. And it appears to be working. Airbus has received 4,500 orders for its neo, while Bombardier has received no new orders for its CSeries since September 2014, after landing 243 orders during its development stage.

Keeping Bombardier in Canada

Faced with these difficulties, Bombardier asked for and received US\$2.5 billion from the government of Quebec province, where it is based, to get its CSeries program off the ground, giving up a 49.5 percent stake in the CSeries program and 30 percent of its rail unit in exchange. Since receiving the cash injection, Bombardier's stock has fallen 40 percent to a record low of Can\$0.72 before bouncing back slightly to close Friday in Toronto at Can\$0.81. (North American markets were closed Monday).

The company has also asked Ottawa to contribute, but Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's Liberals have reportedly been hesitant to give public funds to a family-controlled firm.

Heirs of founder Joseph-Armand Bombardier hold a small stake in the company but control its board through a majority of voting shares. "Has the Bombardier family taken such good decisions over the past decade? Not really," Dostaler said. "Just because you have a blood tie doesn't necessarily mean you share your grandfather's business acumen," she said of Pierre Beaudoin, grandson of Joseph-Armand Bombardier. —AFP



PINGTANG, China: This file picture taken on July 29, 2015 shows the 500-m Aperture Spherical Radio Telescope (FAST) under construction in southwest China's Guizhou province. — AFP

CHINA TELESCOPE TO DISPLACE HUMANS IN SEARCH FOR ALIENS

BEIJING: China will move nearly 10,000 people to make way for the world's largest radio telescope which promises to help humanity search for alien life, state media reported yesterday. The Five-hundred-metre Aperture Spherical Radio Telescope (FAST), nestled between hills in the southwestern province of Guizhou, is due to start operation this year. Provincial officials have vowed to relocate 9,110 residents living within five kilometres of the listening device by September, the official Xinhua news agency said.

The relocations will "create a sound electromagnetic wave environment", it cited a top regional official named Li Yuecheng as saying. Residents will receive 12,000 yuan (\$1,800) in subsidies for their troubles, with some getting extra support for housing, it said. FAST, built at a cost of 1.2 billion yuan, will dwarf the Arecibo Observatory in

Puerto Rico as the world's largest radio telescope, which is some 300 m in diameter.

Xinhua earlier cited Wu Xiangping, director-general of the Chinese Astronomical Society, as saying that the telescope's high level of sensitivity "will help us to search for intelligent life outside of the galaxy". In the past China has relocated hundreds of thousands of people to make way for large infrastructure projects such as dams and canals. Many complain of poor compensation. The area surrounding the telescope is remote and relatively poor. Xinhua earlier said it was chosen because there are no major towns nearby.

As well as upping investment in astronomy, Beijing is accelerating its multi-billion-dollar space exploration program, with plans for a permanent orbiting station by 2020 and eventually a manned mission to the moon. — AFP

News

in brief

Huawei embraces Flo-Jo for ad mojo

BEIJING: Chinese telecommunications equipment maker Huawei on Tuesday defended advertisements comparing its achievements with the late American sprinter Florence Griffith Joyner, dogged by doping allegations for setting records that have stood unbroken for some three decades. The English-language adverts circulated online feature a painting of Griffith Joyner, widely known as "Flo Jo", raising her muscular arms in triumph while crossing a finish line under the heading "Strategic Breakthrough". Griffith Joyner, a flamboyant runner renowned for long colourful nails and spandex trackuits, posted relatively slow times early in her career but set jaw-dropping world records in the women's 100 m in the US Olympics trials in 1988 and in the 200 m sprints at the Olympics itself in Seoul. She retired a year later. No woman has ever run faster.

Apple Pay to go live in China on Feb 18

BEIJING: Apple Inc's Apple Pay mobile payment system will be available in China from Feb 18 for Industrial and Commercial Bank of China Ltd (ICBC) customers, bank representatives said in social media posts yesterday. The technology giant had previously said the system would launch in China in early 2016, making it Apple Pay's fifth country as it accelerates development of a planned new revenue stream. ICBC is China's biggest lender by assets. The lender is set to be joined by a raft of peers: Apple's China website lists 19 Chinese lenders as official Apple Pay partners, and state media reported two other lenders will also go live with the service from Feb 18. Greater China is Apple's second-largest market by revenue, but the company faces an uphill battle to match that prowess quickly in mobile payments.

Cisco inks cloud deal with Pivotal

SAN FRANCISCO: Cisco Systems Inc has struck a deal with Pivotal Software Inc to offer each other's products in the cloud arena, a sign the giant network company is looking to work with others as it tries to build its presence in one of the fastest-growing areas of computing. The agreement, to be announced later on Tuesday, means the two companies will jointly sell Pivotal Cloud Foundry, which helps developers build and run software on the cloud, and Cisco's Metapod, a service that lets companies make their data centers more cloud-friendly. Pivotal's service helps companies deploy a free, but hard-to-use open-source technology also called Cloud Foundry, much as the free operating system known as Linux generally requires services of a consultant like Red Hat Inc.

TECH KEEPS MINERS AFLOAT BUT PRICES UNDER WATER

MELBOURNE/VANCOUVER: New technology is helping miners cut costs to survive the worst downturn in commodity prices in nearly two decades, which is good news for companies that might otherwise have gone to the wall, not so good for an industry drowning in overcapacity. Commodity prices from coal to zinc are down in some case as much as 80 percent from record highs a few years ago, caused in part by slowing economic growth in China - for years the world's biggest user of raw materials - which shows little signs of abating.

Global resource-based companies have adapted to the fall in revenue by adopting new technologies enabling, for example, real-time tracking of operations, which helps reduce down time, saves fuel, improves safety and boosts production. Despite the collapse in prices, Australian mining companies have suffered only a 20 percent fall in profits in the most recent financial year relative to 2012, according to government data.

That means mines that would have been

doomed in past downturns are proving far more resilient, prolonging oversupply and keeping downward pressure on prices. "You're getting more output for a lower price. It's just one issue that's making production a bit stickier than you would expect," said Ric Ronge, a portfolio manager of Pengana Global Resources Fund. At a new gold mine in northern Canada, huge fans switch on to suck dust and diesel fumes out of shafts 650 metres underground when equipment or workers approach the area, and switch off when they leave, not wasting energy spinning all day long.

"Ventilation on demand" is saving Goldcorp as much as \$2.5 million a year at the Eleonore mine, and has cut energy costs more than 20 percent at a Glencore copper mine in Canada, thanks to software tying together data from tracking tags on the workers and sensors on ore loaders. "They're seeing it as: 'If I don't do this, I'm not going to be around, because it's helping lower my costs,'" said Doug Bellin, senior manager at Cisco Systems, which helped set up systems for Goldcorp.

The trend is running against the industry's broader drive to cut capital expenditure. "There's a growing interest towards more automation," said Petri Virrankoski, manager of load and haul in Australia for Sandvik Mining, the Swedish maker of mining equipment. "But obviously in these times money is tight, so I wouldn't say it's easy to sell anything nowadays." Sandvik has successfully tested automated trucks and loaders at a mine in Finland.

Gold Resilience

Gold miners in particular have stepped up technology investment within a falling capex budget, as the gold price in producers' currencies, such as Australian or Canadian dollars, has held up much better than other commodities. "I'd say half our clients are gold, which is quite lucky, because gold's still doing quite well," said Charlie Forrest, vice president of sales for Quebec-based Newtrax, a private company that makes battery-operated wireless nodes that convey data from underground operations to the surface. —Reuters



KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysian police personnel stretching as they take part in the special weight-loss and fitness program "Trim and Fit" at police headquarters in Kuala Lumpur. — AFP photos



KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysian police officer Suresh Mariah (right) exercising with others as he takes part in the special weight-loss and fitness program "Trim and Fit" at police headquarters in Kuala Lumpur.

OVERWEIGHT MALAYSIAN COPS FEEL THE BURN

IT IS SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST FOR 11,000 OFFICERS

KUALA LUMPUR: Huffing and puffing, sweat-soaked Malaysian police officer Mohamad Ra'ayim Jemahir strains in hot pursuit of an elusive quarry: a fit physique.

Panting on an exercise bike, the 102-kilogramme (224-pound) Ra'ayim is among thousands of overweight Malaysian officers who have been ordered to slim down amid concern that fast-expanding waistlines could limit their crime-fighting abilities. The Royal Malaysian Police says about 11,000 of its 122,000 officers—nearly 10 percent—are overweight, causing rising health-related absenteeism and costing millions of dollars in lost productivity.

Top brass warned last month that cops could miss out on future promotions if they fail to shape up, and are now piloting a special weight-loss and fitness program. Ra'ayim largely blames his weight woes on habitual consumption of Malaysia's tasty but often fattening cuisine during the typically long stretches of inaction common in policing.

"Before, I took food without knowledge—I'd eat when I see food. So now, I eat when I need (to)," said Ra'ayim, 40, who wore a white sweatband and hopes to shed 16 kilos. The stereotype of the donut-gulping, coffee-quaffing cop, belly straining at his gun belt, is hardly unique to Malaysia. But the problem has reached worrying proportions in the Southeast Asian country.

Zulkifli Abdullah, the police force's director of management, said growing numbers of officers suffer from diabetes, high blood pressure and other illnesses associated with excess weight and fattening food, and that an average of 560 officers call in sick daily.

"In 2015, we had about 200 officers who died due to various illness like heart attacks and diabetes," Zulkifli said, adding that the number was rising.

Survival of the fittest

The issue is symptomatic of a larger nation-

al obesity problem, with recent studies indicating nearly half of Malaysians are overweight, ironically due to decades of successful economic development that has largely defeated hunger and led to more sedentary modern lifestyles.

Compounding the issue is Malaysia's love for a lip-smacking national cuisine marked by carb-heavy rice dishes, oily noodles, fried chicken, sugary drinks, and rich curries made with fattening coconut milk. National police chief Khalid Abu Bakar said in January that new promotions will henceforth be subject to mandatory fitness tests.

So Zulkifli last month launched a voluntary programme at the main police headquarters in Kuala Lumpur to whip overweight cops into shape. It now has three dozen officers who go through daily workouts and must observe diets limiting them to 2,000 calories per day. Basic goals include a 10 percent weight loss over six months. During a recent session, offi-

cers gamely pushed themselves on stationary bikes and treadmills before circling around an instructor for stretching and other exercises.

At 111 kilograms, officer Suresh Mariah, 28, struggled with knee bends and jumping exercises. He said his weight ballooned after he was hobbled by a knee ligament tear a few years ago, but also sheepishly admits an addiction to Malaysia's national dish, nasi lemak—rice cooked with coconut milk and served with a fried egg, fried anchovies and roasted peanuts. Planning to wed in March, he eventually wants to shed 20 kilos. "I am ashamed of my weight," he said, adding that his current poor condition "shocked" his family and friends.

Image problems

Although now only available at Kuala Lumpur headquarters, Zulkifli hopes to expand the program to officers nationwide.

Overweight police add to the PR woes of what is already one of the country's least-

respected institutions. Police corruption is believed to be widespread, and Malaysia's longtime governing coalition is routinely accused of using the force to harass its political opponents. A shocking history of police detainees dying under suspicious circumstances while in custody hasn't helped.

Zulkifli blamed the weight problems on slack "discipline" among officers and said the fat-busting drive was vital to maintaining the institution's public image and basic effectiveness. "Police officers must be presentable," he said. "We need to run and make arrests. I don't think an obese officer can be as productive as a trim and fit officer." Fitness program participant Zauyah Abdul Rahman, 37, has switched to an oatmeal-intensive diet and cut consumption of coffee and fattening foods. She dreams of dropping 10 kilos—she is now at 86—so she can look good in her uniform. "Also, I want to be promoted to sergeant," she said. — AFP



PARIS: Customs agents stand in front of a stuffed leopard, at Paris' natural history museum yesterday. Stuffed leopards, lions and a giant crocodile head discovered in a private home in eastern France were turned over to Paris' natural history museum yesterday after what customs officials are calling one of the most remarkable seizures of protected species in recent years. — AP

LIONS, LEOPARDS AMONG STUFFED ANIMALS SEIZED IN FRENCH HOME

PARIS: French authorities say they seized three stuffed lions, three leopards and a giant crocodile head from a private home and turned them over to Paris' natural history museum.

Customs officials are calling it one of the most remarkable seizures of protected species in recent years in France. The specimens were brought back from an African hunt in the 1980s and stored in a home near the eastern city of Besancon along with dozens of other animals that the homeowner's late father had killed and preserved.

Customs agents seized the specimens after a tipoff last year. Even dead, the animals are protected by the Washington

Convention on trade in endangered animals. They were handed over to the museum yesterday.

"These animals are of a great beauty, rarity and quality," said Helene Crocquevielle, the head of the French customs office. She noted that these were only a fraction of the dozens or hundreds of seizures of protected species made by the French customs office annually—often the horns of rhinos or elephants that are poached and ground up as an ingredient in quack remedies.

"This trade is becoming more profitable alongside that of arms and drugs," Crocquevielle said. The hunter's son was assessed an undisclosed fine. — AP

ORGANIC MILK, MEAT RICHER IN OMEGA-3, SAYS STUDY

PARIS: Organic milk and meat contain about 50 percent more beneficial omega-3 fatty acids than conventionally produced equivalents, according to a pair of large-scale studies published yesterday.

Previous research has linked omega-3 with reduced rates of cardiovascular disease, improved neurological development, and better immune function. A team of two dozen researchers led by Carlo Leifert, a professor at Newcastle University in England, combed through nearly 200 peer-reviewed studies on milk, and 67 on meat.

They found clear differences between organic and non-organic products, especially when it came to omega-3. "Western European diets are recognised as being too low in these fatty acids, and the European Food Safety Authority recommends we should double our intake," said co-author Chris Seal, also from Newcastle University.

"Our study suggests that switching to organic would go some way towards improving intakes of these important nutrients." Half a litre (one US pint) of organic, full-fat milk or

its equivalent in other dairy products, for example, was found to provide 16 percent of the recommended daily dose of so-called long chain omega-3, while conventional milk provides 11 percent. There are no additional calories in equivalent organic dairy or meat products. Most people choose organic products for one or more of three reasons: animal welfare, the environment, and health. "But much less is known about impacts on nutritional quality," Leifert said in a statement.

Scientists not involved in the research suggested that the health gains identified were minimal. They also pointed out that the higher omega-3 levels were not directly related to the fact that the products were organic. "It is the choice of feed, not the organic farming method, which makes the difference," said Ian Givens of the University of Reading. Organic animals are generally grass-fed. Modest gains in omega-3 from going organic must also be weighed against the potentially negative impact of saturated and trans fats also found in dairy and meat, others pointed out. — AFP

INDIA DRUG MONITORING PROGRAM STRUGGLES TO GROW FAST ENOUGH

MUMBAI/NEW DELHI: Within days of being given a diphtheria jab during a school vaccination drive, 5-year-old Meraj Shabbir Khan's leg became so swollen that he was hospitalised.

In a cramped Mumbai paediatric ward, third-year pharmacology student Nitin Shinde opens the boy's file and notes the vaccine, his age and the doctor's diagnosis of a skin infection. That information is later logged into a computer program linked to a national database, part of India's fledgling efforts to track, analyse and ultimately warn patients about unknown side effects of drugs on the market. India's six-year-old pharmacovigilance program, which collects and submits suspected adverse drug reactions to a World Health Organisation (WHO) database, is key to improving drug safety in a country where medicine consumption is high, experts say. But insufficient staff and equipment, and a lack of awareness among medical professionals mean many potentially dangerous drug reactions go unrecorded, hospital personnel across India told Reuters.

Gaps in the system mean the government has less data to determine whether drugs might have harmful side effects. Also, relatively little information flows from one of the world's largest pharmaceutical markets to the WHO database of over 12 million suspected adverse drug reactions.

"In a country of 1 billion people consuming so much medicine, obviously safety is a concern," said G. Parthasarathi, dean of the pharmacy school at JSS University in Mysore, adding the pharmacovigilance program is still gaining traction. "We've made a good start," he said.

Last year, India contributed 2 percent of the 2.1 million suspected reactions added to VigiBase, the WHO's global database. China, with a comparable population, contributed 8 percent.

Tracking adverse drug reactions is urgent "in public health programs where huge amounts of

medicine are being used," said Sten Olsson, a WHO program expert at the non-profit Uppsala Monitoring Centre (UMC) in Sweden which maintains VigiBase. The centre analyses the WHO database for worrying patterns among suspected reactions and, where there are safety concerns, publishes a "signal" that goes out to member countries. It is up to those countries to act on that information or not. "We're concerned that with some of our new signals nothing has been done with them," said Olsson. Indian health officials say the monitoring program is a "high priority" and a \$14.5 million annual budget is sufficient. "We are going to develop a better pharmacovigilance system in India in due course," said G.N. Singh, India's drug controller. "Patient health will be assured."

DRUG COMPANIES

The program could improve, experts say, if drugs firms contributed more. To make a new drug in India, companies need permission from the national drug controller after submitting safety and efficacy data including from local clinical trials. For four years after an approved drug is on the market, firms must submit safety reports, including those on adverse drug reactions.

After that there is no mandatory requirement for them to report all adverse reactions, and smaller firms, which make up over a third of India's market, often don't have robust monitoring resources.

"They feel after four years, every drug is safe," said a person working in pharmacovigilance at a multinational drugs company in India. "That's not the case." Last year, only about one-tenth of the suspected adverse drug reactions India collected came from drugmakers, compared to 95 percent in the United States. But making reporting mandatory for all companies and all drugs is not realistic, industry advocates say.

"You have up to 80,000 drugs on the market.

You think the government is prepared to do pharmacovigilance for all of them?" said T.R. Gopalakrishnan, deputy secretary-general of the Indian Drug Manufacturers Association. "Many manufacturers don't even know where their drugs are being consumed."

"WHAT CAN I DO?"

Some of India's 179 monitoring centres operate smoothly, but other parts of the system aren't working, program administrators say. In interviews with staff at more than 20 centres, program coordinators cited problems ranging from a shortage of personnel, computers and funds to raise awareness among staff to a lack of cooperation from doctors who say they are too busy.

"I call doctors to my office, serve them tea... and push them to report. What else can I do?" said C.B. Choudhary, who coordinates a monitoring centre at Katihar Medical College in Bihar state. "I want the program to start, but it isn't happening," he said.

Not all centres require extra personnel or equipment, and those that do are in the process of getting full staff, said V. Kalaiselvan, principal scientific officer at the Indian Pharmacopoeia Commission which hosts the pharmacovigilance program's headquarters in Ghaziabad outside New Delhi. Regarding doctors' lack of engagement, "the culture of reporting is improving," he said.

Reporting numbers have risen, and staff at headquarters used patient data last year to make seven recommendations to the drug regulator to add new warning labels—the first time Indian, not foreign data, was used, said Kalaiselvan.

The body recommended, for instance, that the regulator require an antibiotic combination of piperacillin and tazobactam, sold in India by several major drugmakers, be sold with a warning that it could cause breathing difficulty and potassium deficiency. — Reuters

PAKISTAN SCIENTISTS 'FIND 1.1 MILLION YEAR-OLD STEGODON TUSK'

LAHORE, Pakistan: A team of Pakistani researchers claims to have unearthed a 1.1 million-year-old stegodon tusk in the central province of Punjab, potentially shedding new light on the mammal's evolutionary journey.

Stegodons, distant cousins of modern elephants, are thought to have been present on earth from around 11 million years ago until the late Pleistocene period, which lasted until the end of the last Ice Age around 11,700 years ago.

The tusk measures some eight feet (2.44 metres) in length and is around eight inches (20.3 cm) in diameter, making it the largest ever discovered in the country, according to the team. It was found by researchers from the zoology department of the University of Punjab during an expedition in the Padri village of Jhelum district, said Khuram Shahzad, a spokesman for the university. Professor Muhammad Akhtar, who led the research trip, told AFP: "This discovery adds to our knowledge about the evolution of the stegodon, particularly in this region. "It also sheds light on what the environment was like at the time of the animal's life."

Dr Gerrit Van Den Bergh, a paleontologist at the University of Wollongong in Australia who has done extensive research on the ancient mammals including in Pakistan, said: "If you have a complete tusk, that's quite special—they are quite rare." He cautioned however that further verification, including of the dating, would be required. Akhtar said the fossil belonged to the late Pleistocene period and its age was deter-

mined using a uranium-lead radioactive dating technique. Stegodons were known for their long, nearly straight tusks and low-crowned teeth with peaked ridges. This indicated they were browsers or mixed feeders in a forested environment, in contrast to the high-crowned plated molars of mammoths and elephants which allowed them to graze.

They were strong swimmers and are thought to have originated in Africa but to have quickly

spread to Asia, where most remains have been found. "Around 1.2 million years ago they were still thriving," said Van Den Bergh. "They are mostly an Asian species but remains have been found further afield. Recently a molar fragment was discovered in Greece."

He added that the species' extinction coincided with the emergence of modern humans, though it was difficult to say with certainty that men hunted stegodons. — AFP



A stegodon tusk at the discovery site at Padri village in Jhelum district. A team of Pakistani researchers claims to have unearthed a 1.1 million-year-old stegodon tusk in the central province of Punjab, potentially shedding new light on the mammal's evolutionary journey. — AFP

BRAZIL MILITARY FIGHT MOSQUITOES, FLOWER POT TO FLOWER POT

SAO GON ALO, Brazil: The Brazilian military men surrounded the white bucket Monday and moved in the Zika-transmitting mosquito larvae didn't stand a chance. Naval officers and seamen in spotless, crisp uniforms had advanced on a flower pot in the suburban Rio house, meeting no enemy. Their next objective, a potted fern, was also enemy-free.

But in the bucket of water at the back of the house, the servicemen and an employee from the health department in Sao Goncalo, a seaside suburb of Rio de Janeiro, came face to face with Brazil's dreaded foe: larvae of the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito.

After verifying the identity of the dots wriggling in the water, the sanitation worker dumped them on the ground to perish in the 34 degrees Celsius (93 Fahrenheit) sunshine. In President Dilma Rousseff's declared war against Zika and mosquitoes, Brazil had just notched up a tiny victory. All along the same street in Sao Goncalo, teams of naval personnel and sanitation staff went house to house, garden to garden, flower pot to flower pot-anywhere where water might collect and allow mosquitoes a place to breed.

"The goal today is to educate the public that everyone needs to take responsibility... and to investigate possible breeding sites," said Commander Carlos Alexandre Souza de Lima, resident in his white uniform on the normally unremarkable residential street. Across Brazil, some 55,000 other members of the navy, army and air force, plus 310,000 health workers, were deployed on that same mission, with some four million properties in their sights during a campaign that began Saturday and runs through Thursday.

Calling in the cavalry

Zika infections, transmitted by bites from the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito, have exploded in Latin America's biggest country. They are blamed for an alarming spike in cases of microcephaly, a rare and serious birth defect.

The outbreak has been declared an international emergency by the World Health Organization and at least in public relations terms poses a threat to Rio's hosting of the Olympics this August-adding to pressure on Rousseff to find a solution.

With no vaccine against Zika, no cure for

microcephaly and confusion over how much danger the virus-which in most cases produces few symptoms-really poses, Brazil's main strategy is to attack the mosquito itself.

That might sound near impossible in a tropical country of 204 million people, but the involvement of the military is seen as giving Brazil at least a fighting chance.

Jorge Luis de Oliveira, 55, has been on anti-mosquito campaigns for decades as a member of the Sao Goncalo health department, mostly fighting dengue and chikungunya, which are carried by the same *Aedes aegypti* species. But being backed by the military-one of the few institutions in Brazil that is broadly trusted-makes the job a lot easier, he said.

"It makes people more respectful," he said. "Having the armed forces involved makes people realize that we're all in this together." One of the residents opening his door Monday, Mario Jorge de Carvalho, 56, said the sight of the military officers gave him confidence. "People are afraid of letting in agents from the health department, but the presence of the soldiers, the navy, the military is going to help get access to all houses and businesses," Carvalho, an electrical engineer, said.

Blame game

Officials insist that ultimately only the public, not the military, can win this war.

To prevent mosquitos means eradicating standing water and clearing up garbage, which rain can quickly turn into a perfect breeding site. "Eighty percent of mosquito concentrations are in private houses. The people have to do their part," said Dimas Gadelha, health secretary for Sao Goncalo.

De Oliveira said that without "the help of the population, we won't manage." But Zorran Kalil, a tarot card reader watching the operation unfold, said the authorities are the ones at fault.

"I've got no mosquitoes in my house, but look there," he said, gesturing at a broken pipe line sending water gushing and collecting along the side of the road.

"The mayor of Sao Goncalo lives right up there and drives past here every day but they don't fix it," Kalil said. "In Brazil, they wait for a problem to explode-then they try to do something." — AFP



WASHINGTON: Neurologist Jairo Lizarazo talks to his patient Daysi Mendoza who's recovering from Guillain-Barre syndrome, a disorder in which the immune system attacks the nervous system, at the Erasmo Meoz Hospital in Cucuta, Colombia, a city on the border with Venezuela. Mendoza, a Venezuelan who crossed the border for treatment, was diagnosed with the Zika virus days before showing Guillain-Barre symptoms. — AP

USDA RULES COULD BOOST FOOD STAMP ACCESS TO HEALTHY FOODS

KEY REPUBLICAN PUSHING FOR DRUG TESTS FOR FOOD STAMP RECIPIENTS

WASHINGTON: Retailers that accept food stamps would have to start stocking a wider variety of healthy foods or face the loss of consumers under proposed rules expected to be announced by the Agriculture Department yesterday.

The rules are designed to ensure that the more than 46 million Americans who use food stamps have better access to healthy foods although they don't dictate what people buy or eat. A person using food stamp dollars could still purchase as much junk food as they wanted, but they would at least have more options in the store to buy fruits, vegetables, dairy, meats and bread.

In 2014, Congress required the Agriculture Department to develop regulations to make sure that stores that accept food stamp dollars, now called the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP, stock a wider array of healthy food choices.

Under current rules, SNAP retailers must stock at least three varieties of foods in each of four food groups: fruits and vegetables, dairy, breads and cereals, and meats, poultry and fish. The new rules would require the retailers to stock seven varieties in each food group, and at least three of the food groups would have to include perishable items. In all, the rules would require stores to stock at least 168 items that USDA considers healthy.

The proposal would also require that retailers have enough in stock of each item so that the foods would be continuously available. The rules could mean that fewer convenience stores qualify to be SNAP retailers. The convenience store industry has argued that it often operates the only stores that serve certain neighborhoods and at certain times, like overnight. Kevin Concannon, USDA undersecretary for food, nutrition and consumer services, said the department would try to ensure that the rules don't affect SNAP recipients' access to food retailers, and the department may consider waiving the proposed requirements in some areas.

The rules come as a key House Republican is pushing for drug tests for food stamp recipients and new cuts to the program. Alabama Rep. Robert Aderholt, the chairman of the subcommittee that oversees USDA spending, introduced a bill last Thursday that would allow states to require drug testing. The move is designed to help states like Wisconsin, where Gov. Scott Walker has sued the federal government, to permit screening.

USDA has pushed back on such efforts, as it did when Republicans unsuccessfully attempted to cut 5 percent from the program during negotiations over the 2014 farm bill. The push comes

as SNAP use has skyrocketed - the program served more than 46 million Americans and cost \$74 billion last year. That's twice the program's 2008 cost. "While I have not seen Rep. Aderholt's proposed legislation, I have serious concerns about an approach that could deprive a family of access to food and basic necessities simply because a member of the family is struggling with addiction," Vilsack said after Aderholt introduced the bill. — AP

EATING TOO MUCH FISH WHILE PREGNANT RAISES CHILD OBESITY RISK: STUDY

MIAMI: Women who ate more than the recommended three servings of fish per week while pregnant gave birth to children at a higher risk of obesity than expectant moms who ate less, a study said Monday. The study in the *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) Pediatrics* found an association between higher fish intake and the likelihood of rapid growth and obesity in offspring, but researchers cautioned that they had not proven any cause and effect.

Pregnant women are often concerned about how much fish to consume, since it can be good for the developing brain of the fetus but also contains pollutants such as mercury which can be harmful. Researchers said more work needs to be done, and that for now it would be "speculative" to hypothesize that "fish-associated contaminant exposure may play a role in the observed associations."

The study, led by Leda Chatzi, a doctor at the University of Crete, analyzed data from more than 26,000 pregnant women and their children in European and US studies. The study relied on women's reports of how much fish they consumed weekly while pregnant, and followed their children until the age of six to uncover links between maternal fish intake and childhood growth.

The amount of fish women ate varied from an average of 0.5 times per week in Belgium to 4.45 times per week in Spain. "High fish intake was eating fish more than three times per week," said the study. The US Food and Drug Administration and the Environmental Protection Agency both recommend that pregnant women eat three servings of fish per week. "Women who ate fish more than three times per week when they were pregnant gave birth to children with higher BMI values at two, four and six years of age compared with women who ate fish less," said the study.

"High maternal fish intake during pregnancy also was associated with an increased risk of rapid growth from birth to two years and with an increased risk of overweight/obesity for children at ages four and six years compared with maternal fish intake while pregnant of once a week or less."

The effect of excessive of fish intake was greater in girls than boys. The study did not delve into what kinds of fish the women ate, nor did it study levels of contaminants like methyl mercury.

The takeaway message, said study authors, was that pregnant women should follow recommended guidelines for fish intake and not exceed three servings per week. — AFP



RIO DE JANEIRO: A government health agent puts larvicides into a sewage pipe inside a home during an operation to kill *Aedes aegypti* mosquitos that spreads the Zika virus in the Tijuca neighborhood of Rio de Janeiro on Monday. The *Aedes aegypti* mosquito lives largely inside homes and can lay eggs in even a bottle-cap's worth of stagnant water. — AP

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Kuwait Times
248 33 199

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ACK ORGANIZES 'WELCOME BACK' EVENT

The Student Affairs Department at the Australian College of Kuwait (ACK) organized a "Welcome Back" event for new and returning students. The bi-annual "Welcome Back" event hosted a number of outlets offering quality food products and services to ACK staff and students; such as Humba Burger, Organica, Chili Pepper, Nestle Tollhouse, Burger King, 32 Burger, Prefere Ice Cream, Scoop-a-cone, Corn Dogs and LOYAC.

Commenting on the event, Dr Jasem Hajih, Senior Manager of Student Affairs at ACK said: "We welcome all students to the

beginning of the new semester, in particular the new students who joined the ACK family, and we would like to wish them all success. I thank all those who contributed to the success of this festival and special mention to the participating companies and the organizers of the festival, ACK students and staff. The department of Student Affairs is keen to create a vibrant campus life and an amazing environment that contributes to the support of our students in different ways to push them towards excellence and success."



AL-BAYAN BILINGUAL SCHOOL COMPETES AT ANNUAL HARVARD SPEECH, DEBATE

Al-Bayan Bilingual School (BBS) is participating in the 42nd Annual Harvard Speech and Debate Showcase tournament that is taking place this month in Boston, Massachusetts. The Annual Harvard National Forensics is one of the oldest and most prestigious tournaments which takes place under the umbrella of the National Speech and Debate Association in the United States of America. It is the largest interschool speech and debate organization serving Middle and High school students, as well as university students.

BBS Speech and Debate team, consisting of 17 High School students, is the only Middle Eastern and Kuwaiti team to partake in this year's tournament. The showcase includes different competitions: Lincoln Douglas Debate; Dramatic Interpretation; Humorous Interpretation; International Extemporaneous Speaking; Duo Interpretation; and Original Oratory. Speech and Debate is an academic activity for students in Middle and High school. As known Speech and Debate activities require training, constant practice, dedication, and hard work from the students.

The BBS speech and debate team was initiated by Christina McDade, Francine Camerini and Candice Warzecha with few students and since the team started to expand, BBS has hosted



three local tournaments and competed in two. In this trip to Harvard, BBS students had some stops at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in Cambridge, Massachusetts and had a tour around Harvard University and learned more about its significant campus. In conclusion, Al-Bayan Bilingual School is very

proud of the students for being part in Harvard showcase, we continue to support them exploring their interests and empowering them in terms of Education Enterprise and Improving. We extend our best wishes to BBS Speech and Debate team.



GLOBAL BILINGUAL ACADEMY WELCOMES COL AL AMEER

Global Bilingual Academy (GBA) in Mahboula warmly welcomed Colonel Khalil Al Ameer on Sunday, Feb 7. Colonel Al Ameer informed the students that GBA students had been invited to perform on stage in the 14th Annual Fireman's Day at Souq Sharq on March 3

and 4th as GBA is committed to educating and working with its community. Additionally, he advised the GBA Grade 4 students that a few of them would be chosen to conduct an interview with Lt General Yousef Al Ansari.

9TH SLAM POETRY CONTEST



The 9th Slam Poetry Contest was held recently at the Ruby Tuesday Gulf Road. The event was sponsored by Taste of Jamaica. The program attracted poetry lovers

and lots of dignitaries. Kuwait's Nada Faris took the 1st position after mesmerizing the audience with her poems. There were other side attractions including a lovely perform-

ance by B-4-REAL Dancers. This month's event featured hosts of Kuwaiti poets - showcasing their talents and intellectual capabilities.



MILLENNIUM HOTEL & CONVENTION CENTRE RECOGNIZED AT HORECA

In yet another reflection of its culinary excellence, Millennium Hotel & Convention Centre won three prestigious accolades at the 2016 Culinary Art Show, which was conducted as part of the 5th Edition of HORECA Kuwait 2016 on January 18-20th. "The received prestigious batch of accolades, reflects the high standards we place on our cuisine as we strive to continuously stand out in front of our customers," commented Dani Saleh, Area General Manager of Millennium & Copthorne Hotels Kuwait.

Millennium chef Lalantha Fernando earned two Gold medals in the Chocolate Showpiece and Live Ice Carving categories, respectively, while Sutisna Binourhassan won a Bronze medal in the Three Plated Dessert Presentation category. HORECA Kuwait is the most anticipated culinary art show and hospitality exhibition in the country, hosting a large number of interna-

tional chefs and attracting thousands of foodies each year. Chefs from Millennium's reputed Food & Beverage Department earned two Gold medals and one Bronze, as they demonstrated exceptional talent & passion against nearly 200 others.

Millennium Hotel & Convention Centre currently operates a restaurant, cafe and banqueting operation. Its all-day restaurant, LAMAR International Restaurant, is quickly building a reputation for attractive selection of international cuisine, ultra-modern decor and live cooking stations. Separately, the Library Cafe has created a unique atmosphere where guests may enjoy an array of high-end selections of tea, coffees or snacks, while reading one of the books on selection. Moreover, a new restaurant is expected to open at the hotel early this year.



KAVISAMMELAN AND MUSHAIRA ORGANIZED BY WRITERS' FORUM

On a pleasant evening of 6th February 2016, Writers' Forum, Kuwait organized an event of Kavi Sammelan & Mushaira in association with the Embassy of India and Ayuubi Arts & Motion Pictures at the auditorium of Embassy. At the outset, General Secretary Tajwer Sultana welcomed the Chief Guest and the audience. She highlighted the significance of Writers' Forums - a multilingual platform and encouraged the writers of different Indian languages to join the organization.

Following the welcome address by the General Secretary, the president of the Forum Umesh Sharma felicitated the chief guest Ambassador of India His Excellency Sunil Jain. The evening was inaugurated by the Chief Guest by lighting the lamp joined by the President of the forum Umesh Sharma, Vice President Dr Waseem Siddiqi, General Secretary Tajwer Sultana and Joint Secretary Sunil Sonsi. Honorable Chief Guest, in his speech expressed his admiration for the Writers' Forum and keen-

ness for the program... KaviSammelan/Mushaira. Tajwer Sultana invited poets of the Writers' Forum to their seats on the stage. At the end

she invited Dr Waseem Siddiqi - a well known writer of Urdu fiction & Vice President of the forum to preside over the evening event.



SULTAN CENTER
سُلْطَان

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FOR OUR VALUED CUSTOMERS...THANK YOU FOR YOUR TRUST
CELEBRATE NATIONAL DAY FESTIVITIES WITH TSC

Get a **5 KD** Gift Voucher
With Every Purchase of **50 KD**
using TSC Rewards Card

THE SULTAN CENTER CELEBRATES KUWAIT NATIONAL DAY IN STYLE

Driven by its commitment to support the community and in keeping with the celebration of Kuwait National Day festivities, The Sultan Center will be running an EXCLUSIVE promotional campaign for its TSC Rewards card holders from Feb 17th till Feb 24th under the name: "February is Different With Us"... To celebrate the occasion of Kuwait's National day and Liberation day, The Sultan Center would like to partake in the celebrations, and at the same time lay emphasis on the assurance of delivering products and services with everlasting value while providing the best offers to the community of Kuwait. The February campaign is designed to reward customers who spend KD 50 or more at any TSC Sultan Center.

Customers who purchase KD 50 or more will receive a KD 5 Cash voucher to use on their next purchase at any TSC Sultan Center until February 29th. Commenting on TSC campaign, Mohammed Jalloul, Loyalty Card Manager at TSC said: "it's our utmost pride to celebrate the national festivities with our customers across Kuwait whereby, we have designed this campaign to specifically award our loyal shoppers and share with them the true spirit of the season and thank them for their continuous trust in serving the Kuwait market for 33 years".

TSC's February calendar is filled with activities across its retail stores. Throughout the month of February TSC has sponsored and organized events that go hand-in-hand with February festivities. These activities include: Kuwait Open Market for young entrepreneurs, where TSC provided a venue for young business owners to showcase and promote their products; a traditional music event comprised of local Kuwaiti musicians entertaining customers who want to experience Kuwait's traditional heritage.

For children, TSC has arranged activities catering to the festivities including; henna, face painting and a photo booth for children to dress up in traditional Kuwaiti attire contributing to the spirit of the celebration. As part of the company's ongoing support to the community TSC hosted educational seminars in partnership with CANs for customers and staff providing insight on healthy food and nutrition that can help support a healthy lifestyle and aid in the prevention of cancer. The Sultan Center, Kuwait's leading retailer is committed to supporting the community of Kuwait and extends its congratulations to the people of Kuwait on the occasion of national day.

THE SULTAN CENTER HOSTS 'OPEN MARKET'

As part of the National and Liberation Day festivities, and out of its sincere commitment to supporting Kuwaiti youth, The Sultan Center (TSC) hosted an "Open Market" in TSC Sharq store from February 8th to February 13th. Given the success of the previous 'Open Markets' held within TSC stores and feedback received from customers, The Sultan Center looks forward to hosting this year's event. The "Open Market" supports young Kuwaiti entrepreneurs and provides a medium for them to

showcase their unique products. The products being displayed range from arts and crafts to fashion apparel and accessories, along with decoration and toys.

Lisa Al-Ghareeb, Marketing Manager at TSC stated that "TSC is committed to supporting and encouraging young entrepreneurship by providing a venue in which the youth can display and promote their products. It is truly aspiring to see young Kuwaitis take part in this event." The "Open Market" event is a unique venue for

young entrepreneurs to connect, learn and share experiences and ideas which they are passionate about, while providing them an opportunity to meet potential customers. TSC seeks to play an important role in the community in which it operates and takes pride in supporting youth development in Kuwait, as these young entrepreneurs are the future business leaders of tomorrow.

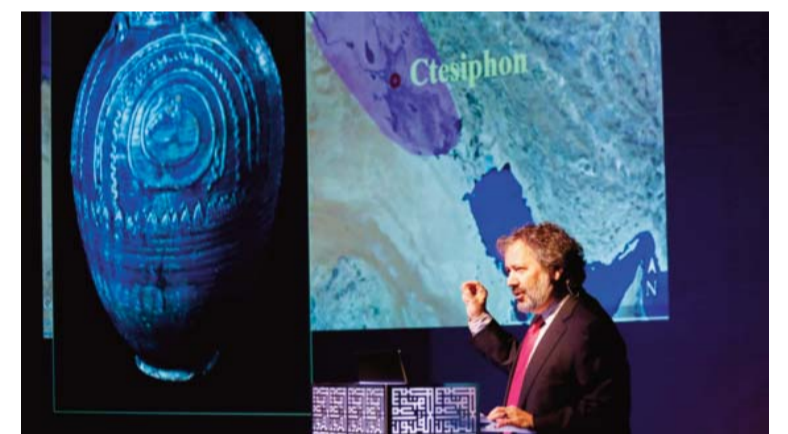


TRADE, TECHNOLOGY, INDUSTRY OF ELITE CERAMICS OF ISLAMIC WORLD



Pottery generally tends to be the most important artifact to study for archaeologists, because it is so prolific. But the ceramics of the Islamic world are important for other reasons also. They represent high technology, with the Islamic world creating a synthesis of technology in a dynamic time for research and science. They are significant art, with their elite status making it worth providing them with original and innovative expression. They were also a significant industry, with major production Centres that had global distributions.

Dr Robert Mason's delivered a lecture on archaeology recently. Dr Mason's area of specialization is the material culture of the Middle East and Europe during the Islamic and Medieval periods (roughly 500 CE to the present), especially ceramics and vitreous materials. Mason received his doctorate from the University of Oxford in 1994, and is cross-appointed between the Royal Ontario Museum in the Near and a Middle Eastern Civilizations Department at the University of Toronto, where he is an Associate Professor.



JORDAN AMBASSADOR HOSTS WINNER OF INT'L COMPETITION IN CHILD LITERATURE

The Jordanian Ambassador to Kuwait Mohammed Al-Kayed recently received the first winner of Kuwait's 2nd International Competition in Child Literature and Endowment & Charity Writing Sana Al-Hattab who was escorted by her husband, writer, Mohammed Jamal Amr. The reception was held at the embassy premises and was also attended by Deputy Ambassador Shaker Al-Ammonth and other top diplomats.



AMC

- 02:05 Coming Home
04:10 Ghoulies
05:30 Beat Street
07:15 Beachhead
08:45 Charge Of The Light Brigade

ANIMAL PLANET HD

- 00:50 River Monsters
01:45 Swamp Brothers
02:15 Swamp Brothers
02:40 Wild Capture School

BBC entertainment

- 00:10 Doctors
00:40 Unforgotten
01:30 Unforgotten
02:20 Ripper Street

- 06:50 Doctors
07:20 Doctors
07:50 Stella
08:40 Call The Midwife

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
01:15 China 24

- Got Her Back
04:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
05:00 Martina Cole's Lady Killers
06:00 Fatal Vows

Discovery CHANNEL HD

- 00:20 Fast N' Loud
01:10 The Island With Bear Grylls
02:00 Men, Women, Wild
02:50 River Monsters (Best Of Series 1-5)

ID. INVESTIGATION DISCOVERY

- 00:40 Who On Earth Did I Marry?
01:05 Who On Earth Did I Marry?
01:30 The Haunted
02:20 Ghost Lab



IDENTITY THIEF ON OSN MOVIES HD COMEDY

- 14:46 How It's Made: Dream Cars
15:10 Mythbusters
15:57 Strangest Weather On Earth
16:44 Space Pioneer



FALCON RISING ON OSN MOVIES ACTION

- 04:55 Starlings
05:40 Starlings
06:25 The Cafe
06:50 Doctors

- 00:00 Violetta
00:45 The Hive
00:50 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch

- 00:00 News Update
19:30 The Heat
19:35 Africa Live
20:00 Global Business

- 01:00 Bangkok Airport
01:50 Valentine Warner Eats Scandinavia
02:15 Eat Street
02:40 Eat Street

OSN FIRST HD COMEDY

- 00:00 Marry Me
00:30 Weird Loners
01:00 The Nightly Show With Larry Wilmore

- 19:00 Complications
20:00 The Night Shift
21:00 The Night Shift
22:00 Supergirl
23:00 The X-Files

OSN MOVIES ACTION

- 00:00 The Terminator
02:00 Dying Of The Light
03:45 Oblivion
06:00 Falcon Rising

OSN MOVIES HD COMEDY

- 00:00 A Case Of You
02:00 The Nutty Professor (1996)
04:00 The Misadventures Of The Underheads

OSN MOVIES FESTIVAL

- 01:00 A Secret Promise
03:00 Low Down
05:00 Black Nativity
07:00 Dr. Strangelove

OSN MOVIES HD

- 01:00 About Alex
02:45 A Madea Christmas
04:30 The Theory Of Everything

OSN MOVIES HD KIDS

- 01:00 Memory Loss
02:45 Blue Elephant 2
04:30 Egon And Donci
06:00 Firm And Pom: The Big Adventure

OSN SPORTS 1 HD

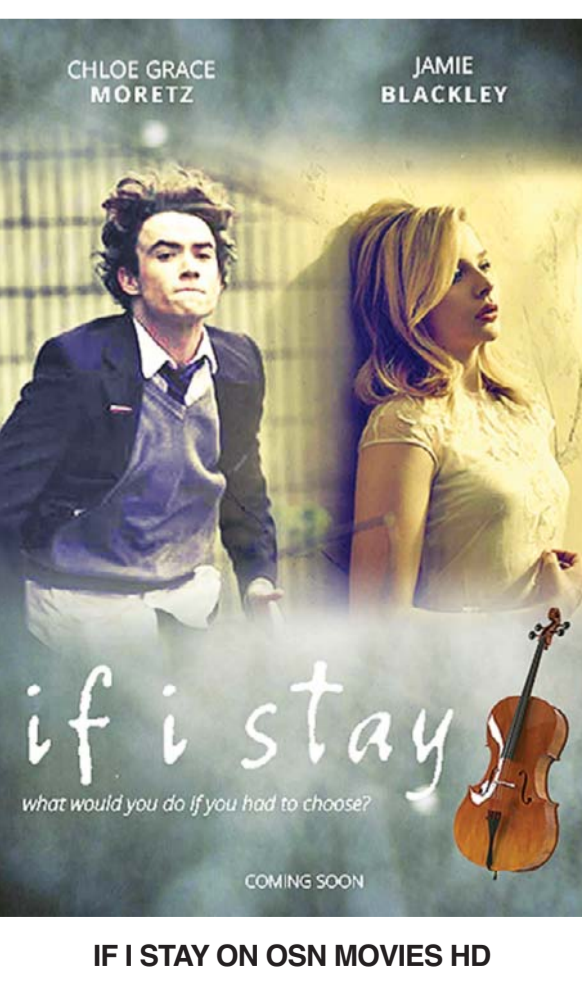
- 01:00 PGA Tour Highlights
02:00 PGA European Tour Highlights
03:00 Europro Tour

OSN SPORTS 2 HD

- 00:00 Live NHL
03:00 World Rugby
03:30 This Week In WWE

OSN SPORTS 3 HD

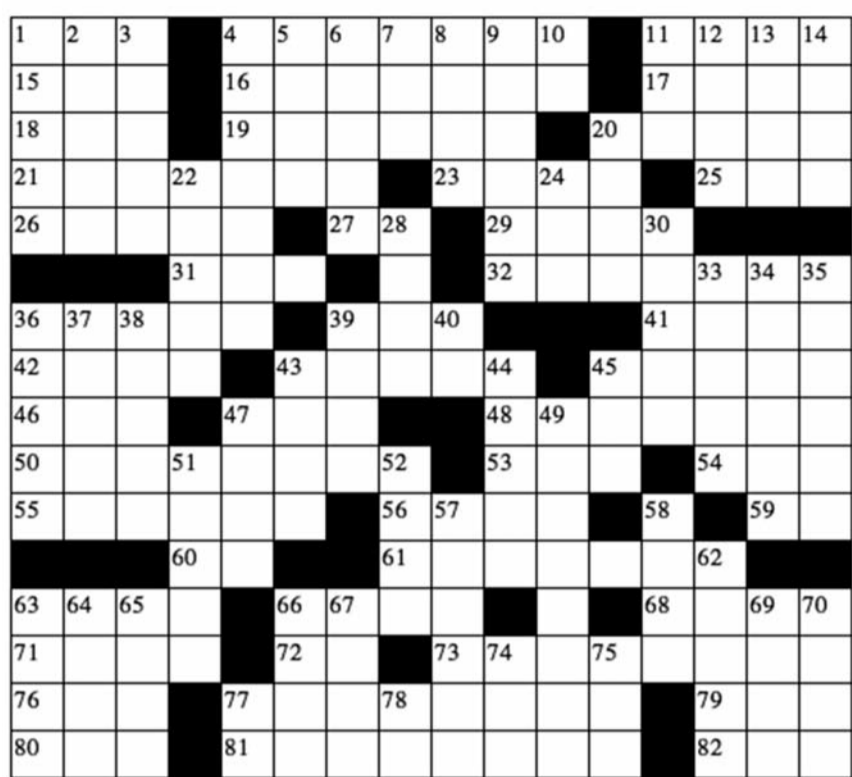
- 00:00 PGA European Tour Highlights
01:00 The Weber Cup
02:00 Welsh Open Snooker



IF I STAY ON OSN MOVIES HD

- 00:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
00:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
01:00 Staten Island Cakes

CROSSWORD 1171



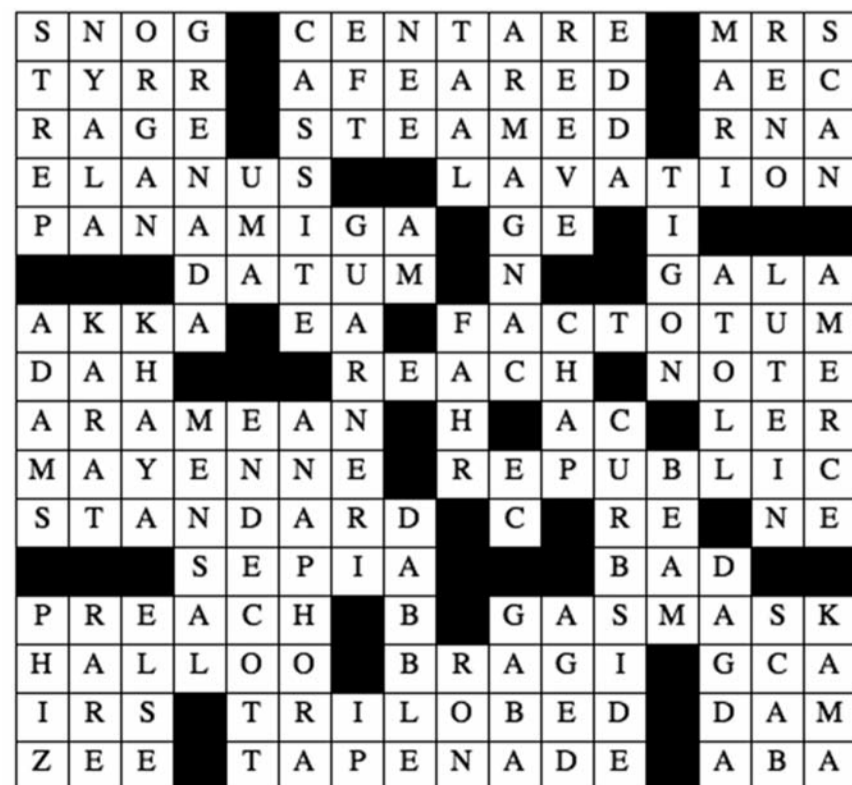
ACROSS

1. An honorary degree in science.
4. Hang freely.
11. A telephone connection.
15. Legal document setting forth rules governing a particular kind of activity.
16. Aroused to impatience or anger.
17. On or toward the lee.
18. Fermented alcoholic beverage similar to but heavier than beer.
19. A worker who attaches something by nailing it.
21. The act of accelerating.
23. No longer having or seeming to have or expecting to have life.
25. A Turkish unit of weight equal to about 2.75 pounds.
26. Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
27. (Akkadian) God of wisdom.
29. A large genus of dicotyledonous trees and shrubs of the family Aquifoliaceae that have small flowers and berries (including hollies).
31. Light informal conversation for social occasions.
32. Type genus of the Dasypodidae.
36. German chemist noted for the synthetic production of ammonia (1868-1934).
41. Having relatively few calories.
42. (botany) Of or relating to the axil.
46. An orange-brown antelope of southeast Africa.
48. Yellowwood trees or shrubs.
50. A famous waterfall in Venezuela.
53. An undergarment worn by women to support their breasts.
54. A small amount of liquid food.
55. (of tempo) Leisuredly.
56. Employed in accomplishing something.
59. A toxic nonmetallic element related to sulfur and tellurium.
60. A ductile silvery-white ductile ferromagnetic trivalent metallic element of the rare earth group.
61. A high-pitched noise resembling a human cry.
63. Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
68. Derive or receive pleasure from.
71. A flat-bottomed volcanic crater that was formed by an explosion.
72. (astronomy) The angular distance of a celestial point measured westward along the celestial equator from the zenith crossing.
73. Low stinging nettle of Central and South America having velvety brownish-green toothed leaves and clusters of small green flowers.
76. How long something has existed.
79. A barrier constructed to contain the flow or water or to keep out the sea.
80. Thigh of a hog (usually smoked).
81. A Scandinavian language (closely related to Icelandic) that is spoken on the Faroe Islands.
82. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.

DOWN

1. A region of central Europe rich in deposits of coal and iron ore.
2. Colony of the United Kingdom located on a limestone promontory at the southern tip of Spain.
3. A person of unquestioning obedience.
4. A bar of sand.
5. Relatively small fast-moving sloth.
6. Old or New World straight-billed game bird of the sandpiper family.
7. A person active in party politics.
8. Having an eye or eyes or eyelike feature especially as specified.
9. (Greek mythology) Any of the 50 sea nymphs who were daughters of the sea god Nereus.
10. A doctor's degree in religion.
11. A compartment in front of a motor vehicle where driver sits.
12. In addition.
13. Plant having a large slender white bulb and flat overlapping dark green leaves.
14. Russian river.
20. In the Roman calendar.
22. Having or showing keen interest or intense desire or impatient expectancy.
24. A flat wing-shaped process or winglike part of an organism.
28. Primitive chlorophyll-containing mainly aquatic eukaryotic organisms lacking true stems and roots and leaves.
30. A colorless flammable volatile liquid hydrocarbon used as a solvent.
33. Type genus of the Pinaceae.
34. A hollow muscular organ in the pelvic cavity of females.
35. A long brightly colored shawl.
37. Using the voice.
38. A coffee cake flavored with orange rind and raisins and almonds.
39. Type genus of the Alcidae comprising solely the razorbill.
40. Before noon.
43. The United Nations agency concerned with civil aviation.
44. A medium to dark brownish yellow color.
45. Aircraft landing in bad weather in which the pilot is talked down by ground control using precision approach radar.
47. A town in north central Oklahoma.
49. A wooded plateau in the Champagne-Ardenne region of France.
51. Moth having nonfunctional mouthparts as adults.
52. Type genus of the Musaceae.
57. Roman general who commanded the invasion of Carthage in the second Punic War and defeated Hannibal at Zama (circa 237-183 BC).
58. A ballistic missile that is capable of traveling from one continent to another.
62. A member of a seafaring group of North American Indians who lived on the Pacific coast of British Columbia and southwestern Alaska.
64. Mentally or physically infirm with age.
65. A complex red organic pigment containing iron and other atoms to which oxygen binds.
66. (Greek mythology) The Titaness who was mother of Helios and Selene and Eos in ancient mythology.
67. The emotion of hate.
69. Someone who works (or provides workers) during a strike.
70. God of love and erotic desire.
74. Used of a single unit or thing.
75. A sweetened beverage of diluted fruit juice.
77. A substance produced by the hypothalamus that is capable of accelerating the secretion of a given hormone by the anterior pituitary gland.
78. A colorless and odorless inert gas.

Yesterday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

To you dreamers of impossible dreams, you just might make them come true today. Do not let your high spirits get too far ahead of the discipline and attention to detail necessary to make any dream a reality. It is possible to find someone that will back you in your ideas. When you let others know of your ideas... Keep a few parts of the idea to yourself until a contract or legal agreement can be created and then signed. It's best to rely on facts rather than feelings, especially when an expensive mistake might be the outcome. If you have faith in yourself and have surrounded yourself with good people, you are unaffected by this movement. Whether you are listening, creating or playing... Music can be relaxing now.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

There are some powerful energies spilling into your life in unpredictable ways. The actions of today will have long-lasting effects. This is a great time to be with others and work together. Your talent fits the requirements for a special job. Your management and directional abilities are in high focus. Your inner resources and emotions are accented. Expect a sense of support and goodwill from those around you. Intensity rules! Colors are brighter, images sharper, music more moving. Emotions run deep, especially with a fantastic friend. Previously good relationships could now border on love or hate. You can control this, so enjoy the good parts while you can. You are very active. This is an excellent time to be with loved ones.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

The accent for this day is on sociability. This should be one of those nice days when everything goes well, great for business transactions as well as for social get-togethers with lighthearted conversation. Any past tensions can easily be straightened out. You could be most persuasive with others and eloquent in your discourse with others. The situation is a natural for self-expression and lends itself to your particular ideas. Though you may prefer to be around old friends, you certainly will not close the door on making new ones today. However you deal with people-interacting one-on-one, leading a group towards a common goal, convincing others in a sales or public relations effort-you will be a winner. All will feel your understanding ways.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

This is a very fast moving day-many things can be accomplished. Apply caution and care in business dealings-both the physical and financial realms are important today. Time out for a little exercise could be as simple as running up and down a flight of stairs. Self-discipline and a sense of self-worth become important issues in your life as a new phase begins. A fear of asserting yourself can hold you back-as can coming on too strong. The trick is in learning to strike a balance and make the most of your personal talents as well as to work within your limitations. Don't be afraid to stretch your mind! Learn new things but set limits. You will enjoy a gathering with the neighbors and friends who are a part of your community this evening.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

You may be in a serious and practical mood today. Hypothetical ideas are not for you just now. You would rather know the real value of something in order to find its right place. This is a period when you take your work most seriously. A lot of time and thought goes into getting things scheduled. You will be good at polishing up details, whether as part of a project or an organization. You know instinctively what needs to be done to make something work. The broad picture can wait for another day. There may be instances when you will have to give a full accounting of your labors, particularly to superiors or those interested in buying your wares. This evening you may think seriously about creating a blog in order to express yourself.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Your intellect is sharp, making it a good day for study or work. You may, however, feel that you are giving more than you are receiving in your job identification. It may be time for an employee review; if so, play it cool and list your goals and accomplishments. They will advise you and in this discourse, you will gain more than you think. It is important to effectively communicate your ideas to co-workers and those who work under you so that people will see you are an achiever. Work to put your plans into action, for action is where your words gain meaning. This is a good time to use the home as a vehicle for entertaining family and friends. Additionally, it is also favorable to make plans for spring cleaning, repairs or planting.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

If ever there was a day to work with groups, this is it. You could be most persuasive as well as expressive in your communications. Others will listen to your ideas, plans or proposals. Your acute sensitivity to other people's moods could enable you to fine-tune those moods as you would a violin. With your charisma, you could obtain anything you wish to obtain or sell anything you wish to sell to people-they will think you have done them a favor! You love being around people, especially those to whom you are emotionally attached. Better yet, old friends with whom you can reminisce. The power of attraction and desire for love is great and the only caution for you at this time is just that: caution. Take time to grow; enjoy the trip.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

This is your lucky day! Schedule that conference, give that lecture and plan for that business trip. Whatever you do today, your ability to make things run smoothly should produce excellent results. Working with and discussing ideas with co-workers can be most beneficial and rewarding. You enjoy working in partnerships or group activities. The ability to communicate with superiors or describe what you see is important to any group. Your acute sensitivity to other people's moods could help you to fine-tune those moods as you would a violin. Besides keeping the peace, you have good practical job-related ideas. Mental stimulation from others is key for today. Doing just about anything with friends or family later this evening will bring much joy.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Your effectiveness in the workplace may have been hampered by your heavy schedule. Your physical energy is really high as well. If you simply cannot get away from that desk, try jogging before breakfast-or schedule in a game of handball at lunch. Work it off or you could wind up irritable and argumentative. Say what you mean and mean what you say. Pay particular attention to the political situation in the workplace-it could have a big influence on your job performance. Your own requirements may appear to separate you from where the gang is headed. This is of short duration. By helping someone else, you know your own life is improved. It is easy for you to lend a helping hand today. You encourage others to follow your lead.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

There could be difficulties in the workplace at this time. It is important to communicate your ideas to co-workers and those who work under you; ask for feedback, if necessary. This is a time to be watchful in order to nip any problems before they begin. Working with others should be profitable. You may be chosen as the person for a particular job. Your directional abilities are good. Although there may be an air of seriousness to issues at work, you will find it easy to help others look for a most positive side. Besides being creative and affectionate, you are very sociable. You truly desire fun and should not hesitate to get to form new acquaintances. In social surroundings this evening, you make stimulating company.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

You are very expressive and sociable. Your personal magnetism is high, making you popular in general. Your creative intellect and communication skills are enhanced. Whether you are in educational surroundings or professional surroundings, you may feel a renewed interest in art, literature and nature. The pictures at work come to your attention and you may think you could do better so you might consider a sketch and work on the piece at home. Your eloquence this day will enhance your influence over others. You are apt to enjoy considerable success at work. A project of complicated construct is near finishing. There may be a few changes in your life because of a partnership. A successful personal project is forecasted.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

It may seem that your emotions are taking over in your dealings with others today. This can cloud reason, so probably it is not the best day for delicate deal making. However, mental patterns and skills play a major role in today's events. Work to develop your highest potential in these areas. This may not be a day when you feel like standing up to the world alone; you appreciate the support of your team or those close to you. You are more than willing to repay them in kind. It is an excellent time to solicit the help of others, though it's important that you truly know the needs of your company or business before asking. This afternoon there is time to relax and focus on new ideas. Perhaps you will enjoy a good book, a movie, etc.

WORD SEARCH

Farm

Find and circle all of the words that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell a common farm animal.

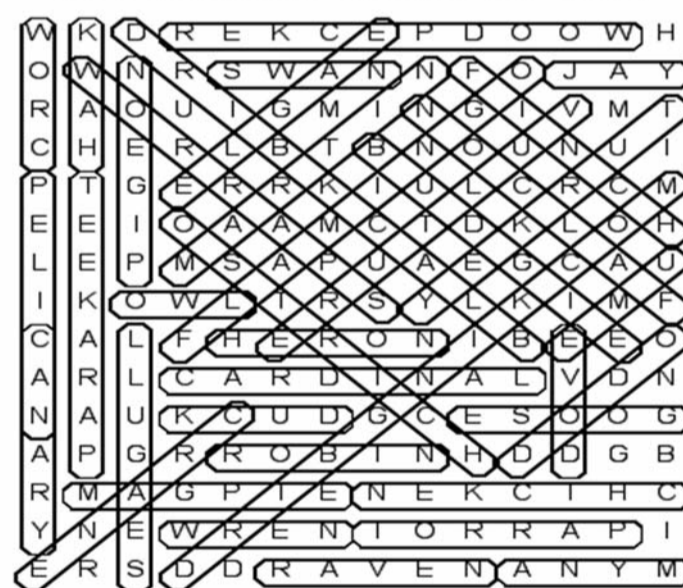


- | | | | |
|--------|------------|-----------|-------------|
| BALER | FARMER | HOUSE | SOWING SEED |
| BARN | FENCE | LIVESTOCK | STABLES |
| BUTTER | FERTILIZER | MILK | TRACTOR |
| CAT | GOATS | PASTURE | TROUGH |
| CHEESE | GRAIN | PIG | TURKEYS |
| CORN | HARROW | PLOW | WEATHERVANE |
| COW | HARVEST | PRODUCE | WEEDS |
| CREAM | HAY | ROOSTER | WELL |
| DAIRY | HEN | SEEDS | WHEAT |
| DOG | HORSE | SOIL | |

Yesterday Solution

Birds

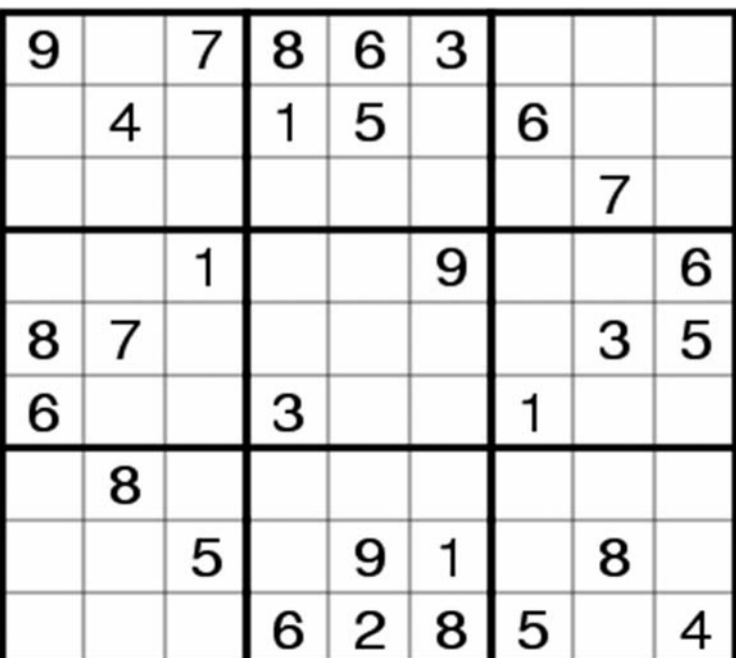
This is the solution to the puzzle located here.



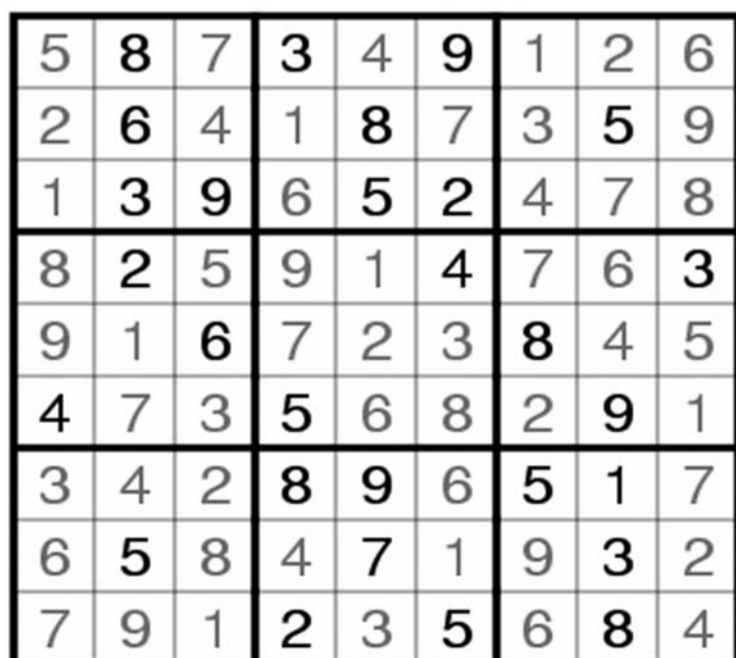
- | | | | |
|-----------|----------|-------------|------------|
| BLACKBIRD | EAGLE | MARTIN | ROBIN |
| BUDGIE | EMU | MOCKINGBIRD | SEAGULL |
| CANARY | FALCON | MYNA | SPARROW |
| CARDINAL | FINCH | OSTRICH | SWAN |
| CHICKEN | FLAMINGO | OWL | TURKEY |
| CRANE | GOOSE | PARAKEET | VULTURE |
| CROW | HAWK | PARROT | WOODPECKER |
| DODO | HERON | PELICAN | WREN |
| DOVE | JAY | PIGEON | |
| DUCK | MAGPIE | RAVEN | |

The hidden message is: HUMMINGBIRD

Daily SuDoku



Yesterday's Solution





In this file photo, Jesse Hughes of Eagles of Death Metal performs at Riot Fest & Carnival in Douglas Park in Chicago. — AFP

Eagles of Death Metal singer says guns could have stopped attacks

Eagles of Death Metal frontman Jesse Hughes claimed that if everyone had guns the Bataclan massacre may not have happened, as he returned to Paris yesterday to play in front of hundreds of survivors of November's terror attacks. The US band were playing at the Bataclan concert hall in the French capital on the fateful night in November when 90 fans were killed in a jihadist attack. In a series of highly emotionally charged interviews, the American singer said France's strict gun control laws "had nothing to do with" the attack. But he questioned whether gun control had saved any lives at the Bataclan. "I think the only thing that stopped it was some of the bravest men that I've ever seen in my life charging head first into the face of death with their firearms. I know people will disagree with me... but that night guns made them equal," the 43-year-old told French TV station iTele. "Until nobody has guns everybody has to have them." Hughes, a member of America's National Rifle Association, told AFP earlier: "I don't go anywhere in America without a gun anymore. That sucks. And I'm not paranoid. I'm not a cowboy... I want to be prepared." But he lambasted US Republican candidate Donald Trump, for whom he has previously voiced support, for claiming he would have tried to fight off the attackers if he had a gun at the Bataclan. "That's absurd," he told Le Monde daily.

group that represents some 500 of them. Life for Paris, said many would only decide whether to go or not at the very last minute. Hughes vowed yesterday's gig would "be a regular rock show," despite the area around Paris' Olympia theatre being locked down by police, and a psychologist who has been treating the victims warning the concert could trigger panic. "Rock and roll for me has always been fun and I am not going to let anyone take that away from me, or my friends," he said, referring to the band's fans. Hughes, who will be joined on stage by band co-founder and Queens of the Stone Age frontman Josh Homme, said he hoped the gig will be the first step to emotional recovery.

"I hope I can walk out on that stage and be stronger than I am being right now," he told AFP tearfully. "I don't want to fall to pieces in front of everyone. This is therapy for me." Many of the survivors of the massacre at the Bataclan also see the concert as a form of catharsis "to end the nightmare" that began on the night of November 13, when 130 people were killed in coordinated shootings and suicide bombings across Paris. Helene, who was in the front row when the killers burst in to the Bataclan, said she hoped seeing the band again would bring some closure. "It will allow me to finish" the concert, said the 42-year-old.—AFP

A regular rock show'

The band members met around 60 survivors on Monday, the eve of the concert, and the

Dubai police honors Malabar Gold & Diamonds for its outstanding philanthropic contributions

Dubai Police honored Malabar Gold & Diamonds in recognition of its active and outstanding participation in various CSR activities in the region. Shamlal Ahamed, Managing Director and International Operations received the memento from Sheikh Mansour Bin Mohammed Bin Rashid Al-Maktoum, Chairman of the Supreme Committee for the Protection of the Rights of persons with Disabilities, in the presence of Major General Khamis Mattar Al-Muzainah, Commander in Chief of Dubai Police and other dignitaries. While handing over the memento, Sheikh Mansour Bin Mohammed Bin Rashid Al-Maktoum expressed his appreciation for the group's involvement in philanthropic activities.

Malabar Gold & Diamonds was honored during the opening ceremony of the forum "Best Practices and Innovations in the protection of people with disabilities" which was conducted in collaboration with Rashid Center for the disabled, which kicks off under the patronage of Sheikh Mansour bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum, Chairman of the Supreme Committee for the Protection of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The forum was aimed to take advantage of best practices and innovations in the field of protection of persons with disabilities and for the development of government services provided to them. The forum was held on the sidelines of an exhibition in which companies offer latest innovations, practices and experiences specialized in the development of technologies for disabilities.



Malabar Gold & Diamonds, one of the largest jewellery retailers sets a wonderful example for corporate philanthropy through various charity programs in India, Middle East and Far East. The group, which currently has over 145 showrooms undertakes several welfare activities in the areas of their operations by associating with like-minded organizations and associations to carry out various welfare activities in the respective region.

CSR activities are a fundamental part of Malabar Group's culture and the charity projects of Malabar Gold & Diamonds have touched the lives of thousands of people across the world. The group sup-

ports many philanthropic activities and is always ready to take initiatives to help the deprived section in the society. The organization ensures that a percentage of its net profit is used for CSR activities every year. They focus primarily in five priority areas such as health, education, environment, housing and women empowerment. With the support of various government departments the group ensures that quality medical care is available to all residents of UAE despite of their income.

REDTAG and Cyrine Abdelnour extend collaboration

REDTAG, the value fashion and home lifestyle brand and Cyrine Abdelnour, the much-loved Arab star, have unveiled an engaging, inspirational, and refined project, marking the continuation of their successful collaboration. Since Cyrine joined the REDTAG family last September, she has been working closely with the brand to further strengthen their collaboration that has now resulted in the launch of the very unique Inspired by Cyrine Collection.

The collection is currently introduced to audiences across the GCC through an innovative social media campaign, #REPOST, led by Cyrine herself. It features the beautiful star dressed-up with complete REDTAG looks that she personally contributed to bringing to life.

Commenting on the occasion, Cyrine said: "I am delighted to see my collaboration with REDTAG taking

a new shape. Inspired by Cyrine is the result of six months hard work and dedication from both parties, and I am very excited to see it come to life and share it with all ladies across the region."

Inspired by Cyrine Collection features a mix of soft casual-chic pieces, sporty but classy outfits, and glamorous shiny looks. Cyrine's touch is marked in every piece, giving the entire collection a soft, lively, and feminine spirit.

"Taking our collaboration with Cyrine to the next level is a step that we are very proud of. Cyrine is now part of our family, and we are working together to cater the needs of our joint audiences across the GCC," said David Pidgeon, COO at REDTAG.

The new "Inspired by Cyrine" Collection will hit select REDTAG stores across the GCC from end of February.



Zain, Burgan Bank, Nasser Al-Sayer, the agency of Canon camera, Albumii and Holiday Inn



Photography competition 2016 under the slogan 'Kuwait in our Eyes' in cooperation with Al-Anbaa newspaper

Albumii: Home for your HD printed memories

By Ben Garcia

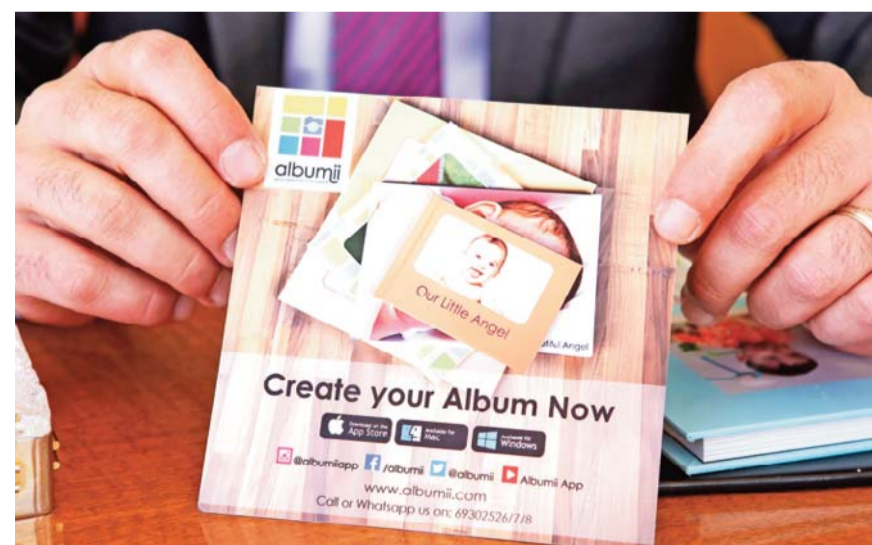
Kuwait Times Photography contest open to professional and amateur photographers encourages photography in Kuwait as positive communication tools between various communities. In an age of digital photography, tangible copies of images are rarely found. Pictures are usually stored on flash drives or hard drives, which requires people to use computers or smartphones to recall their beautiful memories. Photo albums were the rage many years back, but now they are hardly sold in department stores and shops. Before the advent of smartphones and digital photography, the photo album stored many important memories.

However, thanks to Albumii, a smart user-friendly mobile/desktop application, anyone can customize high-quality photos and print them in a professional manner. "I am the founder of Albumii, and my dream is to showcase photos you have taken from your mobile phones and professional cameras and present them just the way you want it, like a jewel or diamond," said Mohamed Amira, founder and managing director of Albumii.

"Most mobile phones nowadays are equipped with 10-megapixel cameras - they are very good for taking photos. The joy of holding a printed copy of a photo that sparks enjoyable conversations with your family and friends will now be realized once again," said Amira. Printed with top-of-the-line HD technology and held together with professional true flat spread binding technology that maintains the quality of the original photo, the technology, according to Amira, is the only one in the Middle East and one of 11 in the world.

"We are the exclusive company for HD print technology in Kuwait not available in neighboring countries," he mentioned. Albumii is the only service that allows customization of all aspects of an album catered to individual needs. "Albumii is the future; you can have the best, so why settle for less?" Amira noted.

Albumii takes pride of its mobile and desktop application. "It's available at your convenience because you can have it on



— Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



your own laptop, desktop or smartphone, and do whatever you want with your album," said Shady Emera, Albumii Product Manager. "The quality is superb and unmatched with HD printing quality. This can be achieved with a revolutionary application that is designed for beginners as well as professional Photoshop/Illustrator designers with a deep variety of customization on the PC/Mac versions of application," Emera added.

Albumii is one of the major sponsors of the Kuwait Times photo competition. "We are really glad to be partnering with Kuwait Times. We offer participants a 50 percent discount on all printing jobs. If you want to win, print your photos in the best possible HD printing press. Here's my tip to all participants - if you want your photographs to be seen differently,

print them with us, because at first glance, they'll be noticed by the judges. You have to present your photographs correctly and appropriately - only then will your photographs be noted," Emera said.

Users may choose the following features:

- Paper printing quality levels (including gloss, silky and matt)
- Varied album cover designs (one by default, more upon request)
- Different page layouts for their photos (eg multiple images on the same page)
- Download photos from multiple sources, including mobile, camera roll, Facebook, Instagram, hard disk, USB drive or CD.

As a user is able to do the following

- Add photo caption on each page
- Auto fill: The application will automatically fill the album with your photos
- Pick an album size: Silver size 152 x 210 mm, gold landscape size 254 x 254 mm, gold square size 210 x 297 mm, platinum size 305 x 314 mm
- Adjust photo orientation (ie landscape or portrait)
- Save the album to edit it at a later time
- View past albums with ability to edit them, or print new copies
- Share their album with friends and family so they may order it as well

Awards



The Thom Browne Fall 2016 collection is modeled during Fashion Week, Monday in New York. — AFP/AP photos

NY Fashion Week: Thom Browne on the art of repurposing



The Associated Press is all over New York Fashion Week, from the runway designs to the celebrity-filled front rows. Here are some recent highlights:

Thom Browne on the art of repurposing

Guests at Thom Browne's runway show entered a Chelsea gallery from the snow-dusted streets of New York. Inside they found, well, the snow-dusted streets of New York. But it was the New York of the 1920s, and the location was Washington Square Park, meticulously recreated down to the houses surrounding it, which were sketched on the gallery's walls. A succession of intriguingly dressed women came to stroll under the streetlamps in this park. They wore elegant combinations of coats, jackets and skirts, all bearing the very detailed tailoring that Browne is famous for. But increasingly, it was obvious that these outfits had been deconstructed and then reconstructed as something else.

A jacket could be seen in its new incarnation as part of a skirt. The fur-trimmed arms of a coat became part of a dress. Sleeves could be seen hanging artfully from a waistline. Despite all the art involved, the theme was actually quite practical. "It's really taking your existing clothing and making new clothing out of it," Browne said afterward. "Really reappropriating. You buy beautiful clothes and they're such good quality that you don't want to throw them away, you just want to reappropriate them into something new."

Like any Browne show, there was some wonderfully whimsical headgear, in this case repurposed neckties. Men's ties were refashioned into tiny sculptures - much like fascinators - looping in different ways around the head. "So many people run away from wearing a tie, because they think it's so constricting," Browne said. "So I wanted to give it to the girl in a way that wasn't constricting at all." Since this was a park, of course, there were dogs, but these came in the form of handbags - actual canine-shaped bags - akin to Browne's earlier whale bags. There was also a mechanical dog, and, actually, a few real dogs who made it into the showroom, too - though they stuck to the sidelines. One of them, a year-old dachshund, belonged to the designer himself.

Tommy Hilfiger sets sail

If you're going to fill the cavernous, spectacular Park Avenue Armory wall to wall with guests, you'd better give 'em some pretty big scenery to look at. And Tommy Hilfiger always does just that, whether it's building a winter wonderland, a beach, or a football stadium. At Monday's nautical-themed runway show, his models strutted the decks of a steam liner, no less - with actual steam coming out of the stacks. The clothes displayed on the, er, T.H. Atlantic combined formal nautical wear - navy jackets with gold buttons and brocade - with more feminine elements, like delicate print dresses, or sheer navy skirts through which one could see sequined short shorts.

There were plenty of sailor coats and dresses, Breton striped tops, wide-legged pants with gold stripes down the side, even nautical overalls. Footwear included chunky-heeled loafers paired with ankle socks. A number of models wore tiaras in their hair. Tiaras? Well, Hilfiger's production notes offered some help there, describing a sensibility where the designer's "signature love of nautical" is "seen through a nostalgic filter where formal naval influences collide with the romance of a bygone era. It's masculine and feminine ...with unexpected combinations that offer a playful sense of irreverence and cinematic flair." The show closed with some of that cinematic flair, sending its marquee model, Gigi Hadid, down the runway in a sparkling gold-sequined sailor dress.



Modes present creations by Tommy Hilfiger.

Cowboys, poodles, and crazy plastic boots at Jeremy Scott

The designs are always eye-popping at a Jeremy Scott show, but on Monday, it was hard to decide whether to look at the models' clothes or at their extremely interesting feet. On those feet were cowboy boots - in plastic - with high heels, in colors like bright pink and blue and yellow. Some were embellished with animal prints, sparkles or other shiny doodads. The overall theme of the show, said Scott backstage, was taking some "honky-tonk archetypes" and twisting them in his own way (the show was titled "Cowboys and Poodles.") "There's a punky kind of Debbie Harry take on this kind of cowboy and western vibe that I've done, and dripped it into candy colors," he said.

The designer had fun - as he usually does - playing with fabrics and textures. "The boots are plastic, there's some angora sweaters in candy colors, there's sequins, there's faux fur, there's wools and fuzzy little bits and bobs," Scott said. "There's a little bit of everything." Jeans were spruced up with brightly colored vinyl patches on the pockets. Tight leather pants were embellished with a fringe coming down the side, evoking a cowboy jacket. Prints were, as usual, bold and entertaining. One had a Betty Grable-style pinup girl. Another had a hairbrush and what looked like a shampoo bottle. And there was an electric-guitar print; supermodel Karlie Kloss seemed to be having a great time modeling a bright blue version of it in a tight knit dress, accompanied by plastic boots, of course, and a poufy hairdo.

Scott has many celebrity fans, and he had a hard time picking his favorites. "There's so many, I mean from Rihanna, Miley and Katy (Perry), Nicki (Minaj) - there's so many ... obviously Madonna who has been wearing the creations throughout the concert tour that I did for her especially, which has been exciting to see ... you know I love working with my musicians and my muses and my friends, and I'm thrilled to see them wearing my clothes. It makes me happy when they're out there performing, doing what they do, and that I'm able to add and contribute to that."

Carolina Herrera in 3D

Don't let the soft palate, mod designs and ethereal feel of Carolina Herrera's fall collection fool you: it is packed with techniques using modern technology. "The way I use the new technology is in embroideries that are just beneath the print of the collection," Herrera, who introduced her first collection in 1980, said. "The embroideries are all floating. I call them 3D. I'm always fascinated by the new technology we find in fashion." Along with those embroideries, textured layers were seen throughout the collection of cocktail dresses, pants, coats, skirts, sweaters and Herrera's signature floor-length gowns. Despite the layering and intricate designs, the clothes still have a delicate feel. "This collection is my perception of beauty," Herrera explained. "I think women should look beautiful and feminine with whatever they wear."

Emmy Rossum was among the celebrities attending Monday's show at The Frick Collection. "It always feels wonderful in Mrs. Herrera's designs," Rossum said. "They're chic, elegant, beautifully made, feminine and she is such a wonderful, strong woman I admire and I have a lot of affection and respect for." The show was also streamed online where viewers were invited to watch with virtual reality viewers for a 3D experience. — AP



Modes present creations by Carolina Herrera Fall 2016.



Modes present creations by Jeremy Scott.





Taylor Swift poses in the press room with the awards for album of the year for 1989, pop vocal album for 1989 and best music video for 'Bad Blood'.



O'Shea Jackson Jr, left, and Ice Cube look on from left as Kendrick Lamar accepts the award for best rap album for 'To Pimp A Butterfly'.—AP/AFP photos



Recording artist Kendrick Lamar receives the award for the Best Rap Album.

Taylor Swift wins top Grammy Award, Kendrick Lamar wins 5



Singer Taylor Swift accepts the award for the Album of the Year.

Taylor Swift's official switch from country to pop with her multi-hit, best-selling "1989" album brought the singer her second Grammy Award win for album of the year. Swift was shocked when she won the night's top prize, beating out Kendrick Lamar, Chris Stapleton, Alabama Shakes and the Weeknd. Swift used her speech to encourage young women who feel defeated at times or discouraged by others. "There will be people along the way that will try to undercut your success or take credit for your accomplishments or your fame. You just focus on the work and don't let those people sidetrack you," she said.

Her speech could be directed partly to Kanye West, who recently said in a new song that he made Swift famous after he stole her microphone at the 2009 MTV Video Music Awards. Beyonce also seemed to make a statement when she presented the final award for the night, record of the year. "Art is the unapologetic celebration of culture through self-expression. It can impact people in a variety of ways for different reasons at different times. Some will react. Some will respond. And some will be moved," she said, seeming to speak to those who were critical of her Super Bowl performance of the anthem, "Formation."

Rap performance

Swift, who won the album of the year Grammy for "Fearless" in 2009, walked away Monday with three awards, including best pop album and music video for "Bad Blood," at the Staples Center in Los Angeles. Alabama Shakes also won three awards, though Lamar was the night's big winner with five. He won best rap album for "To Pimp a Butterfly" as well as rap performance, rap song, rap/sung performance and music video. Along with his wins, Lamar also had a show-stopping moment when he took the stage. He started as he appeared beaten, in handcuffs, with chains around his hands and a bruise on his eyes. He went on to fuse rap, jazz, reggae and African sounds for a commanding performance as he rapped "The Blacker the Berry" and the Grammy-nominated "Alright" passionately. He ended with a map of Africa, and the city of Compton imprinted in it.

"Hip-hop, Ice Cube, this for hip-hop, this for Snoop Dogg ...this for Nas. We will live forever, believe that," said Lamar onstage when he won best rap album. Mark Ronson and Bruno Mars won two awards for "Uptown Funk," including record of the year. Ronson gave a shout-out to Prince, James Brown and George Clinton for being leaders in funk. "This is dedicated to the fans right here," Mars added. Mars introduced Adele, who sang "All I Ask," which



Recording artist Kendrick Lamar performs onstage. they wrote together for her new album "25." She was accompanied with a piano behind her, but the audio sounded off and appeared to throw off her performance.

Recording artist Kendrick Lamar performs onstage.



Music director Alex Lacamoire and Actor, composer Lin-Manuel Miranda celebrate on stage during "Hamilton" Grammy performance.



(From left) Singer John Legend, Demi Lovato, Lionel Richie, Meghan Trainor, Tyrese Gibson, and Luke Bryan perform onstage.



Taylor Swift performs on stage.



The Weeknd holds his trophies for Best R&B Performance and Best Urban Contemporary Album.



Singer The Weeknd performs onstage.



Singer Meghan Trainor receives the award for the Best New Artist.



Johnny Depp, from left, Joe Perry, and Alice Cooper of The Hollywood Vampires.



Beyonce speaks onstage.



Duff McKagan, left, performs with Alice Cooper, Johnny Depp, and Joe Perry of Hollywood Vampires.

Awards

Vocal struggle

"The piano mics fell onto the piano strings, that's what the guitar sound was. It made it sound out of tune," Adele tweeted. "(Expletive) happens." A spokesperson for CBS, where the Grammys aired, said "there was a brief 5-8 second technical issue that was out of our control." Justin Bieber started "Love Yourself" on guitar in good form, but ended with a vocal struggle. Little Big Town and Demi Lovato, however, had shining moments during their performances, hitting impressive and smooth high notes. But Bieber also had a shining moment: He won his first Grammy on Monday night for best dance recording for "Where Are U Now" with Skrillex and Diplo. The Grammys also marked first-time wins for Alabama Shakes, the Weeknd, Stapleton, Pitbull and Ed Sheeran, who won song of the year for "Thinking Out Loud." "We wrote it on a couch in my house," he said of his hit song he wrote with Amy Wadge, which also won him best pop solo performance.

Alabama Shakes' three wins included best alternative music album for "Sound & Color," as well as rock song and rock performance for "Don't Wanna Fight," which they performed. "My heart is beating a mile a minute," said frontwoman Brittany Howard. "I promise we're going to keep going." The Weeknd, who won two awards, performed in a cube that was brightly lit for "Can't Feel My Face" until he switched to a piano-tinged version of his upbeat hit "In the Night." Stapleton, who has written for dozens of country acts, won best country solo performance and country album for "Traveller." "This is something you never ever dream of so I'm super grateful for it," he said. Stapleton lost best country song to "Girl Crush" songwriters Liz Rose, Hillary Lindsey and Lori McKenna, while the group behind "Girl Crush" - Little Big Town - won best country duo/group performance for the hit track.

Representative read

The Grammys featured a number of performances, including touching tributes: Lady Gaga was in David Bowie-inspired makeup and gear as she ran through 10 of the icon's hits, including "Space Oddity," "Changes," "Fame," "Let's Dance" and "Heroes." BB King was remembered with a rousing perform-

ance by Stapleton, Gary Clark, Jr and Bonnie Raitt - all on guitar and vocals - with "The Thrill Is Gone." The Hollywood Vampires, a supergroup of Johnny Depp, Alice Cooper and Joe Perry, performed in their first televised performance and honored Motorhead's Lemmy Kilmister. Stevie Wonder, joined with Grammy-winning a capella group Pentatonix, sang "That's the Way of the World" in honor of Earth, Wind & Fire's Maurice White, while members of the Eagles and Jackson Browne sang "Take It Easy" for Glenn Frey.

Rihanna, who was supposed to perform near the top of the show, couldn't due to doctor's orders. "Rihanna's doctor put her on vocal rest for 48 hours because she was at risk of hemorrhaging her vocal chords," a statement from her representative read. Recording Academy CEO said Lauryn Hill, who was supposed to surprise the audience by performing with the Weeknd, said Hill showed up for dress rehearsal but didn't make it in time for the show. The academy never officially announced Hill was performing. "She was invited by (the Weeknd)," Portnow said backstage. Collaborative performances were one of the themes of the Grammys: Carrie Underwood sang with Sam Hunt; Ellie Goulding and Andra Day performed; and while Lovato, Legend, Luke Bryan and Tyrese sang with Lionel Richie to honor the icon.

Meghan Trainor, who was nominated for two Grammys last year for "All About That Bass," won best new artist. "Thank you to the Grammys, I love you so much," said a teary-eyed Trainor, who also thanked her parents and Epic Records CEO LA Reid. Other winners included D'Angelo, Kirk Franklin, Jason Isbell, Tony Bennett, the cast of Broadway's smash "Hamilton" and Jeff Bhasker. — AP



Brittany Howard of The Alabama Shakes accepts the award for best rock performance for 'Don't Wanna Fight'.



Bruno Mars accepts the award for record of the year for 'Uptown Funk'.

Winners

- Record of the Year**
"Uptown Funk" - Mark Ronson, Featuring Bruno Mars
- Album of the Year**
"1989" - Taylor Swift
- Song of the Year**
"Thinking Out Loud" - Ed Sheeran & Amy Wadge, songwriters (Ed Sheeran)
- Best New Artist**
Meghan Trainor
- Best Pop Solo Performance**
"Thinking Out Loud" - Ed Sheeran (Track from: "X")
- Best Pop Duo/Group Performance**
"Uptown Funk" - Mark Ronson featuring Bruno Mars (Track from: "Uptown Special")
- Best Rock Performance**
"Don't Wanna Fight" - Alabama Shakes
- Best Country Album**
"Traveller" - Chris Stapleton
- Best Pop Vocal Album**
"1989" - Taylor Swift
- Best Rock Album**
"Drones" - Muse
- Best Rap Album**
"To Pimp A Butterfly" - Kendrick Lamar
- Best Music Video**
"Bad Blood" - Taylor Swift, featuring Kendrick Lamar
- Best Musical Theater Album**
"Hamilton"
- Best Music Film**
"Amy" (Amy Winehouse)
Asif Kapadia, video director; James Gay-Rees, video producer.

— Reuters



Robin Thicke (left) and Pitbull perform on stage.



Muse pose in the press room with their Best Rock Album trophy for 'Drones'.



Justin Bieber performs on stage.



Nile Rodgers, left, and Lady Gaga perform a tribute to David Bowie.



Chris Stapleton, left, and Dave Cobb accept the award for best country album for 'Traveller'.



Ed Sheeran accepts the award for song of the year for 'Thinking Out Loud'.



John Legend, from left, Demi Lovato, Lionel Richie, Meghan Trainor, Tyrese, and Luke Bryan perform a tribute to MusiCares Person of the Year honoree Lionel Richie.



Brittany Howard of Alabama Shakes performs on stage.



Singer Lalah Hathaway accepts the Grammy Award for Best Traditional R&B Performance for her song 'Little Ghetto Boy' onstage.



Mark Ronson holds his Best Pop Duo/Group Performance trophy for 'Uptown Funk'.



Angelique Kidjo poses with her Best World Music Album trophy for 'Sings'.



Thundercat holds his Best Rap/Sung Collaboration trophy for "These Walls".



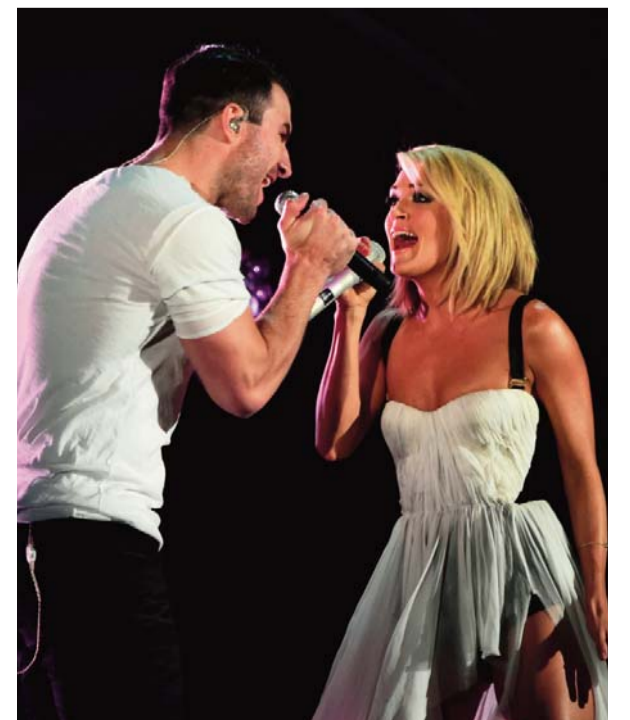
Songwriter Kendra Foster holds her Best R&B Song trophy for "Really Love".



Pentatonix hold their Best Arrangement, Instrumental or A Cappella trophy for 'The Dance Of The Sugar Plum Fairy'.



Ghost hold their Best Metal Performance trophy for 'Cirice'.



Country singer Carrie Underwood (right) and Sam Hunt perform onstage.

Lifestyle

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Taylor Swift wins top Grammy Award, Kendrick Lamar wins 5

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A reveler takes part in the flower parade during the 132nd Nice carnival edition, Saturday, Feb 13, 2016, in Nice, southern France. The Carnival, running from Feb 13 until Feb 28, 2016, celebrates the 'King of Media'. — AP



A man decked out in an alien costume makes hand gestures with the public during a parade at the annual Alien Festival in Capilla del Monte, Cordoba, Argentina.



People dressed as Star Wars characters pose for pictures. — AP photos

Debut edition of Spider-Man comic headed to auction

Walter Yakoboski scraped together nearly every penny he made as a cook in 1979 to begin buying a small collection of rare comic books for \$10,000, hoping his boyhood passion could one day pay off as an investment. That day may soon be here. Yakoboski's copy of "Amazing Fantasy" No. 15 from 1962 - which introduced the world to Spider-Man - could fetch \$400,000 or more when it goes up for auction later this month. "This is the first time I really sold anything," said the 60-year-old Yakoboski, who wants to use the proceeds to buy his late father's 17-acre (7-hectare) vegetable farm in Calverton on eastern Long Island. He insisted that the fact that he was recently laid off as a supermarket baker after more than 27 years is not the reason he's selling now. "I have had it for 36 years and it's just time," said Yakoboski, who is also selling a 1963 Spider-Man, as well as two "Fantastic Four" editions and a "Justice League of America," which combined could bring an additional \$75,000. But the crown jewel is the "Amazing Fantasy" issue, which Yakoboski originally purchased individually for \$1,200 in 1980. Its cover, featuring a price of 12 cents, shows Spider-Man clutching a villain in one arm and swinging from his web with the other.

Heritage Auctions

Stan Lee and Steve Ditko co-created the web-slinger and his alter ego, the educationally gifted but awkward Peter Parker, whose life changed forever when he was bitten by a radioactive spider. It paved the way for Spider-Man adventures on television and the big screen. Lon Allen, managing director of the comics department at Dallas-based Heritage Auctions - which is conducting the sale Thursday - said there are probably 4,000 to 5,000 copies of "Amazing Fantasy" No. 15 in circulation. But Yakoboski's copy is in nearly mint condition. "It was graded 9.4 on a scale of 1 to 10, that's what makes it super desirable and really special," Allen said. "Whoever buys this comic will be joining an elite club." Allen said a private collector reportedly paid \$1.1 million for a near-mint copy of "Amazing Fantasy" No. 15 in 2011, but estimated the \$400,000 or more Yakoboski's edition may fetch could be a record for a public auction of the comic book. — AP

Argentine alien festival soars at UFO sighting site hotspot

Thousands of earthlings descended on Capilla del Monte for an annual international alien festival that has made the town a hotspot for UFO sightings. The weekend festival in Cordoba province included a parade of neon lights with Star Wars characters, an alien costume contest and shops selling green stuffed aliens with bulging eyes next to hooded ETs from the 1982 film.

Some also attended workshops on everything extraterrestrial held near a local hill that is the site of a purported UFO sighting 30 years ago. The incident reputedly left a large burning mark on the hill's grass. The sighting also left a mark in the economy of the town, which has flourished with its alien tourism. "People come here for the energy, for the UFO sightings," said Leonardo Fuentes, a visitor from Chile. "So it's not just tourism but more about all that you can see."

The festival, now in its fourth year, has become popular among alien enthusiasts

worldwide, but some locals are concerned about its fast growth. "The festival is fun, but it can also generate a lack of seriousness toward the issue," said Luz Mary Lopez, who heads the UFO Investigation Center in Capilla del Monte. Her late husband made the investigation of the town's UFO sightings his life's work. Lopez has continued this by offering talks on the events of Jan. 9, 1986, when a local boy saw what many believe to be an alien spaceship. She also has been asking authorities to go beyond tourism to develop the town as a scientific and spiritual hub. One of the most visited sites during the weekend festival was the nearby Uritorco hill. Known as Argentina's "magic mountain," it is sought after by star-gazers, seekers of its "special source of energy" credited for the UFO sightings, and even those who believe it is a door to other dimensions. — AP

A man in an illuminated costume parades.



A woman in an alien costume poses for a picture.



An ET doll sits outside a shop.



This undated photo provided by Heritage Auctions shows the comic book 'Amazing Fantasy' No 15, by Marvel Comics. — AP