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KERRY, LAVROV REACH PROVISIONAL DEAL AMID RAGING VIOLENCE



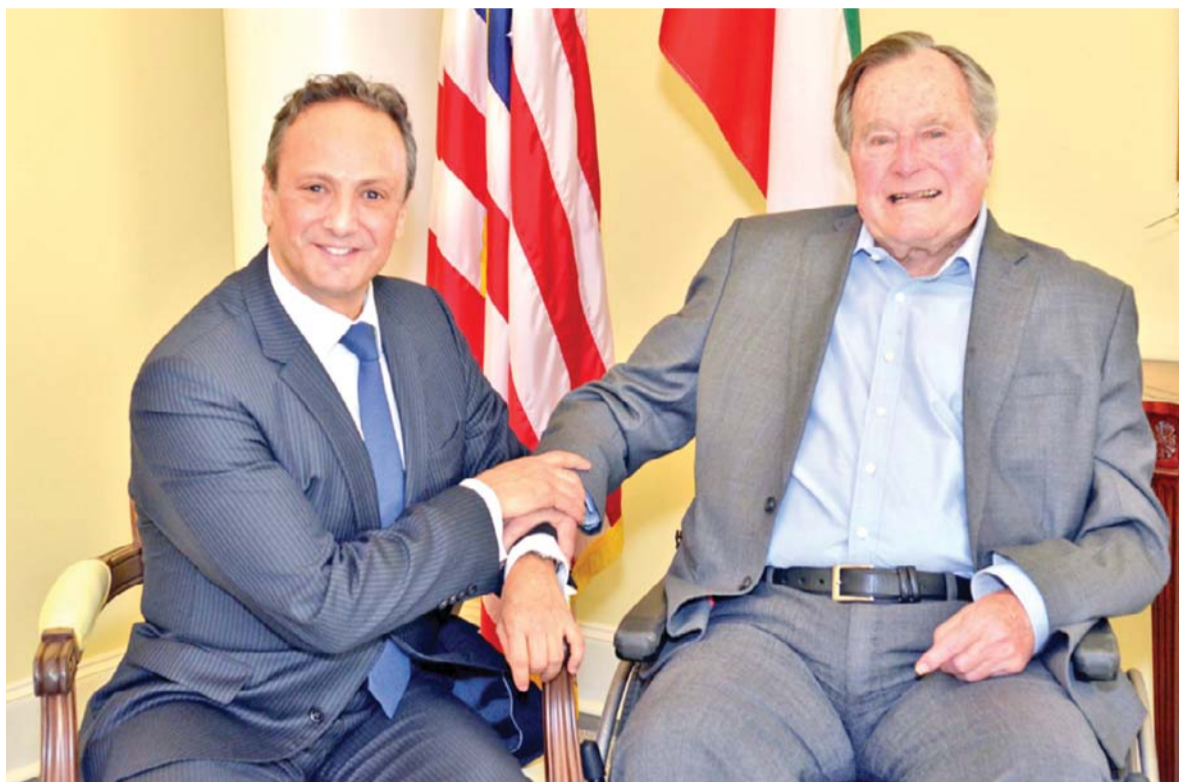
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KUWAITI ENVOY MEETS BUSH SR

WASHINGTON: Kuwait's Ambassador to the US Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah met former US president George H W Bush in College Station, Texas, on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of Kuwait's liberation from the Iraqi invasion.

Sheikh Salem said in a statement to KUNA on Saturday that he conveyed to the former president on Thursday the greetings and best wishes of HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. "While celebrating the liberation day, Kuwait's leadership, government and people remember the bold and high-principled stance adopted by Bush the Elder to stand by Kuwait against the brutal Iraqi invasion," he stressed.

The great US leader was able to win the support of the then Congress over the US-led military coalition to liberate Kuwait, Sheikh Salem said, affirming that Kuwait will remain grateful for the US' help. Sheikh Salem quoted Bush as saying that he made the right decision in support of the legitimate struggle of the Kuwaiti people against the brutal invasion. Sheikh Salem and Bush later joined a symposium on the liberation of Kuwait, hosted by the Bush School of Government and Public Service of Texas A and M University. The Kuwaiti ambassador and former US ambassador to Kuwait Ryan Clark Crocker were among the key speakers at the symposium. — KUNA



COLLEGE STATION, Texas: Kuwait Ambassador to the US Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets former US president George H W Bush. — KUNA

SAYYIDA ZEINAB, Syria: A string of suicide bombings near a shrine outside Syria's capital and in Homs claimed by jihadists killed at least 142 people yesterday, as Washington and Moscow worked to secure a ceasefire. US Secretary of State John Kerry said a provisional deal had been reached on the terms of a truce in Syria's brutal five-year conflict, only for the bloodshed to intensify on the ground.

Near Damascus, the attacks, including a car bombing, ripped through the area of the shrine of Sayyida Zeinab and killed 83 people, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said. And two car bombs killed at least 59 people and wounded dozens in the pro-regime district of Al-Zahraa in the central city of Homs, said the Britain-based monitoring group. The Islamic State jihadist group said it was behind the day's carnage. State television footage from Homs showed emergency workers carrying a charred body on a stretcher past devastated shops and mangled cars and minibuses.

Al-Zahraa - whose residents are mostly from the same Alawite sect of Shia Islam as Syria's ruling clan - has been regularly targeted. IS said in an online statement that two jihadists drove explosive-laden cars into crowds of local residents. Two more of its suicide bombers carried out the Sayyida Zeinab bombings, the extremist group said. State television said a car bombing and two suicide attacks hit the area, killing 30 and wounding dozens in a preliminary toll, whereas the Observatory gave a death toll of 68 in four attacks. An AFP reporter said the blasts struck about 400 m from the shrine. At least 60 shops were damaged and cars

Continued on Page 13

FINANCE PANEL APPROVES KEY AMENDMENTS TO TENDERS LAW

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The National Assembly's financial and economic affairs committee yesterday introduced key amendments to the tenders law which require forming technical committees for the purchase of arms for the army, police and national guard. Head of the committee MP Faisal Al-Shaye said the amendment was proposed by the Audit Bureau to regulate the purchase of arms and military equipment. The Cabinet will issue the necessary decisions to form such committees and will determine the mechanism of their operations, Shaye said.

Other amendments to the law obliges the Central Tenders Committee, which awards state projects, to accept the decision of the petitions committee whose decisions currently are consultative, he said. Under

the new amendments, which still need to be approved by the Assembly, priority in awarding state projects is given to companies listed on the Kuwait Stock Exchange. No new projects will be awarded to companies that are having problems with other projects underway until they solve the problems and complete the projects, Shaye said. MP Ahmad Al-Azemi said the committee discussed his proposal to award projects worth KD 20 million and more to listed companies only. The tenders law is one of the most important legislations that governs billions of dinars in state projects every year.

Rapporteur of the Assembly's priorities committee MP Ahmad Lari said yesterday the panel discussed with the acting electricity and water minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah the ministry's implementation of projects.

He said under the 2015/2016 plan, the ministry has 38 projects worth KD 368 million, of which KD 218 million has been spent so far.

Meanwhile, National Assembly Speaker Marzouk Al-Ghanem yesterday congratulated the newly-elected MP Ali Al-Khamees, who won the by-election seat to replace late MP Nabil Al-Fadhli. The liberal National Democratic Forum however strongly criticized what it called sectarian practices that marred the by-election and accused Islamist movements of all sects of spoiling the election. The NDF said in a statement that raising Sunni-Shiite sectarian divisions has become an effective means of winning Assembly elections. The forum said that the single-vote system has proven once more it is the best environment for sectarian-motivated elections in the country.

News

in brief

Missing radioactive material found in Iraq

BAGHDAD: Radioactive material that went missing in Iraq has been found dumped near a petrol station in the southern town of Zubair, officials said yesterday, ending speculation it could be acquired by Islamic State and used as a weapon. The officials told Reuters the material, stored in a protective case the size of a laptop computer, was undamaged and there were no concerns about radiation. It was not immediately clear how the device, owned by Swiss inspections group SGS, ended up in Zubair, around 15 km southwest of Basra. The material, which uses gamma rays to test flaws in materials used for oil and gas pipelines in a process called industrial gamma radiography, is owned by Istanbul-based SGS Turkey, according to the document and officials.

Bahrain adopts steps to counter Iran 'interference'

DUBAI: Bahrain said yesterday it has adopted measures including travel curbs and monitoring of money transfers to counter Iran's "interference" in the Sunni-ruled kingdom shaken by Shiite-led unrest since 2011. Interior Minister Sheikh Rashid Al-Khalifa spoke of the "dangers of Iran's interference in the internal security" of Bahrain during a meeting with clerics, MPs and newspaper chiefs, said the official BNA news agency. "We have taken a series of measures to confront the dangers of terrorism," Sheikh Rashid said. These include forming a committee to monitor money transfers and donations to combat the "financing of terrorism" and imposing travel restrictions on citizens, especially aged between 14 and 18, to "unsafe countries", he said.

UK LAUNCHES E-VISA SYSTEM FOR KUWAITIS

KUWAIT: The UK embassy in Kuwait has announced a new electronic visa waiver (EVW) system for Kuwaiti passport holders to travel to the UK for business and tourism. The EVW will allow Kuwaiti passport holders to travel to the UK for a visit of up to six months by filling in an online form at least 48 hours before they travel to the UK, the British Embassy in Kuwait said in a press release yesterday.

The scheme removes the need to give biometrics, attend a visa application center or hand in passports in advance of travel. Passengers will be asked to upload a copy of their passport's biographic data page so that details can be checked for accuracy and security purposes prior to travel. To cover the costs of the new system, a fee of 15 (around KD 7) will be introduced early next year, it said.

UK Ambassador to Kuwait Mathew Lodge said the new visa system is a sign of deep and permanent relations between the UK and Kuwait, according to the press release. He added that in light of the historic ties between both countries, the UK is committed to introducing an electronic visa waiver system to facilitate the travel of Kuwaiti nationals to the UK. The ambassador hoped that when the scheme is rolled out early next year, many Kuwaitis would seize the opportunity to visit the UK, the press release noted.

"I am incredibly pleased to announce that the electronic visa waiver system has today been fully implemented in Kuwait. I hope this will mean an increase in the numbers of Kuwaitis visiting the UK and thereby further strengthening the people to people links between our two countries," said Tobias Ellwood, Minister for Middle East and North Africa.

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KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets Minister of Health Dr Ali Al-Obaidi and Public Authority for Food and Nutrition officials. — Amiri Diwan and KUNA photos



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets Minister of Public Works Ali Al-Omar, and president of the Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources (PAAAFR) Faisal Saud Al-Hasawi.

AMIR RECEIVES NUTRITION AUTHORITY SENIOR OFFICIALS

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Seif Palace yesterday Minister of Health and Chairman of Public Authority for Food and Nutrition (PAFN) Dr Ali Saad Al-Obaidi, and the authority's officials Saleh Al-Humaidhi, Musaed Saleh Al-Abdali, Nawal Majran Al-Hamad, Amal Al-Rashdan, Abdulaziz Al-Samhan and Reem Al-Fulajj. His Highness the Amir met with these officials on the occasion of their appointment at the authority. 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 also received minister Obaidi and the PAFN officials.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Amir received Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs Ali Al-Omar, who presented the newly appointed president of the Public Authority for

Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources (PAAAFR) Faisal Saud Al-Hasawi. Omar later presented the new officials to His Highness the Crown Prince and His Highness the Prime Minister.

Earlier, His Highness the Amir received His Highness the Crown Prince, His Highness the Prime Minister, National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem and First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. His Highness the Crown Prince meanwhile received Ghanem, His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah.

His Highness the Crown Prince also received Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs

Sheikh Salman Sabah Salem Al-Sabah, and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs and Acting Minister of Water and Electricity Sheikh Mohammad Al-Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah.

Separately, His Highness the Crown Prince received Minister of Commerce and Industry Yousef Al-Abdullah Al-Ali and Director General of Direct Investment Promotion Authority Dr Sheikh Mishaal Al-Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

In other news, His Highness the Crown Prince expressed gratitude to the nationals and residents of the country and "the brothers outside Kuwait" for expressing their sincere sentiments on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of His Highness' assumption to the post. His Highness the Crown Prince wished the people further progress and prosperity under the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir. — KUNA



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets Minister of Commerce and Industry Yousef Al-Ali and Director General of Direct Investment Promotion Authority Dr Sheikh Mishaal Al-Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.



KUWAIT: Head of the Government Performance Follow-up Apparatus Sheikh Ahmad Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah (right) and Kuwait University President Dr Hussein Al-Ansari sign the agreement. — KUNA

FOLLOW-UP APPARATUS, UNIVERSITY SIGN MOU

KUWAIT: The Government Performance Follow-Up Apparatus signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Kuwait University (KU) yesterday aimed to benefit from the latter's consulting and academic experiences. The agreement also aims to raise the level of the performance of the apparatus and develop the working system, the apparatus

said in a statement. The MoU was signed by Head of the Government Performance Follow-up Apparatus Sheikh Ahmad Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and Kuwait University President Dr Hussein Al-Ansari, the statement added. The signing of the agreement was also attended by officials from both sides. — KUNA

KUWAIT, US MARK LIBERATION WITH CELEBRATIONS AT NATIONAL LIBRARY

By Nawara Fattahwa

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Information in cooperation with the US Embassy held a joint event yesterday at the National Library to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the Liberation of Kuwait. A documentary film on the liberation was shown during the event.

Assisting Undersecretary for the Foreign Media Sector at the Ministry of Information Faisal Al-Mitlagim spoke on America's role in supporting Kuwait. "The bilateral relations between our countries are special and represent a model of real friendship between countries and nations," he said during the event representing the Minister of Information and State Minister for Youth Affairs Sheikh Salman Al-Humoud Al-Sabah. "This friendship goes back decades since the first US consulate opened in Kuwait in the 1950s. The United States played an important role in supporting Kuwait during the invasion, which was supported by both the US leadership and the nation," added Al-Mitlagim.

US Ambassador to Kuwait Douglas Silliman addressed the gathering, noting that he is glad to be participating in this event as all the nations of the coalition came together to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the liberation of Kuwait. "This occasion, this week's events and celebrations, provide us the opportunity to reflect on our nations' shared experiences of 25 years ago - experiences that cemented the

bonds of friendship that unite our people today," he said.

Shared friendship, history

Ambassador Silliman also spoke about the sacrifices. "We should remember the sacrifices of the generation of Kuwaitis who lived through those terrible days of occupation and who helped rebuild Kuwait into the free and modern state in which we live today. Let us remember the sacrifices of the 700,000 American service men and women who left their family and friends at home to fight for the liberation of Kuwait," stressed Silliman.

He called for using these shared experiences to look to the future. "Let us look to a future of strengthened partnership, a future of shared peace and security, and a future of prosperity for our children and our grandchildren. Let us look to a future where the United States and Kuwait work together to build new economic and educational opportunities for our children, cooperate to preserve and maintain our environment, and collaborate to address the security challenges of the region," he pointed out.

"This is how we truly honor those men and women who sacrificed so much so that we could live in a free Kuwait and pursue these lofty goals. That is their challenge to us, and that, indeed, is our true opportunity," concluded Silliman. Former United States Ambassador to Kuwait immediately after liberation, Edward Gnehm provided short remarks about his experience.

AMIR CONGRATULATES NEWLY-ELECTED MP

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on Saturday sent a cable of congratulations to Ali Abdullah Al-Khamis who won a parliamentary seat in the by-elections of the third constituency. His Highness the Amir wished the new member of the National Assembly success in serving the national interests of the dear homeland, according to readout of the cable released by the Amiri Diwan. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah have also sent similar cables to Khamis to express their best wishes for him. — KUNA



KUWAIT: National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem congratulates newly-elected MP Ali Abdullah Al-Khamis. — KUNA

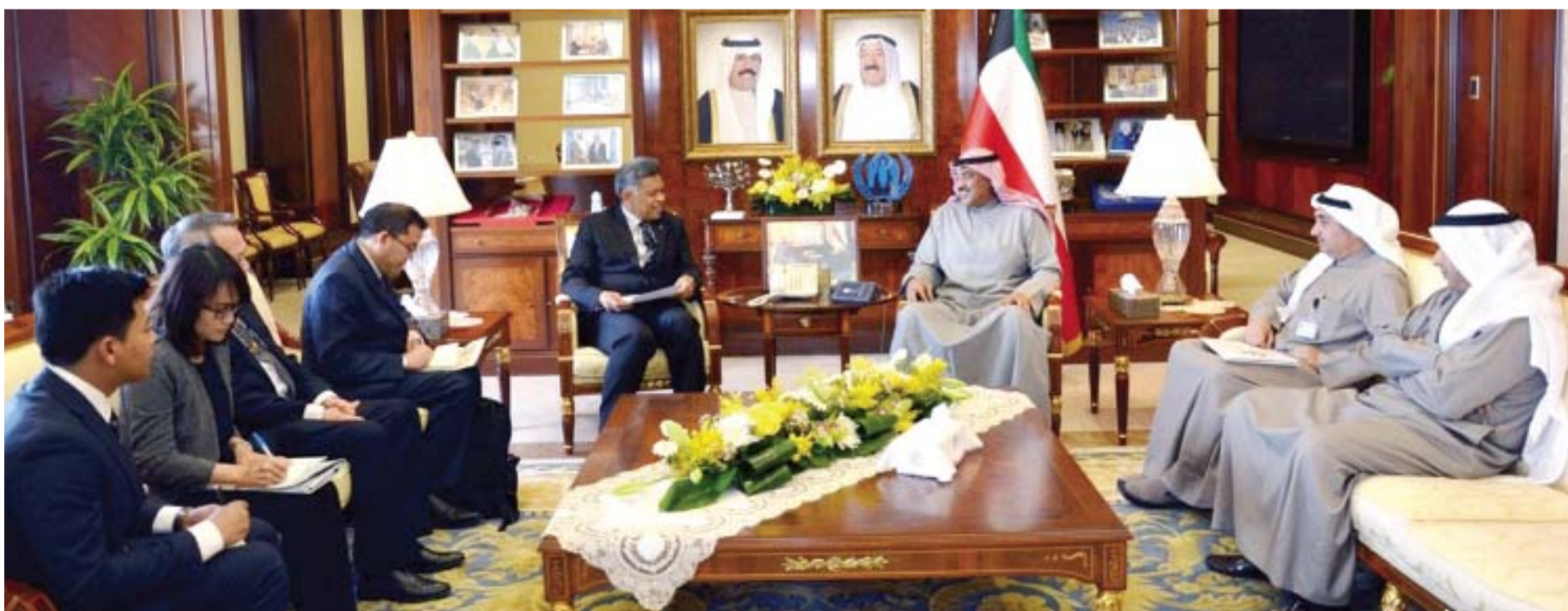
ASSEMBLY'S GENERAL SECRETARIAT RECEIVES BALLOT BOXES

KUWAIT: The National Assembly's General Secretariat yesterday received all ballot boxes and official results of the third constituency by-elections for 2016, announced the Assembly's Secretary General Allam Al-Kandari.

Kandari noted that according to article number 39 of Kuwait's elections law, the chairman of the polling commission is tasked with handing the boxes to the secretariat. The boxes will remain at the assembly's body until all protestations were studied before returning them to the Ministry of Interior, he added. Speaker of the National Assembly Marzouq Al-Ghanem declared the seat of the third constituency vacant after the passing away of late MP Nabil Al-Fadhel on January 12. — KUNA



Allam Al-Kandari



KUWAIT: First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets Thailand's Special envoy to the Foreign Minister Dr Surin Pitsuwan. — KUNA

FM RECEIVES LETTER FROM THAI COUNTERPART

KUWAIT: First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah received yesterday a written letter from Thailand Foreign Minister Don Pramudwinai. The letter highlighted bilateral relations and

ways to boost them in all fronts, including issues on mutual concerns. The letter was delivered to Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, during a reception at the foreign ministry headquarters and was handed over by Thailand Special envoy to the Foreign

Minister Dr Surin Pitsuwan. The meeting also tackled topics on current cooperation between the two countries, and development in the region and international arena. The meeting was attended by senior foreign ministry officials. — KUNA

DIPLOMATIC INSTITUTE TO HOST SEMINAR ON KUWAIT-US TIES

KUWAIT: Saud Al-Nasser Al-Sabah Kuwaiti Diplomatic Institute is to host a seminar on Kuwait-US ties today, as Kuwait is to celebrate its 25th anniversary of the Liberation Day. The Institute Ambassador Abdul-Aziz Abdul-Latif Al-Sharekh and former US Ambassador to Kuwait Edward Gnehm are to talk during the seminar, the Institute said in a press statement yesterday. Another seminar co-hosted with the economics department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs will also be held tomorrow to promote direct investment. — KUNA

legalese

HIRING A LAWYER

By Attorney Fajer Ahmed

I know it is not very ideal for me to be writing this myself as I am a lawyer, but I have gained experience in the past few years learning the tricks of the market by providing my clients with legal services from not just myself, but my highly qualified colleagues. I also know that many lawyers, attorneys, legal consultants and other legal professionals will not be very happy with me disclosing this information. I have learned the very insensitive way that some lawyers perceive the legal profession as a purely commercial profession, to make the highest profit possible for their work. So it is important to not just trust your lawyer, but to investigate your lawyers' morals and work ethics before signing them on.

Legal fees

Question: I am about to hire a lawyer to represent me against my husband at court as he has filed a case against me. I called a lawyer, requested to meet with her and I asked her over the phone how much the legal fees will be. She said it will be around KD 3,000. Do you think this is acceptable?

Fajer: From experience, I am not so concerned with the amount that the lawyer is asking for; different lawyers will have different fees according to the service they provide, and that includes their location and secretaries, the languages they provide, etc. What I am very concerned about though is the fact that some lawyers can give quotations of their fees without sitting with the client, and without knowing if you have children or not. If your lawyer does not know what work is required from them and the extent of it, then how can they give you a quotation?

Signing a contract

Question: I am about to sign a contract with a lawyer and was wondering if you have any advice on what to keep an eye out for?

Fajer: There are many things to be weary of when signing any contract in general. The most important thing though for any contract is that the obligations and responsibilities of each party are clearly written out. It is highly important that both parties involved understand what is required from them.

Let me give an example. When signing the service agreement with your lawyer for an employment case, your contract should clearly state what your lawyer is asking on your behalf by writing out all the benefits that you are rightfully entitled to. So the contract between your lawyer and yourself would mention for example that your lawyer will obtain your termination indemnity plus your economy return class ticket to your home and remuneration for your off days, etc.

The payments should be agreed on in the contract; this includes the amount to be paid, the dates of payment and the preferred method of payment for the amounts mentioned. Also keep in mind that if the lawyer is representing you for any cases or issues that involve them obtaining money on your behalf, then your contract should include their method of payment to you. Will they obtain the money from court in their name and then transfer it to you? And if so, when will they pay you back?

Termination indemnity

Question: I got terminated recently and my employer has not paid me my termination indemnity or any other benefits. I would like to hire a lawyer on my behalf to obtain the amounts for me, but I have to leave Kuwait. Can lawyers represent me in courts even if I am not in Kuwait?

Fajer: Yes, lawyers and attorneys in general can represent their clients without their presence. In some cases, the judge might request that the client be present, as the judge or public prosecutor might want to investigate more, especially in criminal cases. As a general rule of thumb though, lawyers can represent their clients even if they are not in Kuwait.

With that said, a lawyer will not be able to represent you in Kuwait without a Power of Attorney (POA). There are different templates for POAs in Kuwait, and I suggest that you read them carefully (the document is always in Arabic) as they could give your lawyer the right to obtain money on your behalf, proceed with governmental transactions and possibly even sell your possessions.

As I said above though, it is important for you to trust your lawyer. Practically speaking, it can be difficult for your lawyer to explain every single detail of your case. I have seen lawyers that base their legal fees according to "how annoying their client is." Yes, honestly. If the client is too demanding in the beginning, asks a lot of questions or calls all the time, then lawyers will bring up their quotation.

A huge part of my job is finding the right lawyer for my readers. I get a large number of requests for legal services on a daily basis. Most lawyers are specialized in a specific area of law whether it be commercial law, employment law, family law, criminal law, etc. Therefore, my advice is to always ask for your lawyers' credentials. Just because your friend's lawyer was very successful for him, it does not mean he will be the same with you! Also, I strongly advise that you try to negotiate things looking for a win-win situation before getting a lawyer (and ask your lawyer to negotiate on your behalf before going to court!)

For any legal questions or queries, email ask@fajertlawyer.com

TWO PEOPLE TRAFFICKED TO KUWAIT GO HOME

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Manpower Public Authority (MPA) announced Saturday that two victims of human trafficking chose to leave the MPA's migrants sheltering center for their home countries voluntarily. The repatriation process was conducted in collaboration with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) under instructions of the Minister of Social Affairs and Labor Hind Al-Subaih, said the MPA's Deputy Director General for manpower protection Abdullah Al-Motatah.

"This is the first such cooperation between the MPA and the IOM meeting the international standards related to the protection of victims of human trafficking. The process included assessment of the risks that could face the immigrants at their home countries, medical checks to ensure their safe travel, and provision of travel tickets," Motatah pointed out.

The nationality of the two victims was not made public. The IOM's emergency fund provided each immigrant with \$1,500 to help them start a small project or complete their education, he added. —KUNA

MAN SHOOTS DEAD EX-IN-LAW FOLLOWING FAMILY DISPUTES

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: The Interior Ministry's relations and security information general department said a 74-year-old citizen was killed by his ex-in-law following a family dispute in Sabah Al-Nasser. The suspect is a policeman and committed the crime while in uniform, using his police issue M-16 handgun to fire the fatal shot. Interior ministry operations received a call from Farwaniya Hospital about the arrival of the 74-year-old victim with a bullet in his head. The suspect's whereabouts were then determined, and his residence in Reqqa was stormed. He confessed to the shooting, and led police to the crime weapon hidden in his car. The exact circumstances which led to the crime were not immediately known. The suspect was sent to the public prosecution for further action.

Traffic statistics

Efforts to control traffic through a series of sudden campaigns resulted in issuing 29,934 citations, while 1,735 vehicles were impounded, 13 cars confiscated, 134 persons detained and one expatriate sent for deportation for driving without a license.

No injuries in fire

A fire broke out in Liwan mall in Egaila, and Mangaf fire center responded, supported by Qurain center. Firemen discovered that the fire started in a shoe warehouse. The mall was evacuated and the fire was contained and put out. Only material losses were reported.

Banners removed

Kuwait Municipality's public relations department announced the removal of 83 election banners and four election headquarters in the Capital, Farwaniya and Hawally governorates following the end of by-elections in the third constituency. The public cleanliness and road occupancy department in the Capital removed 23 advertisements beside four premises, while in Hawally, 35 banners were removed. Farwaniya saw the removal of 25 hoardings.

Road closed

The Interior Ministry's General



Municipality workers remove a banner following the end of by-elections in the third constituency.



A fire truck stops outside the Liwan mall in Egaila where a fire was reported yesterday.

Traffic Department announced yesterday that the Jahra Road's intersection with Ghazali Road heading towards Kuwait City will be closed between 2:00 am and 4:00 am starting from

today and until Thursday, February 25, 2016. The department urged drivers to take Jamal Abdul-Nasser Road heading towards Kuwait City as a replacement.

KD 6 MILLION FOR SPECIAL NEWS TRUCKS

'COLD WAVE' HITS KUWAIT NEXT WEEK

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: The Information Ministry said that it acquired six production trucks needed to help cover live events happening in Kuwait. The ministry explained that four of the trucks, with a total value of KD 1.6 million, had already arrived to port while two more, with a total value of KD 4.3 million, would arrive by June. The additional trucks come with special specifications and will be used for covering sporting activities, the ministry explained.

Cold wave

The weather is expected to remain warm until the weekend before a cold wave hits Kuwait next week, a veteran meteorologist announced. Strong and dusty winds are expected for today while chances for scattered rain are expected tomorrow, Dr Saleh Al-Ojairi said, adding that the unstable weather might obstruct sea navigation but will not affect aviation. Next week's cold wave is not expected to be as severe as a similar wave which hit Kuwait last month, Ojairi said. He added that young people can start wearing summer clothes by the beginning of March, while senior citizens are advised to wait until the end of the month before doing so.

Employees absent without leave

Kuwait Municipality recently referred 21 Kuwaiti employees for investigation for not being present at their offices during official working hours. Within its strict measures in terms of attendance and showing up to work, the Municipality's financial and administrative affairs sector recently inspected the Municipality's environment affairs department and three landfill sites where the 21 employees were found absent without leave.

Expat labor issues

GCC states are currently working on unifying regulations and legislations concerning national and expatriate labor so that it could be endorsed by the end of 2016 and binding to all Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states. In this regard, Amer Al-Hajari, the manager of the executive office of the council of GCC ministers of social affairs and labor, said that the first issues to be handled when the rules were unified would be expatriate laborers in general and domestic one, in particular.

Custom fees transfers

The automated transfer of custom fees amongst GCC states has reduced custom procedures followed in various inter-exits to become instantly done with the maximum delay of 24 hours. According to the news system, the exporting country sends the transfer information to the GCC Secretariat General custom data center which, in turn, sends back a notification to the destination country notifying it with the transferred sums. This project aims at facilitating swift transfer of goods amongst GCC states.

Hash smugglers acquitted

The court of appeal yesterday cancelled a first instance criminal court's verdict sentencing two suspects to capital punishment for smuggling 40 kilograms of hashish into Kuwait from a neighboring country. The men were acquitted. The suspects had been arrested upon a search warrant with the possession of the drugs hidden inside a barrel onboard their boat. However, the suspects' lawyer, Sultan Al-Mnadeel argued that the search warrant was void and that public prosecution investigations were incomplete as none of the members of the raiding force, other than the officer in charge, was questioned.



KUWAIT: Interior Ministry's Assistant Undersecretary for Traffic Affairs Major General Abdullah Al-Muhanna attended activities held as part of a campaign to raise awareness regarding the importance of licensing motorcycles and all-terrain vehicles. The event, organized by the Kuwait Traffic Safety Society on the occasion of the National Holidays, included a motorcycles' parade along the Arabian Gulf Road and ended at the Bnaider camp.

In my view

ONLY IN KUWAIT-8

By Talal Al-Ghannam

local@kuwaittimes.net

Good morning dear and honorable readers. I am back with a new column from my 'Only in Kuwait' series after a brief halt, because there are many issues that must be addressed. When I address such negative issues in the Kuwaiti society, I do not mean to mock certain people, but to pinpoint the wrongdoings in such practices and ask authorities to thoroughly address and find solutions to them.

Only in Kuwait you enter a public clinic or hospital, and there you see the male or female doctors are more interested in attending to their smartphones than you.

Only in Kuwait that policemen stationed on the highways, both with cars or motorcycles attend more to their smartphones rather than keep an eye for maniac drivers. I have never seen one of those police vehicles chasing a maniac driver or pulling him over; but instead they become interested in playing games or chatting.

Only in Kuwait you find two or three friends driving along the main road and blocking it while talking with each other, leaving tens of stranded vehicles behind them. And when you honk at them out of frustration, you better 'accept the consequences'.

Only in Kuwait holidays are more than the actual work days. If in case a holiday approaches, many people mysteriously become sick three or four days before the holiday starts, and become fine soon right after it is finished.

Only in Kuwait the Interior Ministry impounds old vehicles then releases them a week later, not taking into consideration why they were impounded and the owners were fined in the first place. In my opinion, they were impounded for violating traffic or safety regulations. A week later, they are released without even taking commitment from owners to rectify such violations.

Only in Kuwait that when you are driving and politely give a signal to pass someone, that said person transforms into the rudest person in universe and tries to step on his or her car's pedal, not letting you pass him or her.

Only in Kuwait the safety lane which you are permitted to use with a speed no more than 45 km/h can get you in trouble, as so many rude drivers nag you and flash their high beam, wanting you to open up and let them go. I personally witnessed an incident last week in which an expat was pulled over by a maniac driver, who beat him up severely just because that expat was abiding by the traffic law. My suggestion is to increase the speed limit till at least 65 km/h, as there are many reckless, rude and conceited drivers who do not accept the state's regulations, and those who wish to take the law into their own hands.

Only in Kuwait you get fined for tinting your car's windows according to the set traffic law which is 30 percent. Does the policeman have the right tool at the inspection scene to tell if the tinting was 30 percent or more? I advise all to buy a convertible car.

Till the next article insha Allah

VOTER REGISTRATION TO OPEN

By Meshal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: The Interior Ministry will open for registration and transfer amongst electoral constituencies in the period between February 22-29 and March 1-20, head of the elections department Colonel Salah Al-Shatti announced. Voters aged 20+ wishing to register would have to submit original citizenship documents plus photocopy, original civil ID plus photocopy, he said.

Request denied

Hawally committee at the Municipal Council rejected a request made to allow the Union of Cooperative Consumer Societies (UCCS) to rent some floors in its headquarters building in Hawally. Committee chairman Yousif Al-Ghareeb said that in addition to rejecting the request, the committee referred another request to pave an open yard in Salwa overlooking Fahheel expressway for further discussion. "The committee also postponed a proposal on publishing the names of stores selling inedible and expired food items and meats in the press and various media," he said. In another development, the Capital municipality inspection teams recently found a store in a Salhiya multi-floor parking building that had been used for preparing food stuff and items without having a license. Team members detected insects and noticed that the place lacked cleanliness too.

Telecom towers procrastination

The head of a Municipal Council's fact-finding committee investigating telecom towers, Osama Al-Otaibi refused what he described as 'procrastination' between Kuwait Municipality and the Fatwa and Legislation Department concerning the telecom towers law chart. "We refuse the idea of spending years to set laws as this costs the state considerable losses to be paid in compensation," he added, pointing out that the committee had already reviewed a report made by the Ministry of Health about the possible damage as well as condition to avoid them.

ZAIN RENEWS COMMITMENT TO UN'S GLOBAL GOALS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

COMPANY SUPPORTS PROTECTING CHILDREN'S RIGHTS IN ARAB WORLD

KUWAIT/CAIRO: Zain Group, a leading mobile telecom innovator in eight markets across the Middle East and Africa, announces its support of the agenda put forward by the Second Policy Dialogue and Sixth Regional Consultation for Middle East and North Africa Conference on Child Helplines in the Arab World; which recently convened at the Arab League headquarters in Cairo 15 to 17 February. Zain Group was the only mobile operator who was invited and participated in the conference to share its collaboration, experience, and leadership in this area of supporting the plight of children across its regional footprint. Held in collaboration with Child Helpline International (CHI), and falling under the United Nations' Global Goals for Sustainable Development, the Conference aimed to consider the plight of children from a regional perspective. The UN's Global Goals for Sustainable Development are directly in line with Zain's own outlook on the topic, with the series of 17 ambitious goals having been adopted by 193 world leaders at the United Nations last September. They are aimed at ending poverty, fighting inequality and injustice, and tackling climate change for all by 2030.

Child helplines

The Conference discussed mechanisms to develop and activate child helplines in light of the conflicts and regional instability that currently exists and considered how to develop emergency response mechanisms for the delivery of services to children and displaced people in refugee camps. Additionally the Conference explored how ICT infrastructure could be leveraged to facilitate and support child helplines, while also encouraging member countries that do not have such facilities in place to introduce them. Ways in which to deliver a quality child helpline network across the Arab World were also raised.

Commenting on the plight of children in the region, Zain Group's Head of Corporate Sustainability and Social Responsibility, Jennifer Suleiman said, "A society is judged by the manner in which it treats its most needy and vulnerable citizens. It is incumbent upon each one of us to protect the innocence of children for as long as possible, and it is an area that Zain takes very seriously, and feels strongly about continuing to contribute towards."

Recent research results from CHI reveal that providing basic services to children can significantly accelerate the progress towards achieving the UN Global Goals for Sustainable Development, and the Consultative Conference saw the participation of representatives from child support organizations and CHI from across member states. Representatives from regional and international children rights' organizations were also present as were a number of academicians and representatives of think tanks and private sector entities.

Protection initiatives

During the conference, Zain presented details of a number of child protection initiatives it had introduced aimed at supporting separated families across the Arab world. The company highlighted the role ICT can play in helping displaced children and offered examples of where it has been involved in such activities.

Under the overarching theme of child protection, Zain detailed how last year it undertook a multi-faceted media campaign to raise awareness about the ills of child abuse and shed light on this often taboo, yet tragic topic. Zain highlighted this global phenomenon and its support of children from the region, especially in those areas ravaged by conflict. Zain Group is already actively involved in anti-child abuse-related initiatives in partnership with the GSMA; dating back to February 2011 when Zain joined the

GSMA Mobile Alliance against Child Sexual Abuse Content campaign. Further, in November 2014, Zain partnered with the GSMA's agreement with Child Helpline International (CHI) to protect young people and safeguard their right to be heard. The GSMA and CHI jointly signed a Memorandum of Understanding that established a roadmap for promoting child helplines across the globe. The roadmap included measures to strengthen relationships between national mobile operators and their in-country helplines and foster collaboration on issues such as a safer Internet for children.



of children on the Internet, which aims to identify the risks to children and to create awareness of this risk and the exchange of knowledge, experiences and facilitate cooperation among stakeholders, stressing the importance that the majority of children having protection from the dangers of the internet by 2020.

It is noteworthy that as a result of social, economic and political challenges facing the Middle East and North Africa, have led to the displacement of more than 10 million people, it is estimated that the current conflicts in the MENA region deprive more than 13 million children to have access to formal education.

Zain as an institution is committed to promoting sustainable development, is keen to align its business activities and strategy within the UN's Global Goals for Sustainable Development at the forefront of its considerations and decision-making.

Free access

Zain has gone on to provide free access to child helplines in both Jordan and Saudi Arabia, with plans to launch the service in Sudan and Kuwait later this year. Another area of concern highlighted at the conference

News

In brief

Kuwait's Credit Bank loan portfolio at KD 5.3 billion

KUWAIT: The value of loan portfolio issued by the Credit Bank of Kuwait (KCB) amounted to KD 5.3 billion, and the bank does not have any bad debts, said Director General of Kuwait Credit Bank Salah Al-Mudhaf yesterday. Mudhaf said in an interview with Arabic-language Kuwaiti daily newspaper 'Al-Anbaa' that the bank is keen on the continuity and sustainability of providing mortgage loans to Kuwaiti citizen, especially with the increasing number of residential units distributed by the Public Authority for Housing Welfare. He added that providing residential units for Kuwaiti families that commensurate with the current value of the loan need a profound study, especially with the increasing prices of the housing units. — KUNA

Martyr's Bureau releases new issue of 'Al-Hawiya' magazine

KUWAIT: The Martyr's Bureau of the Amiri Diwan released yesterday a new issue of 'Al-Hawiya' (Identity) magazine, coinciding with national day celebrations and the 25th anniversary of the office's inception. Undersecretary of the Amiri Diwan and Chief Editor of 'Al-Hawiya' magazine Fatma Al-Amir, in a column she had penned entitled, "Serving our Martyrs for 25 Years," said that stability and security are constituents of a brighter tomorrow. "Prosperity and Development are amiss without stability and security," she wrote. Moreover, head of the magazine's editorial department Fayza Al-Mane echoed similar sentiments in a column of her own, saying that stability and security are necessary to stifle violence plaguing the region. The issue also covered some landmark events including the inauguration of Jaber stadium, and features a host of articles commemorating the country's national and liberation day celebrations. — KUNA

Kuwait bans ruminant imports from Georgia

KUWAIT: The Public Authority of Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources has banned imports of all ruminant species from Georgia over an outbreak of bluetongue disease in the country. In a statement issued yesterday, the authority stressed the necessity that all shipments should be subjected to measures of the authority, the World Organization for Animal Health, and quarantine in Kuwait and all GCC member states. The statement added that shipments of ruminants diagnosed with epidemic and infectious diseases will be sent back to Georgia on its expense. The move was prompted by a recent report by World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) on outbreak of the disease in the country, it added. — KUNA

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- Canon Camera Eos 70D + Canon EF-S 18-135 mm.
- Free Camera Bag.
- One Economy class ticket Kuwait - Dubai - Kuwait

Fourth prize

- Canon Camera EOS 760D + Canon EF 85 mm f/1.8 USM.
- Free Camera Bag.
- One Economy class ticket Kuwait- Bahrain- Kuwait

Fifth prize

- Canon Camera EOS 760D + Canon EF 70-300mm f/4.5-5.6 DO IS USM.
- Free Camera Bag.
- One Economy class ticket Kuwait - Bahrain - Kuwait

Sixth prize

- Canon Camera PowerShot G15.
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- One Economy class ticket Kuwait - Bahrain - Kuwait

All photos should be submitted at the Kuwait Times newspaper before 17th of March 2016.

Rules & Conditions:

- The competition is open to individuals of all ages.
- The submitted photos should be taken by the participant.
- Every participant is allowed to submit maximum five entries.
- The photos can be black and white or colour size 40X30 cm.
- All entries should be provided a hard copy and Soft Copy on a CD (in high resolution) with photo of the participant needs to be included in the CD.
- The original coupon should be attached to the back of each photo and should include a complete information about the participant.

The coupons are advertised at Kuwait Times and Al Anba newspapers during the period of competition.

- All submitted photos will become property of Kuwait Times newspaper and can be used for different purposes.
- The winners will be chosen by a panel of judges.
- All photos must be original and should not be doctored with any design program, such as Photoshop.

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KUWAIT: Minister of Commerce and Industry Yousef Al-Ali inaugurates the first international Kuwait Trading Fair. —Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

KUWAIT'S FIRST COMMERCIAL FAIR PROMOTES TIES IN ALL FIELDS: MINISTER

KUWAIT: Minister of Commerce and Industry Yousef Al-Ali said yesterday that the first international Kuwait Trading Fair 'Kuwait Heart of the Commercial World' contributes to enhancing relations in all fields. The minister made the remark during a speech while inaugurating the event in which about 25 Arab and foreign countries are taking part.

The conference, which is held concurrently with celebrations of the national days, is part national keenness on materializing the desire of His Highness the Amir to turn Kuwait into an international commercial and financial hub, he added.

He noted that the government cooperated with the parliament in terms of enacting several financial and economic legislations and laws aiming to attract more foreign investors. The event is an opportunity to deal with major companies and institutions across the globe so as to open new horizons and markets of trade and economic cooperation. — KUNA



Minister of Commerce and Industry Yousef Al-Ali speaks at the event.



Minister of Commerce and Industry Yousef Al-Ali and officials in a group photo.

In my view

GREETING, REVERENCE TO YESTERDAY'S MOTHERS



By Abdullah Abbas Bowair

local@kuwaittimes.net

The word 'mother' is not one to be taken lightly because mothers are the first schools children ever attend, so if they are well-prepared, they will be able to raise the best peoples ever. Mothers are fertile lands that are very fruitful when taken care of. Those who have seen mothers in the 1980s and earlier can never forget how dedicated and devoted they used to be. Back in the old days, when life was much simpler, mothers used to bear with very tough circumstances, especially when men went out on pearling or fishing expeditions, leaving the responsibility of their households to them.

In those times, mothers used to take care of everything in the house. They stayed up all night to make sure that their children were sleeping peacefully and

So, whatever one does in return, it will never be enough to repay even a little bit of her sacrifices

comfortably. They used to give without expecting any rewards for it. So, whatever one does in return, it will never be enough to repay even a little bit of her sacrifices.

On the other hand, today's moms seem to lack such unique genuine characteristics of good mothers. I personally saw an unforgettable scene on picking up my daughter from school the other day. A housemaid was carrying a little girl outside the school and the girl firmly clung to her, refusing to go to her mom, who kept trying to carry her instead. The girl's attitude reflects how much she loves the maid, more than her own biological mother, even though I often see domestic workers and drivers drive crazily regardless of all traffic regulations on the road with their sponsors' children onboard.

Yes, dear old mothers of the past good old days, you were the best. So may the Almighty have mercy on the souls of those who have departed us and prolong the lives of those of you who still live amongst us!

KUWAITI JOURNALISTS SUPPORT PALESTINIAN HUNGER STRIKER

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Journalists Association (KJA) organized a sit-in at its location in Shuwaikh yesterday to demonstrate solidarity with journalist Muhammad Al-Qiq who is imprisoned in Israel. Qiq has been on hunger strike since November 25, 2015 in protest against his imprisonment without charges or trial. The 33-year-old Palestinian is reportedly in critical condition as he continues his 89-day hunger strike in protest.

During his speech, Dhiran Aba Alkhail, member of the Administration Council at the KJA, said that the KJA met with members of the Freedoms Committee and agreed to hold the sit-in in order to support Qiq. He added that Kuwait is the first Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) country to organize a sit-in in solidarity with Qiq, and the first Arab state to take this step after Palestine and Jordan. He called on

government officials to urgently end Qiq's torture. "I did not meet Qiq," Aba Alkhail said, "but during our talking with his colleagues in the freedom organizations, I knew that he was a fearless journalist who made his enemy fear him until now, where he is in poor health and his sight and hearing have been effected."

Comprehensive peace

Former MP Ali Al-Deqbaasi called for the immediate and unconditional release for Qiq and all Palestinian political prisoners as key to the realization of justice and comprehensive peace between Palestine and Israel. He demanded all freedom and international organizations to work together to promote and implement campaigns of boycott and sanctions against Israel and its illegal measures against Palestinians. "Palestine is our cause," Deqbaasi proclaimed. "I have discussed with international organizations the



Former MP Ali Al-Deqbaasi speaks during the sit-in.

situation in which prisoners are spending more than 30 years in jail without charges or trial."

The former lawmaker stressed that Arab countries and organizations must act immediately. "We already know the issue and know our enemy, what are we waiting for?", he asked. "Unfortunately, some freedom organizations are waiting for governments to act, but that is never going to happen. We must act and translate the Palestinian issue to all lan-

guages and post it on social media to deliver their voices. We also have to debunk bribery of all the media and the freedom organizations that are silent."

Jehad Gradat, General Coordinator of the Jerusalem Forum, said that Qiq, whose health has deteriorated to the point of facing imminent death, showed the world that Palestinians will always be strong and fight their enemies by wearing a smile on their faces.

ENTRIES FOR SHEIKH MUBARAK AL-HAMAD JOURNALISM EXCELLENCE AWARD CLOSED

KUWAIT: The higher committee of Sheikh Mubarak Al-Hamad Journalism Excellence Award said yesterday that submission of entries for the competition ended. The competition kicked off last November 18th. The award is sponsored by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

This year's award witnessed unprecedented participation due to the constant development plans of the award, namely the prizes and training courses hosted in the most recognized media institutes, president of the higher committee of the award Ayman Al-Ali said in a press release.

Al-Ali added that among those improvements were signing a memo of understanding with France 24, International Radio France, and Monte Carlo Radio for training the winners and polish their skills, in addition to signing a contract with Thompson Foundation. Ali added that a specialized committee is currently sorting and scrutinizing applicants based on the rules and conditions listed for the competition. With regard to the award's final ceremony, Ali said a dateline will be announced next March for the event. — KUNA

US MEDICAL EXPERT VISITS SABAH AL-AHMAD HEART CENTER

KUWAIT: Sabah Al-Ahmad Heart Center said yesterday that it is hosting an expert from the US Mayo Clinic Hospital specializing in Cardiovascular Diseases Dr Peter Brady as part of his 8th routine visit to the country.

The center expressed in a statement its keenness on bringing in the best experts in the heart disease field for the sake of providing quality medical services to citizens and residents alike, the President of the Center Dr Mohammad Al-Jarallah said.

Jarallah added that Dr Brady will deliver lectures to doctors on the issue, including workshops to doctors working on Cardiovascular Diseases, including advance analysis on reading and analyzing heart Electrocardiography, known as (ECG). The visitor performs many heart operations, including reviewing and following up patients with difficult heart problems, Jarallah said. — KUNA



KUWAIT: A general view of people in attendance at a sit-in organized by KJA to demonstrate solidarity with Palestinian journalist Muhammad Al-Qiq. — Photos by Joseph Shagra

Kuwait is our identity



Borgan Bank Group would like to extend its congratulations to Kuwait and its people on the occasion of the National and Liberation days. **May every year bring happiness and prosperity to our beloved country.**

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Al-Jarida



Al-Anbaa

MAHFOUZ AJAB

By Saleh Al-Shayji

It is not a matter of iconic or very well-known writers because writing is the right of everybody, opinion is freedom and freedom is a necessity. Those who make very good careers in journalism and writing may not necessarily be very good human beings as well - they may be the exact opposite. No writer is immune or beyond accountability.

Two days ago, the iconic Arab and probably international journalism star Mohammed Hasanin Heikal passed away after assuming that prestigious position for around seven decades. A lot has been said and written about him. Many stories and novels were written about him. The most important novel about him was titled 'The Man Who Lost His Shadow' by Fathy Ghanem, which tells Heikal's story through the hero Mahfouz Ajab, a young opportunist Machiavellian journalist who would do anything to achieve his goal regardless of the price he had to pay.

This character is definitely that of Heikal, the most important Arab journalist and the one who most affected Arab minds. He was an entire institution rather than an individual - he probably was a state in himself rather than an institution. Gamal Abdul Nasser have him access to all Egyptian state facilities and granted him control over them, which made him actually and literally form Nasser's personality from A to Z.

He was the only one from outside the 'free officers' organization to attend its meetings before they took over, and that provoked the organization's leader Mohammed Naguib. So much has been said and written about suspicions around his life, human and journalistic behavior. He used to beg a lot until he reached his goals, then turn up against whoever had helped him and start enjoying torturing him as a prey while he used to kiss his hand and feet a short while earlier.

That was what he did to his mentor and benefactor Mustafa Ameen when he framed him as a US spy and had President Nasser jail him. Death does not erase sins and mistakes of those who die and each dead person carries them all to his grave. Death is not a sort of catharsis and cannot turn black into white - it does not cover history with roses nor does it spray rosewater on any person.

Heikal had hated us in the GCC and it was he behind Nasser's hate of us as well. That is why we hate him and we even hate him more for his personal characteristics and his ill-natured personality as a human being. Well, to readers who will say I should only mention good things about dead people, I already started by mentioning his good points before the bad ones, and I am even praying to bestow mercy on his soul!

— Translated by Kuwait Times

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Crime

Report

CRACKDOWN IN CENTRAL PRISON

KUWAIT: Central prison authorities launched a campaign described as 'one of the largest in recent years' in coordination with special task forces and riot police, to uncover banned and illicit material within the prison. The campaign took approximately five hours and included cell searches. It resulted in the discovery of a bounty of banned material, including more than 100 mobile phones, chargers and Wi-Fi devices. The campaign also uncovered hidden caches of shabu (meth) and other drugs. The campaign reportedly came in response to the beating of an officer by several inmates in the central prison after he discovered banned substances in their possession.

Teacher insults student

A citizen accused a Kuwaiti teacher of insulting his daughter, claiming that she told her "You are trash coming out of trash." A complaint was lodged at Saad Al-Abdullah police station.

Ex hubby robs citizen

A citizen accused her former husband of breaking into her house and stealing two air conditioning units while she was away. The incident took place in Saad Al-Abdullah area.

Kidnapped youth freed

Ahmedi police freed a Kuwaiti youth who was detained by two men in a Nuwaiseeb area chalet. A security source said that a call for help came from an unknown man inside a chalet, so several Ahmedi officers responded, and broke the front door to release him. The boy said that he had been detained for two days.

Cars vandalized

An unknown person broke into and stole the contents of four cars owned by citizens while parked in a Saad Al-Abdullah area school parking lot. A security source said four citizens came in the police station at different times and said their cars were broken into. All the vehicles had broken glass, and the owners said that they did not know who had done it. Stolen material include mobile phones, money and civil IDs. Police are investigating.

Ex-convicts arrested

Farwaniya detectives arrested two ex-convicts who specialized in thefts, as well as possessing weapons, ammunition. Two shotguns and two pistols were found hidden in cars found in the farm.

Digger arrested

Rabiya police noticed a man digging a hole in the ground near the police station. When questioned, the man said he was looking for a weapon he had hidden in that area.

Expat hanged self

The body of an Asian man was received by the coroner after he was found hanging from a ceiling fan inside a room he shares with others in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh. A security source said the deceased was in his thirties, and his roommates said he was suffering from financial problems in his home country. — Al-Rai and Al-Anbaa



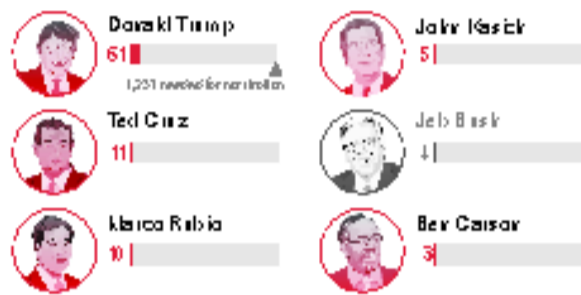
Saudi prince: Troop offer reflects unease on Syria

DEFYING CAMERON, BORIS TO CAMPAIGN FOR BREXIT

ELECTION '16

GOP delegate count

Donald Trump won the South Carolina Republican primary, increasing his delegate lead and forcing rival Jeb Bush to end his campaign.



Latest state results: Feb. 20

SOUTH CAROLINA — percentage of vote (delegates won)

Trump	32.6%	(35)	Bush	7.2%	(TBA)
Rubio	22.6%	(TBA)	Kasich	7.6%	(TBA)
Cruz	22.3%	(TBA)	Carson	7.2%	(TBA)

Next contest: Feb. 23

Nevada Republican Caucuses

Results as of 10:30 p.m. EST.

SOURCE: AP Election Services



(Left) Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump celebrates winning the South Carolina primary in Spartanburg, South Carolina, yesterday.

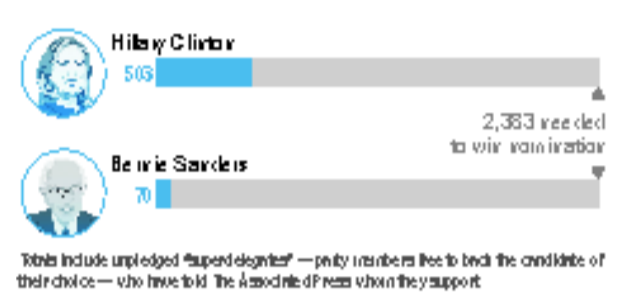


(Right) Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton waves on stage with her husband and former President Bill Clinton at a Nevada Democratic caucus rally on Saturday in Las Vegas. — AFP/AP

ELECTION '16

Democratic delegate count

Hillary Clinton won Nevada's Democratic caucuses, adding to her commanding lead in delegates to secure the party's presidential nomination.



Latest state results: Feb. 20

NEVADA — percentage of vote (delegates won)

Clinton	52.7%	(19)
Sanders	47.3%	(19)

Next Democratic contest: Feb. 27

South Carolina Democratic primary

Results as of 10:30 p.m. EST.

SOURCE: AP Election Services

KEY WINS FOR TRUMP AND CLINTON

JEB BUSH ENDS WHITE HOUSE BID

SPARTANBURG: Republican presidential frontrunner Donald Trump grabbed a big win in the South Carolina primary on Saturday, while Democrat Hillary Clinton breathed life into her sluggish campaign with a victory over Bernie Sanders in Nevada. The wins for the brash billionaire and the former US secretary of state give them a major boost heading into the crucial next phase of the White House race - Super Tuesday on March 1, when about a dozen states go to the polls.

But the rough-and-tumble campaign claimed another victim when former Florida governor Jeb Bush - brother and son to two US presidents - dropped out of the race after another poor showing. In South Carolina, the 69-year-old Trump captured about a third of the votes, with all of the precincts reporting. His supporters erupted in a roar when CNN called the contest in his favor - his second win of the nominations race after New Hampshire and an important test of the strength of his bid to succeed President Barack Obama.

"There is nothing easy about running for president, I can tell you," Trump told his victory party in Spartanburg. "It's tough, it's nasty, it's mean, it's vicious, it's beautiful. When you win, it's beautiful." After several nail-biting hours, final results showed Florida Senator Marco Rubio in second place in the Republican contest with 22.5 percent of the vote, narrowly ahead of Texas Senator Ted Cruz, who had 22.3 percent. "After tonight, this has become a three-person race and we will win the nomination," said Rubio, like Cruz a Cuban-American first-time senator.

In Nevada, Clinton claimed a major win in the Democratic race. Final results gave her 52.7 percent of the vote against 47.2 percent for Sanders. "This is your campaign, and it is a campaign to break down every barrier that holds you back," Clinton said in her victory speech at her Caesars Palace headquarters on the Las Vegas Strip.

'Take a Risk' with Trump

In South Carolina, Trump - a one-time reality TV star who has upended the political landscape with his tough talk on everything from Muslims to Mexico to waterboarding - showed he could compete for the long haul. "We just think we want to take a risk with Trump. We think he's had success with everything he's touched," Lynn Derrick, a first-time primary voter, told AFP in the state capital Columbia. Trump and Cruz, who won the Iowa caucuses, duked it out in the week leading up to Saturday's primary, with the campaign growing increasingly nasty. Trump even had a spat with Pope Francis, who suggested the tycoon was "not a Christian" for wanting to build a wall on the border with Mexico. Trump also called for a boycott of Apple over its refusal to unlock the phone of a suspect in the San Bernardino attacks.

If Trump wins the Republican nomination and is elected president in the Nov 8 election, he would be the first US president in history to have no government experience. Saturday's results were bad news for Bush, Ohio Governor John Kasich and retired neurosurgeon Ben Carson, who were relegated to the second tier of candidates. Bush did not wait long to fold. "In this campaign, I have stood my ground, refusing to bend to the political winds," he said.

Clinton Wins in Desert

In the desert state of Nevada, the 68-year-old Clinton scored a major win, but Sanders proved he was in it for the long haul. "Some may have doubted us, but we never doubted each other," Clinton said in a fiery left-leaning speech clearly aimed at the minority voters who make up roughly half of the state's population and who are key in the US South. Clinton claims that Sanders is offering impractical, fantasy ideas that he cannot deliver as president, and on Saturday took aim at corporate America - usually a message sounded by Sanders.

"If you cheat your employees, exploit consumers, pollute our environment, or rip off taxpayers, we're going to hold you accountable," Clinton said. "But if you do the right things, if you invest in your workers, contribute to your communities, help build a better America - we're going to stand with you." Clinton, who won by a hair in Iowa but was crushed by Sanders in New Hampshire, had counted on a major Hispanic voter turnout, especially among Las Vegas hotel and casino employees.

CNN entrance polls showed that she handily won the black vote, but the Latino vote was more evenly split - evidence that the Sanders campaign may have more stamina than first expected. Clinton did well with women, but was again stomped by Sanders with young voters, the polls showed. Sanders congratulated Clinton, and said he was proud of having significantly narrowed the gap. "We have the wind at our back as we head toward Super Tuesday," the 74-year-old Sanders said,

looking ahead to the showdown, when about a fifth of the Democratic nominating delegates are in play.

Bush Quits Race

"Tonight, I am suspending my campaign," an emotional Bush, who at times appeared on the verge of tears, said after the disappointing result. "I'm proud of the campaign that we have run to unify our country." The former Florida governor started his campaign as the odds-on favorite to win the Republican presidential

nomination, backed by a prodigious political brain trust and millions of dollars in donations from private and corporate supporters. Although the 62-year-old Bush led some opinion some polls very early in the campaign, his support had dwindled by Saturday to single digits nationally, and his White House aspirations were on life support. The coup de grace came after he earned less than eight percent of the vote in the primary in South Carolina, a state where his family had always made strong primary showings. — Agencies

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CROWDED FIELD COMPETES FOR COMOROS PRESIDENT

MORONI, Comoros: Voters in the Indian Ocean archipelago of the Comoros voted for a new president Sunday from a crowded field of 25 candidates, with a struggling economy and poor infrastructure high on the agenda. Polling in the country of less than one million people went off without any major incidents after voting opened 7:00 am (0400 GMT), although some were delayed by the late arrival of voting materials. Voting in areas affected by delays continued after the official closing time at 6:00 pm.

A total of 159,000 voters on Grand Comore island were eligible to vote in the first round of the election, in accordance with electoral rules that stipulate the president is chosen on a rotating basis from one of the archipelago's three main islands. Among those running for president are a former coup leader and the vice president. After the first round, the three top candidates will go into a nationwide run-off on April 10 that will decide the successor to President Ikililou Dhoinine.

Dhoinine comes from Moheli, the smallest of the three main islands. The other island in

the trio is Anjouan. The system of rotating candidates among islands was established in 2001 in a bid to usher in stability after more than 20 coups or attempted coups, in the years following independence from France in 1975. Among the candidates leading the field are vice president Mohamed Ali Soilihi, Grande Comore governor Mouigni Baraka and Azali Assoumani, a former coup leader and two-time former president.

Athoumani Toioussi, an unemployed mother who was voting in the capital Moroni, on Grande Comore, said she would vote for Assoumani, despite his coup history. "Yes, he came to power through a coup but it helped get the country out of chaos," Toioussi told AFP. Another voter, Houmadi Ahmedi, favoured Baraka saying "he gave learning materials to elementary school." Moineaicha Youssouf Djalali, a businesswoman, is the only female candidate in a country where the majority are Sunni Muslims.

Avoiding 'Double Voting'

Dhoinine's successful completion of his five-year term has been seen as a sign of

growing stability in Comoros, though many candidates had expressed fears of electoral fraud. "Real efforts are being made by the election commission and international actors to ease any political or social tensions," European Union representative Eduardo Campos Martins said. The electoral commission on Saturday agreed to a request from 20 candidates to ban proxy voting, seen as a possible source of fraud, "to preserve the peace". Voters were also set to be forbidden from leaving Moroni or moving between villages unless they had an official pass "to avoid double voting", the interior ministry said.

The election is being monitored by dozens of African and international observers as well as a 425-person monitoring platform established by local civil society groups. The campaign of all 25 candidates had been centred on similar promises of free health care, education and infrastructure improvement, in a country where the roads are riddled with potholes and women and children queue for water. Voters were also choosing governors for the three islands. — AFP



MORONI: Voters queue on the Grande Comore island to cast their ballots for the presidential election yesterday. — AFP

SAUDI PRINCE: TROOP OFFER REFLECTS UNEASE ON SYRIA

'MUSLIM NATIONS MUST LEAD IN COUNTERTERRORISM'

ABU DHABI: A prominent Saudi prince said yesterday that the kingdom's offer to send troops to Syria to fight extremist groups reflects growing unease over the ability of US-led airstrikes alone to defeat the Islamic State group and end the Syrian civil war. Prince Turki Al-Faisal, speaking at a luncheon in Abu Dhabi attended by a handful of journalists, said the kingdom does not expect the US-led coalition battling the IS group, of which Saudi Arabia is a member, will succeed unless there is a ground intervention.

Saudi Arabia has made clear that its willingness to send special forces to Syria is contingent on the US leading the ground effort. "The world community has the capability, economic, political, military and otherwise, to put a stop to the killing," he said. "I think it is high time that people said enough is enough, but simply saying it is not going to do it. There has to be concrete action on the ground to put a stop to the killing."

He added that he has not seen any indication from Saudi leaders that if Saudi troops were deployed to Syria, they would also fight Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad's forces. Riyadh is one of the main supporters of Syrian rebels battling to overthrow Assad. Its regional rival Iran is one of Assad's main backers. The prince, who does not hold an official seat in government, is an influential and outspoken member of the Saudi royal family. He headed Saudi Arabia's General Intelligence Directorate for more than two decades until Sept 1, 2001, and held ambassador posts to the US, the UK and Ireland.

Fighting Terror

Speaking earlier at a press conference, he said Muslim countries need to take the lead in fighting terrorism. The kingdom is currently hosting an 18-day military exercise with 20 members of a recently announced Islamic counterterrorism alliance, which includes Pakistan, Sudan, Jordan and neighboring Gulf states. Defense ministers from the coalition of Muslim-majority countries are scheduled to hold their first meeting in Saudi Arabia sometime in March, and the Saudi leadership is working on mak-



ABU DHABI: Former director of the Saudi Arabia General Intelligence Directorate Prince Turki bin Faisal Al Saud, and a member of the board of the Beirut Institute, talks during a press conference yesterday. — AP

ing its capital a logistical hub for the 34-nation alliance.

The prince said that because the majority of victims of terrorist acts are Muslims, "it is our responsibility as Muslim countries to play the primary role in fighting this disease that has impacted us all." Notably absent from the coalition are Iran, Syria and Iraq, all of which are battling the Islamic State group. Sunni-majority Saudi Arabia and Shiite-majority Iran are fiercely divided on a host of issues and support opposite sides in the wars in Yemen and Syria.

Relations worsened after the execution of a popular Shiite cleric in Saudi Arabia last month, which trig-

gered protests in Iran and the ransacking of the Saudi Embassy and another diplomatic mission there. The two countries then severed diplomatic and trade ties. As Iran readies for parliamentary elections on Feb 26, the prince said he has little hope that those elected will help bridge the political divide.

He said the vote is likely to make the relationship "even worse" because some liberal and reformist candidates were barred from running by the country's Guardian Council, which vets candidates. "You are going to get a very conservative (parliament) as is the present one, and so we're going to have more of the same," he said. — AP

EGYPTIAN COLUMNIST DEALS STINGING BLOW

CAIRO: A prominent columnist yesterday delivered the harshest attack to date against Egypt's president in the local media, saying that Abdel-Fattah Al-Sisi presided over a "theocracy" that is no different from the Islamist-led government he overthrew in 2013. In a front-page column in the Al-Maqal daily, Ibrahim Eissa expressed outrage over a two-year prison sentence issued Saturday against author Ahmed Naji for publishing a sexually explicit excerpt of his novel that prosecutors said violated "public modesty".

The sentence has angered Egyptian authors and artists, who say it's a blatant encroachment on the freedom of expression and artistic creativity enshrined in Egypt's new constitution. A statement signed by 13 rights groups and published Sunday called for Naji's immediate release. Sisi maintains that Egypt's judiciary is independent, an assertion disputed by rights activists, who say it is beholden to the executive branch.

As military chief, Sisi led the 2013 overthrow of President Mohamed Morsi, an Islamist who was Egypt's first freely elected president but proved deeply divisive. Sisi was elected the following year, and has enjoyed fawning coverage by state and private media, most of which is owned by influential businessmen. But the unusually strong criticism by Eissa, a dean of the Egyptian media who supported the 2013 overthrow and has personally interviewed Sisi, indicates growing discontent.

"Say what you will, Mr President, and speak at your conferences ... as you wish, but the reality of your state is different," he wrote. "Your state violates the constitution, harasses thinkers and cre-

ators and jails writers and authors. "Your state is a theocracy, Mr. President, while you are talking all the time of a modern, civilian state," he wrote. "Your state and its agencies, just like those of your predecessor, hate intellectuals, thought and creativity and only like hypocrites, flatterers and composers of poems of support and flattery."

Criticism

The growing criticism comes as the Egyptian government has struggled to deliver on promises to stabilize the economy after the years of unrest that followed the 2011 uprising, which ended President Hosni Mubarak's nearly three-decade reign. The bombing of a Russian passenger jet last year dealt a major blow to the already suffering tourism industry, the local currency is weakening and foreign reserves are drying up.

An Islamist insurgency based in the Sinai Peninsula, which grew increasingly assertive after Morsi's ouster, has been able to carry out attacks across the country, adding to the sense of crisis. Sisi has meanwhile overseen the harshest crackdown in decades, jailing thousands of Islamists and hundreds of secular activists. All unauthorized protests have been banned, and activists say the police have reverted to the brutality of the Mubarak years. Sisi has said his ouster of Morsi saved Egypt from a theocracy and restored civilian, democratic rule. But Eissa called that claim into question. "Where is this civilian state? Where do you see it?" he wrote, addressing Sisi. "This is a state that witnesses more legal prosecution of writers than what we have seen during the Brotherhood's one-year rule." — AP



KABATIYA: Palestinian mourners carry the body of Qusay Abo Al-Rub, who was shot and killed by Israeli soldiers at a checkpoint, during his funeral in this West Bank village near Jenin yesterday. — AP

BIBI DEFENDS TOP GENERAL IN EXCESSIVE FORCE DEBATE

JERUSALEM: Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu defended Israel's military chief yesterday after the general was criticized for saying he would not want soldiers confronting a wave of Palestinian stabbings to "empty a magazine" into a girl wielding scissors. One member of Netanyahu's rightwing cabinet said Lieutenant-General Gadi Eisenkot's remarks last week could be misinterpreted by Israel's international critics as confirming allegations, which it denies, that disproportionate force has been used against assailants, many of them youths.

Another cabinet minister, posting on Facebook, said soldiers might now hesitate to shoot attackers, putting themselves and others at risk. Netanyahu called the internal political debate "hollow" and said Israel's top general was merely "stating the obvious" about rules of military engagement, under which soldiers can open fire only when lives are in danger. "Everything said after (Eisenkot's statement) stems from ignorance or an attempt at political bashing," Netanyahu told his cabinet in public remarks. Video of alleged attackers being hit by multiple gunshots, sometimes after falling to the ground, has stirred controversy. Israel says such force is sometimes necessary in fluid situations where soldiers' and civilians' lives are in danger. In the latest example on Friday, Al Jazeera television aired footage showing two or

three Israeli paramilitary police repeatedly shooting a Palestinian lying on the ground after, according to Israeli authorities, he stabbed two officers outside the walls of Jerusalem's Old City.

"It's impossible to judge the situation the combatants are in," Israeli Public Security Minister Gilad Erdan told Channel 10 television on Saturday. "There have been incidents in which (security forces) opened fire, the terrorist was not killed, and he managed to stab again."

Rules of Engagement

Addressing high school students on Wednesday, Eisenkot got into political hot water when he spoke of the rules of engagement. "There were places where a 13-year-old girl was holding scissors or a knife and there was an obstacle between her and the soldiers," he said. "I wouldn't want a soldier to open fire and empty a magazine into a girl like that, even if she is doing something very serious, but I would want him to use the necessary force to carry out the mission." Last November in Jerusalem, two Palestinian girls stabbed an elderly man with scissors before a policeman shot and killed one of them and wounded the other. Closed circuit video showed the officer firing several times at one of the girls as she was lying motionless on the ground. — Reuters

IRAN MODERATES COULD INFLUENCE NEXT LEADER

BEIRUT: Iran's Assembly of Experts, made up mostly of elderly clerics, has not mattered much for years. The body's main task is choosing Iran's supreme leader, but that job has not come vacant since 1989. This time it's different. Given the ailing health of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, 76, the Assembly to be elected on Feb 26 for an eight-year term is likely to pick his successor, charting the course of the country for many years to come.

The Supreme Leader is the highest military and judicial authority in the country and has broad powers overseeing other branches of government. Even the president, who is directly elected, has less authority. Khamenei, hardline successor to the Islamic Republic's founder Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, has ensured for decades that Tehran remains hostile to the United States abroad, and slow to embrace cultural reforms at home.

Elections for parliament are scheduled for the same day, but it is the outcome of the Assembly election that is likely to have a much greater long-term impact. In terms of numbers, hardliners are almost certain to have the upper hand. The Guardian Council, a hardliner-dominated government body which reviews the eligibility of candidates, has already disqualified 475 candidates, many thought to be moderates, leaving just 161 people vying for 88 places.

Among those disqualified was Khomeini's grandson Hassan Khomeini, a charismatic reformer blessed with his grandfather's potent name. The Council questioned his religious qualifications. But the list of those permitted to stand includes other prominent moderates, first and foremost President Hassan Rouhani himself, who is riding a wave of domestic popularity after helping seal a nuclear deal with world powers last year.

He is joined by one of his most influential predecessors, Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, who already holds an Assembly seat and will be campaigning to keep it. Earlier this week, Rouhani released the names of 16 candidates, including Rafsanjani, in a bloc calling themselves the "Friends of Moderation." Their campaign slogan: "Moderation is Islam."

Within the assembly, a conservative majority bloc is likely to be led by hardline clerics like Mohammad Taghi Mesbah-Yazdi, Ahmad Jannati and Mohammad Yazdi. Nevertheless, the moderate minority could still

play an important role in choosing the next Supreme Leader. When Khamenei was chosen in 1989 after Khomeini's death, the decision was taken only after elaborate backroom dealing that went far beyond a simple tally of votes in the Assembly.

There was discussion of putting together a leadership council, before a handful of top clerics in the Assembly, including Rafsanjani, pushed for the nomination of Khamenei. Khamenei did not have the appropriate religious rank to hold the position at the time, so the constitution was amended to allow him to take his post. Similar dealing may take place in order to choose Khamenei's successor. "Shiite clerics are really masters of the art of the deal," said Hadi Ghaemi, executive director of the International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran, a US-based organization which has criticized the widespread disqualification of candidates.

"So while it is important how big your faction is in the Assembly of Experts it does depend on who the charismatic dealmaker is at that time." In December, Rafsanjani broke a taboo by noting that a group had been formed within the Assembly to review possible candidates who could replace Khamenei.

Complaints over Disqualifications

Moderate politicians and others have complained about the disqualifications by the Guardian Council, arguing that they skew the electoral field in favour of hardliners. Rafsanjani publicly criticized the disqualification of Hassan Khomeini. And 296 university professors from around the country signed a letter of protest to Rouhani over widespread disqualifications for both the parliament and Assembly election. Hardliners say the complaints are unfounded and stem from a realization among moderates that they will not win a majority of seats in the Assembly. "The reformists are more focused on eliminating Mesbah-Yazdi, Jannati and Yazdi from the election than gaining a majority," Amir Mohebian, a conservative Tehran-based political strategist and analyst who has advised top Iranian politicians, wrote in an e-mail, referring to the top conservative candidates. Still, there is an acknowledgment of the high stakes. "The hardliners are very anxious about succession and the future direction of the country," said Sanam Vakili, an associate fellow at Chatham House who focuses on Iranian affairs. "The hardline objective is to prevent any social or political liberalisation within the state." — Reuters



TEHRAN: An Iranian woman applauds during a reformists' campaign meeting for the upcoming parliamentary elections at Hejab hall in downtown Tehran on Saturday. — AFP

UNEVENNESS OF IRISH RECOVERY WEIGHS ON ELECTION

EDENDERRY, Ireland: An hour's drive from the now bustling centre of Dublin, Edenderry bears more scars of Ireland's recent economic collapse than signs of its seemingly rapid recovery. With a population of 10,000, the town has one of the highest vacancy rates for commercial property in the country, with close to one in four units standing empty since a property crash almost a decade ago devastated the Irish economy.

It is a scene replicated throughout rural Ireland. The two-speed patchiness of the revival in Europe's best-performing economy has undermined Prime Minister Enda Kenny's re-election message to "keep the recovery going". "I can't see it changing for the next while," said Michael Carroll of the boarded-up, tattered shop fronts along the same high street as his family-run Carroll's Menswear store. "We travel up and down to Dublin a lot and you can see that it's thriving but that's counterbalanced by what you'll see in the rest of the country. It's definitely more difficult on the ground here."

The recovery is only slowly trickling

down, according to the 36-year-old retailer, who has seen sales rise for the first time in seven years over the past few months. Unemployment in the midlands region is 12.4 percent, compared with an 8.6 percent national average, but is down from a peak of 19 percent in 2012 when Ireland was in a three-year EU/IMF bailout. Away from the traffic jams, packed restaurants and buzzing shops of the big cities, rural communities are still struggling and seeing more young people emigrate.

They have missed out on the foreign direct investment which companies like Google and Apple have delivered to major cities. And their souls have been ripped out by closures of bank branches and pubs and cuts to local services. "Let's be honest, there is a recovery but it's not in rural Ireland," said John Foley, a local councillor who is running for election as an independent candidate. "The people in small towns and villages do not feel it. We've been left behind. The business people in Edenderry, along with all the other towns, are surviving through pure downright determination but they're crying out for a bit of help."

Dublin Dichotomy

Dublin's CHQ shopping mall was for years a monument to the crash, standing almost completely empty in the city's financial district. Bought in 2013 by former Coca-Cola chief executive Neville Isdell, one of many foreign investors who have taken over distressed assets in Dublin, it is now thriving with trendy lunch spots and technology startups. "Three or four years ago, we walked through this place and there was nothing here," said Dave O'Donoghue, who with Cormac Manning has brought Canadian healthy eating franchise Freshii to CHQ.

"We've been blown away by the reaction, our customers have good disposable incomes, there are good solid jobs and more are being created. There's a belief back that we're on a recovery that isn't going to suddenly be knocked off for five years," O'Donoghue and Manning are hoping to roll out 30 to 40 franchises in Ireland's major cities, buoyed by retail sales volumes that rose at their fastest pace in 15 years last year and consumer sentiment that also hit a 15-year high last

month.

Kenny's Fine Gael party chose CHQ as its election headquarters to illustrate the turnaround it has overseen in the past five years. The party has struggled to build momentum ahead of the vote on Friday, raising the prospect of a post-election stalemate as opposition complaints that the benefits of recovery are unfairly spread appear to resonate with the public. A poll this week found that after years of austerity, 56 percent of adults have not felt the effects of the economic recovery personally and 79 percent believe the economy is recovering on a two-tier basis.

"While the government keeps extolling the need to 'keep the recovery going', the reality is well over half of the population still feel that they haven't actually felt any impact," said Richard Colwell of Red C Research, which carried out the survey. In two opinion polls on Saturday, Fine Gael appeared to be recovering from its recent slide in popularity, but its coalition partner Labour fell to its lowest ever level. Kenny's hope is that nervous voters prefer to play it safe on the day after taking the

pain of spending cuts and tax rises.

In Edenderry, the increasing number of commuters driving to Dublin each morning gives some grounds for optimism. "When I'm here at 6.30 in the morning, you wouldn't get across that street with the amount of cars - lads back working having not been for a long, long time," said Johnny Brady, who owns the town's local supermarket. "Three years ago, you could have played football in that street early in the morning. That was sad. But there's a few more quid to spend now and you see it in the shop and in bars and the restaurants again."

He's voting though for Foley, the independent candidate who could be among the largest-ever contingent of non-party members of parliament. Brady, 46, believes the government should have done more to help small businesses in towns like Edenderry. His son opened a tattoo shop which only lasted a month, after a large bill for services from the council rendered it unsustainable. "He's back on the social welfare now. It's demoralizing," he said. — Reuters

NIGER 'LION' PREZ SEEKS RE-ELECTION

NIAMEY: Niger voted yesterday amid tight security in an election in which President Mahamadou Issoufou has promised a "knockout" blow to his opponents, who are already crying foul after a tense campaign. A vast nation endowed with an abundance of uranium, gold, coal and oil but among the poorest on the planet, Niger is electing a head of state, as well as a new parliament, with Issoufou hoping for a second five-year term. A total of 7.5 million people are eligible to vote at 25,000 polling stations across the country on the edge of the Sahara Desert, where security is a growing concern after attacks by jihadists from neighboring Nigeria, Mali and Libya. The results are expected within five days.

Security was tight with forces on patrol across the country, including the capital Niamey, where voting got off to a delayed start in many parts of the city due to the late delivery of ballot papers and other materials. "There is no such thing as zero risk but we are working to uphold security on election day," Interior Minister Hassoumi Massoudou said ahead of the ballot. Some stations opened up to three hours late, but electoral commission chief Ibrahim Boube insisted that "all voters who come will be able to vote".

After voting in Niamey, Issoufou said "there will be only one winner, and that will be Niger", saying he hoped the election would reinforce the country's democratic structures. In an interview with AFP on Thursday, the 63-year-old said he was "absolutely" confident of victory and predicted a second-round run-off vote would not be needed. Issoufou said he had met his pledges on boosting growth and infrastructure, while shoring up security in the face of jihadist attacks.

Known as the "zaki" or "lion" in Hausa, the majority language in Niger, the former mathematician and mining engineer faces a total of 14 rivals, including two former prime ministers and an ex-president. Should he fail to win a first-round victory, his rivals, who have accused him of planning to rig the result, have agreed to unite behind whoever scores highest amongst them for the second round.

Cheating Claims

Heading the opposition pack is 66-

year-old Hama Amadou, who is campaigning from behind bars after being arrested in November on his return from exile in France over his alleged role in a baby-trafficking scandal. Amadou, a former premier and parliament speaker, heads the Nigerien Democratic Movement (NDM) whose members were tear-gassed by police earlier this month after gathering in their thousands to support their man.

Among the other candidates are Seyni Oumarou, of the National Movement for the Society of Development (NMSD), a runner-up to Issoufou in the 2011 presidential race, and Niger's first-ever democratically-elected president, Mahamane Ousmane, 66, who is making his fourth bid to step back into the job since his 1993 election.

Defence remains a top budget priority in Niger, with the remote north threatened by jihadist groups operating out of Mali and Libya while the southeast tries to fend off attacks by Nigeria's Boko Haram. In December, the government said it had foiled an attempted military coup. The threat of unrest hangs over the vote, with some opposition supporters threatening a general strike if Issoufou is declared victorious at the first round.

"If Issoufou wins in the first round, it's because he has cheated. If this happens we will go on strike and there will be clashes," an Amadou activist said, speaking on condition of anonymity. Tensions edged higher after Niger's top court approved a controversial plan to allow voters to cast their ballots without identity papers, sparking an opposition outcry on the eve of the vote.

Moussa Tchangari, a leading civil society and opposition figure who heads a rights and development group, said he feared violence. "Everyone is afraid the outcome could be exceptionally serious," he said. Niger, which has a history of military coups, has only had multi-party democracy since 1990. Three quarters of the country's 18 million people survive on less than two dollars a day and desertification, driven by climate change, is pushing rural dwellers into towns. The UN expects two million people will need food aid this year in Niger, which has the world's highest fertility rate. — AFP



KALAMAZOO, Michigan: Police investigate the scene early yesterday where people were shot in vehicles outside a Cracker Barrel restaurant. (Inset) This image provided by the Kalamazoo County Sheriff's Office shows suspect Jason Dalton. — AP

SIX DEAD IN MICHIGAN SHOOTING RAMPAGE

SUSPECT IN CUSTODY • VICTIMS SELECTED AT RANDOM

CHICAGO: A gunman killed six people in a shooting spree in the northern US state of Michigan, police said yesterday, after arresting an armed 45-year-old white male for the crime. Officials corrected an earlier report of seven dead, stating that one of the victims was alive but seriously injured. The suspect was apprehended at 12:40 am on Sunday (0540 GMT) after the shooting rampage Saturday night in the city of Kalamazoo, police said.

Michigan state trooper Lieutenant Dave Hines told a post-midnight press conference that there were three separate shootings - one outside an apartment complex, another outside a car dealership, and the third at a chain restaurant. "What it looks like is we have somebody driving around, finding people and shooting them dead in their tracks," Kalamazoo County Undersheriff Paul Matyas told

the local CNN affiliate 24 Hours News 8. "This is your worst nightmare, when you have somebody just driving around randomly killing people," he added.

At a later press conference at sunrise Kalamazoo County prosecutor Jeff Getting identified the white male suspect as Jason Brian Dalton, 45, and said that he will face murder charges in court today. Getting said Hines is accused of shooting eight people, six of whom died. Earlier reports of the death of seventh victim, a teenage girl, were incorrect, Getting said, though he did say that the teen was "gravely injured". The gunman's motives were unclear, officials said.

Several police agencies were involved in the case, and the death toll and profiles of those killed changed as the hours went by and details emerged. The suspect was armed when he was arrested at a traffic stop, but surrendered peacefully, Matyas said.

Kalamazoo, in the northern state of Michigan, is located some 190 km west of the industrial city of Detroit and has a population of 76,000, according to census figures. The Kalamazoo killings follow a pattern of mass shootings in the United States that include the Dec 2 massacre in San Bernardino, California that left 14 people dead and 22 wounded, and the Dec 14, 2012 Sandy Hook school massacre in which 20 children and six adults were shot dead. Gun violence kills about 30,000 Americans every year and mass shootings - rare in most countries - have been on the rise in the United States. According to the tracking website gunviolencearchive.org, there were 330 mass shootings in the United States in 2015, up from 281 in 2014. They affected nearly every part of the country, reaching into both big cities and small towns. — AFP



LONDON: London Mayor Boris Johnson arrives home yesterday. — AFP

DEFYING CAMERON, BORIS TO CAMPAIGN FOR BREXIT

LONDON: Charismatic London Mayor Boris Johnson was set on Sunday to lend his pulling power to the campaign for a British exit from the European Union, dealing a heavy blow to Prime Minister David Cameron ahead of June's referendum. The BBC reported Johnson's decision without citing sources ahead of an official announcement. One source with knowledge of the decision confirmed to Reuters that he would back the 'out' campaign.

The decision comes a day after Cameron called the June 23 poll and declared his own intention to campaign for Britain to stay in the EU after clinching concessions from other member states that he said would give Britain a special status in the world's biggest trading bloc. Johnson, a political showman whose buffoonish and eccentric exterior masks fierce ambition to succeed Cameron, has the potential to galvanise the 'out' campaign because of his ability to swing public opinion.

Cameron yesterday urged Johnson, instantly recognizable by his thatch of platinum-blond hair, not to join opponents of EU membership, loosely organized around divisive political figures such as UK Independence Party chief Nigel Farage and maverick left-wing campaigner George Galloway.

"I would say to Boris what I say to everybody else, which is that we will be safer, we will be stronger, we will be better off inside the EU," Cameron told the BBC. It was not only Cameron who had been waiting to hear Johnson's decision.

Leaders on both sides of the Brexit debate, Britain's Sunday newspapers and even financial markets had been eagerly waiting for Johnson to declare his allegiance. Johnson joins six members of Cameron's cabinet who on Saturday rebelled and said they wanted to leave. British voters - and Cameron's ruling Conservative Party - are split on membership. — Reuters

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10 DEAD AS CASTE RIOTS RAGE IN NORTH INDIA

NEW DELHI REELS FROM WATER CRISIS, SCHOOLS CLOSED



SRINAGAR: Indian women cry during a funeral for civilian Abdul Gani in Gundipora village, in Pulwama district south of Srinagar yesterday. Gani was hit by a bullet in crossfire between militants and Indian troops.—AFP

5 KILLED IN KASHMIR STANDOFF BETWEEN TROOPS, REBELS

SRINAGAR: A handful of rebels holed up in a building in the Indian portion of Kashmir exchanged fire with government forces for the second straight day yesterday, raising the number of dead to four soldiers and one civilian. Another 13 paramilitary troops have been wounded in the standoff.

The rebels, numbering two to three, fired guns and grenades early yesterday as Indian commandos tried to storm the government building where they have been hiding since Saturday, said paramilitary spokesman Bhavesh Chaudhary.

The latest firing killed an army captain and a soldier belonging to the army's special forces and injured four paramilitary soldiers, said army spokesman Col Nitin N Joshi. Two paramilitary soldiers and one civilian were killed Saturday and nine paramilitary troops were hospitalized. The militants, who are fighting against Indian rule over the disputed Himalayan region, then fled to a nearby government building and forced more than 120 trainees and staff inside to leave.

Fresh firing erupted yesterday morning after the Central Reserve Police Force and soldiers surrounded the training institute overnight, with the militants still holed up inside.

As an intense gunbattle raged between security forces and the insurgents, a portion of the five-story government building caught fire.

The standoff started Saturday when the militants fired automatic rifles as they ambushed a convoy of Indian paramilitary soldiers before taking refuge in the nearby government building. They allowed more than 100 civilian government employees to leave the building without any harm.

Anti-India protests and clashes broke out yesterday in several neighborhoods in the saffron-rich Pampore area, where the militants are holed up. Witnesses and officials said hundreds of youths, chanting "Go India, go back" and "We want freedom," ignored the appeals from police to stay away from the site of the gunbattle and hurled rocks at police and paramilitary soldiers.

Government troops fired tear gas and pellet guns to disperse the protesters. At least three protesters were hospitalized with wounds from pellet guns, police said.

Kashmir has been divided between rivals India and Pakistan since they won independence from Britain in 1947. Both claim the Himalayan territory in full. Overall violence in the restive territory has sharply declined during the last decade, but armed clashes between rebels and government forces still break out regularly.—Agencies

LEADING HINDU PRIEST SLAIN IN BANGLADESH

DHAKA: A top Hindu priest was decapitated by attackers in northern Bangladesh yesterday and two worshippers wounded, police said, in the latest assault targeting minorities in the Muslim-majority nation.

Two assailants armed with pistols and cleavers attacked Jogeswar Roy, 45, the head priest of Sri Sri Sant Gourio Math, at his home in the temple yesterday morning, officials said.

"The priest was preparing for morning prayers when they pounced on him and slit his head from the body at the verandah of his home inside the temple," said Shafiqul Islam, a government administrator in the sub-district Debiganj where the temple is located.

"We recovered a blood-stained cleaver from the spot," he said. Two devotees were wounded in the attack including one who was shot as he tried to save the priest, he added. The motive for the murder was not clear but police said Islamist militants were among those suspected as being behind the killing.

District police chief Gias Uddin Ahmed said police had launched a hunt for the attackers and security checkpoints had been set up across the district. "The Jamayetul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) is also in our list of suspects," Ahmed said. The banned group is believed to have been behind an attack on an Italian Catholic priest in the neighboring district of Dinajpur late last year.

Bangladesh has seen an upsurge in attacks on minorities including Shiites, Sufis, Christians and Ahmadis by Islamist militant groups. The government rejects the Islamic State's claims of responsibility for several recent attacks, including the shootings of two foreigners.—AFP



DHAKA: Bangladeshi relatives of a top Hindu priest react after he was killed in the remote northern district of Panchagarh yesterday.—AFP

ROHTAK, India: Ten people have died in caste protests which triggered widespread arson and looting in a north Indian state, police said yesterday, as New Delhi faced a water crisis after mobs shut down a key supply.

Thousands of troops with shoot-on-sight orders were deployed on Saturday in Haryana state, a day after week-long protests turned violent with rioters setting fire to homes and railway stations and blocking highways. Ten people have been killed and about 150 injured in the state since Friday when officers fired on rioters, Haryana police chief Yash Pal Singal told a press conference, updating earlier estimates of five dead.

The Jat caste is leading the protests, demanding quotas for government jobs and university places, saying they are struggling to find employment and education opportunities despite India's strong economic growth.

India reserves places for lower castes in measures intended to bring victims of the country's worst discrimination into the mainstream. But the policy causes resentment among Jats, a rural caste which owns farms, and among other communities, who say it freezes them out.

Protesters again took to the streets overnight despite the stepped-up security, torching shops in Haryana's Rohtak district which is the epicentre of the violence, a local police officer told AFP.

"There were clashes during the night across the district. Over a dozen buildings were set on fire by protesters, with incidents of looting of shops and ATMs at two places," the officer said on condition of anonymity. A local police officer in Jhajjar, whose district borders that of



CHANDIGARH: Indian residents from the Jat community block the Chandigarh-Shimla highway amid violent caste protests in Panchkula yesterday.—AFP

Rohtak, earlier told AFP that five people were killed on Saturday "when the army opened fire on a mob".

Water crisis

As the crisis escalates, the Indian capital's water supplies have been hit after mobs forced the shutting of sluice gates at a canal in Haryana which takes water to the capital's treatment plants. More than 16 million people in India's capital are facing a major water crisis as a result of the violent demonstrations. The protesters have damaged equipment that brings water from Munak canal in

Haryana state to New Delhi, depleting the capital's water supply. New Delhi gets about 60 percent of its water from the neighboring state.

After holding emergency meetings, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal announced water rationing throughout the city, and said schools would be closed today to conserve supplies. "Water to be equally rationed amongst all. Pl save water. Schools closed tomo," Kejriwal said on Twitter. Talks aimed at ending the violence were set to be held later Sunday in Delhi between Jat leaders, including those involved in the protests, and

national Home Minister Rajnath Singh.

"We are working on immediately ending the violence," national Jat leader Yashpal Malik, who will take part in the talks, told AFP. Protesters maintained blockades of roads into Haryana despite the impending talks, television footage showed. Hundreds armed with sticks halted vehicles along one key route which was also blocked with fallen trees, an AFP photographer reported.

The photographer saw at least a dozen gutted buildings including a school in the town of Sampla five kilometres (three miles) from Rohtak city.—Agencies

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Libyan men practice kite boarding in the eastern city of Benghazi yesterday. — AFP

SMARTPHONES TO REPLACE CARDS AT ATMS

WASHINGTON: Here's another use for the smartphone as it invades daily life: In place of your debit card at your bank cash machine. The "cardless" automatic teller machine (ATM) is gaining ground in the US and around the world, with smartphone technology allowing for speedier and more secure transactions. Dozens of US banks are installing new ATMs or updating existing ones to allow customers to order cash on a mobile application and then scan a code to get their money without having to insert a bank card.

US banking giants Wells Fargo, Bank of America and Chase are in the process of deploying the new ATMs, as are a number of regional banks and financial groups around the world. Makers of ATMs and financial software groups are ramping up to meet this demand. "We think our model (using

smartphones) reduces a lot of vulnerabilities," said Doug Brown, who leads mobile technology for FIS Global, a major provider of software and technology for ATMs.

Brown said the FIS cardless system is being used at some 2,000 ATMs operated by at least 28 banks in the United States "and we're looking to rapidly expand that." He said the system should be operational at some 80,000 machines in North America over the coming 18 months. And similar changes are coming in other countries, according to Brown.

Reducing 'Skimming', Fraud

In addition to speeding the transaction time, the smartphone-based system aims to curb the growing problem of "skimming" in which criminals steal the data on a card, often by inserting devices into the ATM card

slot. By some estimates, skimming cost the global banking industry some \$2 billion in 2015 and can lead to other kinds of fraud when card data is stolen. "Consumers are aware of this, they really understand and welcome this," Brown said.

Another security benefit, Brown said, is that authenticating on the handset reduces the time spent at the ATM to around 10 seconds instead of the typical 30 to 40 seconds. "The performance is kind shocking to some people, they almost jump back at the instantaneous response," Brown said. "But it provides more physical security because they can make the transaction faster."

Bank of America spokeswoman Betty Riess said the group is "currently developing a new cardless ATM solution" based on NFC or near field communication technology to allow customers to authenticate without the use of a card. "We'll roll out this capability in late February to associates in select ATMs in Silicon Valley, San Francisco, Charlotte, New York and Boston," Riess said. "It will be followed by a broader customer launch mid-year."

Chase said it is planning a similar rollout sometime this year. "When we first roll this out, customers will be able to request an access code through the Chase mobile app and enter it at the ATM to do their transactions," said Chase spokesman Michael Fusco. "Later on, they will be able to use their digital mobile wallet to complete the transaction at the ATM." Wells Fargo is also on board, developing ATMs that will allow customers to use their smartphones to obtain and eight-digit token to authorize a cash withdrawal. The Wells Fargo system will support Android Pay, "and we'll continue to evaluate additional wal-

lets," said spokesman Kristopher Dahl. Chicago-based BMO Harris, an affiliate of Bank of Montreal, began using smartphone technology at its 750 ATMs last March.

'Headless' ATMs

Some of the new technologies will require only a software update to the ATM, while others will need new hardware. ATM manufacturer Diebold is testing a "headless" teller machine, without a screen or keypad, which

dispenses cash from interaction on the smartphone. "What we are saying with this is forget the card reader, forget the PIN pad, we all have these devices in our pockets," said Dave Kuchenski, Diebold's senior business development manager for new technology. Customers need only verify their identity, which can be done with the device's fingerprint reader, or possibly with an iris scanner on the ATM.

While some existing Diebold ATMs can work with mobile applications,

Kuchenski said the new concept, in testing with Citibank and others, could provide "a better user experience." "We don't have to walk through the same process which we have had since the ATM has existed," he said. "If we're using a mobile phone, we no longer have the need for a card, we no longer have a need for a receipt printer, we've dematerialized a lot of the devices. Banks like this, because it has fewer moving parts, so it reduces the total cost of ownership." — AFP



AMSTERDAM: A picture taken on Feb 19, 2016 shows a man using a smartphone with an app that allows online payments using biometric authentication. — AFP

IS BLASTS KILL 130 AS US, RUSSIA PRESS SYRIA ...

Continued from Page 1

reduced to mangled metal in the area, where a January attack also claimed by IS killed 70 people. World powers have been pushing for a halt in fighting in Syria that was meant to take effect by last Friday, but have struggled to agree on the terms. The latest bombings came as Kerry said he had spoken with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and agreed on how to implement a ceasefire in the conflict that has cost more than 260,000 lives. "We have reached a provisional agreement, in principle, on the terms of the cessation of hostilities that could begin in the coming days," Kerry said on a visit to Amman. "It is not yet done and I anticipate that our presidents, President (Barack) Obama and President (Vladimir) Putin, may well speak somewhere in the next days or so in order to try to complete this task."

The Russian foreign ministry later said on its Facebook page that Lavrov and Kerry held two more telephone conversations later yesterday and finalized the ceasefire terms to be submitted to their respective presidents. World powers proposed the truce just over a week ago as part of a plan that also included expanded humanitarian access, in a bid to pave the way for peace talks to resume. The talks, which collapsed earlier this month in Geneva, had been scheduled to resume on Feb 25, but the UN's Syria envoy has already acknowledged that date is no longer realistic.

On Saturday, key opposition umbrella group the High Negotiations Committee said it would agree a temporary truce only if regime backers halted fire. HNC chief Riad Hijab said any ceasefire must be reached "with international mediation and with guarantees obliging Russia, Iran and their sectarian militias and

mercenaries to stop fighting". Assad, meanwhile, told Spain's El Pais newspaper he was "ready" for a ceasefire, but said it should not be exploited by "terrorists".

Regime backer Moscow is a key architect of the proposed ceasefire, but has shown little sign so far that it plans to rein in the air campaign it began in September in support of Assad's government. On Saturday, the Kremlin said it would continue "to provide assistance and help to the armed forces of Syria in their offensive actions against terrorists".

Regime forces backed by Russian strikes were advancing on Sunday east of Aleppo city against IS, consolidating their control over a stretch of highway from the city to the Kweyris military base.

The Observatory said at least 50 IS fighters had been killed in clashes and Russian strikes since Saturday morning. Tensions have been rising between Moscow and opposition-backer Ankara, alarmed by both the regime's Russian-backed advances and a major operation by Kurdish-led forces in Aleppo province. The Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) and their Arab partners have in recent days seized key territory from rebel forces in Aleppo, prompting Turkey to shell their positions.

Ankara considers the YPG to be an affiliate of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party, which has waged a decades-long insurgency against the Turkish state. It fears the Kurdish advances are intended to link up areas in north and northeast Syria to create a contiguous semi-autonomous Kurdish zone along the Syrian-Turkish border. Yesterday, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan defended his country's fight against the YPG as "legitimate defense" after international calls for Ankara to halt its military action in Syria. — AFP

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Focus

CAMERON CLEARS
KEY HURDLES IN
BREXIT CAMPAIGN

By Florence Biedermann

Prime Minister David Cameron has cleared some key hurdles as he takes his first steps in what promises to be a bitter campaign ahead of an EU membership referendum in June, experts said. Starting with a reform deal struck at a European Union summit on Friday, Cameron went on to secure the support of the overwhelming majority of his cabinet on Saturday. "Cameron did well politically with the other member states" and "the best that he could" with eurosceptics within his own Conservative Party, John Springford, a research fellow at the Centre for European Reform, told AFP.

Cameron says the deal in Brussels confers a "special status" on Britain, protecting its status as a non-eurozone member, excluding it from the aim of "ever closer union" and curbing welfare benefits for EU workers in Britain. After the cabinet meeting on Saturday, only six ministers said they would campaign for "Leave" on the referendum question on June 23: "Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union or leave the European Union?"

The decision of Justice Secretary Michael Gove, a close personal friend and ally of Cameron, to support "Leave" was a blow to the premier, but the endorsement of heavyweights like Home Secretary Theresa May, Foreign Secretary Philip Hammond and Defence Secretary Michael Fallon was seen as crucial. One key uncertainty, however, is which way the Mayor of London Boris Johnson, who is seen as a potential successor to Cameron, will go. The gaffe-prone but popular eurosceptic politician could boost a "Leave" camp that so far lacks a national figurehead, aside from UK Independence Party (UKIP) leader Nigel Farage, who does not appeal to moderate voters.

'Cameron's Standing' is Key

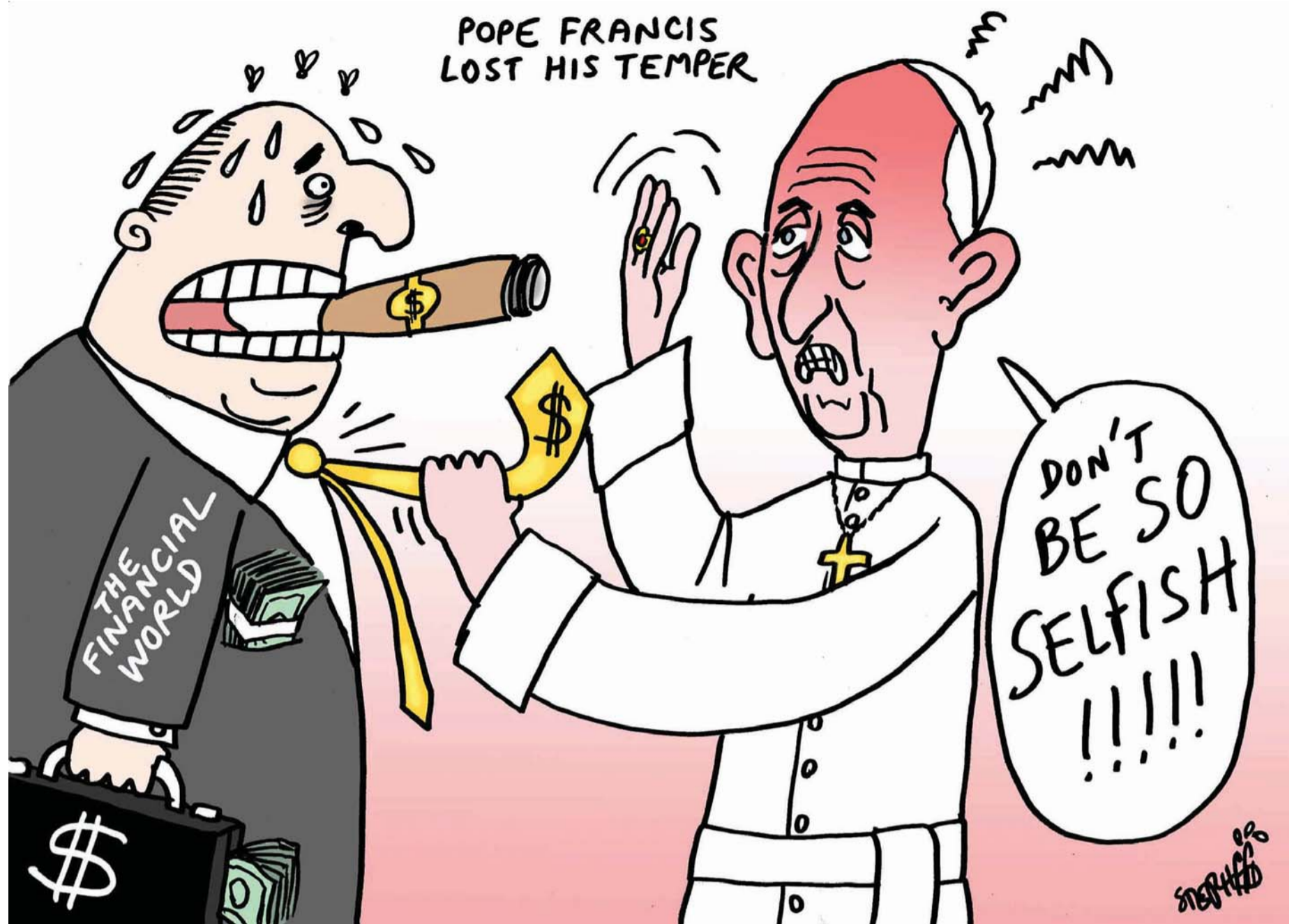
Whatever the arguments of the for and against camps, experts said it was unlikely the details of the EU deal would have much weight in a campaign that will hinge on larger issues about national prosperity and sovereignty. "The deal won't do that much to convince anybody," Springford said, adding that aside from the most ardent EU supporters and opponents "those in the middle will vote on the big arguments about economy and security".

Anand Menon, a European politics professor at King's College London, also said it was "unbelievable" that anyone would decide their vote based on the substance of the EU deal. "Come June 23, no one is going to be talking about the specifics of the deal," he told AFP. As the campaign gets underway, Cameron will also be reassured by the backing of the City of London, Europe's biggest financial hub, and the main centre-left opposition Labour Party.

Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn has dismissed Cameron's EU negotiations as a "sideshow" but has said he will campaign for Britain to stay in the EU to protect investments, jobs and worker and consumer protection rights. Come June 23, The Economist weekly argued, voters' decision will hinge largely on their views on Cameron, who does not want to go down in history as the prime minister who led Britain out of the European Union.

"Nothing will matter as much as Mr Cameron's standing," it said, adding that his "personal appeal and abilities" would be key. "If it currently looks like the 'In' campaign will prevail, that is because he remains relatively well-liked and respected (with the emphasis on relatively)," it said. There is little scope for complacency though. Springford identified two "risks" that remain for Cameron - a massive new influx of migrants into Europe as weather conditions improve later this year and a fresh eurozone crisis as Greece prepares for an important debt repayment in June. —AFP

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ABADI KEEPS IRAN AT ARM'S LENGTH

By Maher Chmaytelli

As fighting in Iraq raged last summer, Iranian Major-General Qassem Soleimani came across unexpected opposition to his plans to defeat Islamic State. Soleimani is the commander of Iran's Al-Quds brigade and has been a key figure in the fight against the Sunni Islamist group in Iraq. That fight has been led not by Iraq's army but by Iranian-backed Shiite militias. But in August, Iraqi Prime Minister Haider Al-Abadi told Soleimani that a planned assault on the Sunni city of Ramadi should be left to the Iraqi army, according to a government official and two diplomats.

Abadi, a 64-year-old Shiite, wanted the militias to stay away to avoid inflaming ethnic tensions, the sources said. Abadi's office declined to comment on the story, which has been repeated in Baghdad's diplomatic circles for months. Three Iraqi politicians denied it ever happened. But the government official and the diplomats said the incident was one of a series of moves by Abadi to assert his authority as leader and to distance himself from Tehran and the militias that came to Baghdad's rescue in 2014 and early 2015.

Abadi has begun to push for reconciliation between Iraq's Shiites and Sunnis, and for better relations with Sunni Arab neighbors like Saudi Arabia, they said. If he can bridge the gap between rival sectarian communities as he has promised, he will have gone a long way towards reuniting a country which has been deeply riven since the fall of Saddam Hussein in 2003.

According to the government official and the two diplomats, Abadi also objected to Soleimani's plane landing at Baghdad airport without prior permission. Abadi was also irritated that Soleimani used an official VIP hall at the airport when entering Iraq, even though he was not officially invited by the government. The deterioration in their relationship, the sources said, began in August when Soleimani attended a top Iraqi security meeting run by Abadi and behaved in, what one source said, was "a bossy manner as if Iraq was an Iranian protectorate".

This, the sources said, had led Abadi to ask Soleimani why he was at the meeting. The Iranian general had then left. "Abadi questioned his presence. It was a matter of Iraqi sovereignty and nationalism," one Western diplomat said. Abadi's office declined to comment. The Iraqi government official said Abadi and Soleimani had not fought but were "keeping an operational, business-like relationship. We can't say it's warm".

Whatever the case, Soleimani has receded from public view in Iraq in the past six months. The omnipresent posters and television images of him on the battlefield have all but disappeared. There are likely to be limits to that change.

Iran's allies within Abadi's Shiite camp are pushing back against his more muscular stance, while the collapse in oil prices has cut the government budget, said Hisham Al-Hashemi, an Iraqi government adviser and an expert on Islamic State. For now though, Abadi seems to be trying to deliver on his initial address to parliament in 2014 in which he painted a vision of a decentralized and united Iraq.

Victory in Ramadi

The army's victory in Ramadi against the ultra-hardline Sunni militant group was a key moment. An elite corps of the Iraqi army dislodged Islamic State from the city, the largest in western Iraq, in the final days of 2015. Support came from US warplanes while Sunni tribesmen held the ground behind the army lines. The army is now preparing to take on Islamic State in Fallujah, a bastion of Sunni jihadists to the west of Baghdad, and plans to start a push towards Mosul, the largest northern city.

It was the fall of Mosul to Islamic State in 2014 that forced the exit of Abadi's predecessor Nouri Al-Maliki. Many Iraqi lawmakers blamed Maliki for the Iraqi army's defeat in the city. Crucially, Maliki lost the backing of Grand Ayatollah Ali Al-Sistani, a reclusive octogenarian who enjoys almost mythical status among millions of Shi'ite followers and wields authority that few Iraqi politicians openly challenge. Sistani called for a consensus candidate. Abadi was Maliki's replacement, in part because he promised to heal the sectarian rift between Iraq's Shi'ite and Sunnis.

The new prime minister grew up in Baghdad amongst Sunni, Christians and other communities. "His father was a prominent doctor. (Abadi) is used to living with other communities," said Mustafa Alani, an Iraqi security analyst with the Geneva-based think-tank Gulf Research Center. After more than 20 years in exile in Britain where he studied in the northern English city of Manchester and worked as an electrical engineer, Abadi returned to Iraq in 2003 following the US-led invasion that toppled Saddam's Baath party.

Like Maliki, Abadi is a member of the Shiite Dawa Party, which along with other Shiite groups carried out a US-initiated de-Baathification campaign, effectively removing Sunnis from state, army and police positions. A decade ago, Abadi backed that campaign. But when he became prime minister he promised to unite the country. At first, he struggled to assert himself. Some US officials then perceived him as a weak leader who needed the backing of the militias.

But in the past few months that perception has begun to shift. On Feb 9 he renewed a bid to dismantle the country's patronage system and root out corruption. Abadi said he wants a government reshuffle with technocrats as ministers. The move surprised several groups of his ruling

coalition, the government official said. "He made the announcement straight to the media, without consulting the party leaders."

Abadi has also improved relations with Iran's regional rival Saudi Arabia. In December, Riyadh reopened its embassy in Baghdad, 25 years after it shut following Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. Saudi Ambassador Thamer Al-Shabhan told newspapers the move would enable greater cooperation against extremism. The closer ties survived their first test in January, when Saudi Arabia executed Shiite cleric Nimr Al-Nimr. The Iraqi government resisted pressure from Shiite groups to break off ties and instead offered to mediate between Riyadh and Tehran. "Abadi has kept himself at arm's length" from Iran, said a European diplomat. "He has only been to Tehran two or three times in 18 months, not like his predecessor who would go all the time."

The Limits to Change

Convincing Sunni Iraqis that he is sincere will not be easy. Parliamentary speaker Salim Al-Jabouri, the most senior Sunni in the Iraqi state, said Abadi is showing good intentions but "does not use all of his authority to do what he promised to do". Many Shiite politicians feel like Abadi is already too accommodating. Shiite political parties continue to back de-Baathification measures affecting tens of thousands of Sunnis. They also oppose the creation of a National Guard that would incorporate provincial forces like the Sunnis who are fighting Islamic State.

The government official said most Shiite politicians still have a strong anti-Sunni feeling. After Abadi's recent call for reforms, some Shiite government officials even discussed replacing the prime minister, the official said. The European diplomat said the resistance Abadi faced made it hard to implement real change. "The feeling remains that Sunnis should pay the price for what they have done under Saddam," he said.

The sharp drop in oil prices and growing economic crisis in Iraq make things even harder. "For the prime minister you can't spend on the military, otherwise you can't defeat (Islamic State)," the same diplomat said. "He has a lot less money to play with than any of his predecessors have had since 2003." Abadi's limited influence on the Shiite militias was apparent in January when his government failed to stop revenge attacks on Sunni civilians after Islamic State carried out a series of bombings east of Baghdad.

"Instead of holding Shiite militias to account the authorities have turned a blind eye to this shocking rampage. In some cases abductions and killings took place in full view of local authorities, who failed to intervene," said James Lynch, Deputy Director of Amnesty International's Middle East and North Africa Programme. —Reuters

WHY TRUMP COULD WIN GOP NOMINATION

By Ivan Couronne

Billionaire businessman Donald Trump has in the past eight months defied his critics and proven his White House bid is not simply a surreal stunt. To the shock of the political world, the 69-year-old onetime reality TV star's nomination to be the Republican presidential candidate is now a genuine possibility. His populist campaign has morphed into a national protest movement against Washington elites and establishment "politicians".

He has rallied fiscal and social conservatives as well as moderate Republicans who could propel him to the nomination - but the GOP trophy will depend on the behavior of other party rivals still in the race. The crowded field shrank by one after Saturday's South Carolina primary slugfest, leaving five: Trump, Senators Ted Cruz and Marco Rubio, and two underdogs - Ohio Governor John Kasich and retired neurosurgeon Ben Carson.

Trump has a solid support base of about 30-35 percent of the Republican vote: He won New Hampshire with 35 percent and South Carolina with 32.5 percent. In national polls, he is averaging about 34 percent support. So long as the remaining

votes are divided between other candidates, as occurred in the first three nomination contests, Trump appears unbeatable. And from March 15, most states will award their delegates via the winner-take-all method, which would help Trump clinch the nomination before the Republican convention in July in Cleveland.

But if several others withdraw - as Jeb Bush, the son of one president and brother of another, did Saturday after faring poorly in South Carolina - voters could in theory elevate a challenger capable of uniting the Republican electorate against Trump. "I do think Trump has a ceiling, probably around 40 percent, and that he's not going to do much better than that," explained University of Massachusetts political science professor Brian Schaffner, who also directs the UMass Poll.

Trump might snag some voters from Carson, who is popular with evangelicals, should the doctor drop out, and he is likely to earn trickles of support from Bush and others who suspend their campaigns. But Schaffner has studied surveys about voters' second, third and fourth choices, and has concluded that it's pretty black or white on Trump. "Most of the people who don't support him really have no interest in support-

ing him," and the majority of those who had backed Bush or Kasich - symbols of the establishment - would switch allegiance to either Cruz or Rubio, he explained.

'A Three-Person Race'

Trump has no patience or use for the calculations of such "geniuses," and who can blame him? He has defied expectations daily since last summer. "They don't understand that as people drop out," Trump said Saturday night, "I'm going to get a lot of those votes also." Indeed, voters are hardly beholden to the prognostications of political experts. They may be more sensitive to personality traits than political platforms.

Trump's undisputable talent "is to keep the focus on him" and not necessarily his policies, generic as they are, said Timothy Hagle, a professor of political science at the University of Iowa. America's political left has essentially anointed Trump a bona fide frontrunner. "Nothing is certain in politics," wrote Josh Marshall, editor of web-based Talking Points Memo. "But it's time to dispense with any faith-based logic that disputes the fact that Donald Trump is now the overwhelming favorite to win the Republican nomination."

Cruz, a champion of the religious right,

is struggling to reach voters beyond his arch-conservative core, but he is determined to hang on. Rubio nipped Cruz for second place on Saturday in South Carolina, consolidating his position as the mainstream darling. "After tonight, this has become a three-person race, and we will win the nomination!" Rubio told cheering supporters.

There are indeed some obstacles in Trump's path, notably involving his campaign organization. "Can he expand his campaign to more than one state at a time?" Hagle asked. Eleven states across the country will cast ballots in Republican nominating contests on "Super Tuesday" (March 1), and Trump's campaign team has fewer staff and volunteers - and less ground experience - than his well-stocked rivals. There is also the scenario in which Trump, Cruz and Rubio remain in the race until the July convention, with none having managed to secure an absolute majority of delegates - 1,237 out of the 2,472 available.

Should that unfold, after a first round of voting, delegates would be released from their initial commitments and could vote for the candidate of their choosing in the second round. Woe to whoever predicts the outcome in that scenario. —AFP

'WE NEED AURIER', SAYS PSG'S MATUIDI

PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain midfielder Blaise Matuidi on Saturday offered his support to disgraced team-mate Serge Aurier, insisting that the Ligue 1 leaders "need him, whether it be on the field or off it." "Serge is my friend and is the friend of everyone in the dressing room. He is well-liked by everyone," said Matuidi after PSG beat Reims 4-1 at the Parc des Princes as they continued their relentless march towards another French title. "We know he made a mistake but, as they say, people make mistakes. He has apologised. He will have a discussion with the coach and we hope it will be positive." Aurier was suspended by the club last Sunday after appearing in a video on the social media site Periscope in which he directed homophobic insults at PSG coach Laurent Blanc and also appeared to insult several team-mates. He will meet with the club's hierarchy on Monday amid speculation that PSG will not play Aurier again and will look to sell the Ivory Coast international in the summer for a cut-price fee. But Matuidi added: "We need him, whether it be on the field or off it, because he is someone who is liked by everybody." — AFP

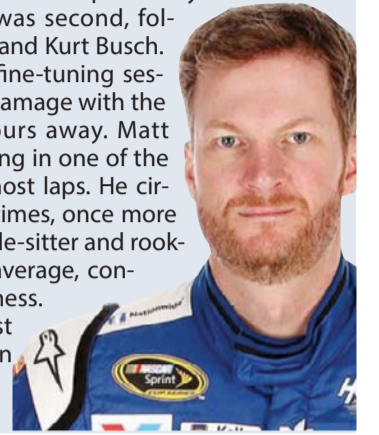


HAAS AIM FOR POINTS WITH THEIR 'VERY FIRST' F1 CAR

BARCELONA: Formula One newcomers Haas, the sport's first U.S.-owned team in 30 years, presented their 2016 car on Sunday with a grey and red livery and the designation VF-16 to mark it out as the 'Very First'. "Our goal with this car is to score points," declared principal Guenther Steiner, who previously worked in Formula One with Jaguar and then Red Bull when the Austrian energy drinks company bought that team. "First, we need to go out there and show that we can do the job, that we can finish races, that we are respected by the fans and other teams in the paddock. Then, we want to score points. That is the ultimate goal." The car, designed in Italy by Dallara and powered by Ferrari, will make its first public appearance on track at Barcelona's Circuit de Catalunya on Monday at the start of pre-season testing. The team carried out a brief 'shakedown' of the car in Barcelona on Saturday but Ferrari had the circuit to themselves on Sunday for private filming. Frenchman Romain Grosjean and Mexican Esteban Gutierrez, who was a Ferrari reserve last season after previously racing for Sauber, are the Haas drivers. The season starts in Australia on March 20. — Reuters

EARNHARDT NOTCHES FASTEST LAP IN FINAL DAYTONA 500

DAYTONA BEACH: Dale Earnhardt Jr. had the fastest lap in final practice for the Daytona 500. Earnhardt, whose car is nicknamed "Amelia," has been strong all week. He reached 197.131 mph on his eighth and final lap Saturday at Daytona International Speedway. Defending race winner Joey Logano was second, followed by Ryan Blaney, Brad Keselowski and Kurt Busch. Twenty-five cars took part in the final fine-tuning session. Fifteen did not to avoid potential damage with the season-opening race less than 24 hours away. Matt Kenseth drove a backup car after crashing in one of the twin qualifying races and turned the most laps. He circled the 2 1/2-mile superspeedway 30 times, once more than Logano, Blaney and Keselowski. Pole-sitter and rookie Chase Elliott had the fastest 10-lap average, considered a good indicator of race readiness. He averaged 195.106 mph over his first 10 practice laps, a tick quicker than Brian Vickers, Busch and Kevin Harvick. — AP



KOTC SHOOTING TOURNAMENT CONCLUDES

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Kuwait Oil Tankers Company shooting tournament was concluded Saturday at Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Olympic Shooting Complex in the air pistol, air gun, 50m rifle and Olympic archery, in the presence of President of Kuwait and Arab Shooting Federations Eng Duaj Khalaf Al-Otaibi, KOTC CEO for Financial and Administrative Affairs Khalid Al-Quoud, and Secretary General of Kuwait and Arab Shooting Federations Obaid Al-Osaimi.

The tournament witnessed fierce competition and results were close to each other in top places, reflecting the interest of shooters in winning and be selected as members of the national team keeping in mind that HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah Annual International Grand Prix is around the corner.

In his closing ceremony speech Obaid Al-Osaimi said Kuwait Shooting Sport Club is proud to organize the KOTC shooting tournament each year, due to the company's contributions in supporting KSSC activities, and encouragement of

shooters to reach their goals. Al-Osaimi said that more than 75 shooters participated from the club and National Guard, who completed in a friendly atmosphere. He said the tournament was held as Kuwait shooting is preparing for its most dear international tournament in 2016, which is HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah Annual International Grand Prix which will be held from 1st March to March 8th, in which a large number of teams will participate. Results of the tournament were as follows:

Air pistol - men

Mideth Al-Sahaly, Hassan Al-Mulla, Saad Al-Ajmi.

Air rifle - men

Abdallah Al-Harby, Mohammad Adel, Suleiman Al-Asousi.

Air pistol - women

Huthama Al-Baghli, Athari Qurban, Israa Bahman.

Air rifle - women

Heba Irzouqi, Ayat Al-Duwaikhi, Mariam Irzouqi

50 rifle - 3 positions men

Mohammad Adel, Torky Al-Shimmari, Abdallah Al-Harby.

50m rifle, prone - men

Khalid Al-Subaie, Abdallah Al-Harby, Torky Al-Shimmari

50m pistol - men

Saad Al-Ajmi, Hassan Al-Mulla, Ali Al-Mutairi

50m rifle prone - women

Niran Irzouqi, Mariam Irzouqi, Heba Irzouqi

Air rifle - women - juniors

Heba Irzouqi, Reem Al-Bughaili, Shurooq Duwaisan.

Olympic Archery

Faisal Al-Rashidi, Abdallah Taha, Bader Al-Mutairi

Compound archery men

Ahmad Al-Shatty, Salam Al-Zaid, Amer Al-Hajiri.



FERRARI THREAT TO MERCEDES SCRUTINISED IN TESTING OPENER

BARCELONA: Ferrari's ability to challenge Lewis Hamilton and Mercedes' dominance of Formula One will be examined as the longest season in the sport's history gets underway with the first series of testing in Barcelona today.

Hamilton is looking for a third consecutive drivers' championship and the fourth of his career across a mammoth 21 Grand Prix season that starts in Australia on March 20.

The Englishman coasted to the title last season as he and Mercedes teammate Nico Rosberg won 16 of the 19 races. However, Ferrari showed signs of a revival with four-time world champion Sebastian Vettel claiming the other three race wins, exceeding team principal Maurizio Arrivabene's pre-season expectations.

Arrivabene is now looking for even more progress from the SF-16H to be able to challenge Mercedes with Vettel and Kimi Raikkonen—the last man to win a drivers' title with Ferrari back in 2008 — at the wheel.

"I think this year, we need to push a bit more. We would like to fight until the end for the championship," Arrivabene said at the SF-16H launch.

"I know that is not going to be easy, because our competitors are not sleeping, but we are committed to do our best." Mercedes certainly believe Ferrari will be their main obstacle to another season of dominance.

"We see Ferrari as our main threat and it remains to be seen how we position ourselves in the weeks to come," Mercedes technical director Paddy Lowe told Sky Sports.

"Ferrari are a very strong competitor and one we worry about. It keeps us motivated to keep us pushing all the time." Worrying for Mercedes' competition, though, the double world champions ran a trouble free 98.2km on a filming day in

the W07 Hybrid in Silverstone last week. "We take our opposition very seriously—especially Ferrari," said Rosberg. "They are going to be a big threat so we need to keep pushing." Elsewhere, all eyes will be on what improvements the McLaren-Honda partnership has developed in the off-season after a disastrous return to F1 for the Japanese manufacturer last season.

IMPROVEMENT

Former world champions Fernando Alonso and Jenson Button didn't even get on the podium as McLaren finished ninth in the constructors' championship ahead of only Marussia, who failed to register a single point.

Red Bull will also be looking for continued improvement as they ended 2015 promisingly to finish fourth in the constructors' championship.

"We're looking to build the progress we made at the end of the season and carry that momentum into the early races," said team principal Christian Horner.

However, it was Williams who were the best of the rest behind Mercedes and Ferrari last season and are looking for more in 2016 with the partnership of Finland's Valtteri Bottas and Brazilian Felipe Massa back for a third consecutive season.

"Staying where we are will be a challenge in itself, but we are determined to keep improving because only winning will ever be good enough," team principal Frank Williams said at the launch of the FW38.

The grid extends to 22 cars in 2016 as thanks to the introduction of the first American F1 team in 30 years in Haas.

Meanwhile, French car giant Renault returns as a constructor after buying out the financially stricken Lotus team. — AFP



INFINITI'S FORMULA ONE INVOLVEMENT PROGRESSES

KUWAIT: Infiniti's successful involvement in Formula One enters the next phase. Starting with the new 2016 season, Infiniti will be a technical partner of the new Renault Sport Formula One team. Leveraging its expertise in performance hybrids, Infiniti will contribute engineering resources to the Renault Energy F1 Power Unit's Energy Recovery System (ERS), which incorporates two motor generator units, the MGU-H and MGU-K, and a battery.

This new and enhanced involvement strengthens the Renault Nissan Alliance and at the same time leverages the opportunities the Alliance provides by creating powerful industrial synergies for its members.

Infiniti's reputation for performance hybrid

vehicles is built on the widely-acclaimed 3.5-litre hybrid engine. The Q70sedan, equipped with this engine, has been recognized by the Guinness Book of World Records as the fastest accelerating full-hybrid car. The same hybrid system is also offered on the Q50 sports sedan. Infiniti's strong expertise will be used by the Renault Sport Formula One team in Viry-Châtillon as a team of Infiniti hybrid specialists move from Infiniti's technical center in Atsugi, Japan, to France to support development of the Renault Energy power unit. At the same time, Infiniti will use the experience from the F1 ERS system to further enhance its hybrid powertrains for road cars.

Infiniti began its Formula One involvement in

2011 as partner of the Red Bull Racing team and evolved into the title sponsor of the team as of the 2013 season. Building upon this experience, Infiniti now takes the logical next step forming a technical cooperation with the Renault Sports Formula One team based on a five-year plan.

"At Infiniti, motorsport is an important part of our business strategy," said Roland Krueger, President Infiniti Motor Company. "Forming a technical collaboration and enabling technology transfer road-to-track and track-to-road is the logical next step. The establishment of the Renault Sport Formula One Team by our Alliance partner Renault provides us with an ideal opportunity to enter this next phase of our long-term motorsport strategy."

US EAGLES RIP CHILE TO SEIZE AMERICAS TOURNEY LEAD

WASHINGTON: Mike Te'o scored two tries and the United States routed Chile 64-0 Saturday to seize the lead of the Americas Rugby Championship over Argentina by a lone bonus point.

The South American side took a 24-21 road victory at Uruguay that left them level at 2-0 and one drawn with the Americans, who were deadlocked 35-35 with Argentina in their opening match.

But the 10-try outburst by the US Eagles against Chile earned an extra

bonus point in the overall standings, giving them a 13-12 edge with two matches remaining in the round-robin intercontinental showdown. Canada remained third at 2-1 on 10 points with a 52-25 home triumph over winless Brazil, getting two tries each from Lucas Rumball and Clay Panga.

"To get one try was amazing but to get two was just a bonus," Panga said. "It was an unreal feeling. It's a great testament to how hard the boys worked." Te'o,

from the US Sevens squad, scored in the 64th and 77th minutes and fly half J.P. Eloff kicked seven conversions and scored his first international try, one of six Eagles to achieve that feat in the rout.

"The performance is more important (than the margin)," US coach John Mitchell said. "I think we're still naive in terms of game management, but these are problems that have solutions and we're dealing with a very youthful team."

Also scoring tries for the Americans

were Chris Baumann, Nic Edwards, Joe Taufete'e, Lorenzo Thomas, Jake Anderson, Chad London and Luke Hume. "For me, it was a good performance but maybe too much individualism," Mitchell said. "Sometimes that can happen in a game like this. At times the execution wasn't on, but if you keep going to space there's always going to be a high probability of scoring."

Canada also had tries from Paul Ciulini, Mike Hamson and Ray Barkwill and 13

points kicking from Andrew Ferguson in keeping pace with the leaders. Marcos Bollini, Juan Cappiello and Franco Cuaranta scored tries for Argentina, which also had two conversions from Juan Novillo and a conversion and penalty kick by reserve Pedro Mercerat. The scene shifts to South America as the five-week event continues next weekend with the United States at Brazil and Uruguay at Chile on Saturday and Canada visiting Argentina today. — AFP

CHAN WINS GOLD AT FOUR CONTINENTS

TAIPEI: The 2014 Olympic silver medalist Patrick Chan of Canada claimed the men's title at the Four Continents Figure Skating Championships in Taipei yesterday, despite a stressful start to the competition.

Skating to the music of Chopin, Chan kicked off his free skating programme with a quad toeloop/triple toeloop combination and added two triple axel, among others, to bring his total to 290.21 points.

The three-time World champion, 25, admitted he had been "very worried and stressed" when he finished fifth after Friday's short programme, which he attributed to "being jet-lagged and the ice not being perfect."

"But finally today it seemed that everything, my body, the ice, just felt just right and I could finally just relax and enjoy the programme," Chan told a press conference after his victory.

"I just let everything go and focus on myself and not focus on the other skaters. I think it paid off today," added Chan, who was competing in his first Four Continents after taking a one-year break.

China's Jin Boyang, the leader of the short programme, finished runner-up with a total of 289.83 points in his first Four Continents competition.

The 18-year-old also became the first skater to land four quads—a quad lutz, a quad salchow and two quad toeloop—in an international competition. "In my previous competition which was a domestic competition I also landed four quads in my free skate, so it gave me confidence coming into this competition," he said.

"I think I've done better today so I am very happy with this." China's Yan Han took the bronze medal while Japan's Shoma Uno and Takahito Mura ranked fourth and fifth, respectively.

Earlier in the past week Japanese skater Satoko Miyahara, the 2015 World silver medalist, claimed the ladies' single title. In the pairs event, 2015 World silver medalists Sui Wenjing and Han Cong of China took gold. American sibling team Maia and Alex Shibutani, the newly crowned US National Champions, won the ice dance event. — AFP



LA THUILE: Liechtenstein's Tina Weirather, center, winner of an alpine ski women's World Cup super G race, celebrates on the podium with second-placed Switzerland's Lara Gut, left, and third-placed Lindsey Vonn, of the United States, in La Thuile, Italy, yesterday. — AP

WEIRATHER WINS WHILE VONN IS REMINDED OF SOCIAL MEDIA GAFFE

LA THUILE: A daughter of skiing royalty, Tina Weirather of Liechtenstein won a slushy super-G yesterday for her first victory of the season while Lindsey Vonn was reminded of her social media gaffe during another podium finish.

Racing in unusually warm weather, Weirather finished 0.57 seconds ahead of Lara Gut with Vonn 0.64 back in third. It was the fifth career win for Weirather, the daughter of two-time Olympic gold medalist Hanni

Wenzel and Harti Weirather, who won downhill gold at the 1982 world championships. With the temperature soaring well above freezing on the Franco Berthod course in the shadows of Mont Blanc, organizers treated the snow with salt to prevent it from melting.

"They did a really good job on the snow. It was not easy to prepare the course," Weirather said. "We were already experienced because in Garmisch we had the same problem, it was also like 10 degrees (Celsius, or 50 Fahrenheit) so we kind of knew how to deal with it."

"When you inspect the course in the morning and there's no salt in it you almost think it's impossible to have a race and then you still have to get ready for a race and be prepared," Weirather added.

For Vonn, it was a second consecutive podium result after losing sleep to clean up damage from an ill-advised Facebook post. Vonn apologized to her equipment supplier Friday after posting a video of an angry outburst in which she destroyed her bindings with a hammer following a downhill where one ski detached.

'MISTAKES HAPPEN'

The DJ during yesterday's race poked fun at Vonn by playing MC Hammer's 1990 hit "U Can't Touch This," during the American's run.

"That was funny," Vonn said. "There's a lot of jokes out now but I did it to myself. Mistakes happen and you just got to move forward and today I was finally 100 percent focused on the skiing and I felt a lot better," Vonn added. "I actually got some sleep last night. So now I'm just thinking about racing and that's what I should be thinking about, because I have a lot of important races coming up."

With bright sunshine, a crowd of nearly 10,000 showed up, many of them young children clamoring for autographs, and Vonn and the other top skiers had to be escorted off the mountain by police officers on skis.

"That was intense," Vonn said. "Coming down from the finish was incredible. There were so many kids and I love that. I love the enthusiasm

they have for the sport and it makes our job a lot more fun as well."

Vonn's overall lead over Gut was reduced to 23 points, while in the super-G ranks she holds a 79-point lead on Gut with three races remaining in the discipline this season.

Fabienne Suter of Switzerland finished fourth and Romane Miradoli of France fifth, while local favorite Federica Brignone of Italy was sixth.

Saturday's downhill winner Nadia Fanchini and Viktoria Rebensburg of Germany were among those who didn't finish.

Up next is a special parallel slalom city event in Stockholm for men and women tomorrow. While Gut said she would travel to Sweden, Vonn was considering skipping the event over concern about a jump on the temporary course - potentially giving up points to her Swiss rival.

"I have to think about all the consequences, the positives and the negatives and we'll see," Vonn said. "The duel is definitely a different beast. I really like duels, actually, but with the jump in there I'm not really sure about it. So I have to make that decision tonight or tomorrow."

The women's circuit then travels to Soldeu, Andorra, for a super-G and Alpine combined next weekend. — AP

COE: IAAF COULD SUSPEND KENYA IF IT VIOLATES DOPING RULES

LONDON: Track and field's governing body is prepared to ban Kenyan athletes from the Olympics in Rio de Janeiro if the country fails to comply with global anti-doping rules, IAAF President Sebastian Coe said.

The IAAF has already suspended Russia's track and field program from global competition, and now Kenya could be at risk of the same sanction.

The IAAF's ethics commission is investigating alleged extortion and doping covers-ups in Kenya involving top officials. The World Anti-Doping Agency has also put Kenya on notice that it could be declared non-compliant with the global anti-doping code.

"We know that a disproportionate amount of reputational damage is caused by a relatively few countries and we have to be very much more proactive," Coe told British television network BT Sport when asked about investigations into Kenya. "Yes, if it means pulling them out of World Championships or Olympic Games then we will have to do that."

"I know the World Anti-Doping Agency has looked very closely at the Kenyan National Anti-Doping Agency, we of course monitor that through the IAAF so that work is ongoing," Coe added in the interview, which was being aired Thursday night.

Kenya's problems with WADA relate to delays in setting up and funding a new national anti-doping body, and delays in passing legislation that would make doping a crime - both promises made to WADA as far back as four years ago.

The Kenyan anti-doping agency announced Thursday that it has received nearly \$3 million from the government to buy anti-doping equipment, including testing kits for all the country's remote training camps.

"We have fully cooperated with WADA, although we recognize there has been delays in the processes, hence the lapse of one of the deadlines that had been put in

place," Anti-Doping Agency of Kenya chief executive Kiplimo Rugut said.

MAKING PROGRESS

WADA said last week that Kenya was under investigation for failing to meet an initial deadline for complying fully with its anti-doping code.

Kenyan track and anti-doping authorities said Thursday they were making progress.

"It does not worry me now that we may face an Olympic ban, since ADAK (The Anti-Doping Agency of Kenya) is working out a policy bill which will be taken to parliament to be made into law,"

said Jackson Tuwei, the acting president of Kenya's track and field federation. "I am confident we will succeed. And since we have been given another two months we will work day and night to conform with the rules."

Former marathon world record-holder Wilson Kipsang is urging the Kenyan government to implement the necessary measures, including fast-tracking legislation criminalizing doping.

"We must all step up the fight against doping because if we are banned, Kenya will never be the same again," Kipsang was quoted as saying by Kenya's Daily Nation.

"This is a country which has made its name as an athletics giant. We have done well in the Olympic and world championships and therefore, we should not miss out complying with the doping directives."

Earlier this week, the chief executive of Kenya's track and field federation took 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.

The IAAF's ethics committee is already investigating three other senior Athletics Kenya officials, including its president, for doping cover-ups and other alleged misconduct. — AP



IAAF President Sebastian Coe

MARLINS EXCITED TO HAVE BONDS AS HITTING COACH

MIAMI: Giancarlo Stanton grew up a Dodgers fan and remembers attending their games when Barry Bonds would step to the plate for the Giants.

"It's one of those sounds you never forget - how loud those boos were," Stanton said. Bonds has turned down the volume by keeping a low profile since 2007, his final year as a player. Now the polarizing home run king is back in the major leagues as hitting coach for Stanton and the Miami Marlins.

Bonds wore his familiar No. 25 and a smile as he faced a cluster of notebooks and cameras during media day Saturday at Marlins Park. The session included no boos or questions about steroids, and only one brief reference to the Hall of Fame, where Bonds is an uncharacteristic 0 for 4 in the annual balloting.

He received 44 percent of the vote in January, a career high but far short of the 75 percent needed for induction. Nonetheless, he said he considers himself a Hall of Famer.

"There's not one player that ever could say I'm not one," he said. "There's not a coach who ever coached me who says I'm not one. In my heart and soul, and God knows, I'm a Hall of Famer."

Bonds will likely hear some jeers around the NL this season. Marlins players have expressed no reservations about working with the steroids-tainted slugger, however, and Stanton sounded enthusiastic despite an inadvertent choice of words that caused a few double-takes.

"I'm going to go in the lab, get to work and see what we can come up with," he said. Bonds will begin working with Stanton, reigning NL batting champion Dee Gordon and two-time AL batting champ Ichiro Suzuki, among others, when the full squad reports for spring training

tomorrow in Jupiter, Florida.

"He can help everybody," veteran infielder Chris Johnson said. "If you can't pick something up from him, I don't know who can help you. You'd be an idiot not to be picking his brain all the chances you get."

Bonds might agree. He said he knows what will work if a player is willing to put in the time, and as a mentor, he said he can be another Willie Mays.

SPRING TRAINING

"It's great to be in the position I'm in, the same thing as my godfather Willie was," he said.

Bonds said spring training will be a time to develop relationships and perhaps step on toes. He was already acquainted with Stanton, who played against Bonds' son in high school in Los Angeles and grew up a fan of the Giants slugger.

"Me and my brother would fight over his rookie cards and stuff," Stanton said. "I still have a couple I stole from him."

Bonds is the career leader in home runs with 762 and a seven-time NL MVP, but the Marlins are treating him like one of the guys. Ace Jose Fernandez, a .190 career hitter, joked that he can hit the ball farther than the new hitting coach.

"I'm 51 years old, so he'd better," Bonds responded with a laugh. "If he doesn't, he's terrible."

In recent years Bonds worked as a guest instructor for the Giants in spring training and privately tutored several players, including Alex Rodriguez. Hiring him in Miami was team owner Jeffrey Loria's idea, and new manager Don Mattingly supported the move.

Bonds said he has missed competition and clubhouse camaraderie, and saw coaching as a

way to honor his late father, former major leaguer Bobby Bonds, who taught Barry how to hit.

Bonds convinced the Marlins he's willing to put in the long hours the job requires. "I've been a hitting coach, and I know how much time it takes," Mattingly said. "I wanted to make sure Barry was ready for that, and he was."

Mattingly, a six-time All-Star, said the hiring upgraded his staff's collective resume. "Between me and Barry," Mattingly said with a smile, "we hit over a thousand homers." — AP



JUPITER: Miami Marlins hitting coach Barry Bonds attends workouts for the team's pitchers and catchers at baseball spring training at Roger Dean Stadium on Friday, in Jupiter, Fla. — AP

OOREDOO PARTICIPATES IN EQUESTRIAN TOURNAMENT

KUWAIT: Ooredoo Kuwait, a member of international Ooredoo Group, participated in one of the most exciting activities of Hala Febrayer, which was held on February 19th and 20th in collaboration with Kuwait Riding Centre.

The tournament was organized by Kuwait Riding Centre, where participants had the chance to compete in 3 different categories, based on their level of experience and skills. The two-day program included intermediate tournament, horse dancing shows, beginners' tournaments, advanced tournaments, raffle draws and winners honouring.

Prizes were distributed to winners at the end of each day, first day winners of all three categories received a KD5 cash prize

each, while winners of the second day received KD1000 each, in addition to the grand draw prize which was a Hyundai 2016 model car.

The tournament is one of the key activities under Hala Febrayer Festival 2016 with Ooredoo, which included various activities that interest nationals and expats, locals and visitors of all age groups, the prominent festival included a camp, carnival, musical concerts, cultural and religious nights, shopping festival, graffiti competition, marathon and many other events. Ooredoo's sponsorship of the festival stems from its belief in the importance of effectively taking part in national events and activities that bring the people of Kuwait together, and spreading the festive spirit.



WATSON AIMS FOR SECOND RIVIERA WIN IN THREE TRIES

PACIFIC PALISADES: Bubba Watson fired a four-under par 67 in Saturday's third round of the PGA Northern Trust Open to take a one-shot lead over three Americans, including Dustin Johnson, whom Watson edged for the 2014 title.

Two-time Masters champ Watson seized the outright lead with a birdie at 17 on the same Riviera Country Club course where he shot 64-64 on the weekend two years ago to beat Johnson by two strokes. "I am very happy," Watson said. "It is all about the steadiness on the greens."

Johnson is tied for second with second-round leader Jason Kokrak, who shot a 70, and Chez Reavie, who had a 69. Watson, ranked sixth in the world, finished 54 holes at 12-under 201. Northern Ireland's Rory McIlroy, making his Pacific Palisades debut, and former world number one Adam Scott of Australia are part of a group of five tied for fifth at 10-under, just two strokes back. McIlroy and Scott both shot 67s.

Watson's best finish this season is a tie for 10th at the Hyundai Tournament of Champions. He stumbled at Pebble Beach last week in the third round and missed the 54-hole cut.

The third round has been a problem for Watson in his last three outings as he shot 73s in Maui and Phoenix and 74 at Pebble Beach. But the 37-year-old from Florida is back on track this week and Riviera has been good to him in the past.

"This three-week stretch has been tough," Watson said. "There was a lot of negative vibes out there."

"Pebble was very difficult because I haven't been there in so many years, so I pressed there. You get excited and you want to do so well. "Phoenix I didn't make very many putts, Pebble I didn't make too many putts. But then around here, I haven't made too many mistakes around the greens."

After his birdie on 17, Watson got up and down on 18 for par with a superb 100-foot chip from off the green that landed two feet from the cup. "Nobody expected me to hit the shot that good," Watson said. The shot drew a loud cheer from the huge gallery on the grassy hill overlooking the green at 18 that was taking advantage of a clear-sky afternoon and warm temperatures.

"It is better than booing me," Watson joked. "I guess being a past champion here they respect that. They know you can play and they appreciate a past champion."

Watson seized the lead with a birdie on the par-five 17. His tee shot sailed 321 yards to the fairway. The second shot landed in the rough, 55 feet from the pin. He got on the green and sank a three-foot birdie putt.

MCILROY IN TITLE HUNT

Considering the history of the event and with the leaderboard crowded as it is, 72 holes might not be enough to determine a winner. There are a dozen golfers within

four shots of Watson. Seven of the past 15 tournaments at Riviera have gone to a sudden-death playoff, including three in the past four years.

US Open runner-up Johnson certainly put himself in the mix for that long-desired Riviera win with a round Saturday that included five birdies and one bogey.

Besides finishing second to Watson in 2014, Johnson lost a sudden-death playoff to James Hahn last year.

"This is a tournament that I really enjoy playing," Johnson said. "I am definitely happy with my position."

"You have to attack the golf course when you can. There are a bunch of difficult holes where four is a good score."

McIlroy, who is trying to reclaim the world number one ranking from Jordan Spieth, made his lone bogey of the day on the par-four third hole. He then settled in for his third straight round in the 60s and said the tight leaderboard will make for an exciting yesterday.

"You have to try and play a solid round of golf and see where the chips fall. If you shoot the lowest score, then that's great," he said. —AFP



LOS ANGELES: Bubba Watson chips up onto the 18th green during the third round of the Northern Trust Open golf tournament, Saturday, in the Pacific Palisades section of Los Angeles. — AP



Rajeev Ram

RAJEEV RAM BEATS DIMITROV IN DELRAY BEACH SEMIFINALS

DELRAY BEACH: American Rajeev Ram upset fourth-seeded Grigor Dimitrov of Bulgaria 6-4, 6-3 on Saturday in the Delray Beach Open semifinals.

American Sam Querrey beat Argentina's Juan Martin del Potro 7-5, 7-5 in the second semifinal. The last All-American final on the ATP Tour was last April when Querrey lost to Jack Sock in Houston.

The 31-year-old Ram won his only other career finals he has played, in Newport in 2009 and last year. He beat Querrey in '09 to claim his first tour-level title.

"I felt calm from the start because I had a game plan going in to make sure I was on the offensive," said Ram, who - regardless of what happens in the final - will rise to a career-high ranking in the top 70. "I didn't want to let him set his feet too much. I wanted to take the first strike before he did. I do not need to be running side to side chasing his forehand."

After admitting to a bout of nerves during his three-set quarterfinal win over Benjamin Becker, the 31-year-old Ram played what he called "two of the best sets of tennis I've ever played."

Ram played composed, controlled tennis, mixing up powerful forehands and big serves with well-timed forays to the net. He took advantage of a bevy of unforced errors by Dimitrov, particularly off the backhand side. Ram broke Dimitrov in the first game of the match and then again in the third game of the second set. He never faced a break point on his own serve and won on his second match point when Dimitrov dumped a forehand return into the net. "It wasn't my best, best day today," Dimitrov said. "I was trying everything, serve and volley, slice, trying to attack. But everything went his way and absolutely nothing was going my way."

The match was disrupted briefly in the second set when chair umpire Simon Cannavan spotted a drone flying high over the court. During the US Open last year, a drone crashed into the stands during a match between Flavia Pennetta and Monica Niculescu.

Querrey never faced a break point against del Potro and lost just nine points on serve, including two in the second set. Both sets were identical in that neither player blinked until the 11th game when Querrey broke and then held serve.

"That was definitely the best I've played so far," said Querrey, who served 10 aces to del Potro's five. "I served great and it allowed me to claw myself in until I could break him."

Del Potro, the 2009 US Open champion who was playing in his first tournament in 11 months due to two surgeries on his left wrist last year, used a mix of one- and two-handed backhands, as well as his customarily potent forehand. But his fatigue after playing four matches - the same number he played in all of last year - was evident.

"I think this week I more than won the tournament," said del Potro, who confirmed that he will be playing the BNP Paribas Open in Indian

Wells next month. "There are so many positive things. I'm looking forward to the future because I can make a plan for playing tournaments." —AP

NADAL VOWS 'HARD WORK' AFTER NEW DEFEAT

RIO DE JANEIRO: Rafael Nadal has vowed he will put in more hard work in a bid to get his game back to the level where he can win more tournaments.

The 29-year-old Spaniard endured another frustrating defeat late Saturday when he lost a marathon semi-final in the ATP Rio de Janeiro Open to 45th-ranked Pablo Cuevas 6-7 (6/8), 7-6 (7/3), 6-4.

It was just the second time since 2005 that Nadal has lost to a player ranked outside the world top 30 on clay. That loss came just a week after he lost in the semi-final of the Argentina Open in three sets to Austria's Dominic Thiem, also on clay.

Nadal had travelled to South America following his first round loss at the Australian Open in a bid to reverse, on his favourite clay-court surface, the form loss that has seen his world ranking slump.

But the latest defeat will cast more doubts

on his ability of once again winning the French Open title in early June, having lost to Novak Djokovic in last year's quarter-finals.

"I lost an opportunity, that's it," said Nadal of his loss to Uruguayan Cuevas.

"I fought until the end. I have to accept it and keep working to try to change the dynamic. That's what's happening today and I have to work hard to change it."

"I didn't win a title, so it wasn't a positive two tournaments. I had my chances in both. I lost in the semi-finals of both tournaments and just have to look forward to Indian Wells."

That tournament, the first of the year's Masters Series events, gets underway in California on March 20 followed by the Miami Masters. Both tournaments are on outdoor hardcourts and Nadal will be hard pushed to match world number one Djokovic, who has already won the Australian Open in dominating fashion. — AFP



RIO DE JANEIRO: Rafael Nadal of Spain returns a shot to Pablo Cuevas of Uruguay during the men's singles semi-final match of the 2016 Rio Open tennis tournament in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on Saturday. — AFP

DJOKOVIC TO FACE ROBREDO IN DUBAI

DUBAI: After taking a three-week vacation from tennis after winning his sixth Australian Open title, Novak Djokovic is ready to get back on court today at the Dubai Tennis Championships.

Having won his first two tournaments of the year - the Qatar Open and his 11th Grand Slam title in Australia - the top-ranked Serb has been focusing on his family.

"I've played a lot of tennis from the beginning of preparation through the finals of the Australian Open, more or less every day," Djokovic said Sunday. "I think it was necessary for me to just cool off a little bit and do something else."

"Thankfully, I'm a father and husband, and that's already a lot of work and a lot of pleasure,"

he said. "And the few weeks (off) felt like it was even more and I'm eager to come back."

Djokovic is a four-time champion in Dubai, but lost the last two years to Roger Federer in the final and semifinals. Federer recently underwent arthroscopic knee surgery and won't be defending his Dubai title this week.

Djokovic will play Spanish veteran Tommy Robredo in the first round. On the other side of the draw, second-seeded Stanislas Wawrinka of Switzerland is returning to Dubai after an eight-year absence.

Wawrinka has only played here twice before - in 2006 and 2008 - and lost in the first round on both occasions. "It's been many years since I played here and I wanted to change things in my

calendar, to feel like I'm going to new tournaments," Wawrinka said.

Wawrinka beat Djokovic on the way to both of his Grand Slams - in the 2015 French Open final and the 2014 Australian Open quarterfinals - but knows the challenge ahead.

"He's dominating the tennis, for sure, and he's playing a different level from the rest of the players," Wawrinka said. "But we've had some tough battles in Grand Slams when I was playing my best tennis. My game, the power I have from the backhand, the baseline, and the forehand, makes me feel like I have a game I can trust to beat him."

Wawrinka plays Sergiy Stakhovsky of Ukraine in the first round tomorrow. — AP

KUWAITI RUNNERS WIN GOLD, SILVER MEDALS IN ASIAN ATHLETICS' CHAMPIONSHIPS



DOHA: Kuwait's Abdulazeez Al-Mandeeil (R) and China's Yufei Hu compete in the men's 60m hurdles event during the seventh Asian Indoor Athletics Championships at the Aspire Academy of Sports in the Qatari capital, Doha, yesterday. — AFP

DOHA: Kuwait runners Abdulazeez Al-Mendil and Yaqoub Al-Yoha bagged gold and silver medals respectively, in the 60-meter hurdles race of the 7th Asian Indoor Athletics' Championships in Doha yesterday.

Al-Mendil clinched first place with a time of 7.60 seconds, setting a new Asian record. Al-Yoha came in second with 7.65 seconds while Chinese Zheung Hong Lin came in third with 7.73 seconds.

In remarks to KUNA, coach of the Kuwait national team Bader Dashti said that the athletes, by virtue of their performance, have now qualified for the World Indoor Athletics Championships, to take place in the United States in March.

Calling it a landmark accomplishment, Dashti noted that Al-Mendil and Al-Yoha put on repeat performances, having previously finished in the same placings in the 2014 edition of the championships in China.

Raising the Kuwaiti flag aloft is the incentive for participating in this tournament, Dashti added. Moreover, Al-Mendil told KUNA that having earned the first and second positions, Kuwait has proved that it could overcome the stiffest of challenges, pointing out that he had set two records in the championships, one of 7.66 seconds in the semi-finals and the other, 7.60 seconds in the finals.

After winning a silver medal, Al-Yoha said that the athletes had gone through intense preparations prior to the championships, which instilled in them the confidence needed to compete at such level.

Al-Mendil and Al-Yoha, along with Majed Al-Zaid, Salah Al-Hadad, Youssef Karam and Ali Al-Sabagha, made up the Kuwaiti contingent at the championships. The three-day sporting event, which kicked off on February 19, featured unprecedented international participation of around 400 athletes from 36 nations. —KUNA

WARRIORS BOUNCE BACK FROM LOSS TO DEFEAT CLIPPERS

LOS ANGELES: Klay Thompson scored 32 points, fellow Splash Brother Stephen Curry added 23 and the Golden State Warriors beat the Los Angeles Clippers 115-112 on Saturday to avoid losing back-to-back games for the first time this season. The Warriors were coming off a 32-point drubbing at Portland a night earlier that snapped their 11-game winning streak. They appeared highly motivated to erase that memory from the opening tip, shooting 56 percent in the first half and twice leading by 15 points in the second quarter. Draymond Green had his NBA-leading 11th triple-double with 18 points, 11 rebounds and 10 assists to help the defending champions improve to 49-5. Jamal Crawford scored 25 points off the bench, Chris Paul added 24 and DeAndre Jordan had 16 points and 21 rebounds for the Clippers. They fell to 19-6 without injured Blake Griffin. Their two earlier losses to the Warriors were by a combined 11 points with Griffin in the lineup.

HEAT 114, WIZARDS 94

Hassan Whiteside had 25 points and 23 rebounds in his return from a one-game suspension to help Miami beat Washington. Whiteside was suspended for throwing an elbow at San Antonio center Boban Marjanovic's head on Feb. 9. It was the 11th time in NBA history that a player has had at least 20 points and 20 rebounds in a game off the bench. It was Whiteside's second 20-20 game in his career. Luol Deng had 27 points a night after scoring 30 points in a victory at Atlanta, and Goran Dragic added a season-high 24 points and had eight assists and seven rebounds. The Heat played without All-Stars Dwyane Wade and Chris Bosh for the second consecutive game. Wade has a sore left knee, and Bosh is out indefinitely because of a

blood clot in his left leg. Bradley Beal led the Wizards with 19 points. Washington played for the third consecutive day and was looking for a rare third win in as many days after beating Utah and Detroit.

BUCKS 117, HAWKS 109, 2OT

Jabari Parker had career highs of 28 points and 13 rebounds, Greg Monroe added 24 points and Milwaukee Bucks outlasted Atlanta in double overtime to end a six-game road skid. Paul Millsap finished with 27 points, and Dennis Schroder had 25 for the Hawks. Atlanta has lost three straight at home for the first time since March 2014. The Bucks overcame the late absence of Giannis Antetokounmpo, who fouled out with 1:11 left in regulation, and held on despite Monroe missing a layup that could've clinched the win in the closing seconds of the first overtime. Milwaukee's Kris Middleton, O.J. Mayo and Michael Carter-Williams each missed one of two free throws in the final seconds of regulation and the first overtime.

KNICKS 103, TIMBERWOLVES 95

Carmelo Anthony had 30 points and 11 rebounds and New York beat Minnesota to snap a seven-game losing streak. Robin Lopez had 26 points and 16 rebounds to give interim coach Kurt Rambis his first victory since taking over for the fired Derek Fisher three games ago. The Knicks outrebounded Minnesota 51-31 and led by 24 points early in the fourth quarter for their first victory since Jan. 29 against Phoenix. Karl-Anthony Towns had 24 points and eight rebounds, and Andrew Wiggins scored 24 points for the Timberwolves. Ricky Rubio had 16 assists, but they dropped their second straight out of the All-Star break after winning three of four going into it. — AP

NBA results/standings

Atlanta 109, Milwaukee 117 (OT); Miami 114, Washington 94; Minnesota 95, New York 103; LA Clippers 112, Golden State 115.

Eastern Conference				Western Conference			
Atlantic Division				Northwest Division			
	W	L	PCT		W	L	PCT
Toronto	35	18	.660	Oklahoma City	40	15	.727
Boston	32	24	.571	Portland	28	27	.509
New York	24	33	.421	Utah	27	27	.500
Brooklyn	15	40	.273	Denver	22	33	.400
Philadelphia	8	46	.148	Minnesota	17	39	.304
Central Division				Pacific Division			
Cleveland	39	14	.736	Golden State	49	5	.907
Indiana	29	25	.537	LA Clippers	36	19	.655
Chicago	28	26	.519	Sacramento	23	31	.426
Detroit	27	28	.491	Phoenix	14	41	.255
Milwaukee	23	33	.411	LA Lakers	11	45	.196
Southeast Division				Southwest Division			
Miami	31	24	.564	San Antonio	46	9	.836
Atlanta	31	26	.544	Memphis	32	22	.593
Charlotte	28	26	.519	Dallas	29	27	.518
Washington	25	29	.463	Houston	28	28	.500
Orlando	24	29	.453	New Orleans	21	33	.389

BATSHUAYI SAVES MARSEILLE BLUSHES, CAEN BEAT RENNES

PARIS: Michy Batshuayi scored five minutes into injury time to rescue a point for Marseille in a 1-1 draw at home to Saint-Etienne yesterday, while Caen edged Rennes 1-0.

OM's Belgian forward Batshuayi had come off the bench 15 minutes from the end and headed home a Romain Alessandrini free-kick with virtually the last touch of the ball.

That was a 13th league goal of the season for Batshuayi, putting him behind only Zlatan Ibrahimovic in the Ligue 1 goalscoring charts.

It was only five minutes from time that St Etienne thought they had scored the potentially winning goal that would have sent them above Nice into third place in Ligue 1 — the final Champions League qualifying spot.

Kevin Monnet-Paquet shot home left-footed from Romain Hamouma's pass. Under-pressure Marseille coach Michel was pleased with his side's performance despite the disappointing result.

"Nothing we saw (on Sunday) was new: we created chances, we were close to scoring, we got back into the match just like against Lille (a 1-1 draw), we fought to the end and there was a lot of courage," he said.

The draw barely helps either side as St Etienne could lose fourth spot to Lyon or Rennes later on Sunday while Marseille are 10th and still five points behind Nice in the

tight race to qualify for Europe's premier club competition.

Asked if he feared for his job, Michel said: "I don't think about that, never. I think about doing my job and going forwards."

Later yesterday Caen ended a three-match losing streak, as a first goal in French football for Burundian midfielder Saidi Ntibazonkiza saw off Rennes.

The 28-year-old has broken into the first team in recent weeks and took his chance with a fine second half finish, moving Caen above their opponents and to within two points of the top three.

For Rennes though the pressure continues to build, they are now lower in the table than they were a month ago when they sacked former manager Philippe Montanier and brought in Roland Courbis.

There was one positive for Courbis as midfielder Yoann Gourcuff made his first start since rejoining the club in the summer, being withdrawn in the 59th minute.

On Saturday, Paris Saint-Germain maintained their 24-point lead at the top with a 4-1 victory over lowly Reims as Ibrahimovic scored a brace. They now need only three more wins and a draw from their final 11 matches to win the Ligue 1 title.

Monaco remain second and determined to delay PSG's inevitable crowning as French champions after a 3-1 win over rock-bottom Troyes sent them eight points clear of Nice, who drew 0-0 at Bordeaux on Friday night. —AFP



MALAGA: Real Madrid's Portuguese forward Cristiano Ronaldo (C) jumps for the ball during the Spanish league football match Malaga CF vs Real Madrid CF at La Rosaleda stadium in Malaga yesterday. — AFP

REAL RUE RONALDO MISSED PENALTY IN MALAGA DRAW

MADRID: Cristiano Ronaldo missed a penalty as Real Madrid's hopes of catching La Liga leaders Barcelona were all but ended with a 1-1 draw at Malaga yesterday.

Madrid remain nine points behind Barca with 13 games to go after Raul Alcantara cancelled out Ronaldo's opener 24 minutes from time. However, Zinedine Zidane's men were left to rue Ronaldo's miss from the spot to make it 2-0 before the break when Carlos Kameni dived to his left to parry the three-time World Player of the Year's effort.

A point moves Real level with Atletico Madrid in second ahead of the Madrid derby next weekend, but Atletico can move to within six points of Barca with victory over Villarreal later on Sunday.

Madrid were without the injured Karim Benzema and Gareth Bale, whilst James Rodriguez was only left on the bench by

Zidane. Jese Rodriguez was handed a start after scoring Real's second in a 2-0 win at Roma in the Champions League in midweek and should have opened the scoring when he shot straight at Kameni when clean through on 17 minutes.

However, the visitors were fortunate not to be behind moments later when Juanpi scuffed his shot with just Keylor Navas to beat and the Costa Rica international made a comfortable save. Ricardo Horta then missed another glorious chance for Malaga when he fired into the side-netting unmarked at the back post.

When the opening goal did arrive it was in controversial circumstances as Ronaldo headed home Toni Kroos's free-kick despite clearly standing in an offside position. There was no doubt about the penalty award two minutes later when Ronaldo was brought down by Weligton.

Yet, the normally lethal Portuguese from the spot was denied by a fine low save by Kameni. Malaga missed another great chance to level before the break as Navas parried Duje Cop's shot into the air and Sergio Ramos got back to clear the looping ball off the line.

Navas then made an incredible stop just after the restart when Nacho turned Juanpi's cross towards his own goal.

Yet, the Madrid stopper was finally beaten when Malaga's two centre-backs combined for the equaliser as Weligton's low cross was coolly slotted home at the back post by Alcantara.

Malaga could even have snatched all three points as Navas was again forced into action by a looping Charles header.

However, for the second time this season Malaga did enough to take a point from Real and almost certainly stretch their run without a league title to four years. — AFP

DORTMUND BEAT LEVERKUSEN IN INTERRUPTED BUNDESLIGA GAME

BERLIN: Borussia Dortmund's 1-0 win at Bayer Leverkusen in the Bundesliga was interrupted for eight minutes yesterday after the home side's coach refused to be sent to the stands.

Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang's 64th-minute goal - his 21st of the season and his 50th in 86 Bundesliga games - was enough for second-placed Dortmund to restore the eight-point gap behind Bayern Munich.

But referee Felix Zwayer sent Roger Schmidt off for complaining vociferously over the positioning of a free-kick in the build up to the goal, when Leverkusen striker Stefan Kiessling lost the ball and fouled Sven Bender. Matthias Ginter took a quick free kick from where the ball rolled to Erik Durm, who crossed for the onrushing Aubameyang to shoot to the unguarded net.

"I was too stubborn, I reacted emotionally. I was sent a signal from 45 meters that I should go to the stands," Schmidt said. "It was definitely a mistake of mine. I didn't think the game would be interrupted. I hurt my team through that."

Zwayer ordered both sides off the pitch when Schmidt made no sign of moving, prompting widespread confusion among players and fans. Zwayer and his officials also walked off, leaving the field vacant for several minutes - until players and officials came back out.

"To interrupt a game like that and to make things so hectic is completely unnecessary," Leverkusen sporting director Rudi Voeller said.

His annoyance was compounded minutes after the restart, when Dortmund defender Sokratis wasn't penalized for blocking Javier "Chicharito" Hernandez's header with his arm in the penalty area.

Schmidt blasted the decision. "Not to give the penalty for handball is crazy," the Leverkusen coach said. "If he sees that he's going to whistle it," Dortmund counterpart Thomas Tuchel agreed. Marco Reus missed a great opportunity to secure the win for Dortmund, before Hernandez shot wide in injury time with the equalizer beckoning. Aubameyang missed the biggest chance of the first half just before the

break when he fired wide with only the goalkeeper to beat after he was set up by Christian Pulisic. The 17-year-old American Pulisic was making his first league start for Dortmund.

"Both teams can do more," Germany coach Joachim Loew said of an uneventful first half. Schalke was to host in-form Stuttgart and Hannover was facing Augsburg in a relegation battle later yesterday. — AP



LEVERKUSEN: Dortmund's goalkeeper Roman Buerki catches the ball during the German Bundesliga soccer match between Bayer Leverkusen and Borussia Dortmund in Leverkusen, Germany, yesterday. — AFP

Sports

KOTC shooting
tourney concludes

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Kuwaiti runners
win gold, silver
medals in Doha

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DE VILLIERS, AMLA LEAD S AFRICA TO ENGLAND ROUT

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LONDON: Manchester City's Argentinian goalkeeper Willy Caballero (R) leaps as Chelsea's Spanish midfielder Pedro (L) goes through but is ruled off-side during the English FA Cup fifth round football match between Chelsea and Manchester City at Stamford Bridge in London yesterday. — AFP

CHELSEA PUNISH PELLEGRINI'S SELECTION GAMBLE

LONDON: Chelsea punished Manuel Pellegrini's controversial decision to field a remarkably inexperienced team as Eden Hazard inspired a 5-1 demolition of Manchester City in the FA Cup fifth round yesterday.

With City due to make the long flight to the Ukraine on Monday ahead of their Champions League last 16 first leg tie at Dynamo Kiev on Wednesday, Pellegrini had pleaded with the FA not to bow to demands from television networks to move the Chelsea game from its original Saturday date. But Pellegrini's request was ignored and, concerned that injury-hit City were in danger of being stretched to breaking point, the Chilean boss prioritised European success and next weekend's League Cup final against Liverpool, admitting that he didn't consider the Stamford Bridge showdown "a real

game". Pellegrini had warned fans they wouldn't get value for money because he would rest stars like Sergio Aguero and Yaya Toure and he was true to his word as he fielded an unrecognisable starting line-up featuring six teenagers, five of whom were making their full debuts.

In contrast, Guus Hiddink, with the luxury of having played in the Champions League already this week, named his strongest available side and it was men against boys as they swept into the quarter-finals thanks to a pair of assists and a goal from Hazard.

Diego Costa put Chelsea ahead and, although David Faupala equalised for the visitors, second half goals from Willian, Gary Cahill, Hazard and Bertrand Traore handed City a third successive defeat.

Pellegrini will face accusations of disrespect-

ing the FA Cup, but he won't care about that if City can take a step towards the Champions League quarter-finals and win the League Cup this week. French forward Faupala was one of City's debutants and the 18-year-old showed no signs of being overawed when he left two defenders trailing in his wake before testing Blues goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois. After a slow start, Chelsea threatened when Pedro's clipped shot bounced to safety off the far post.

INCISIVE

City were competing well but Hiddink's side broke the deadlock in the 35th minute. Cesc Fabregas was the instigator with a deft flick that picked out Hazard's run and the Belgian hooked a fine cross into the six yard box, where Costa dived forward to head past Willy Caballero for

his 13th goal of the season. But City's youngsters showed a composure that belied their lack of experience as they hit back two minutes later. Spanish midfielder Manu Garcia clipped a pass through for Kelechi Iheanacho, who got to the byline before crossing low for Faupala to poke home from close-range.

City's youthful enthusiasm overflowed as they celebrated in front of Chelsea's supporters, some of whom responded by throwing coins in an ugly echo of the incident that saw West Brom's Chris Brunt pelted by his own fans 24 hours earlier.

Hiddink had won all six of his FA Cup ties in his two spells as Chelsea's caretaker, a run that included leading the club to the trophy in 2009. And Chelsea were back on course to extend that run in the 48th minute when Brazil winger

Willian launched an incisive raid, picking out Hazard before racing past City's statuesque defence to meet the Belgian's return pass with an angled finish into the far corner.

Just five minutes later, Chelsea booked their quarter-final place as City were let down by their few senior players.

Fernando only half cleared to the edge of the area, where Cahill's drive was straight at Caballero but still squirmed under the goalkeeper and into the net. Hazard capped one of his few impressive performances this season when he curled a free-kick past Caballero in the 66th minute. Caballero saved Oscar's 74th minute penalty after Martin Demichelis barged into Traore, but Traore completed the rout in the 89th minute when his back header looped in at the far post. — AFP

HAMMERS DOWN BLACKBURN 5-1

LONDON: Nigeria's Emmanuel Emenike and France's Dimitri Payet both scored twice as West Ham came from a goal behind to book their place in the FA Cup quarter-finals with a 5-1 win at second-tier strugglers Blackburn Rovers yesterday. Rovers took the lead through Ben Marshall in the 20th minute but it only took visitors West Ham six minutes to draw level courtesy of Victor Moses's equaliser.

And before half-time West Ham, bidding to reach their first FA Cup final since losing the 2006 showpiece match to Liverpool, were in front through Payet.

Blackburn were reduced to 10 men early in the second half when Chris Taylor was sent off for a second bookable offence. Emenike secured victory for the Hammers by making it 3-1 in the 64th minute at Ewood Park before scoring his second five minutes from time. The forward, on loan from Turkish side Fenerbahce, twice almost had a hat-trick on his first West Ham start, a shot coming back off the post before another effort was ruled out for offside in stoppage time. But in the second minute of added-on time, the influential Payet weaved his way through the Rovers' defence before shooting home to make it 5-1. Blackburn, faltering towards the bottom of the Championship, went ahead when, after Elliot Bennett's corner was cleared, full-back Marshall cut back on his left foot and found the bottom corner with a well-struck shot. But it did not take long for West Ham to draw level when Nigeria winger Victor Moses let fly from 20 yards out as the Rovers defence backed off.

And in the 36th minute the Hammers took the lead when French playmaker Payet's 25-yard curling free-kick went up and over Blackburn's defensive wall before beating the outstretched right hand of Rovers goalkeeper Jason Steele. At 2-1 the match was still in the balance, but Emenike put the tie beyond Rovers' reach when, after Steele had denied Michail Antonio, Moses fed Cheikhou Kouyate, whose ball across the box gave the striker an easy close-range finish. West Ham had to play the final 15 minutes a man down after Mali midfielder Kouyate was shown a straight red card for a foul just outside the box on Adam Henley.

But it made little difference, Emenike scoring his second goal and West Ham's fourth five minutes from time after more good work by Payet. — AFP

PALACE KNOCK SPURS OUT OF FA CUP

LONDON: A rare goal by Martin Kelly earned Crystal Palace a 1-0 win away to Tottenham Hotspur yesterday and a place in the FA Cup quarter-finals.

The South Londoners are now hoping to reach their first FA Cup final since 1990, when they were beaten by Manchester United in a replay.

Kelly's goal—his first since netting for Liverpool at Chelsea in November 2011 — also ended Tottenham's hopes of a league and domestic cup double.

Mauricio Pochettino's side are currently second in the Premier League but whatever happens now they will not be emulating Spurs' celebrated Double-winning squad of 1961. Palace manager Alan Pardew will be hoping it can be third time lucky for him in the FA Cup as he played for Palace in the 1990 final and was the West Ham manager when they lost to Liverpool in the 2006 showpiece match.

The White Hart Lane return of former Tottenham man Emmanuel Adebayor turned out to be disappointing.

The Togo striker, having sauntered out behind his Palace team-mates, was booed by many home fans before kick-off and throughout the game but did not look like scoring. North London side Tottenham almost scored in the third minute when Dele Alli's header at the back post from a corner was blocked on the line by Yohan Cabaye and Josh Onomah nodded the rebound over.

Palace felt they should have had a penalty when Jordan Mutch's volley hit Nabil Bentaleb on an arm but referee Craig Pawson disagreed.

Kyle Walker and then Adebayor were hurt as tackles began to fly in from both



LONDON: Crystal Palace's English striker Connor Wickham vies with Tottenham Hotspur's English defender Danny Rose (L) during the FA cup fifth round football match between Tottenham Hotspur and Crystal Palace at White Hart Lane in London yesterday. Crystal Palace won the game 1-0. — AFP

sides. Both men recovered with Walker then sending a header over Michel Vorm, his own goalkeeper, who was just able to claw it away before it crossed the line.

The free-kick count continued to mount, with Palace conceding most of them. The

visitors almost took the lead when Scott Dann took down a high ball and played Joe Ledley in but Vorm dived bravely at the Welshman's feet to save.

Spurs' reply was another near miss from Alli, who saw his low shot hit the far post,

rebound across the goal on to the other upright and be cleared before a team-mate could pounce. Onomah flashed a snapshot across goal but Spurs continued to look vulnerable at the other end. A chance finally came Adebayor's way but Eric Dier was across swiftly to block.

POWERFUL SHOT

Palace goalkeeper Wayne Hennessey had to make a diving save to keep out Harry Kane's long-range free-kick and the visitors took the lead in stoppage-time through Kelly.

Wilfried Zaha teed up the defender on the right of the box and his drive was too powerful for Vorm at his near post.

Spurs replaced Mousa Dembele with Christian Eriksen at the break and it wasn't long before Hennessey had to dive to deny Kane once more. It then needed Kelly's intervention on the line to stop Onomah converting Kane's flick across goal.

Alli, having barged Cabaye into advertising hoardings to send tempers flaring again, fired just wide from 25 yards as Spurs pressed for an equaliser. Eriksen was next to have a go but Hennessey saved.

Cabaye was booked for tripping Danny Rose before Palace sent on fit-again winger Yannick Bolasie in place of Adebayor, who had only occasionally been in the game.

Connor Wickham went on a dangerous run that saw his shot blocked as Palace pressed for a clinching second goal.

Wickham did convert Bolasie's cross with four minutes remaining but the goal was ruled out for offside. Kane saw a header blocked by a scrum of Palace bodies in front of their goal seconds before referee Pawson blew for time. — AFP

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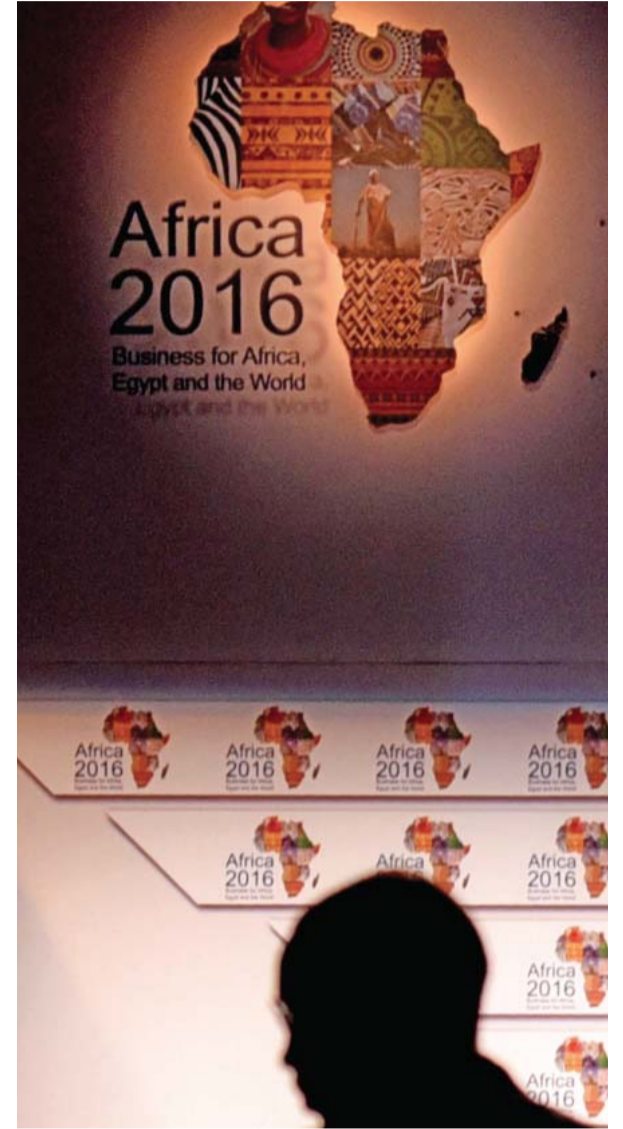


Oxford Business Group
signs MoU with KDIPA

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SHARM EL-SHEIKH: Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry speaks to the media during the "Africa 2016" conference in the Red Sea resort of Sharm El-Sheikh yesterday. More than 1,200 delegates including some heads of state are attending talks to sign business agreements during the two-day summit, aimed at attracting private sector investment. (Right) A man attends the "Africa 2016" conference. — AFP



GULF MARKETS LOSE STEAM AS OPTIMISM FADES

BUHARI TO DISCUSS OIL PRICE STABILITY WITH SAUDI KING

DUBAI: Most Gulf stock markets edged down yesterday after oil prices pulled back on Friday, as optimism faded over a proposed deal among crude producers to cap output. A rise in shares of Commercial International Bank buoyed Egypt's bourse.

Officials in some oil producing nations are still talking up the deal. Russia's energy minister said on Saturday consultations should be concluded by March 1, so there could be further surges in oil and equities prices before that date.

Meanwhile, Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari will fly to Saudi Arabia to discuss with King Salman ways to stabilise crude oil prices, the presidency said in a statement yesterday. Buhari will also fly to Doha after his visit to the kingdom to discuss oil price stability with Qatar's ruler, the statement said.

"Ongoing efforts by Nigeria and other

members of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries to achieve greater stability in the price of crude oil exports are expected to be high on the agenda of discussions," the presidency said before the trip later this week.

Nigeria's oil minister, Emmanuel Ibe Kachikwu, met his Qatari counterpart Mohammed Al-Sada yesterday, the Qatari Oil Ministry said in a statement. Qatar holds the current OPEC presidency.

Nigeria has been suffering from a slump in oil prices eroding vital oil revenues and whacking its currency. Russia, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Venezuela said last week after talks in Doha that they were ready to freeze production at January levels if other producers do the same. Iran welcomed the deal but stopped short of saying it would itself freeze production at January levels and its deputy oil minister said on Saturday it would increase production soon. Buhari would also meet businessmen from

Saudi Arabia and Qatar to invest in Africa's top oil producer, the statement said.

Brent crude pulled back 3.7 percent on Friday to \$33.01 a barrel, showing expectations among many traders that the deal - if it goes ahead - will do little or nothing to reduce massive oil supplies already in the market. The Saudi stock index, which rose 3.9 percent last week, fell back 0.1 percent on Sunday, though trading remained active. Saudi Basic Industries slipped 0.7 percent.

Some second-tier stocks continued to attract eager buying by local retail investors, however, with Middle East Paper surging its 10 percent daily limit and Al Taysar Travel climbing 4.0 percent.

The Dubai stock index was almost flat. Real estate heavyweight Emaar Properties lost 0.8 percent. But construction firm Arabtec surged 8.3 percent after it reported a net loss of 360 million dirhams (\$98.02 million) for the three

months to Dec. 31, compared with a loss of 94.4 million dirhams a year earlier.

An analyst at SICO Bahrain had forecast Arabtec would make a quarterly net loss of 123.6 million dirhams in the latest quarter. However, investors may have been encouraged by the fact that the firm's loss narrowed sharply from a 944.8 million dirham shortfall in the third quarter of 2015.

GFH Financial, the most heavily traded stock, surged 6.9 percent. It has been rising sharply since Abu Dhabi Financial Group's capital markets arm, Integrated Capital, said on Wednesday it had increased its stake in GFH to 10 percent. Previously its stake was 7.4 percent. Qatar fell 0.6 percent as petrochemicals and metals producer Industries Qatar slid 1.6 percent. But Qatar Gas Transport Co (Nakilat) rose 0.4 percent after posting a 12.1 percent rise in fourth-quarter net profit to 226 million riyals (\$62 million) - although that was lower

than the 271.1 million riyals which QNB Financial Services had forecast. Qatari Investors Group, which plunged last week after it said it planned to delist from the market, jumped its 10 percent daily limit after it said it would hold an extraordinary shareholders meeting on March 6 to discuss the plan.

In Kuwait, mobile communications operator Ooredoo Kuwait jumped 9.4 percent after it raised its dividend for 2015 despite swinging to a fourth-quarter net loss. Egypt's stock index gained 1.1 percent as Commercial International Bank added 1.9 percent, while Egyptian Iron & Steel surged 10 percent. But total trading volume in the market was modest. Beltone Financial also surged 10 percent. It has more than doubled in the past eight trading days on expectations that its new owner, Orascom Telecom Media and Technology, will build it into a financial powerhouse. — Reuters

ITALY CLOUDS OVERSHADOW RENZI'S SECOND ANNIVERSARY

ROME: Bullish and boyish in equal measure, Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi is not shy about blowing his own trumpet. To mark his second anniversary as premier, which falls yesterday, the Twitter-loving 41-year-old has posted a slideshow on his Facebook page vaunting his achievements since seizing power in an internal putsch inside his centre-left Democratic Party (PD).

As Renzi sees it and tells it, an Italy that was on the ropes when he took office is now bulking up economically, feeling better about itself and starting to punch its weight on the European and international stage. Few observers would contest that the country is in better shape now than it was two years ago. What they don't agree on is how much of the credit Renzi, a self-styled reforming "bulldozer," can take for that. Also up for debate is how much longer the brighter days will last as the related problems of mass migrant arrivals from Libya and the chronic instability of Rome's former colony loom on the horizon.

Jobs expansion

The economy has pulled out of recession on Renzi's watch and unemployment has fallen. According to the premier, the 764,000 permanent new jobs created last year were proof labour market reforms enshrined in his 2014 Jobs Act are bearing fruit. But growth slowed to a virtual standstill in the last quarter of 2015 and skeptics say cheap money, cheap oil and a weak euro have been bigger factors in the jobs improvement.

Whatever the truth, the slowdown is threatening to derail the government's delicate balancing act between pro-growth tax cuts and investment and its commitment to trimming the country's 2.2 trillion euro debt. That in turn has set the stage for an intensification of the skirmishes with Brussels and Italy's EU partners that have become an increasingly prominent feature of Renzi's

administration and, some say, could cost Rome influence not gain it.

Renzi insists he is a Euro enthusiast but he often sounds like a skeptic. He has tussled with France over temporary border closures linked to migrant flows, Germany over a major gas pipeline project and fought the European Commission over the consolidation of bad debts by Italy's banks as well as budget issues.

Migrant crisis deepening

None of those problems are going away anytime soon. On top of the gloomy macro-economic outlook, there is a perception that Italy's banks are vulnerable to a new financial crisis. Austria's intention to temporarily close its borders has intensified fears Italy could soon be forced to permanently accommodate a much bigger proportion of the migrants who have been arriving in Italy at a rate of more than 3,000 people a week for over two years now. And that is not the biggest Libya headache Renzi faces. Last week's US airstrikes against Islamic State targets in Libya again highlighted concern over the threat of the extremist group using the lawless north African state as a launchpad for attacks on Europe with Italy on the front-line. Rome has made plans to lead a stabilization force into Libya but for that to happen Libya must first form a government with the authority to ask for security help - still a remote prospect at the moment.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel initially greeted Renzi as a welcome new broom in the eurozone's third largest economy. But officials say her patience is beginning to wear thin. "Renzi is always playing his anti-Merkel theatre," an EU diplomat said. "It's just theatre, but it gets in the way of policy at times." "In the old days when their economy was struggling the country could just frustrate. Now they have to reform, that is frustrating and they respond with theatre." —AFP

INCOME GAP, WALL STREET RULES BIG FOR DEMOCRATS

LAS VEGAS: Most Democrats consider income inequality a very important issue and half of them think tougher regulations of the financial markets imposed after the 2008 financial crisis did not go far enough, according to a poll released as Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders enter a crucial stretch for the party's nomination.

The poll conducted by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research suggested support within the party for Sanders' fiery calls to increase regulations on Wall Street banks and address wide gaps between the nation's wealthy and poor. Most Democrats - and Republicans - support increasing the federal minimum wage, although they favor more incremental steps backed by Clinton, the poll found.

Clinton and Sanders are vying for support in Nevada, which was among the hardest-hit states during the economic downturn and holds its Democratic caucuses Saturday. The Clinton-Sanders contest, and Republican caucuses in the state three days later, could offer a snapshot of how the presidential field is being judged against the backdrop of more economic anxiety. The poll found that reducing income inequality, a message championed by Sanders, resonates deeply with Democrats. More than three-quarters of them in the poll say reducing the gap between rich and poor is very or extremely important for the next president to address. And 8 in 10 Democrats, but just 3 in 10 Republicans, say the government has some responsibility to reduce those income differences.

Democrats were even more likely to say that reducing poverty is very important for the next president (86 percent) than that reducing the gap between rich and poor is that important (77 percent). Among all Americans, 72 percent say cutting poverty is very important, while 57 percent say reducing



NEW YORK: The American flag flies above the Wall Street entrance to the New York Stock Exchange. — AP

the gap between rich and poor is.

Las Vegas resident Bernadette Davila, 50, who accompanied her 18-year-old son, Dante Ortiz, as he registered to vote at a Sanders office, said she wanted to see a woman in the White House, but also likes Sanders' ideas about the economy.

"I know we all struggle," Davila said. "I work in the school district helping teachers and I just have six hours a day, you know? And I see how hard these families work." She spoke of the richest 1 percent constantly cited by Sanders and said: "We really work and we have less." The poll offered good news for both Clinton and Sanders. Half of Democrats say government regulation of financial institutions and markets put in place after the 2008 financial crisis didn't go far enough, an approach in sync with Sanders' calls for more

vigorous regulations. An additional 35 percent said the rules were about right, and 15 percent said they went too far. More than two-thirds of Democrats call regulating financial markets a very important issue.

The poll found widespread support for increasing the federal minimum wage of \$7.25 an hour but offered mixed results about how high it should go. Seven in 10 Americans favor increasing the minimum wage, but only half consider it an important issue. Seven in 10 say increasing wages to keep up with the cost of living is very important.

Among all Americans, slightly over half favor increasing the minimum wage to \$12 an hour, in keeping with a Senate Democratic proposal backed by Clinton, while just a third support increasing it to \$15 an hour, which Sanders has advocated. —AP

NILKAMAL LTD



KUWAIT: Indian Ambassador Sunil Jain and other officials at the India Pavilion of the Kuwait International Trade Fair at Mishref Fair Ground yesterday.



INDIAN EXPORTERS SHOWCASE THEIR METTLE KUWAIT INTERNATIONAL TRADE FAIR

KUWAIT: The Federation of Indian Export Organizations (FIEO), New Delhi with the support of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India, New Delhi and in association with the Embassy of India, Kuwait is organizing an "India Pavilion" at 'The Kuwait International Trade Fair', an International

Trade Exhibition organized by the Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Kuwait, at the Kuwait International Fair Ground (Hall 6), Mishref, Kuwait from 21-27 February 2016. Sunil Jain, Ambassador of India to Kuwait will inaugurate the India Pavilion on 21 February 2016.

The "India Pavilion" at 'The Kuwait International Trade Fair' would provide an excellent platform for networking and one-to-one business meetings with potential customers. 11 leading companies from India are participating in the "India Pavilion". These companies are showcasing a wide range of products

including marble handicrafts, brass handicrafts, wood handicrafts, paintings, handicrafts products, imitation jewellery, plastic molded furniture (chairs; tables, cabinet, chests, kids furniture), zari work table covers, purses, cosmetics, decorative, fancy items, batik, block print & stitching on sari, salwar kurti, clothing,

shawls, scarves, stoles, ladies woven embroidery tops, dresses, skirts, stoles, garments, home furnishings, etc. The event is open to the public from 9.30 am to 1 pm and from 4.30 pm to 9.30 pm on all days of the Fair except on Friday, 26 February 2016, the timings will be from 4:30 pm to 10 pm.

BAHRAIN BATELCO CANCELS PLANS TO SELL JORDAN'S UMNIAH

MANAMA: Bahrain's Batelco has cancelled plans to sell Jordanian telecom operator Umniah, the former monopoly's chief executive told Reuters, citing market conditions as it instead aims to make acquisitions itself. In January, Batelco revealed it had received non-binding bids for Umniah, which accounted for a fifth of the parent's 2015 revenue and in which it holds a 96 percent stake.

"We're going to terminate the sale process," said group CEO Ihab Hinnawi. "It's not an optimal time to sell, it's an optimal time to buy. Prices are reducing, the appetite of so many big players is declining and many are over-leveraged. "We have a healthy balance sheet ... we shouldn't let go of an asset that has added a lot of value." Batelco operates in 14 markets from the Falkland Islands to the

Maldives after it expanded abroad to offset stiffening domestic competition.

Hinnawi, Umniah's former chief executive before becoming permanent group CEO in January, said Batelco's priorities were to cut costs, increase efficiency, assess potential new business areas and assess existing assets. He wants to expand into smart home services, mobile money, mobile health, mobile television and cloud services. Batelco will buy companies, forge partnerships or go in-house to offer these.

Hinnawi predicted so-called adjacent services will provide about 15 percent of revenue in 2019-2020, up from 5-8 percent currently. Batelco had cash and bank balances of 160 million dinars (\$424.29 million) at the end of 2015, which could be used for acquisitions, potentially another telecom operator. "We have many options. One is to expand. We shouldn't retain much cash, be it through debt settlement or growth transactions," Hinnawi said. "There are a couple of potential target companies that we're looking at."

Domestic revenue fell 6 percent to 154 million dinars in 2015, although profit was near flat at 37.3 million dinars. This was two-thirds of the group's total. Batelco is expanding its domestic fibre broadband network, which could be its revenue driver in Bahrain, Hinnawi said. This would help lift capital expenditure above 20 percent of revenue in 2016, although the longer-term average would be about 15 percent.

Yemeni unit Sabafon's subscriber base fell by a fifth last year as the country's civil war escalated. Hinnawi ruled out selling Batelco's 27 percent stake, citing Yemen's relatively large population which can only access 2G networks. "There are huge opportunities and we may think to up our stake," said Hinnawi. — Reuters

GM COULD CANCEL \$1.6BN INVESTMENT IN BRAZIL

SAO PAULO: General Motors Co will reconsider plans for new investment in Brazil if the economic and political situation does not improve, the company's president Dan Ammann said in an interview published yesterday. Brazil was until recently one of the world's five biggest auto markets, but it has sunk into the worst recession in 25 years and business confidence has been undermined by political uncertainty and a bid to impeach President Dilma Rousseff.

"I hope to see political and economic advances in the next six to 12 months, which would allow us to stick to our investment plan," Ammann told the Estado de S.Paulo newspaper.

Otherwise, GM would "re-evaluate," he said. GM announced last year that it plans to invest 6.5 billion reais (\$1.62 billion) in new products and technology in Brazil through to 2019. But recession has hit the auto sector badly. Production of cars and trucks dropped 29.3 percent in January from a year earlier, the lowest for the month since 2003, and sales fell 38.8 percent, the lowest monthly total in almost nine years, according to the national

automakers association Anfavea. Despite the severe downturn, Brazil remains a major base of operations for Fiat Chrysler Automobiles NV, Volkswagen AG, Ford Motor Co and GM. Barry Engle, GM president for South America, said in the same interview that Brazil needs changes in fiscal policy and reforms to its tax, labor and regulatory laws because it is "terribly uncompetitive." A third of the Brazilian auto industry's nearly 130,000 workers are on some kind of furlough, as automakers struggle to cut capacity without resorting to more costly layoffs. Ammann said it was too early to say whether GM will close any of its five plants in Brazil, two of which make components for vehicles produced at the other three.

GM continues to view Brazil as a market with great potential in the long run, but "a big change" is needed to reach that potential, Ammann said. "The important question is to know when we will see the stability that allows us to continue investing. We are worried because the environment is unstable and the outlook is uncertain for the next few years," he said. — Reuters

ARABTEC POSTS \$627 MILLION LOSS

DUBAI: The Dubai construction company that helped build the city's record-breaking Burj Khalifa and many other buildings in the United Arab Emirates says it lost more than \$600 million last year as building slows amid a slump in oil prices.

Arabtec Holding's preliminary results released yesterday show a loss of 2.3 billion dirhams (\$626.7 million) in 2015. That compares with a profit of 215 million dirhams

a year earlier. Sales fell 12 percent to 7.3 billion dirhams. Arabtec says results were hurt by "the continuing difficult environment ... and the challenging economic backdrop," as well as several "poorly performing projects."

Backed by Abu Dhabi's state-run Aabar Investments, the company has cut costs following the abrupt departure of its then-CEO in 2014. It says it plans further cuts this year. — AP

GOLD PRICE STABLE ABOVE \$1,230: SABAEEK AL-KUWAIT

KUWAIT: Gold prices were stable above \$1,230 per ounce last week, according to Sabaek Al-Kuwait company. In a report released yesterday, the company said that the recent economic statements in international markets did not affect the rise in gold prices, as investors are seeking a safe haven and a guaranteed source of liquidity amidst the unstable economic conditions. It added that Gold ended last week's session at \$1,231 per ounce in New York Mercantile Exchange (NYMEX), with a difference of \$19 compared to the prices at the opening session. The company meanwhile, expected the price to reach \$1,249 and \$1,269 in the upcoming days.

As for silver, the report noted that it has also remained stable at over \$15.4 per ounce, expecting the price of one ounce to reach \$16, as demands on the metal are rising in industrial markets and manufactured silver markets. Meanwhile, other precious metals were affected by weak demands, said the report. Palladium dropped \$19 reaching \$500 per ounce, while platinum dropped one dollar reaching USD 946 per ounce upon settlement, it added.

As for the local markets, the company said performance was slow as it was affected by the drop in oil prices and currency rates. However, there was a rise in buying on gold ore, manufactured gold and gold bars amidst a strong rise in prices, where one kilo of gold reached KD 11,800. — KUNA

News

in brief

US dollar stable at 0.298 against Kuwaiti dinar

KUWAIT: The US dollar rate yesterday remained stable against the Kuwaiti dinar exchanging at KD 0.298 where as the euro stood at KD 0.332, compared to Thursday's rates, the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) said yesterday. The CBK said in the daily bulletin on its website that the sterling pound went up to KD 0.430, while the Swiss franc stabilized at KD 0.301, while the Japanese yen remained at KD 0.002.

Loan portfolio amounts to KD 5.3 billion: KCB

KUWAIT: The value of loan portfolio issued by the Credit Bank of Kuwait (KCB) amounted to KD 5.3 billion, and the bank does not have any bad debts, said Director General of Kuwait Credit Bank Salah Al-Mudhaf yesterday. Al-Mudhaf said in an interview with Arabic-language Kuwaiti daily newspaper "Al-Anbaa" that the bank is keen on the continuity and sustainability of providing mortgage loans to Kuwaiti citizen, especially with the increasing number of residential units distributed by the Public Authority for Housing Welfare. He added that providing residential units for Kuwaiti families that commensurate with the current value of the loan need a profound study, especially with the increasing prices of the housing units.

EXCHANGE RATES

AL-MUZAINI EXCHANGE CO.

ASIAN COUNTRIES

Table with 2 columns: Currency, Rate. Includes Japanese Yen, Indian Rupee, Pakistani Rupee, Sri Lankan Rupee, Nepali Rupee, Singapore Dollar, Hongkong Dollar, Bangladesh Taka, Philippine Peso, Thai Baht.

GCC COUNTRIES

Table with 2 columns: Currency, Rate. Includes Saudi Riyal, Qatari Riyal, Omani Riyal, Bahraini Dinar, UAE Dirham.

ARAB COUNTRIES

Table with 2 columns: Currency, Rate. Includes Egyptian Pound - Cash, Egyptian Pound - Transfer, Yemen Riyal/for 1000, Tunisian Dinar, Jordanian Dinar, Lebanese Lira/for 1000, Syrian Lira, Morocco Dirham.

EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES

Table with 2 columns: Currency, Rate. Includes US Dollar Transfer, Euro, Sterling Pound, Canadian dollar, Turkish lira, Swiss Franc, Australian Dollar, US Dollar Buying.

Table with 2 columns: Weight, Gold Rate. Includes 20 Gram, 10 Gram, 5 Gram.

UAE EXCHANGE CENTRE WLL

CURRENCIES

Table with 2 columns: Currency, Telex Transfer per 1000. Includes Australian Dollar, Canadian Dollar, Swiss Franc, Euro, US Dollar, Sterling Pound, Japanese Yen, Bangladesh Taka, Indian Rupee, Sri Lankan Rupee, Nepali Rupee, Pakistani Rupee, UAE Dirhams, Bahraini Dinar, Egyptian Pound, Jordanian Dinar, Omani Riyal, Qatari Riyal, Saudi Riyal.

DOLLARCO EXCHANGE CO. LTD

Rate for Transfer

Table with 2 columns: Currency, Selling Rate. Includes US Dollar, Canadian Dollar, Sterling Pound, Euro, Swiss Frank, Bahrain Dinar, UAE Dirhams, Qatari Riyals.

Table with 2 columns: Currency, Rate. Includes Saudi Riyals, Jordanian Dinar, Egyptian Pound, Sri Lankan Rupees, Indian Rupees, Pakistani Rupees, Bangladesh Taka, Philippines Peso, Cyprus pound, Japanese Yen, Syrian Pound, Nepalese Rupees, Malaysian Ringgit, Chinese Yuan Renminbi, Thai Bhat, Turkish Lira.

BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY

Table with 3 columns: Currency, Buy, Sell. Includes British Pound, Czech Korune, Danish Krone, Euro, Norwegian Krone, Romanian Leu, Slovakia, Swedish Krona, Swiss Franc, Turkish Lira.

Table with 3 columns: Currency, Buy, Sell. Includes Australian Dollar, New Zealand Dollar, Canadian Dollar, US Dollars.

Table with 3 columns: Currency, Rate. Includes US Dollars Mint, Bangladesh Taka, Chinese Yuan, Hong Kong Dollar, Indian Rupee, Indonesian Rupiah, Japanese Yen, Kenyan Shilling, Korean Won, Malaysian Ringgit, Nepalese Rupee, Pakistan Rupee, Philippine Peso, Sierra Leone, Singapore Dollar, South African Rand, Sri Lankan Rupee, Taiwan, Thai Baht.

Asia

Table with 3 columns: Currency, Rate. Includes Bahraini Dinar, Egyptian Pound, Iranian Riyal, Iraqi Dinar, Jordanian Dinar, Kuwaiti Dinar, Lebanese Pound, Moroccan Dirhams, Nigerian Naira, Omani Riyal, Qatar Riyal, Saudi Riyal, Syrian Pound, Tunisian Dinar, Turkish Lira, UAE Dirhams, Yemeni Riyal.

Arab



THE 2016 HONDA ACCORD COUPE

HONDA ALGHANIM LAUNCHES FIRST CAR IN REGION WITH HONDA SENSING TECHNOLOGY

KUWAIT: Honda Alghanim announced the launch of 2016 Honda Accord Coupe. Available at both Honda Showrooms in Shuwaikh and Al-Rai, the ninth generation Honda Accord Coupe is the first in the region to boast of the Advanced Safety Technology namely 'Honda Sensing'. This advanced safety feature has evolved e-drive assist technologies to provide utmost safety and security to all passengers. Accord Coupe features a brand new shape which primarily focuses on agility and sportiness.

Exterior

The Accord Coupe new dynamic shape which features sportier, more sophisticated and expressive styling cues including restyled front and rear bumper fascia, a new grille, bold and new tail light designs as well as new design alloy wheels for all grades. The Accord Coupe also features expanded use of LED lighting - new design LED headlights for 3.5L V6 grades, LED pipe guide daytime running lights (DRLs) as well as LED pipe guide tail-lights for all grades, and LED Front Fog Lights to help in low visibility situations for all grades.

Interior

The Accord Coupe's interior is a fusion of advanced sport design and sophistication in the same breath with an advanced, intuitive and futuristic look and feel. It has a spacious cabin with fabric in base grade and leather in 3.5L V6 grades. In terms of technology, few highlights of Accord Coupe interior in all grades are the hi-tech 8-inch TFT Intelligent Multi-Information Display (i-MID) screen providing all assistance at a touch, premium audio and also 'Remote Engine Start' a very significant feature that enables the drivers to start their vehicles in advance, thereby activating the climate control system before they get into the vehicle. The 3.5L V6 grades in

addition to the above mentioned features has Navigation. For air conditioning, we have Dual Zone A/C in the base grade and i-Dual Zone A/C in the 3.5L V6 grades which coupled with controlled noise, vibration and harshness (NVH) gives the cabin a quiet feel.

Power Train

Two gasoline engines with Earth Dreams Technology(tm) are available

2.4L EX grade and a 13.4 (km/l) in the 3.5L V6 grades.

Body and Safety

The Accord Coupe boasts of advanced technology available in GCC namely 'Honda Sensing(tm)'. This new suite of driver-assistive technologies helps driver sense things which might be missed while driving. In some cases, they can even help in avoiding a

collision or mitigate its severity. This feature is only available in top grade. The Honda Sensing(tm) features consist of the below:

1. Adaptive Cruise Control (ACC): Adaptive Cruise Control (ACC) extends existing cruise control system to include millimeter-wave radar and camera monitors the distance between your vehicle and vehicle

ahead. It helps the driver maintain a constant following distance eliminating manual acceleration/deceleration.

2. Lane Keeping Assist System (LKAS): Available Lane Keeping Assist System (LKAS) is engineered to gently correct steering when driver begins to leave detected lane without signaling, applying torque progressively to the steering to help guide driver back to center of lane. It helps in reducing

mines a collision to be unavoidable.

4. Road Departure Mitigation (RDM) System: A system specifically designed to alert driver with the help of signals and a rapidly vibrating steering wheel that the car is drifting too close to the side of the driveway without any turn signal activated. This system also uses torque and braking to keep car in the detected lane, when it detects the car continuously leaving

the parking space on the MID and rear view camera. The other Honda active-safety features such as Vehicle Stability Assist (VSA) with Traction Control Systems (TCS), Anti-Lock Brake Systems (ABS), Electronic Brake Distributor (EBD) and Hill Start Assist (HSA). In addition the Accord Coupe utilizes Honda's Advanced Compatibility Engineering (ACE) body structure technology to enhance occupant protection and crash compatibility.

The Accord Coupe also has received the highest available crash safety ratings and a 5 -Star Overall Vehicle Score from NHTSA and a similar rating of TOP SAFETY PICK+ from the IIHS (when equipped with CMB-STM) in the United States of America.

Grade and Color Availability

The 2016 Accord Coupe comes in three grades with the introduction of the new 3.5L V6 with Honda Sensing and the other grades namely the 2.4L EX and the 3.5L V6 grades. The Accord Coupe will be available in the below exterior colors

1. White Orchid Pearl
2. Lunar Silver Metallic
3. Modern Steel Metallic
4. Deep Blue Opal Metallic
5. Crystal Black Pearl
6. San Marino Red

All come in beige interior colors with the option of fabric in the base grade and leather in the remaining two grades

Alghanim Motors, the exclusive distributor of Honda automobiles, motorcycles, power products, and marine products in Kuwait, is committed to providing customers with flexible payment solutions and efficient and cost-effective services. The waiting lounge offers entertainment and comfort for customers with gaming consoles, digital satellite TV, free wireless internet and relaxing massage chairs.



on 2016 Accord Coupe. These include a 2.4-liter 4-cylinder engine with CVT and a 3.5-liter V6 engine with i-VTEC + VCM functions coupled to a 6-speed automatic transmission. The L4 engine generates 185-horsepower @ 6400rpm and the V6 model 3.5-liter engine delivers a 276-horsepower@ 6200 rpm. The fuel consumption of the Accord Coupe is 16.4 (km/l) for the

collision or mitigate its severity. This feature is only available in top grade. The Honda Sensing(tm) features consist of the below:

1. Adaptive Cruise Control (ACC): Adaptive Cruise Control (ACC) extends existing cruise control system to include millimeter-wave radar and camera monitors the distance between your vehicle and vehicle

driver fatigue.

3. Collision Mitigation Braking System™ (CMBSTM): Collision Mitigation Braking System (CMBSTM) is a Honda safety feature designed to help reduce likelihood of a potential collision by alerting the driver. It can also take steps to help reduce severity of an impact by automatically applying brake pressure if the system deter-

the roadway.

Also featured in the 3.5L V6 grades is the Honda LaneWatch feature which uses a camera located below the passenger side window to display an expanded rear view of the passenger side road way on the Intelligent Multi Info Display (i-MID). The display can show cars up to two lanes. The rear parking sensors, standard in all grades,

VIVA LAUNCHES EXCLUSIVE UNLIMITED SURFON PACKAGE IN UAE FOR KD7

KUWAIT: VIVA, Kuwait's fastest-growing and most developed telecom operator, launched for the first time an exclusive unlimited Surfion package in UAE, for all VIVA's postpaid and prepaid customers.



This new package allows VIVA's customers to enjoy unlimited surfing in all GCC countries (UAE including), in addition to Jordan, for only KD7 for 14 days or KD14 for 30 days.

Abdulrazzaq Bader Al-Essa, Director of Corporate Communications Division at VIVA, said: "Fulfilling is one of VIVA's values that we emphasize on to meet our customers' expectations, therefore we launched this

exclusive package to offer them unlimited Surfion in the whole GCC countries, to prove our leadership in the telecom arena, and our ability to create innovative products and services."

To activate this new Surfion package, send 4 to 102, and for further information please visit one of the 70 VIVA's branches, or the VIVA website at www.viva.com.kw, or call VIVA's 24 hour call center on 102.

VIVA is the fastest-growing telecom operator in Kuwait. Launched in December 2008, VIVA makes things possible for its customers by transforming communication, information and entertainment experiences. The company has rapidly established an unrivalled position in the market through its customer centric approach. VIVA's quest is to be the mobile brand of choice in Kuwait by being transparent, engaging, energetic and fulfilling. VIVA continues to take a considerable share of the market by offering an innovative range of best value products, services and content propositions; a state of the art, nationwide network and world-class service. VIVA offers internet speeds of more than 100 Mbps, due to the implementation of the most advanced fourth generation (4G LTE) network in Kuwait resulting in superior coverage, performance and reliability.

OXFORD BUSINESS GROUP SIGNS MOU WITH KDIPA

MAJOR PROJECTS TO TAKE CENTRE-STAGE IN 2016 REPORT

KUWAIT: Oxford Business Group (OBG), a global publishing firm, has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority (KDIPA) for its forthcoming report on the country. Under this MOU, OBG will continue to collaborate with KDIPA to facilitate interviews and access research material for the compilation of The Report: Kuwait 2016.

The Report: Kuwait 2016 will highlight Kuwait's mega projects in various priority sectors, and plans to sharpen the focus on ICT integration, in line with the country's push to increase efficiency and competitiveness by streamlining services through the use of big data analytics. It will also depict recent moves to build the knowledge economy pillars and foster creativity and innovation in its national enterprises business ventures and product development.

KDIPA's Director General Sheikh Dr Meshaal Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, expressed his hope for the new Report to look at the key initiatives that will buttress the country's resolve to speed up economic diversification, and encourage a larger role for the private sector, capitalizing on the convening of the landmark first Kuwait Investment Forum, which is scheduled to take place in March 2016 under the patronage of HH the Amir. He clarified that "The \$1.2bn of direct investment licensed by KDIPA in its first year of operation reflects the solid progress that Kuwait has made to attract value added investments that will serve as a channel to foster technology transfer and spur innovation, while providing the necessary facilitation and aftercare, and ensuring a pro-business environment."

Jana Treeck, OBG's Managing Director for the Middle East, commented that "Kuwait has set itself many ambitious targets in its Second

Development Plan 2015-2020 and Vision 2035," she said. "I'm delighted to cooperate with KDIPA as OBG primary partner for more than a decade, and other local partners, to successfully chart the country's progress as it edges towards its long-term goals."

The Report: Kuwait 2016 will be a vital guide to the many facets of the country,

markets of the Middle East, Africa, Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean. Through its range of print and online products, OBG offers comprehensive and accurate analysis of macroeconomic and sectoral developments, including banking, capital markets, insurance, energy, transport, industry and telecoms.

The critically acclaimed economic and



including its macroeconomics, infrastructure, banking and other sectoral developments. The publication will also contain contributions by HH the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and several other leading representatives. It will be available in both print and online.

Oxford Business Group (OBG) is a global publishing, research and consultancy firm, which publishes economic intelligence on the

business reports have become the leading source of business intelligence on developing countries in the regions they cover. OBG's online economic briefings provide up-to-date in-depth analysis on the issues that matter for tens of thousands of subscribers worldwide. OBG's consultancy arm offers tailor-made market intelligence and advice to firms currently operating in these markets and those looking to enter them.

FOR SOME NORDIC BANKS, BORING MAY BE BETTER THAN BONUSES

STOCKHOLM: Just seven months ago, Sweden's Handelsbanken was worth almost \$20 billion less than Deutsche Bank. This month, it eclipsed Germany's flagship lender. Its market value has held up as concerns over negative interest rates and bad debts, along with spiralling macro-economic worries, have seen other European lenders slide this year. Handelsbanken epitomises a more conservative Nordic banking style that prioritizes cost control over revenue growth. It pays no annual bonuses to executives and has a decentralized model that gives branch managers control over lending, which it says helps reduce bad loan risks.

It had an efficiency ratio - a measure of a

bank's operating costs as a percentage of its revenue - of 45.3 percent in 2015. By comparison, Deutsche Bank had 115.3 percent and BNP Paribas 82.9 percent.

Former Swedish Finance Minister Anders Borg has lauded its approach, calling for more "boring" banking based on borrowing and lending over the risk-taking and expansionist policies in the global industry that helped cause the 2008 financial crisis. "I wouldn't use the word boring, but we don't want any surprises," Handelsbanken finance chief Ulf Riese told Reuters. "The one risk we do like to take is credit risk because we know our customers so well and have such a local presence." —Reuters

A CALM FEBRUARY AFTER JANUARY'S CHAOS

KUWAIT: After a volatile start of 2015, the Chinese Yuan spent most of 2015 trading in a very narrow range before authorities decided to start devaluing the currency in August of last year.

In 2016, all eyes turn to China to determine whether the PBoC will continue on the devaluation path in an attempt to reclaim their lost share of global growth in a global deflationary environment.

After a rocky January, February seems to have brought some markets calmness, especially after the minutes of the latest FOMC meeting were released during the week.

Globally, with the ongoing persistence of the oil glut known to be the main reason for oil prices to linger near the lows, only an acceleration of the global economy could see prices move in the other direction. With the IMF and the OECD downgrading global growth amid the Chinese slowdown, oil prices aren't likely to move higher in the short term and market stress are likely to come back in 2016.

Moreover, as global inflation continues to be subdued, policymakers would rather postpone any rates hike. In some cases, as in Japan and Europe, Central banks are even reducing rates into the negative territory to try to spur growth in their respective economies.

As January proved to be a difficult month in term of US fundamental news, various economic indicators improved again last week with both initial jobless claims at 262k against expectations of 275k and the Philly Fed manufacturing index at -2.8 against expectations of -3.0. The improvement in the four-week moving average for claims was seen as positive in the current environment. With expectations of the next Fed hike pushed all the way to February 2017, the current calm environment could continue and volatility might drop in the short term.

For the moment, all the attention is shifted towards commodities, especially oil prices and the global economic slowdown.

On the foreign exchange side, the Yen remains very volatile trading between a high of 114.87 and a low of 112.31. The currency performance continues to be highly negatively correlated with the Nikkei, and investors continue to sell the rally in the Dollar while awaiting further action from the BoJ. The latest measures taken by the BoJ to cheapen the currency have failed for now and sent a negative signal to equity markets.

The Euro on the other hand lost some ground against the Dollar this week. The ECB verbal intervention continues as Draghi vows to do whatever it takes to spur Europe economic growth. The Euro fell under pressure and dropped to 1.1130 by the end of the week.

Despite the good economic figures

in the UK, and the signs of progress in the ongoing negotiations between the UK and EU this week, the lack of agreement left the Pound stranded, closing the week around the 1.4406 level. The short term direction in the currency remains highly dependent on the progress, or lack of it, of the talks in Brussels.

On the commodities side, this week's negotiations in Qatar yielded little in terms of a fundamental change in either OPEC calling for non-OPEC cooperation, or market expectations of supply growth this year. As talks moved from cuts to a freeze in production, such a freeze would come from producers who weren't expected to raise production such as Russia, Venezuela, Saudi Arabia and Qatar. Treasury Group Weekly Money Market Report 21 February, 2016

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The IMF and the OECD

The IMF published an update to its World Economic Outlook last week, saying that the pick-up in global growth was weak and uneven across economies, with emerging markets and developing economies set for slower growth. The Fund projects global growth of 3.4 percent this year down from 3.6 percent in October and 3.6 percent in 2017. The IMF estimates that the global economy grew 3.1 percent last year. According to one of the director of research, "This year is going to be a year of great challenges and policymakers should be thinking about short-term resilience and the ways they can bolster it, but also about the longer-term growth prospects."

In parallel, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development also cut its global growth forecasts last week. According to the report, the world economy is expected to grow by 3 percent this year lower than its previous forecast and the same pace as 2015. That included a downgrade to its US forecast to 2 percent this year while China is expected to grow 6.5 percent.

Bullard Shifting Side

In a complete turnaround for one of the most Hawkish members of the Fed, James Bullard, St. Louis Fed president said it would be "unwise" for the U.S. Federal Reserve to continue hiking interest rates given declining inflation expectations and recent equity market volatility. For much of last year, Bullard argued for an earlier rate hike, but said he now feels key assumptions supporting higher rates have been undermined.

Expenses

Housing expenses - which account for a third of the consumer price index - have risen 3.2 percent from a year ago. Medical services are up 3.3 percent. In January, prices also rose on a monthly basis for airfare, clothing and autos, while food expenses were flat. The Fed is closely following inflation, looking for assurance that it will accelerate to 2 percent in its preferred measure. That particular measure of personal consumption

further rate increases later this year. "In a way, this justifies the December rate hike and keeps the Fed at the rate hike table," she said.

The combination of a strong dollar and cheaper oil has suppressed inflation across much of the economy. Gasoline prices at the pump have dropped 24 percent over the past year to a national average of \$1.72 a gallon. At the same time, economic growth struggles worldwide have pushed up the value of the dollar, making foreign imports cheaper. But the rate of gasoline prices declining slowed in January, weakening its downward pull on inflation.

NBK MONEY MARKETS REPORT

Inflation expectations have fallen "too far for comfort," making it more probable inflation itself will fall and continue to miss the Fed's 2 percent target. "I regard it as unwise to continue a normalization strategy in an environment of declining market-based inflation expectations". In addition, declining equity prices and other tightened financial conditions have made dangerous asset bubbles "less of a concern over the medium term."

In parallel, San Francisco Fed President Williams stuck to his view that a gradual pace of policy normal-

ization as being the best course. Williams said that the US economy still needs a gentle shove from monetary policy headwinds but that the economy is 'all in all, looking pretty good'. On the popular topic of negative rates, Williams said that the chances of the Fed cutting rates below zero were 'very remote'



ization as being the best course. Williams said that the US economy still needs a gentle shove from monetary policy headwinds but that the economy is 'all in all, looking pretty good'. On the popular topic of negative rates, Williams said that the chances of the Fed cutting rates below zero were 'very remote'

The Fed worried

The latest Philadelphia Fed manufacturing survey for February suggest the manufacturing ISM is likely to remain in contractionary territory. The ISM Philadelphia declined to 44.7 in February in comparison to 47.5 in January and matches its recent October 2015 low. As long as the manufacturing ISM survey remains below 50, investors are likely to continue to worry about the US growth outlook.

This week's housing starts also dropped, however according to analysts, this could be a direct relation to

the bad weather experienced in January in some parts of the country. Industrial production came at 0.9 percent on a monthly basis against expectations of 0.4 percent. The number picked up strongly despite the downward revisions to the previous month. The release of the January FOMC policy meeting minutes this week pointed towards the fact that the Fed was still in a wait and see mode, keeping options open but with clear uncertainty around the outlook.

Members turned their attention on the factors driving the turmoil in mar-

Europe & UK

This week ECB minutes didn't offer a whole lot new with the text revealing that the governing council was unanimous that policy 'needed to be reviewed and possibly reconsidered' at the March meeting, although there were some hints from certain policymakers that it would be 'preferable to act pre-emptively' rather than 'wait after risks had fully materialized'. Treasury Group Weekly Money Market Report 21 February, 2016

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Markets are expecting the ECB's deposit rate to be cut another 10 basis points to -0.4 percent next month, while the €60 billion quantitative easing programme launched a year ago is likely to be increased. However, Jen Weidmann, president of the Bundesbank remains against the extension of the ECB's asset-purchase program.

On the data front, France January

tations were for a increase of 0.7 percent, the figures came at 2.3 percent almost three times the pace of growth forecasted by economists. According to the report, growth was helped by post-Christmas price cutting as retailers looked to clear excess stock. On a yearly basis, retail sales rose 5.2 percent.

Asia

Chinese Markets, Calm for now

As China comes back from a week of holidays, markets were calmer following comments by the People's Bank of China's governor, saying he saw no basis for continued depreciation in the currency.

On the data side, exports fell 6.6 percent on a yearly basis in January following a 2.3 percent gain in December. Expectations were for a gain of 3.6 percent. It was the biggest fall in exports since the 8.9 percent drop in July 2015. In dollar terms, the drop was bigger, with exports dropping 11.2 percent on a yearly basis. Imports also dropped 18.8 percent in dollar terms from a 7.6 percent drop in January versus expectations of a drop of 3.6 percent.

Chinese January inflation numbers were also released this week. CPI figures were up by 0.5 percent on a monthly basis driven by a surge in food prices with non-food prices relatively stable. The yearly rate was up by 1.8 percent although slightly less than market expectations of +1.9 percent.

On a different front, after a record lending figure of 2.51 trillion Yuan in new loans in January 2016, the People Bank of China decided on Friday to boost the amount of reserves some banks must lock away as it moves to contain risks after a January surge in credit by smaller lenders. The targeted increase in the reserve requirement ratio will affect regional banks. The step taken by the bank to increase the reserve ratio is aimed at curbing financial-system risks and doesn't necessarily amount to monetary tightening by the PBOC.

Bank of Japan under pressure

This week, figures showed the Japanese economy shrank at a rate of 1.4 percent in fourth quarter down from a 1.3 percent advance in the third quarter and worse than expectations for a 0.8 percent contraction. Moreover, industrial production fell more than expected by 1.7 percent in January, compared to the 1.4 percent fall originally released by Japan's economy ministry. On a yearly basis, it fell 1.9 percent against expectations of 1.6 percent drop. The figures are likely to put additional pressure on the BoJ to support the economy.

Kuwait

Kuwaiti dinar at 0.29885. The USD-KWD opened at 0.29885 yesterday morning.

US CONSUMERS SIGNAL SIGNS OF ACCELERATION IN JANUARY

WASHINGTON: US consumer prices were unchanged in January, as the rising costs of housing and health care were largely offset by cheaper oil.

But the annual pace of inflation showed signs of acceleration. The Labor Department said Friday that prices have risen 1.4 percent over the past 12 months, compared to a year ago when annual inflation was close to zero. Consumer prices climbed at the fastest annual rate since October 2014.

Core inflation, which excludes volatile energy and food costs, rose 0.3 percent in January. Over the past 12 months, this category closely watched by the Federal Reserve has climbed 2.2 percent.

The rising tempo for inflation follows a Fed decision in December to raise a key short-term interest rate for the first time in nearly a decade. But the turmoil in the stock and bond markets after the Fed rate hike suggested to many investors that inflation might barely budge amid a slowing global economy.

Jennifer Lee, a senior economist at BMO Capital Markets, said that January's report on consumer prices affirms the Fed's decision and raises the potential for

places less of an emphasis on housing. It posted a modest annual increase of 0.6 percent in December.

Fed officials have said they are increasingly unsure about the path of inflation after raising a key interest rate in December from a record low set in late 2008. The quarter-point increase pushed the federal funds rate from near zero to a range of 0.25 percent to 0.5 percent.

Top Fed policymakers have greater concerns about threats to U.S. economic growth coming from lower oil prices and slowing growth in China and other emerging markets, according to the minutes of their January meeting released Wednesday.

The officials said these global pressures made it harder to forecast growth and inflation, two key factors for deciding the pace of additional rate hikes.

"Most participants indicated that it was difficult to judge at this point whether the outlook for inflation and economic growth had changed materially, but they thought that uncertainty surrounding the outlook had increased as a result of recent financial and economic developments," the minutes said. — AP



Mohammed El Houssami

FORD MIDDLE EAST APPOINTS NEW SALES DIRECTOR

DUBAI: Ford Middle East yesterday announced the appointment of Mohammed El Houssami as the new sales director, supporting Ford and Lincoln dealers across the GCC markets, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Afghanistan and Yemen. A Lebanese national, Mohammed El Houssami has an extensive automotive experience over 15 years in all the GCC and Middle East markets, having held various positions in sales, aftersales and dealer network at General

Motors Middle East.

Thierry Sabbagh, managing director, at Ford Middle East said: "We are pleased to welcome Mohammed to our organization and look forward to his valuable contribution to our team. With his knowledge and background, we are confident that he will lead our sales operations to greater heights and accelerate the delivery of Ford and Lincoln products across our dealership network in the region."

US TREASURY URGES PUERTO RICO CREDITORS TO NEGOTIATE

WASHINGTON: The US Treasury weighed in on Puerto Rico's battle with creditors, urging bondholders to come to the table and work on debt restructuring.

Treasury Secretary Jacob Lew met with a group of bondholders and "explained that the crisis in Puerto Rico is severe and rapidly deteriorating," a statement said. He told them it was essential that the small US territory crumbling under \$70 billion in debt needs Congress to pass laws establishing a process on orderly restructuring of the Caribbean island's debt.

But some creditors have fought such a move and so far Congress, requested by Puerto Rico and the White House to give it the right to enter bankruptcy pro-

tection, has not obliged. Lew warned that without action from Congress, a disorderly default on the debt was "a likely outcome." That, he said, "could trigger protracted and costly litigation, threaten the delivery of critical public services, (and) delay or lower the ultimate recovery by bondholders and other creditors," according to the Treasury statement.

"In order to resolve this crisis, Secretary Lew urged all stakeholders to come to the table." Lew "underscored that addressing the crisis will require shared sacrifice by all parties, including by creditors, and that without an orderly restructuring, there is no path out of insolvency and back to growth."

At the beginning of February, Puerto

Rico proposed that holders of its \$49.2 billion in tax-funded debt agree to cut the value to \$26.5 billion in a voluntary restructuring. It also proposed that interest payments, which would only begin in 2018, be limited to 15 percent of current government revenues, down from the current draw of 36 percent, which Puerto Rico says is "unsustainable." To make the proposal work, however, it requires a very high level of participation from creditors. Puerto Rico has been locked in recession for a decade, and defaulted on some debt payments at the beginning of the year. Despite sweeping spending cuts and some policy reforms, it has not been able to stop the deterioration of its budget deficit. — AFP



MIAMI: Shoppers walk along Lincoln Road Mall, a pedestrian area featuring retail shops and restaurants in Miami Beach, Florida. — AP



KUWAIT: Lulu Exchange outlet at Sama Mall in Egaila being launched in the presence of Sunil Jain, Indian Ambassador to Kuwait, Yusufalli M A, Managing Director, LuLu Group International, Adeb Ahamed, Director, Lulu Exchange, KNS Das, General Manager Lulu Exchange and other dignitaries.



KUWAIT: A ceremonial cake being cut to mark the opening of the Lulu Exchange outlet in Sama Mall, Egaila.



KUWAIT: The inauguration of the Lulu Exchange in Mehboula.



LULU EXCHANGE OPENS 2 NEW BRANCHES IN KUWAIT

19TH AND 20TH OUTLETS OPEN IN SAMA MALL, EGALIA AND MEHBOULA

KUWAIT: Lulu Exchange, one of the leading global remittance and foreign exchange brands in Kuwait, inaugurated its 19th and 20th outlets at Sama Mall in Egaila and Mehboula, respectively, on Wednesday.

The outlet at Sama Mall in Egaila was launched in the presence of Sunil Jain, Indian Ambassador to Kuwait, Yusufalli M A, Managing Director, LuLu Group

International, Adeb Ahamed, Director, Lulu Exchange, KNS Das, General Manager Lulu Exchange and other dignitaries.

"We are proud of the fact that with the opening of our outlets in Egaila and Mehboula today, we operate 20 branches in Kuwait. We are delighted at the progress our firm has made in expanding and enhancing the range of services we are able to offer to our customers so far. It is a moment of great pride since we are also celebrating the opening of our 125th global branch. It has been a great journey for Lulu International Exchange and to reach this milestone in the span of six years, is proof of our commitment to extend world class exchange services and solutions to our esteemed customers around the world," said Adeb Ahamed, Director, Lulu Exchange.

LuLu International Exchange began its operations six years ago when the first branch was inaugurated in Abu Dhabi, UAE, on September 2, 2009. The company soon expanded its operations to other countries viz., Oman, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, India, Philippines and Seychelles. The first branch of Lulu Exchange in Kuwait was opened on July 8, 2011 at Fahaheel.

"Our culture of quality and standardization makes sure

that every branch offers the same quality of service that we have become renowned for. It is our high caliber workforce backed by training and the latest technologies that help us deliver the highest standards of customer satisfaction. This customer-centric approach has made us the favorite of customers in such a short period and has helped us grow at a fast pace. We will continue striving towards spreading our network worldwide to get as close to our customers as possible and keep offering the best of services and solutions," added Adeb.

The new branches have been outfitted with state-of-the-art technologies enabling it to provide even more efficient and effective services to the exchange house's customers. The branches will also grant customers access to all of the competitive and innovative products and services that the exchange house has to offer.

LuLu Exchange has partnered with internationally renowned and trusted money transfer service providers to guarantee that the hard-earned money reaches your loved ones in the fastest and the most secure way possible. The exchange house caters to markets across the world and has direct online remittance arrangements for India, Nepal,

Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Philippines, Egypt and Indonesia, among others.

With the opening of the new branch, the exchange house currently has 20 branches across the State of Kuwait, one each in Egaila, Al-Rai, Mirgab, Dajeej, Mubarakia and Khaitan; two branches each in Mangaf, Salamiya, Fahaheel, Farwaniya and Abbasiya regions and four in Mahaboula.



KFH NAMES 7 WINNERS OF BANKING CARDS CAMPAIGN 5TH DRAW

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) named 7 winners of the fifth draw of the new banking cards promotional campaign themed "Shop and Win Back Up to KD 50,000 with KFH Cards" that had been launched in an attempt to encourage clients to use KFH credit, prepaid and debit cards while making purchases in Kuwait and overseas.

For every KD 10 spent on their KFH cards, clients will get a chance to enter a draw and win back up to KD 500 of their daily spends for 100 days ending April 19th 2016. KFH Credit and Prepaid cards used in domestic and international retail spends and KFH Debit cards used in international retail spends are eligible for the daily draw.

The winners are: Samer Ali, Ali Alsalmi, Naeim Abdal, Abdullah Alkhudhair, Haydar Alshimari, Khaled Alhajerji and Abdullah Althniya.

KFH strives to continuously offer its clients new promotions and discounts in order to distinguish them among peers, not to mention to further bolster bank's leading position in the

field of banking cards.

KFH marketing campaigns play a significant role in underlining KFH's principles that include boosting sales, and benefitting clients and merchants.



This new campaign is part of KFH's efforts to reward its clients and grant them additional value; thus achieving customer satisfaction and boosting their confidence. The campaign also aims at enhancing the bank's presence especially that it dominates the largest market share in

the field of banking cards.

It is worth noting that KFH has won several awards in the field of banking cards which reiterates its success and efficiency in banking cards market. KFH enjoys high confidence and leadership in the market in addition to high quality products which have enabled it to achieve growth in cards market and increase the number of customers. KFH occupies the leading position as the issuer of banking cards and one of leading banks at the GCC level.

KFH was established in Kuwait in 1977 and is enlisted in the Kuwait Stock Exchange. KFH Group is a global pioneer in the field of Islamic banking services, where it offers a wide array of Islamic products and services, not to mention a high standard of innovation and client service.

KFH manages its operations in the GCC, Asia, and Europe through over 446 branches, including KFH-Turkey, in order to offer services for the bank's clients in Turkey, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Germany, Jordan, and Dubai.

CHANGAN AUTOMOTIVE ANNOUNCES BOLD HALA FEBRUARY OFFER

KUWAIT: As part of the Hala February festivities, Al-Qurain Automotive Company - the authorized distributor of Changan Automotive in Kuwait - has



Salem Al-Mutawa

price-conscious, and we concluded that this is the perfect time to announce an offer that is both kind to customers' wallets and provides the same excellent quality and comfort associated with Changan cars," explained Al-Mutawa.

All Changan models are designed according to European standards and feature top-shelf technology in-line with prestigious premium brands. Drivers will enjoy 11 safety features, along with outstanding performance thanks to advanced powertrain technology from the UK. It is worth mentioning that Changan is China's best-selling automotive brand with 2015 sales exceeding 1.5 million units, a 30.9% increase over the previous year. The automaker is pursuing two-tiered strategy comprised of heavy R&D investment and satisfying the ever-changing customer needs in a fast-paced world. In this context, Changan operates facilities in China, Japan, the United States, United Kingdom and Italy, in addition to hiring experts from over 14 countries, in addition to its own engine production lines.

Also in 2015, Changan occupied first place in terms of R&D strength amongst Chinese manufacturers, having completed 93.6 out of 100 points in their criteria. Moreover, Changan proudly collaborates with several prestigious names in the automotive industry, such as Mazda, Suzuki and Ford, as well as a sophisticated international research centers covering 16 sectors, such as the chassis, collision tests. The automaker is also responsible for developing more than 60 smart technologies in area of intelligent communication, smart driving and other areas.

Al Qurain Automotive Company was established in 1984 as part of the Abdulaziz Al-Ali Al-Mutawa Group of Companies to take on an ever-expanding range of business activities for the group.

announced some of the lowest installments in Kuwait along with generous value-added benefits for customers purchasing one of its new models.

Monthly installments for new Changan models start from as low as KD 69 for the "EADO", the dynamic full-option midsize sedan, KD 74 for the "CS35" full-option compact SUV, and KD 95 for the elegant new "CS75" medium sized SUV. Moreover, all new Changan customers are given the "Peace of Mind" package, which includes a 10-year / 60,000 KM warranty (whichever comes first), 24/7 Roadside Assistance, Free Vehicle Registration, Free 3rd Part Insurance for 3 years, and the company's commitment to the highest quality aftersales service.

According to Salem Al-Mutawa, General Manager of Changan Automotive in Kuwait, the celebratory offer was developed after observing changes in consumer behavior caused by an expected rise in cost-of-living expenses.

"Our market study found that customers are becoming increasingly

AL-TIJARI ANNOUNCES THE WINNERS OF NAJMA ACCOUNT

KUWAIT: Commercial Bank of Kuwait held the Al-Najma Account draw on 21st February, 2016.

The draw was held under the supervision of the Ministry of Commerce & Industry represented by Mr. Abdulaziz Ashkanani.

The winners of the Al-Najma daily draw are:

Bashar Abdulkareem Al-Arbash — KD 7000, Salwa Nouri Al-Shammari — KD 7000, Yousef Jadallah Al-Shahadat — KD 7000, Dalal Naser Al-Mutairi — KD 7000, Mousa Majed Al-Mutairi — KD 7000.

Al-Najma awards are now brighter and bigger than ever

With the revamped Al-Najma account, all your dreams will be turned to reality. On top of offering the highest daily prize in Kuwait for KD 7,000, now our Mega prize draws got bigger to reach KD 250,000.

The new prizes scheme for Al-Najma account
Daily draw to win KD 7000

Quarterly draws to win great prizes that would start from KD 100,000 to KD 250,000

1st quarter KD 100 000, 2nd quarter, KD 150 000, 3rd quarter — KD 200 000, 4th quarter —KD 250 000.

With Al-Najma you have more chance to win greater prizes

* Each KD 25 kept in your account gives you one chance to win

* Each KD 25 kept in your account for one week will give you a chance to enter the quarterly draw.

* Each KD 25 kept in your account for 3 months will give you chance to enter the quarterly draw.

Additional features
* ATM card
* Issue a credit card against your account

* Obtain all CBK banking services You deserve to win! Open an account now with just KD 500 and you will enter all draws.

BURGAN BANK ANNOUNCES WINNERS OF YAWMI ACCOUNT

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank announced yesterday the names of the lucky winners of its Yawmi account draw, each taking home a prize of KD 5,000.

The lucky winners for the daily draws took home a cash-prize of KD 5,000 each, and they are:

1. Eissa Abdullateef eissa Hussain Alsarraf
2. Awatef Mohd. Hussein Khalaf
3. Sabah Sahni Gurvinder Sing Sahni
4. Fatemah Adel baqer Maarafi
5. Marzouq Marie Faraj Arafat

To further add to the anticipation of Yawmi account customers, Burgan Bank now offers a Quarterly Draw with more chances to win higher rewards, entitling one lucky customer to enter KD 125,000 every three months. The Yawmi Account now offers Daily and quarterly Draws, the Quarterly Draw requires customers to maintain a minimum amount of KD 500 in their account for 2 months prior to draw date. Additionally, every

KD 10 in the account, will entitle customers to one chance of winning. If the account balance is KD 500 and above, the account holder will be qualified for both the quarterly and daily draws.

Burgan Bank encourages everyone to open a Yawmi account and/or increase their deposit to maximize their chances of becoming a winner. The more customers deposit, the higher the chances they receive of winning.

For more information on opening a Yawmi account or about the new quarterly draw, customers are urged to visit their nearest Burgan Bank branch and receive all the details, or simply call the bank's Call Center at 1804080 where customer service representatives will be delighted to assist with any questions on the Yawmi account or any of the bank's products and services. Customers can also log on to Burgan Bank's www.burgan.com for further information.

SPACE STATION ASTRONAUTS GIVE MASSIVE TRASH CAN THE BOOT

CAPE CANAVERAL: The International Space Station just got a whole lot tidier. A pair of NASA astronauts released a capsule loaded with 1.5 tons of trash Friday as the space station soared over Bolivia. The capsule should re-enter the atmosphere and burn up harmlessly over the Pacific on Saturday.

NASA supplier Orbital ATK launched the capsule to the space station in December, full of food, clothes and other goods. The astronauts removed the precious contents, then filled it with garbage and old equipment for incineration.

Commander Scott Kelly and Timothy

Kopra, the Americans on board, sent computer commands to set the Cygnus free. The stunning 250-mile-high view showed the capsule slowly backing away, its two circular solar wings looking like open umbrellas. Kelly, who's less than two weeks from wrapping up an unprecedented yearlong mission for NASA, thanked everyone who worked on the Cygnus - "this great vehicle."

"It's been a pleasure," he noted. "A beautiful release," replied Mission Control. Virginia-based Orbital ATK plans to launch another Cygnus with more supplies from Cape Canaveral, Florida, late next month. The flight was delayed

a few weeks after black mold contaminated some of the cargo bags. Technicians had to disinfect everything.

SpaceX, meanwhile, another commercial cargo carrier for NASA, is aiming to make a delivery in the next few months. The company is working to get back on track following a launch accident last summer. NASA has handed off space station shipments to private business so it can focus on getting astronauts beyond low-Earth orbit, namely to Mars. It hopes to do the same with space station crews next year. For now, US astronauts are hitching rides with the Russians. — AP



This photo taken from NASA TV shows a capsule loaded with 1.5 tons of trash, released from the International Space Station. — AP



BANGKOK: Chalit Pongpitakwiset with his girlfriend as they wait for a boat at a pier along a canal. — AFP photos

BLACK MARKET HORMONES: THE HURDLE FOR THAI TRANSGENDERS

'I AM IN THE HANDS OF DOCTORS'

BANGKOK: Chalit Pongpitakwiset has always felt like a man. Now the 25-year-old wants everyone else to see it too. But unlike most transgender people in Asia, who are left to self-administer hormone supplements, Chalit is being helped by a pioneering clinic.

"I am in the hands of doctors," said Chalit, who was born female, but identifies as a man. "I'm not doing it by myself, so it isn't dangerous," the software

company worker said. Several days after receiving his first testosterone injection, Chalit returned to get a blood test at Tangerine, the new clinic inside a Red Cross centre in downtown Bangkok.

The centre is a pilot program that organizers hope could be replicated across Asia. Its location is no accident—Thailand has a large and visible transgender population and is one of the world's top des-

tinations for sex-reassignment surgery. But just like elsewhere in Asia-Pacific, a region home to more than nine million transgender people according to UN estimates, long-term care for patients is patchy at best.

The clinic is a rare place providing follow-up treatment, both physical and mental, for those who have undergone sex-reassignment surgeries, procedures where patients are often at risk of infection. "Most of the centers where the surgery is performed only provide short-term post-surgical care," explained Nittaya Phanuphak, the head doctor at Tangerine.

Unregulated hormones

In Thailand, hormones are commonly purchased on the Internet or in local pharmacies, and administered on advice gleaned from friends or web forums. Recent university graduate Benyapon Chimsud, who was born a man but identifies as female, said she has been taking hormones for two years.

"I have been taking hormones by myself for two years, I consult with my friends," to determine the proper doses of contraceptive pills, she explains. She also gets monthly black market oestrogen injections at a rudimentary neighborhood clinic. That leaves her cut off from regulated healthcare, prone to receiving inaccurate medical advice and at risk of over-consuming hormones in a rush to see rapid results. Chalit, on the other hand, met with a psychiatrist several times before receiving his first injection to prepare for the changes to his body.

"The psychiatrist asked me how long I've wanted to be a man, and whether my friends and other people around me would accept it if I changed," Chalit said. Now he is getting hormone injections every two weeks. "The hormones will stop my periods, change my voice, give me a beard and moustache, and develop my muscles," he said. "All things that will help me no longer be a woman anymore." That should insulate him from the dangers of taking the wrong doses of hormones which experts say can lead to liver and cardiovascular problems. HIV is also always a risk if needles are shared. Rights groups like the Asia-Pacific Transgender Network (APTAN) say this public health issue is largely neglected by the mainstream medical community. "There are no official guidelines on the administration and monitoring of hormones among trans people," said Joe Wong of the Asia-Pacific Transgender Network (APTAN).

Discrimination still commonplace

Although Thailand can appear tolerant on transgender issues from the outside, many segments of society remain deeply conservative. The kingdom's transgenders, often men who become women and are known colloquially as "ladyboys," are over-represented in the entertainment and sex industries.

Despite high levels of education, many struggle to secure full-time work or prominent positions in the workplace. Same sex marriage is also still not legally recognized, and up until 2012, transgenders were considered mentally ill by the army. Tangerine doctor Nittaya says discrimination remains widespread in medical centres, making access to proper healthcare a challenge for many transgenders.

But Chalit is one of a small number of people to have been made aware of the dangers and commitment that comes with long-term hormonal therapy. Several days after starting his treatment, Chalit, who is considering an operation, got a tattoo of the testosterone molecule on his arm. "I have to take hormones for the rest of my life," he said. "This tattoo will also stay with me for the rest of my life." — AFP



BANGKOK: This picture taken on January 14, 2016 shows Thai transgender Chalit Pongpitakwiset, who is undergoing a hormone treatment to change into a man, showing off a tattoo of the testosterone molecule on his arm outside his home.

UN CLIMATE CHIEF TO STEP DOWN IN JULY

STOCKHOLM: UN climate chief Christiania Figueres says she will leave her post in July after six years in charge of the diplomatic effort to fight global warming. The Costa Rican diplomat's announcement Friday comes two months after a historic international agreement on climate change was adopted in Paris.

In a letter to governments and observers of the talks, the 59-year-old Figueres said she would "not accept an extension" when her term ends in July. Figueres helped rescue the climate talks after a tumultuous 2009 summit in Copenhagen and put them on a path that culminated with the Paris Agreement, the first deal asking all countries to rein in their greenhouse gas emissions.

"The Paris Agreement is a historical achievement, built on years of increasing willingness to construct bridges of collaboration and solidarity," she wrote in the letter. "It has been an honor to support you along this path over the past six years."

Figueres said UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon "will soon initiate the search" for her successor. Alden Meyer of the Union of

Concerned Scientists, a veteran observer of the climate talks, said Figueres would leave on a high note. "She was an essential part of the success in Paris," he said. "She had the knowledge of the issues, the understanding of the politics and the willingness to engage with non-state actors and use them to build momentum."

Set to take effect in 2020, the Paris Agreement requires all countries to submit plans for climate action and to update them at regular intervals. The plans themselves are not legally binding. The UN's expert panel on climate science says soaring emissions of greenhouse gases, primarily from the burning of fossil fuels, are the main reason for the rise in global temperatures since the middle of the 20th century.

Also Friday, the executive director of the Green Climate Fund, Hela Cheikhrouhou, said she will step down when her three-year term ends in September. The fund is one of the main channels of climate finance to help poor countries reduce their emissions and adapt to rising sea levels, droughts, floods and other impacts of climate change. — AP

SHARP RISE OF DENGUE ON CHILE'S EASTER ISLAND

SANTIAGOP: Chile's remote Easter Island over the past two weeks has seen a dramatic increase in dengue, with a total now of 16 confirmed cases, including one serious enough to require hospitalization. Health officials in Santiago said two new dengue cases were confirmed Saturday on Easter Island in two women, ages 20 and 52.

"One of them required hospitalization after displaying serious symptoms," Chile's health department said in a statement, who said the woman at present is in good condition. Authorities said they are also monitoring the population for Zika virus, and that about a dozen people suspected of having the disease are under observation.

Both dengue and Zika are transmitted by the same mosquito, aedes aegypti. Officials worry that the dengue outbreak could hurt tourism, a major source of revenue. Several nations in Latin America and the Caribbean have seen serious outbreaks of Zika, which officials suspect of causing birth defects in infants, and other potentially serious health concerns.

Easter Island, a Chilean Pacific territory of just 5,761 people, is a volcanic outcrop of Polynesian culture some 3,500 kilometers from the Latin American continent. It is famous for its archaeological sites, including some 900 mammoth ancient statues of human figures, which are a major tourist attraction. — AFP

EL NINO WEAKENS BUT US WON'T FEEL IT FOR MONTHS

WASHINGTON: Meteorologists see signs that the super El Nino is weakening ever so slightly, but they caution months will pass before people in the Americas will feel it. The World Meteorological Organization said Thursday that El Nino has passed its peak based on specific temperature, wind, and atmospheric pressure conditions.

That's technically true, but Michelle L'Heureux, lead El Nino forecaster for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Climate Prediction Center, said there's a few months lag time before the changes affect the Americas.

El Nino is the occasional but natural warming of the central tropical Pacific which, along with changes in the atmosphere, alters weather patterns worldwide. It often brings more rain to California and parts of the US West and South, raises temperatures globally a bit, and causes droughts elsewhere in the world.

In December and January, El Nino measurements showed it tied 1997-1998 for the strongest since records started being kept in 1950. "It's still strong, but it has reached a peak value and it's starting its decline," said University of Oklahoma meteorology professor Jason Furtado. "It's still there;

it's not like we don't have El Nino anymore. We can still expect (El Nino) like conditions in March and April and even into May, as well."

Mike Halpert, deputy director of the climate prediction center, said this El Nino hasn't brought drought-struck California as much moisture as previous strong El Ninos, but there are still two months to go to get significant rainfall.

With El Nino still kicking, NOAA forecast a spring that's wetter than normal throughout the US South, much of the West and part of the East. Only the Great Lakes region and Pacific Northwest are forecast to be dry. It also predicts warmer than usual weather along the entire West Coast and most of the country north of Colorado, Missouri and Tennessee, with only Texas, parts of Oklahoma and New Mexico cooler than normal.

The International Research Institute at Columbia University forecast that once this El Nino fades, there's a 50 percent chance it will be followed directly by El Nino's flip side, a La Nina. La Nina often means droughts in parts of the US Great Plains and Southwest with more rain in the Northwest. La Ninas often mean warmer winters in the US Southeast and cooler winters in the Northwest. — AP



DHAKA: Bangladeshi man Abdul Bajander rests a day after a surgery at Dhaka Medical College Hospital in Dhaka yesterday. A Bangladeshi man dubbed 'tree man' due to large bark-like warts growing on his hands and feet underwent successful surgery on February 20 to remove some of the growths. — AFP



AL SAYER MEDICAL SPONSORS THE 4TH KUWAIT DENTAL DEPARTMENT CONFERENCE

Al Sayer Medical Company, one of Al Sayer Group Holding Companies, held the 4th Kuwait Dental Department Conference & Exhibition, "For Better Future Vision" under the Patronage of HE Dr Ali Al-Obaidi, Minister of Health and 34 specialists and lecturers from around the world spoke at the conference. The conference was an opportunity to engage with internationally renowned specialists and professors from different areas of dentistry through lectures and workshops of cosmetic dentistry, orthodontics, surgery, dental implants, gum treatment and root canals treatment. The conference was also a platform to explore the latest products across these specializations at the exhibition within the conference.

An exclusive booth was allocated for Al Sayer Medical Company to display its wide range of dental products from the world's largest medical companies. The booth attracted large number of visitors and attendees, who inquired about the different products and services of the company.

Al Sayer Medical Company was represented by a team of professionals who guided and assisted the visitors, in addition to clarifying technical information and details of such products. HE Dr Ali Al-Obaidi, Minister of Health who visited the booth was accompanied by Dr Hossam Afify, General Manager of Al Sayer Medical



Company during his tour where he explained to him the company's products. Al Sayer Medical Company was honored by the Minister at the end of the tour for the outstanding participation in the conference.

On this occasion, Dr Hossam Afify, General Manager of Al Sayer Medical Company said: "First of all, we would like to congratulate HE Dr Ali Al-Obaidi, Minister of Health and Assistant Undersecretary for Dentistry Dr Youssif Al Douwairi and Director of Dentistry Department Dr Sabiha Al Mutawaa on the success of the conference, which became one of the most scientific conferences in

dentistry in the region that contribute to the developments of dentistry services in Kuwait and give the opportunity for those working in the field to exchange expertise and the latest in the dentistry field.

"This year participation in the conference reflects our commitment to support Ministry of Health's efforts to enhance the health services provided to citizens and residents. As part of our strategy, we will continue to spread health awareness and find integrated medical solutions through our partnership and representation of many world's leading medical companies in the field of dentistry and medical supplies and devices", added Dr Hossam.



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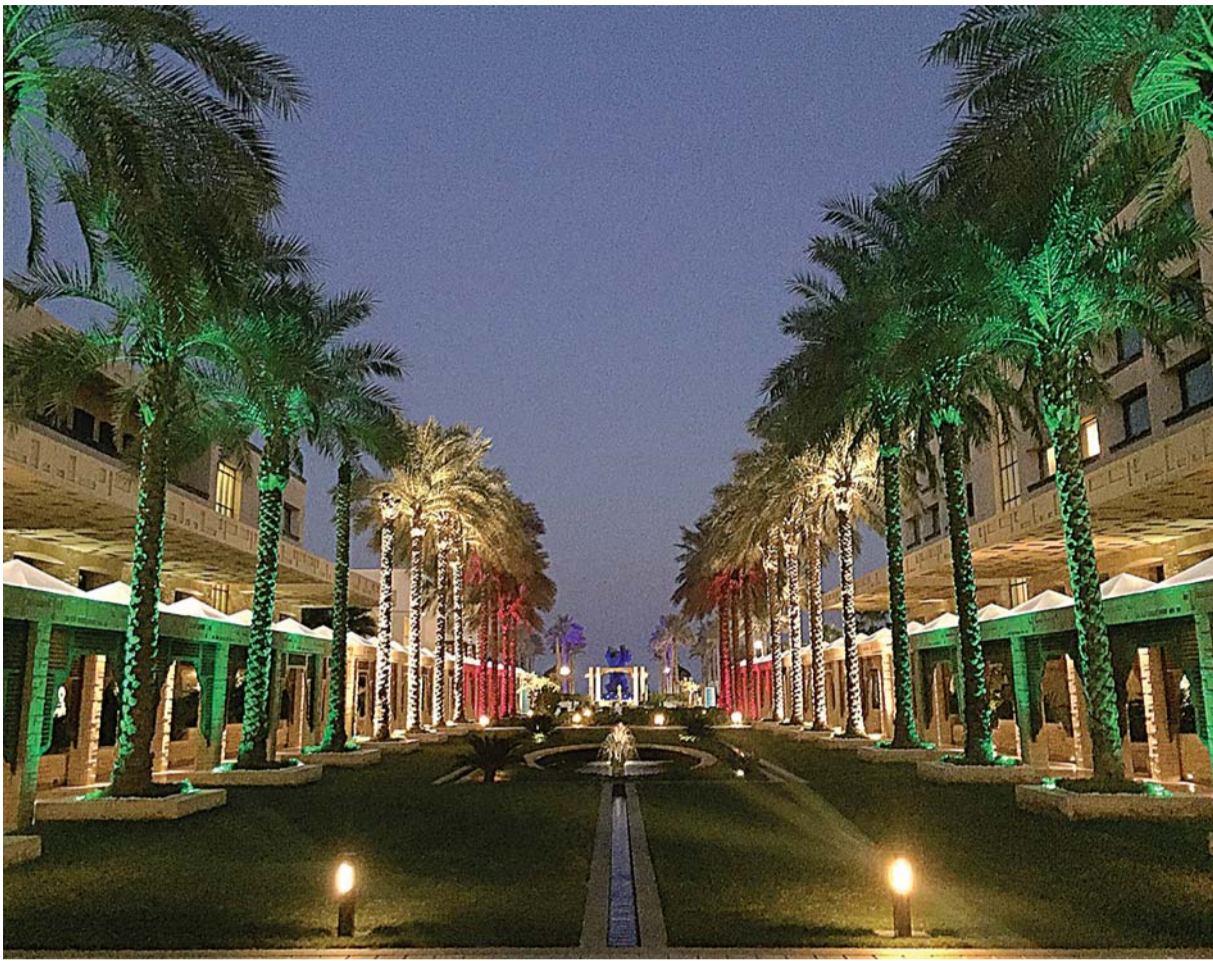


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JUMEIRAH MESSILAH BEACH HOTEL AND SPA CELEBRATES NATIONAL AND LIBERATION DAYS

Jumeirah Messilah Beach Hotel and Spa has marked National and Liberation Days, the country's most important festivals with events and celebrations.

General Manager, Hakan Petek, said: "As we mark this momentous and significant milestone in the chapter of Kuwait, we are committed to delighting our guests with exceptional services that turn everyday moments to memorable and meaningful Jumeirah

experiences."

Throughout February, the luxurious landmark's facade will be lit with the colors of Kuwait and draped with the Kuwaiti flag. Flowers also adorn the hotel's lobby and the gardens and infinity pool have been illuminated with the nation's color schemes of red, white and green.

Guests and residents are invited to spend quality time with their family and friends and take advantage of

unforgettable stay experiences. Guests are also welcomed to enjoy themed-nights in Garden Café, Italian delicacies at Olio Restaurant, premium steaks at Pepper Steakhouse, and Seafood at Salt Restaurant.

Talise Spa, a haven of tranquility, also offers a selection of treatments for the ultimate luxurious pampering experience, together with February's exclusive Harmony Healing Massage tailored to deliver soothing results.



AL-MULLA FINANCIAL SERVICES GROUP ORGANIZES OPEN DAY FOR STAFF

Al-Mulla Financial Services Group organized a family day out for its staff with a variety of activities for its staff on Saturday, Feb 13, 2016. The event was held at Al-Mulla Group Spring Camp, where nearly 700 guests turned up making the event a grand success.

The day came alive as rooting and cheering began with the games and activities kicking off. The teams clashed for supremacy in games like tug of war, plank game, cricket and football among others. The crowd was entertained by a live band who had them swaying to

their favorite tunes. There was also a raffle draw for a good number of prizes ranging from gift hampers, dinner coupons, travel bags, vouchers and so on.

There were valuable contributions from sponsors like Philippine Airlines, Dawat Restaurant, Safir International Hotel, Taj Sweets, Metro Bank and Bank of Philippine Islands. Certificates of appreciation were given to employees who completed 10 years in Al-Mulla Exchange and staffs who excelled in their departments in the 2015.

X-CITE WINS SERVICE HERO ELECTRONICS STORE OF THE YEAR AWARD

X-cite by Alghanim Electronics, Kuwait's largest electronic retailer, won first place in the Service Hero Awards 2015 for the Electronics category, for the second year in a row. The award ceremony was held on Monday, February 15th, at the JW Marriott Hotel in Kuwait City.

It is of no coincidence that X-cite won this prestigious award for two consecutive years, given the company's continuous efforts towards service excellence and positive consumer engagement. The award also demonstrates X-cite's ongoing commitment to deliver a world-class shopping experience throughout its strategically located showrooms and online store, which is achieved by offering amazing deals and promotions coupled with great customer service throughout the year.

Service Hero is a consumer-powered assessment focusing on service quality in Kuwait. The awards were based on a six-month voting

drive that collected over 14,500 direct customer votes through an online-based survey that was then validated and reviewed to ensure empirical and authentic findings. Customers rated the companies

value for money, location of offering, staff quality, call center and the company's website.

X-cite by Alghanim Electronics would like to thank its customers and fans as this award was only made possible by the customers' trust that was instilled in the company, a trust that the company prides itself on and strives to maintain. The company's main goal is to meet and exceed customer satisfaction by continuously improving its services and providing value to the customer. In this optic, and to celebrate the National and Liberation days, X-cite is pleased to offer its customers a Mega Sale of "up to 70 percent off" until the 29th of February.

Stay connected with X-cite via its various social media channels and be the first to know about the latest electronic offers and giveaway contests: on Instagram, Twitter and Snapchat, @xcitealghanim, or Facebook, XcitebyAlghanim, or visit their online store www.xcite.com.



based on a 10-point scoring system that measures customer expectations versus actual customer satisfaction across eight service dimensions. The eight dimensions were reliability, speed, product quality,



A BOOK TALK BY LISA URKEVICH IN CELEBRATION OF KUWAIT NATIONAL DAY

In celebration of Kuwait National and Liberation Days, Dr Lisa Urkevich, Professor of Musicology/Ethnomusicology and Chair of the Department of Music and Drama at the American University of Kuwait (AUK), will hold a talk on Tuesday, 23 February, to discuss her book, Music and Traditions of the Arabian Peninsula: Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, and Qatar. The volume, which includes 200 images and a CD with 31 musical examples, is the result of almost two decades of pioneering fieldwork that spanned thousands of kilometers across the Arabian Peninsula.

In her talk, which comes as part of the AUK Faculty Speaker Series,

Urkevich will present key book concepts and share her field research experiences in dealing with the many variegated Peninsula areas, subcultures, and rich and dynamic performing arts, many of which have been unknown beyond local communities until now.

Music and Traditions of the Arabian Peninsula has been lauded by critics from around the world. Niel van der Linden, writing for The National (Abu Dhabi News) praises, "Not only is it the most comprehensive book in English on the music of this part of the world, [Music and Traditions of the Arabian Peninsula] is also one of the most comprehensive books on music anywhere in the Middle East and North Africa."



World music reviewer Richard Dorsett (USA) concurs, "This fine volume opens more doors to understanding the region than you might expect...[it] is among a handful of the best books on traditional music" (Roots World).

But the work is not just of interest to musical enthusiasts. As noted by Dr El-Sayed El-Aswad, Chair of Sociology at UAE University, "It is a welcome contribution to the scholarship of the Middle East, in general, and the Arabian Peninsula and Gulf societies, in particular" (Middle East Media and Book Reviews Online).

Urkevich's talk will take place in the Auditorium of the AUK Campus at 6 pm on Tuesday 23 February. Music and Traditions of the Arabian Peninsula is available for purchase at the AUK Bookstore, Jarir, and Amazon.com.

HRINVEST TO HOST KUWAIT'S FIRST HR EXCELLENCE AWARDS

HRinvest, Kuwait's leading Human Resource (HR) consulting agency, announced it will be hosting Kuwait's first HR Excellence Awards, to honor, celebrate and recognize HR employees in Kuwait on April 11, 2016.

In partnership with Kuwait University's College of Business Administration's HR Academy and Provitivi, the global consulting firm, the HR Excellence Awards seeks to commemorate exceptional HR practices and employees in Kuwait showcasing outstanding performance and achievements within the field, offering a platform for HR practitioners and business stakeholders to exchange ideas and celebrate their accomplishments.

Under the review of a selective independent committee, the HR Excellence Awards will award distinguished employees in the field of HR in following categories: Best Talent Management Practices, Best Nationals Development Program (Kuwaitis), Best Engaged Workforce, HR Person of the Year, and the HR Excellence Gold Award. The selective independent committee will consist of five judge panelists: Advisor and Manager of the Management and Human Capital Development at The National Assembly of the State of Kuwait, Zeina Al-Mulla; Senior Trainer at Gulf Bank, Dr. Neal Nadler; Kuwait University's Dean of the College of Business Administration, Dr. Rashed Al-Ajmi; Kuwait University Professor in Human

Resource Management and Kuwait HR Academy, Dr. Mila Baker; and former HR Manager and DMD at Kuwait Petroleum Corporation, Jassem Ramadhan.

HRinvest Managing Partner, Surour Alsamerali said: "By recognizing individuals who have made advancements in the field of HR at Kuwait's first HR Excellence Awards, we aim to highlight and encourage the adoption of HR practices and its key function in the core of every organization in today's market."

All businesses and employees are invited to submit an application for any of the listed award categories online at www.hrinvestkuwait.com. The submission deadline for applicants is March 15, 2016.



JOIN IN THE FEBRUARY CELEBRATIONS AT MARINA HOTEL KUWAIT

With the onset of Hala February and the festivities of National and Liberation Day, Marina Hotel Kuwait is ready with its best offer and guarantees that all guests have an enjoyable time with their

friends and family. Guests can avail of an exclusive package that includes rooms and a delicious breakfast buffet in addition to free access to the hotel's various facilities, gym, beach and pool.

Unwind in the finest ambiance at the hotel and enjoy with your family and friends a delightful dining experience. Indulge with a complimentary breakfast buffet at Six Palms restaurant followed by a delectable lunch buffet

at the Atlantis Restaurant with a magnificent sea view. Celebrate the holidays at Marina Hotel Kuwait and enjoy the difference, with the exclusive deals combined with the hotel's attractive features and location where Hala

February shopping offers and entertainment programs are at highpoint being close to many attractions like Marina Hotel and Marina Crescent. For more information, please visit our website: www.marinahotel.com



EXCLUSIVE OFFERS ON NATIONAL AND LIBERATION DAYS AT MARRIOTT HOTELS

On the occasion of Kuwait's National and Liberation Days, Marriott Hotels in Kuwait are offering their guests exclusive deals and benefits to celebrate in style. The exciting array of accommodation offers and dining promotions include the perfect weekend escape with up to 30 percent discount on rooms and suites at JW Marriott Kuwait City, Courtyard by Marriott Kuwait and Residence Inn by Marriott Kuwait City. In addition, the package also includes complimentary buffet breakfast, free WiFi, and free meals for children under 6 years old and

50 percent discount for kids between 6 and 12 years old. Furthermore, guests can benefit from a 20 percent discount at La Brasserie Restaurant at JW Marriott Kuwait throughout February. To add to the exclusive benefits, guests can enjoy free access to the swimming pool and health club. Free valet parking and shared airport transfers will also be available along with early check-in and late check-out subject to availability. It is also worthy to note that JW Marriott Hotel Kuwait and Courtyard by Marriott Kuwait have a direct

exclusive entrance to "Salhia" and "Arraya" Shopping Malls, where guests can shop between an array of world-class retail brands. For rich and diverse cuisines, guests can visit the renowned La Brasserie restaurant which offers international buffets for breakfast, lunch and dinner or enjoy huge buffets with scrumptious dishes at Atrium Restaurant in Courtyard by Marriott Hotel Kuwait City. The Terrace Grill restaurant, known to be one of the best steakhouses in Kuwait, is also available for guests who prefer an extensive

menu of the finest meat cuts and seafood. Other interesting cuisines can be tried at the Japanese Sushi restaurant, offering a wide selection of mouth-watering Japanese delicacies, and the much-celebrated Indian restaurant Soul and Spice in Courtyard by Marriott that is well known for its Indian cuisine with a unique fusion twist. Blendz restaurant, located at the lobby of Residence Inn by Marriott Kuwait, offers its guests a unique flavor of modern recipes in a very relaxed ambiance making it a perfect place to spend time with family and friends.



AL-MUHALLAB MALL HOSTS ITS FIRST HEALTH ACTIVITY EVENT

In efforts of promoting healthy living within the Kuwaiti society, Al-Muhallab Mall announced yesterday that it will be hosting the first of many free Health Activity events, featuring the presence of Dr Ahmad Al-Haifi; one of Kuwait's top nutritionist, head of the Kuwait Food and Nutrition Association, and Professor at the Faculty of Food Science and Nutrition Department (Kuwait University), who will be providing nutrition advice to attendees. The event will be held on Monday, February 22, 2016 from 7 pm - 9 pm at the mall's newly introduced jogging track and is open to females and families to participate in.

Integrating fitness and sports into the Kuwaiti society, comes in line with Al-Muhallab Mall's key priorities, whereby holding its Health Activity event is a clear indication of its utmost consideration of promoting healthy living. At the event, participants will be able to gain valuable nutrition advice by Dr Ahmad Al-Haifi, in addition to the best workout routines by internationally accredited trainers from Flare Fitness Center along with undergoing several contests for a chance to win valuable prizes. Al-Muhallab Mall's management said: "We are excited to be hosting our second event of the year. The health activity is designed to help familiarize the public with the benefits of maintaining a healthier lifestyle and spreading this behavior in all parts of the society. Participants of the health activity will be able to meet famous health influencers and trainers every month, in addition to performing a number of activities at the mall's new jogging track. On behalf of the mall's management I would like to invite everyone to take part in this event which will certainly add a lot to their daily physical exercise routines." Customers interested in taking part of Al-Muhallab Mall's yearlong activities can follow the mall's social media channels for instant updates on Instagram: @AlmuhallabMall, Twitter: @AlmuhallabMall, or Facebook: Almuhallab Mall.

GUST CELEBRATES 25 YEARS OF LIBERATION

Gulf University for Science Technology (GUST) kicked off a week of events in celebration of Kuwait's 25 years of liberation since the Iraqi invasion of 1990. All events took place on the university's campus, and were organized by many of GUST's student clubs with the Office of Student Life (OSL). This year's events, overseen by GUST's OSL, were designed to educate and entertain students and faculty alike on Kuwait's history and traditions, via on-campus decorations in the form of traditional seating areas, henna tattoos, games, a short play performed by students, and a musical performance by a Kuwaiti traditional band. Other notable activities included a giant banner with the flag in the shape of a heart, a

model aircraft show, and a seminar by the relative of resistance fighter, Asrar Al-Qabandi. The celebrations culminated with the release of 250 balloons in the colors of the national flag. Anwar Al Sabah, Head of OSL, said, "This year's celebrations are extra special, as we mark 25 years of Liberation. As our country advances to the future, it is important to keep traditions alive, and ensure that each upcoming generation knows its history and the tough times Kuwait has been through." To cap off the week, OSL arranged for a specially choreographed flash mob to salute the flag, before breaking into a dance to a song specifically commissioned for this occasion. Later on in the day, a performance which recap-

itured the spirit of the dark days of the occupation was acted in front of students. Prof Donald Bates, GUST President, said, "Not only is GUST an educational institution, we are also an incubator of creativity and entrepreneurial spirit. These activities and events - all of which were set up by our student clubs, is what sets us apart. Our students are independent, driven, and ambitious, and I am confident that the skills they develop and hone here at GUST can only make Kuwait a better place." This week's festivities come just weeks after the university celebrated the Amir's tenth anniversary as Head of State, which featured an air show performed by the Kuwait Air Sports Committee.

WHAT'S ON - SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

All photos submitted for What's On should be minimum 200dpi. Articles must be in plain text and should include name and phone numbers. Articles and photos that fail to meet these requirements will not be published.

Please send them to news@kuwaittimes.net

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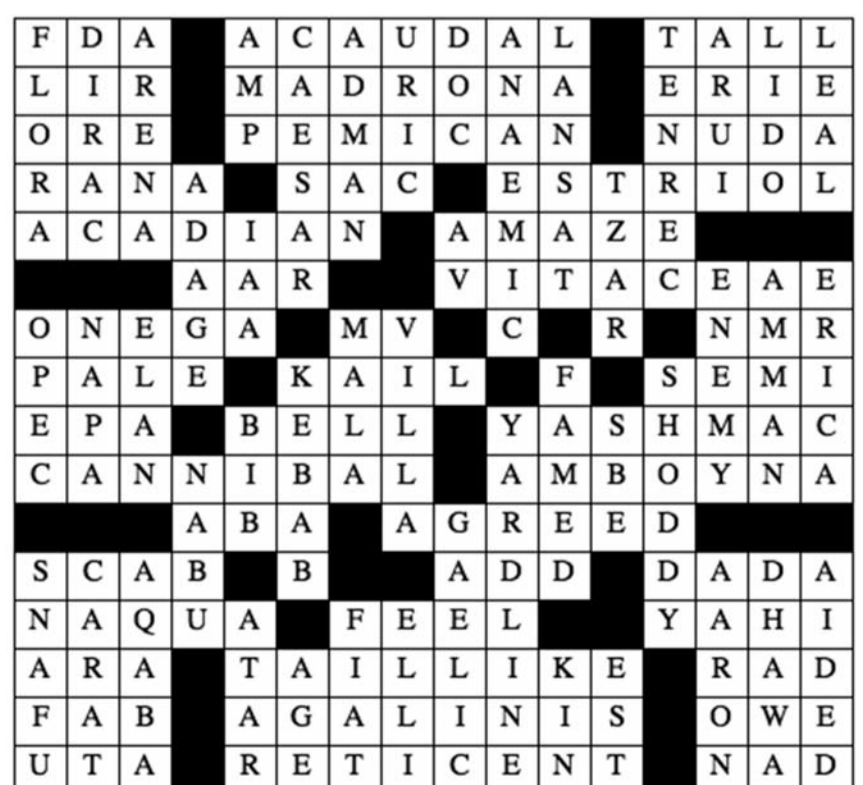
ACROSS

1. A game played on a large open course with 9 or 18 holes.
5. Be noisy with activity.
11. Open pastry filled with fruit or custard.
15. A person who makes use of a thing.
16. An immunosuppressive drug (trade name Imuran) used to prevent rejection of a transplanted organ.
17. An informal term for a father.
18. The greatest possible degree of something.
20. A student who studies excessively.
21. In bed.
22. An epic in Latin by Virgil.
24. Of time long past.
26. (Irish) Mother of the ancient Irish gods.
27. The father of your father or mother.
28. A large Yoruba city in southwestern Nigeria.
30. A Mid-Atlantic state.
34. A white linen liturgical vestment with sleeves.
38. An ugly evil-looking old woman.
41. A great raja.
44. Any culture medium that uses agar as the gelling agent.
45. The United Nations agency concerned with civil aviation.
48. A long thin piece of cloth or paper as used for binding or fastening.
49. East Indian flying squirrel.
51. Eel-shaped vertebrate without jaws or paired appendages including the cyclostomes and some extinct forms.
53. Complacently or inanely foolish.
56. Used of a single unit or thing.
57. The Teutonic god of thunder.
59. An ancient Hebrew unit of dry measure equal to about a bushel.
62. A farewell remark.
65. Used by southerners for an inhabitant of a northern state in the United States (especially a Union soldier).
69. A flat wing-shaped process or winglike part of an organism.
70. Brought about or caused.
73. An organization of military naval forces.
74. A federal agency that supervises carriers that transport goods and people between states.
75. An imaginary creature represented as a white horse with a long horn growing from its forehead.
76. Type genus of the Amidiidae.
77. East Indian tree bearing a profusion of intense vermilion velvet-textured blooms and yielding a yellow dye.
78. Tropical American aroid having edible tubers that are cooked and eaten like yams or potatoes.
79. A master's degree in library science.

DOWN

1. A Russian prison camp for political prisoners.
2. Flexible twig of a willow tree.
3. Minute aquatic herbs floating on or below the water surface of still water consisting of a leaflike frond or plant body and single root.
4. A person you know well and regard with affection and trust.
5. A complete metric system of units of measurement for scientists.
6. A graphical record of electric currents associated with muscle contractions.
7. The basic monetary unit of most members of the European Union (introduced in 1999).
8. Genus of herbs of southern United States.
9. A bag used for carrying money and small personal items or accessories (especially by women).
10. Make attractive or lovable.
11. A federal agency established to regulate the release of new foods and health-related products.
12. Hungarian choreographer who developed Labanotation (1879-1958).
13. Chief port of Yemen.
14. A quantity of no importance.
19. The periodic rise and fall of the sea level under the gravitational pull of the moon.
23. An official prosecutor for a judicial district.
25. A yellow trivalent metallic element of the rare earth group.
29. A power unit equal to the power dissipated when 1 abampere flows across a potential difference of 1 abvolt (one ten-thousandth of a milliwatt).
31. Of or relating to or characteristic of Thailand of its people.
32. A surgical instrument used to remove sections of bone from the skull.
33. A colorless liquid hydrocarbon extracted from petroleum or coal tar and used in making synthetic resins.
35. Goods (or wreckage) on the sea bed that is attached to a buoy so that it can be recovered.
36. God of wealth and love.
37. (Old Testament) Cain and Abel were the first children of Adam and Eve born after the Fall of Man.
39. A toxic nonmetallic element related to sulfur and tellurium.
40. A member of the Siouan people formerly living in the Missouri river valley in NE Nebraska.
42. Any of several coarse tall perennial grasses of most warm areas.
43. A male human offspring.
46. A compartment in front of a motor vehicle where driver sits.
47. A fit of shivering.
50. A genus of plants of the family Crassulaceae.
52. Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
54. Monoamine oxidase inhibitor (trade name Nardil) used to treat clinical depression.
55. A river that rises in northern Colombia and flows generally eastward to the Orinoco in central Venezuela.
58. Wife of Balder.
60. A major victory by the Romans over the Macedonians in 168 BC.
61. A communist state in Indochina on the South China Sea.
63. Type genus of the Alcidae comprising solely the razorbill.
64. Noisy talk.
66. God of love and erotic desire.
67. Morally bad or wrong.
68. An unfledged or nestling hawk.
71. An argument opposed to a proposal.
72. A cgs unit of work or energy.

Yesterday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Whatever you decide to do today will bring great support from others. You feel healthy and natural and there is a feeling that anything is possible. There is optimism, faith and a tendency to take chances at the deepest emotional levels. This is a time of exploring your feelings, a kind of restlessness for new emotional experience... Divine wanderlust, if you will. You may find yourself looking for challenges, perhaps in the physical department, but more than likely in the brain area. You may even consider returning to college or taking a class. A fun and fast game of scrabble, trivia or some board game fills your afternoon. Later tonight, you and a friend or loved one carefully considers all possible methods of increasing the personal income.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

You enjoy comfort and you enjoy keeping a clean home-do allow yourself to be a little messy now and then. You are coming into a more creative and competitive phase in your life and will enjoy spending time involved with some sort of craft. A loved one may enjoy being with you as you work on your hobby or some other creative project this afternoon. You may be pleased at the attention, but you will be wise to encourage your loved one's own creativity. This is a time when your path of self-development and expression becomes more and more unusual-setting you apart from the crowd and from all that is traditional. It may be your turn to cook tonight and that may also be a creative adventure. You like to step outside the box and be inventive.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

You have lots of friends, and today is one of those days when the phone keeps ringing. Later today, a request for your advice regarding some very personal and emotional issues may be received. This may be in a religious setting or in some group gathering. Whatever the case, you will be able to be understanding and flexible. You are able to cut through the red tape and get at what is beneath and behind most situations. Clear decisions affecting others could be made now. Later today there is an opportunity to become involved in some fun sports. This may only mean sports on the television, but you will have plenty of friends with which to share the time. Relax, have fun but go easy on the rich food as you share an abundance of good times with others today.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

This is an excellent day to share with friends. You have a growing understanding of the forces that move the world. Moral issues and the love of others are much more important now than material concerns-which may create a most unselfish time. You have a great deal of passion and may find yourself volunteering in some way to help others within your religious or spiritual group. This afternoon is a good time for joining up with friends and having fun. You appreciate your particular situation and enjoy supporting others as much as they support you. The combination of your creative energy with a partner's sincerity and practicality could prove most rewarding. You are filled with the desire to succeed in all areas of your life.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

The need for emotional security is emphasized. Charisma, self-transformation, the development of personal power-all play a bigger role in your life now, more than ever before. You present a most positive and upbeat side while you lecture or speak to young people that need to hear what you have to say. Fun and upbeat activities that help you to teach will prove successful. You will be able to make a positive difference. Being as flexible as possible will help you move along with others. Work this afternoon may include shoveling snow or chopping wood. Tonight there is time to relax. You create cozy and pleasant surroundings in the home-even if it is a bit messy at times, it is comfortable. You grab some fun time with family and pets.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Being practical and conscientious is of special importance. Taking care of the necessary ingredients that make life run smoothly-health, work and such-becomes a greater preoccupation. Organizing and finding ways to keep the household running efficiently also keeps you busy. There is a satisfaction in the feeling that anything is possible. There is optimism, faith and a tendency to take chances at the deepest emotional level. This is a time of exploring your feelings, a kind of restlessness for new emotional experiences. As you enjoy the company of others in some sort of social surrounding, you gain new insights into the thoughts and feelings of others. A great number of romantic interests come your way this evening. The power of attraction is great.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Your path of self-development and expression becomes more and more unusual-setting you apart from the crowd and from all that is traditional. Tie up any loose ends before moving into new directions. The new, the futuristic and the high-tech are the hallmarks of your lifestyle, as this cycle gets underway. Ideas and technologies that change the way people live-not just one person, but many-are a major new focus in your life. Take care in becoming involved with groups that are not into reality. Find the truth in all things-weigh your options. Lovers, children and other people or things dear to your heart are appreciated this evening and you express your feelings well. Being admired for your gifts and talents may become your power to achieve.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

All manner of hot spots may be discovered and worked through today. This is the time to get the difficult situations behind you. Your mind is quick and you know just how to find truth and peace in wise ways-now is the time to use your wise ways. You have great insight and thinking about a mentor or becoming a mentor may become the best results of this day. You may be successful in teaching a young person to do unto others as the young person would want to be done to by others. This is a period of optimism and emotional stability-making it a good time to evaluate and modify existing relationships. You greatly desire peace and quiet in the family setting and will do everything to keep it that way. Tonight may be a good time for sharing music.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Take care when discussing emotional things today. If you forget the rules for staying focused, you might find yourself or another in a difficult place. A group meeting among neighbors can be handled successfully if there is no exaggeration. You may have a lot of fun when it comes to the process of storytelling; try putting your stories in books-they would be a great success! If you are with others that like to write, you might agree to create regular rap-session meetings. You greatly enjoy social and romantic activities. You truly desire fun and should not hesitate to get to know new people and form new acquaintances. The exchange of ideas becomes a focal point in your life. Learning, knowing a little about many things satisfies the need for mental stimulation.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Today may bring a great deal of reflection, especially about your work. There may be a tremendous desire to cut loose and try something completely different with regard to your profession. Perhaps ideas will come as you look through the employment advertisements in the paper today-or while you talk with a friend. It is a good time to think about where your professional life is heading. Listen with an open mind to the advice of others. This afternoon you may use your home to entertain family members and friends. Good dialogues are favored with others and boost your ego. This period can have a profound effect on your psyche and it marks a time when healings, faith and general good feelings are most beneficial.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Getting people and things organized may not be the best thing for you to involve yourself with today. There may be too many cooks and not enough bottle washers, so to speak. You may find yourself having emotional differences with someone. Those around you, or the situation you find yourself in, may not feel right-you could be challenged. It may be time to take a step back and let someone else take on the challenges of the day. This afternoon there are great opportunities to spend quality time with your loved ones. Being more practical and conscientious takes on a special importance as it may mean how well you put a motor together or how you cook for food-sensitive people. You will find that you are appreciated simply for you.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Spiritual interests are high today-someone has touched your heart. You may be of tremendous emotional help to a friend or family member on this day. Having a great love for your fellow man, you express this in many creative ways. Unusual ideas and novel ways of expressing them are experiences that are just waiting to happen. A neighbor could play a part in this, or perhaps a brother or sister. There are some great new technological items on the market now and you may find yourself making room for a visit to a home, tool or boat show. This could also mean checking out the new cars or the newest mode of transportation in your city. Your loved ones may remind you that it is your day. Enjoy the love and gifts for you.

WORD SEARCH

Friendship

Find and circle all of the words that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell an additional word related to friendship.

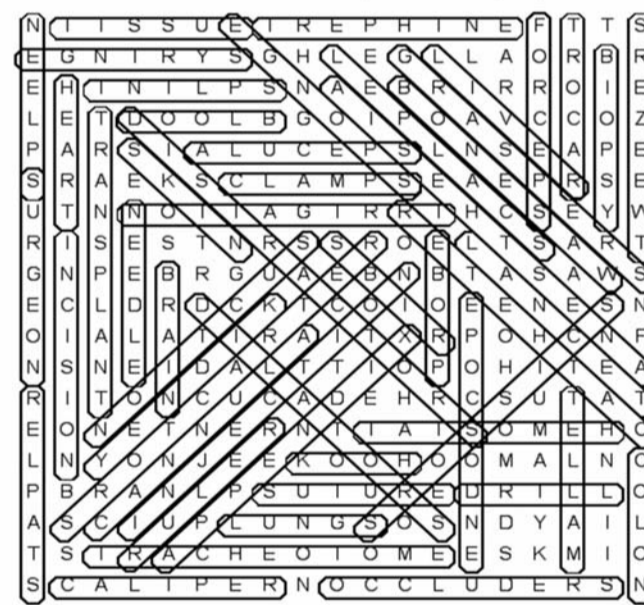


- | | | |
|--------------|--------------|------------|
| ACQUAINTANCE | COMPANION | HONESTY |
| AFFECTION | COMRADE | KINSHIP |
| AFFINITY | CONFIDE | LEND |
| ALLY | EMPATHY | LOYALTY |
| AMIGO | FAVOR | PAL |
| AMITY | FONDNESS | ROOMMATE |
| BOYFRIEND | FRIENDLINESS | SHARE |
| BUDDY | FUN | SUPPORTIVE |
| CHUM | GIRLFRIEND | SYMPATHY |
| CLOSENESS | GOOD TIMES | TRUST |

Yesterday Solution

Surgery

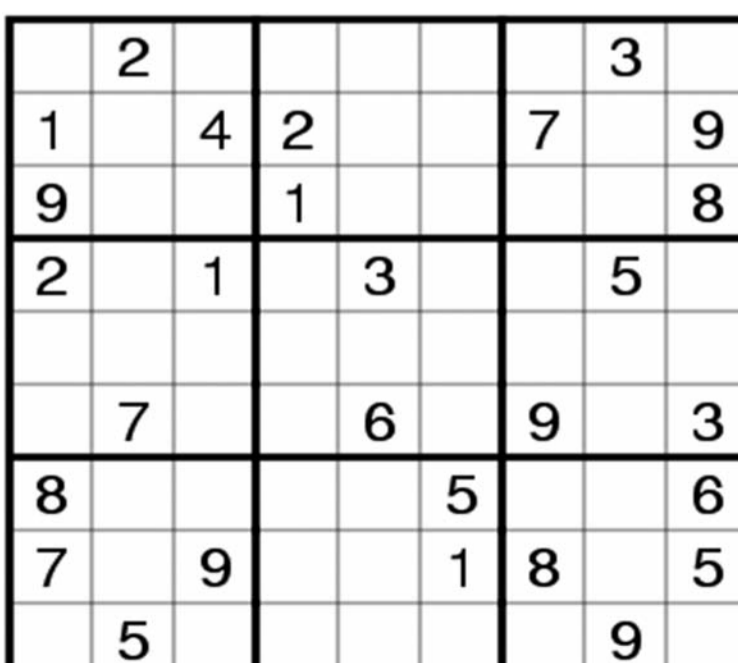
This is the solution to the puzzle located here.



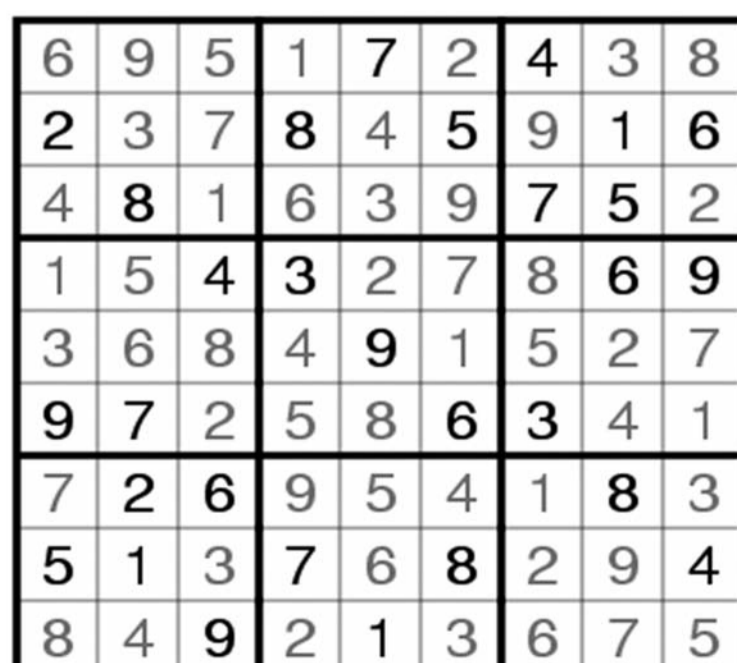
- | | | | |
|-------------|------------|------------|-------------|
| ANESTHESIA | DRILL | LUNGS | SPLINT |
| APPENDIX | ENDOSCOPE | MALLET | SPONGE |
| BIOPSY | FORCEPS | NEEDLE | STAPLER |
| BLOOD | GRASPERS | OCCLUDERS | SUCTION |
| BONE SAW | HEART | PROBE | SURGEON |
| BRAIN | HEMOSTAT | RETRACTORS | SUTURE |
| CALIPER | HOOK | RIBS | SYRINGE |
| CANNULA | INCISION | RULER | TISSUE |
| CATHETER | INJECTION | SCALPEL | TRACHEOTOME |
| CLAMPS | IRRIGATION | SCISSORS | TRANSPLANT |
| COLON | KIDNEY | SKIN | TREPINE |
| DILATORS | LANCET | SPECULA | TROCAR |
| DISTRACTORS | LIVER | SPLEEN | TWEEZERS |

The hidden message is: THE LARGEST ORGAN OF THE HUMAN BODY IS SKIN

Daily SuDoku



Yesterday's Solution





Kim and Kanye building a lake in their garden

The 'Keeping Up With The Kardashians' stars are currently having work done on their mansion and have decided to revamp the current swimming pool and make it into a much more sizable lake, TMZ reports. Meanwhile, the couple are "sparing no expense" on the fixtures and fittings for their new home. A source said: "They both make a ton of money but they also spend a ton. And they are sparing no expense with their new house. \$20,000 fixtures, the perfect flooring - the costs have been endless." And Kanye reportedly became so frustrated with the contractor working on his home that he chose to dismiss the

workers after doing a "walk around" with the contractor and was left disappointed that there was so much work outstanding. An insider said at the time: "He went around complaining how so many things that were supposed to be done were not. He fired the contractor and everyone on the property at the time! He's really frustrated that it's taking this long." Kim and Kanye are currently living at Kris Jenner's house with their two children, Saint, two months and North, two, whilst work is completed on their home.

Sacha Baron Cohen's wife in love with all his characters

The 44-year-old actor and comedian - who is known best for his funny alter egos including Borat and Bruno - has revealed his wife Isla Fisher has had the pleasure of sleeping with each one of them and joked that Bruno was her favorite. He told PEOPLE magazine: "She's had to love all of them but I think her least favorite was Borat. Probably the best was Bruno because of the personal hygiene. Bruno showered, shaved, waxed." Meanwhile, Sacha and Isla - who have three children, Olive, eight, Elula, five and 11-month-old Montgomery together - are always doing their bit to help those less fortunate than them and recently donated one million dollars to charity. Save the Children's CEO Justin Forsyth - whose charity received half the princely sum - said: "By allowing us to make their generous donation to the Syrian children public, Sacha and Isla are helping highlight the tragedy of the issue today. These are desperate times for Syrian families facing bombs, bullets, and torture in Syria. The couple's donation will save many thousands of lives and protect some of the most valuable children."



Coco Austin was told she couldn't have children

The 'Ice and Coco' star - who welcomed daughter Chanel into the world in November - has revealed she has suffered from blood pressure problems since she was six-years-old. Sharing a picture on Instagram documenting her time on the Dr Oz show where she opened up about her medical issues, she wrote: "Chanel joins us after we talk about my blood pressure problems.. My doctor said I couldn't have children cause I would have a stroke If I didn't get it under control..I was angry to hear that and wanted a child even more. So Chanel is a blessing.. My blood pressure was 174/111 since I was six years old.. it's in the family and no right diet or exercise can help." Meanwhile, Coco previously hit back at her critics over claims she isn't "hands on" with her daughter. She wrote: "Some comments really frustrate me at times..some assume since u have money and live in a "celebrity world!" "Let me add, I don't have nannies or babysitters. I've been 100% hands on w/Chanel. I also clean my own house & do my own laundry #100%wife "I'm totally serious when I say I love being a wife. I like the role I play..I can be crazy coco at times but I have a good heart."



Nick Cannon isn't 'ready to date yet'

The 'America's Got Talent' host has admitted he isn't ready to move on following his split from estranged wife Mariah Carey. He said: "I haven't figured it out yet. I just don't think I'm ready to date yet. "It's funny because my next film that I'm writing is all about online dating so I'm learning all about it. It's so intriguing to me but I have yet jump into that pool. But it's the new wave so I'm not against it." The 35-year-old rapper and television personality is learning to "value private time" since his marriage ended. He added to PEOPLE magazine: "I don't know if I would say it was hard. It's more of just adjusting and adapting, as we all do as we get older.

You're living life. "I have really learned to value private time, I've been deep in meditation and getting to know myself." Meanwhile, Nick previously insisted Mariah will "always be the love of his life". He explained: "It's one of those things, I'm a hopeless romantic too. Through this learning process, you never say never. To me one thing I know, that will always be the love of my life, always be my family and that's never going to change. "It's extremely disappointing when you see that people just want to perpetuate negativity when there is no negativity even involved."

Vanessa White wanted to be a boxer

The 26-year-old pop beauty has released her debut solo EP 'Chapter One' and is fully focused on making the transition from girl group The Saturdays to solo star. However, she has contemplated a career in the combat sport world if music didn't work out. Speaking to the new issue of Fiasco magazine, she said: "I've thought about this (not making music) loads and I've decided that I'd really throw myself into boxing or MMA. But really music makes me happy and that's my number one thing. What's the point if you're not happy?" Vanessa's EP 'Chapter One' contains the tracks 'Nostalgia', 'Don't Wanna Be Your Lover', 'Relationship Goals' and 'Lipstick Kisses' featuring Wretch 32. The sexy singer admits the short collection of songs has a 90s influence, which she says is down to a love of artists like Aaliyah, Teedra Moses and JoJo, and she'd love to record a collaboration with any one of the trio. Speaking to the publication - for which she has been styled by Krishan Parmar and shot by Elliot Morgan - she said: "I have a whole bunch of people. If I could go back it would be Aaliyah, Teedra Moses and lets add JoJo too! I'd love to bring all of these women together and a whole lot more, and just have this epic collaboration."

Vanessa acknowledges that it took her a while to find her own sound for the mini-album, but once she went back to her musical roots the songs started flowing. She explained: "It took a long time to find the sound and what was working, but honestly it just came back to what I grew up listening to and what I fell in love with the most - Ashanti, Aaliyah, JoJo. I was obsessed with that genre, and when I say obsessed I was that annoying kid at school, constantly singing with their CD Walkman. So anything from that time, the 90s I guess, seems to sit really well with me and my work." Vanessa has been busy in the studio working on material for her forthcoming debut solo album and is set to perform at Cargo in London on March 16.



Ratajkowski felt guilty about her teenage years



The stunning model-and-actress first shot to fame when she appeared naked in Robin Thicke's 2013 'Blurred Lines' music video announcing herself as the world's newest sex symbol. But Emily admits it was tough for her when she was making the transition from being a girl to womanhood because she felt she had to suppress her feelings based on the behavior of others toward her. Sharing her personal experiences in Lena Dunham's online "Lenny" newsletter, she revealed: "Teachers, friends, adults, boyfriends ... (they) were more often the ones to make me feel uncomfortable or guilty about my developing sexuality." Emily developed D-cup breasts by age 12 and she can vividly remember a concerned family member "sobbing" to her parents while sharing their concerns about an outfit she wore at the age of 13 in a school play which accentuated her figure. Later that same year, Emily says another family member pulled her to one side and told her to "keep a low profile" as she grew into her body. She wrote: "Their comments felt much more personal and thus landed that much harder. I was still figuring out how to put a tampon in, never mind how to understand some of the more complicated aspects of womanhood." Now 24, Emily feels supremely confident in her own skin and understands the difference between being "sexy" and being "trashy". The 'Gone Girl' star continued: "To me, 'sexy' is a kind of beauty, a kind of self-expression, one that is to be celebrated, one that is wonderfully female. Why does the implication have to be that sex is a thing men get to take from women and women give up? Most adolescent women are introduced to 'sexy' women through porn or Photoshopped images of celebrities. Is that the only example of a sexual woman we will provide to the young women of our culture?" "I refuse to live in this world of shame and silent apologies. Life cannot be dictated by the perceptions of others, and I wish the world had made it clear to me that people's reactions to my sexuality were not my problems, they were theirs."



Professor Green and Millie Mackintosh have split up

The 'Lullaby' hitmaker and the former 'Made In Chelsea' star have confirmed they have ended their relationship after less than two and a half years of marriage. In a joint statement given to the Daily Mirror, they said: "It is with sadness and regret that we confirm our separation. "It is a mutual decision, we still care deeply about each other and would like it to be known that it is on amicable terms and we wish each other well." A source added of the pair: "It's extremely sad that Millie and Stephen have decided to part ways, but they have managed to remain on the best of terms throughout their split

and they are hopeful they will continue to do so." The news comes only weeks after Professor Green admitted he had only seen his wife once since the beginning of the year. He admitted: "I've only seen Millie once this year ... It was the first time I had seen her properly in 30 days. We had seen each other like ships in the night, but we weren't getting any quality time together. "It is good sometimes to have space, but it is also difficult when you miss someone for that long."

Khloe doesn't need anyone's approval to be happy

The 'Keeping Up With The Kardashians' star posted a lengthy message on Instagram to urge her fans to "take the control back". She wrote: "Let me remind you that we don't need anybody's approval to be happy in life. It's on you to validate and accept your version of happiness. Take the control back. You choose your life. Don't let anyone else decide for you. We are no victims to life. No prisoners. But we do become victims and prisoners to the people we choose to surround ourselves with. "We tend to become content, passive and blind within our relationships. Whether it be a family member, business partner, friend or a lover. Out of comfort and possibly fear. The unknown will leave you stuck in a bad situation. Choosing comfort over your own happiness. Never forget that fate loves the fearless." The 31-year-old television personality went on to insist there is a "huge difference between giving up and letting go". She added: "Today's wisdom was yesterday's pain. Tomorrow's happiness is today's bravery. Never be fearful of letting go, for sometimes holding on can damage you deeper. Those scars run deep. There's a huge difference between giving up and letting go. Giving up means you are selling yourself short. It means allowing fear to limit your opportunities and keep you cemented in place ... "Letting go means putting yourself first instead of holding on to that negative space you don't deserve. Nobody deserves. Removing toxic people from your life is only allowing room for a positive flow to elevate your mind, body and soul. Not everyone who started with you will finish with you. Be ok with that."

Washington's mother watches her movie scenes with her

The 'Scandal' star has revealed her mom Valerie has sat and watched her get frisky on screen in the television series and commented she did "very good work". Speaking on Jimmy Kimmel Live, she said: "My mother's like this very elegant, graceful intellectual, but she will sit through a sex scene like nobody's business. She doesn't sweat at all. "And last week, actually, I watched our Scandal episode with her, and I had like a three-minute crazy sex scene with Scott Foley, and I was like sweating and fidgeting. And, my mother was like, 'Good work. Very good work.'" Meanwhile, the 39-year-old actress previously admitted she has tried to quit acting "all the time". She shared: "I try to quit act-

ing all the time! Not necessarily the show, it's not that I would ever walk away from 'Scandal,' but at times I am like, 'Eh, I'm done with this acting thing.' But being able to tell the story brings me back." And Kerry credits the show's creator Shonda Rhimes for making it easier for her to return to set after her daughter Isabelle was born. She said: "Well, last season was my first real experience of working with Isabelle. Honestly, it's no joke! It's the real deal. "Shonda Rhimes is a wonderful role model. One of the greatest things about having her as a boss is that she is a woman who really understands. She's a mother and has four shows, along with three kids."



Redmayne confident about Dicaprio's Oscar chances

The 41-year-old star is yet to receive an Academy Award in his life but is odds-on favorite to scoop the prize - after being nominated six times - for his portrayal of frontiersman Hugh Glass in 'The Revenant' at the star-studded ceremony to be held in Los Angeles. And even his fellow nominee - who is recognized for his portrayal of Lili Elbe in 'The Danish Girl' - has backed his rival, saying the trophy "should" be his. The 34-year-old Englishman said: "(Leonardo is) definitely going to win and should. "I feel excited just to be invited to the party, frankly." Other stars in the category include Bryan Cranston for 'Trumbo', Matt Damon for 'The Martian' and Michael Fassbender for 'Steve

Jobs'. Eddie won the coveted gong last year for his portrayal of Stephen Hawking in 'The Theory of Everything' and being nominated this time around for his acclaimed performance as a transgender pioneer means he could walk home with a consecutive Oscar. But the star didn't comment on that and said he is simply looking forward to the "huge fun" he'll have soaking in the glitz and glamour of the famed awards show, which he will likely be attending his wife Hannah Bagshawe. He told the Telegraph: "Going to the Oscars is always the most sensory overload and a huge amount of fun."

Lady Gaga bleaches her eyebrows every day

The 'Til It Happens To You' hitmaker has revealed the strict beauty routine she sticks to, which keeps her brows looking famously. She told Vogue magazine: "I bleach my eyebrows every day - I like to keep them light. They're more versatile for a beauty look. You can draw [your eyebrows] any way you want when they're bleached." And whilst Lady Gaga has a wealth of beauty tips, she previously insisted she would never release her own clothing collection because she has too much "respect" for fashion designers. She said: "The thing is, at the end of the day, I have a real respect for fashion designers. And it's the reason I don't have my own

line and the reason I never will. "If I ever do anything in fashion, it will always just be as a muse or as an aesthetic, creative. I like to be a part of helping artists find themselves and feel good about who they are. I would never for a second claim to be proficient in fashion design [just] because I know good looks. "[One of the things] I've really learned from Brandon is that he's able to see in me this extremely kind of girlish, feminine side of myself that I don't naturally see because I'm more of an imaginative person, and I don't really identify one way or another with my fashion."



Jane Fonda wouldn't want to 'be young again'

The 'Barella' star claims she has no interest in rolling back the years because she "hated" how she felt as a younger woman and only truly found happiness in later life. The 78-year-old actress said: "You could not pay me to be young again. I don't care how much money I was offered, I wouldn't do it. I didn't like being young at all. I actually felt I started to get old at seven. By the time I was 20, I hated how old I was then. At 30, I was ancient, I saw no future for myself." She continued: "At 49, I said, 'I'm going down a dark hole, I can't be creative any more,' and I quit acting for almost 16 years. I was just so old... Then, after I turned 60, I began to understand who I was, and I became young

again. Now I'm in sight of my 80th birthday and feeling pretty good about life!" Despite loving life in her seventies, the veteran star admits to having "a little help" to keep wrinkles at bay. Asked what secret to staying beautiful is, she told the Daily Mail: "It's good genes and a lot of money. I've given myself a little help. But I don't want to be one of those people who do too much and you look at them and think, "Hmmm, somewhere in there is someone I think I know..." I think I still look like me, you know?" Jane can currently be seen in cinemas in 'Youth' starring opposite Michael Caine, Rachel Weisz and Harvey Keitel and plays fictional Hollywood starlet Brenda Morel.

Liu to be honored by Harvard University

The Harvard Foundation are set to name the 'Charlie's Angel' star as 2016's Harvard University Artist of the Year at the Cultural Rhythms Festival. S Allen Counter, director of the Harvard Foundation, said in a statement: "The students and faculty of the Harvard Foundation are delighted to present the distinguished and much-admired television and film star Lucy Liu with the 2016 Artist of the Year award. "Our student and faculty

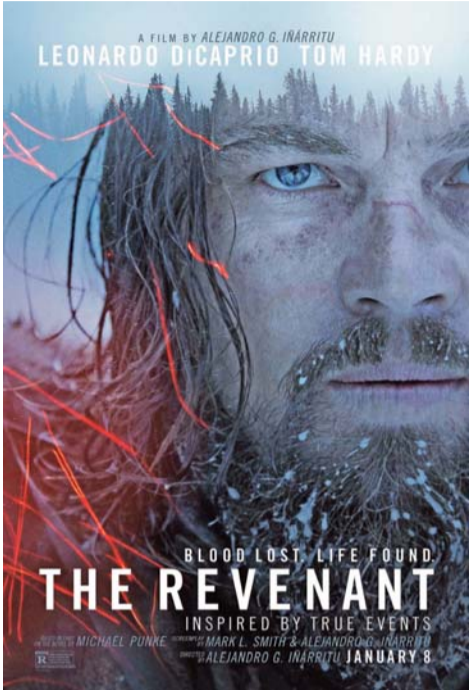
committee commended her outstanding contributions to the performing arts and her highly-praised humanitarian work as UNICEF Ambassador and other charitable projects." And Lucy has shared a photo of her trip to the prestigious university on Instagram, which is somewhat surprising after she previously admitted she's "terrible" at social media. She said: "I'm terrible. I'm a visual person so I'm much more comfortable sending pictures. It's

so hard to keep up with emails and lines and a 14-16 hour day of work. I'm not a daily Instagram or Twitter or Facebook person. I send things out when I feel like it. I don't know how people find the time."

— Bangshowbiz

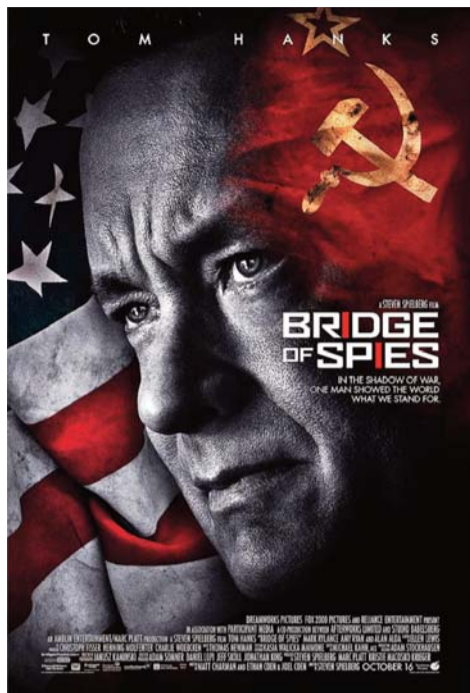
Real to reel: 10 Oscar hopefuls based on true stories

From biopics and historical epics to spy stories and harrowing tales of abduction and abuse, this year's list of Oscar nominees features a bevy of films based on true stories. Some stick faithfully to history, but many play fast and loose with the facts—and others are almost entirely fictionalized. Here are 10 Oscar-nominated films which prove the maxim that real life can sometimes be stranger—or at least more entertaining—than fiction:



The Revenant
Famous as much for the brutal filming conditions and Leonardo DiCaprio's liver-eating antics as its glittering array of pre-Oscar honors, "The Revenant" tells the story of real-life 19th century frontiersman Hugh Glass. Left for dead after a bear attack and grieving his murdered son, he embarks on an epic quest for survival, fueled by a bloodthirsty desire for revenge. The film is up for 12 Oscars, including best actor for DiCaprio, best picture and best director for Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu. Glass was left for dead by his companions in real life, but there's no record that he had a son, and he seems to have been motivated by a desire to get his rifle back and demand an apology, rather than revenge.

Bridge of Spies
Steven Spielberg's espionage thriller is nominated for best picture and five other statuettes, including best supporting actor for Mark Rylance. Set in the Cold War, it tells the story of the 1962 prisoner exchange of American spy plane pilot Francis Gary Powers and graduate student Frederic Pryor for Soviet spy Rudolf Abel. The Washington-based Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum wrote a blog post listing



five myths propagated by the film, including that Powers was tortured. "I didn't expect a documentary, but as someone who is a stickler for historical accuracy and someone especially familiar with this story, the movie was a disappointment," wrote Layne Karafantis, a museum curator.

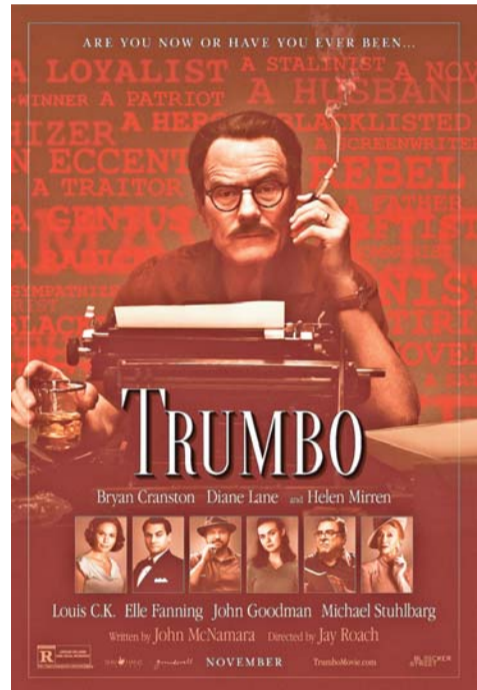
The Big Short
Adam McKay's "The Big Short" is based on Michael Lewis's non-fiction 2010 book of the same name on the 2008 global financial melt-



down. Boasting an all-star cast including Christian Bale, Steve Carell, Ryan Gosling and Brad Pitt, it is nominated for five Oscars, including best picture and best director. Described by The New York Times as a "true crime story and a madcap comedy, a heist movie and a scalding polemic," the film tells the story of Michael Burry, a hedge fund manager who bet against the subprime mortgage market at the heart of the crisis.

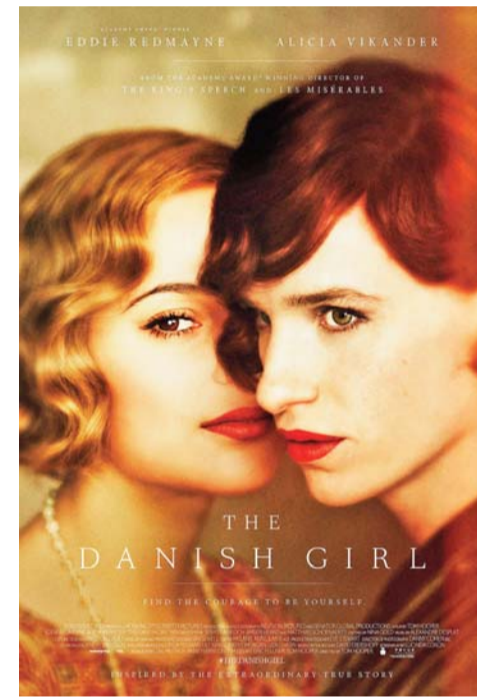
Room
"Room," up for four Oscars including the best actress prize for Brie Larson and Jacob Tremblay, was adapted from Emma Donoghue's novel of the same name, shortlisted for the Booker Prize. The film tells the story of Joy "Ma" Newsome, a young woman and her escape after 10 years in captivity, as told through the eyes of her five-year-old son Jack. While entirely fictional, the story was inspired by the case of Austria's Josef Fritzl, who locked his daughter, Elisabeth, in a basement for 24 years, raped her repeatedly and fathered her seven children.

Spotlight
"Spotlight" depicts the painstaking investigation by The Boston Globe newspaper on how the Catholic Church hushed up the activities of nearly 90 pedophile priests in the northeastern US city in the early 2000s. Nominated for six Oscars and a slew of other prizes, the film is based on a series of stories by the real Spotlight team, who earned the Globe the 2003 Pulitzer Prize for Public Service. Journalists Walter Robinson and Mike Rezendes, part of the investigative team, told AFP last month the child abuse scandals plaguing the Catholic Church are only the tip of the iceberg.



Trumbo
"Trumbo" tells the story of screenwriter Dalton Trumbo, who in 1947 was blacklisted along with other artists for refusing to testify before Congress about alleged Communist propaganda in Hollywood films. Bryan Cranston-of "Breaking Bad" fame-is up for an Oscar for his portrayal of Trumbo, but some critics have attacked the film for being historically misleading. Godfrey Cheshire, of the "Roger Ebert's Journal" website, described the biopic as "another of those simplistic, made-to-order films about the Hollywood blacklist in which the blacklisted movie folks are all innocent, in every conceivable way." Cheshire complained that the film incorrectly has the House Committee on Un-American Activities creating the blacklist when in reality it was drawn up and maintained by Hollywood studio chiefs after the committee's hearings.

Steve Jobs
The biopic of Apple's visionary boss, for which Kate Winslet has a best supporting actress nomination, has been hit by numerous claims of inaccuracy. Pixar and Disney Animation Studios president Edwin Catmull told the Hollywood Reporter that Jobs would "be appalled" by the film, arguing that he was much kinder than the character portrayed by nominee Michael Fassbender.

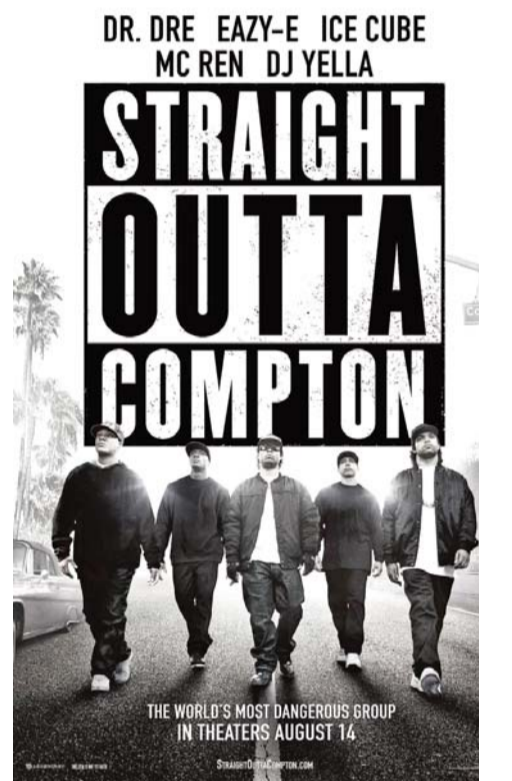


The Danish Girl
"The Danish Girl"—up for four Oscars including best actor for last year's winner Eddie Redmayne—was loosely inspired by the lives of 1920s painters Lili Elbe, one of the first known recipi-

ents of sex reassignment surgery, and her wife Gerda Wegener. The film has been marketed as a "true story," despite containing many of the deliberate historical inaccuracies of the 2000 novel of the same name on which it is based. Some characters and scenes are entirely fictional, and the film distorts the timeline of many of the real-life events in the main characters' lives.

Joy
Comedy drama "Joy" stars Oscar-nominated Jennifer Lawrence as Joy Mangano, a real-life divorced mother-of-three who became a millionaire after inventing the self-wringing Miracle Mop. Mangano is reported to have given director David O. Russell permission to take many liberties with the facts, including giving her a fictional half-sister and two children, rather than three, and making her ex-husband a Venezuelan singer.

Straight Outta Compton
After the biographical drama about Los Angeles-based gangsta rap pioneers N.W.A. was released, MC Ren took to Twitter to complain that his significance in the group had been greatly diminished. The film has also been accused of omitting a number of women who played significant parts in N.W.A.'s success and criticized for whitewashing Dr Dre's history of physically abusing women. Dre issued a statement in response apologizing to "the women I've hurt. I deeply regret what I did and know that it has forever impacted all of our lives." — AFP



Harper Lee leaves questions about her life and work

Harper Lee has died, but the conversation about the author's life and work has only begun. "I think the retrospective will be more useful than what was said during her lifetime, because there are a lot of things we can get down to that were impossible before," Lee's friend Wayne Flynt, an Alabama-based historian, told The Associated Press.

Lee's death Friday at age 89 comes almost exactly a year after her publisher, HarperCollins, stunned the world by announcing that a second novel by the author of "To Kill a Mockingbird" would be released, ending what many believed was a permanent and much-desired literary silence.

With Lee confined to a nursing home in her native Monroeville, Alabama, and communicating only through press releases that many wondered if she even knew about the debate about her state of mind and about the second book, "Go Set a Watchman," took off without her. It will likely grow as those close to her finally speak up and more is learned about what, if any, other writings she left behind.

Divisive memories
"Everybody from the newspaper boy to the checkout girl to the local minister will be remembering Harper Lee with fondness or with an ax to grind, depending on how they were treated," said Lee biographer Charles Shields, whose



Harper Lee's two books, "To Kill a Mockingbird," and "Go Set a Watchman" are displayed with a bouquet of tulips in the Monroe County Heritage Museum old courthouse Friday, Feb 19, 2016, in Monroeville. — AP photos

"Mockingbird: A Portrait of Harper Lee" was published in 2006 and will be reissued this year. Flynt, who delivered the eulogy at Lee's private memorial service Saturday in Monroeville, is among those thinking about a memoir. Lee's retreat from public life over the past half-century created one kind of mystery; last summer's publication of "Go Set a Watchman" started another. Millions who thought they "knew" Atticus Finch, who named their children for him and became



In this Nov 5, 2007 file photo, President Bush, left, presents the Presidential Medal of Freedom to author Harper Lee, center, during a ceremony in the East Room of the White House in Washington.

lawyers because of him were faced with a seemingly different man in the new book, which took place 20 years later but actually had been written before Lee turned to what became "To Kill a Mockingbird." The bold attorney who in the 1930s defended a black man accused of rape in "Mockingbird" had aged into a spiteful reactionary condemning the Supreme Court's 1954 decision to outlaw segregation in public schools. Was the Atticus of

"Mockingbird" was in how it could make anyone from the North or South identify with the issues and with the characters. "For 'Go Set a Watchman,' there was no one you were cheering for," he said. "That for me changed the dynamic."

Great gift
In an email to The Associated Press, award-winning historian Isabel Wilkerson said that Lee had created two equally worthy legacies. "Harper Lee has left us a great gift: a beloved vision of our better selves in 'To Kill a Mockingbird' and a thornier reflection of what lies beneath in her earlier manuscript, 'Go Set a Watchman,'" wrote Wilkerson, best known for "The Warmth of Other Suns," which traced black migration from the South in the 20th century.

"In both, she has bravely given us versions of our country for us to ponder for generations." James McBride, winner of the National Book Award in 2013 for the novel "Good Lord Bird" and author of the upcoming nonfiction "Kill 'em and Leave" about James Brown, said reading "To Kill a Mockingbird" as a child made him want to become a writer and that it "crystallized" for him an awareness of racism that had been "floating around him." Nobel laureate Toni Morrison and others have labeled the book a "white savior" novel, but McBride believes that "Mockingbird" is the best story that Lee could have told. —AP

Kesha loses bid to be freed from contract with top producer

Watching tearfully from a courtroom audience, pop star Kesha lost a bid Friday to be freed from her contract with a top record producer she says drugged, sexually abused and psychologically tormented her.

But the ruling doesn't end the platinum-selling singer's clash with hitmaker Dr. Luke, who denies her claims and says she's smearing him to try to shirk her contract. Friday's decision wasn't the final word on their court fight in New York, to say nothing of related lawsuits in California and Tennessee.

Kesha declined to comment as she left court and hugged some of the scores of fans gathered to support her, many of them dusted with the "Tik Tok" singer's trademark glitter. The dispute is a strikingly personal fight in an industry with a long history of strife between artists and those who work with them.

"I cannot work with this monster," Kesha said in a sworn statement in August that accused Dr. Luke of raping her a decade ago after giving her a pill that knocked her out, browbeating her to lose weight to the point where she didn't eat solid food for eight days, and holding her career hostage because she spoke up. His

abuse led her to develop an eating disorder and suicidal thoughts that prompted two months in a rehabilitation clinic in 2014, her lawyers say.

But Dr. Luke and his attorneys say the singer and her camp are trying to pressure him into letting her out of her contract. "All of their horrific allegations of abuse, threats and other purported misconduct by me against Kesha are completely untrue and deeply hurtful," he said in a sworn statement in December. He has not been charged with any crime, and his lawyer, Christine Lepera, says "he wants his name restored."

Too frightened
Dr. Luke's attorneys note that Kesha herself said he "never made sexual advances at me" during sworn questioning in another lawsuit in 2011. Her lawyers say she was too frightened of him for years to disclose what happened. Dr. Luke, born Lukasz Gottwald, has produced hits by artists including Katy Perry, Rihanna, Pitbull and Miley Cyrus. Kesha Rose Seberty was an 18-year-old unknown from Nashville when she signed a contract with one of his companies in 2005, according to court

papers. Five years later, "Tik Tok" was the No. 1 song in the country. She's released two albums, most recently in 2012.

Kesha continues to play some shows, but her lawyers say the contract has essentially stalled her career because she can't stand working with her accused rapist. Lawyers for Dr. Luke and Sony Music Entertainment - his partner in Kesha's record label, Kemosabe Records - say she's violating the five-album agreement by not recording. They say she doesn't have to work with him personally, though he has rights to produce at least six songs on each of her albums and could pursue damages if he doesn't.

Kesha's lawyer, Mark Geragos, asked a judge Friday to bar enforcement of the contract while the case plays out. While the companies said they're eager to see Kesha make and sell records, Geragos suggested they wouldn't promote anything Kesha might record without Dr. Luke. Manhattan state Supreme Court Justice Shirley Komreich turned down the request, saying Kesha "is being given the opportunity to record." — AP

Malabar Gold & Diamonds announces 'Chain Festival'

Malabar Gold & Diamonds, the leading jewelry retailer announced the details of its exclusive & unique campaign- 'Chain Festival' in Kuwait showcasing an extensive collection of chains. The festival runs from 18 Feb until 12 March 2016 at their outlets in Al Rai, Dajeej, Fahaheel and Watya.

The chain festival showcasing different designs of chains to suit the personal style, occasion and budget of their customers. The customers get a chance to witness and own the rarest and finest collection from India, Turkey, Italy, Malaysia, Singapore and UAE, ranging from lightweight daily wear to heavy party wear in traditional as well as contemporary designs.

Customers can also browse through the new jewelry assortment added in to the most admired exclusive brands in the jewelry segment that includes Ethnix - Handcrafted Designer Jewelry, Era - Uncut Diamond Jewelry, Mine - Diamonds Unlimited, Divine- Indian Heritage Jewelry, Precia - Precious Gem Jewelry and Starlet - Kids Jewelry.

Malabar Gold & Diamonds has always differentiated itself from other jewelry retailers by offering customer friendly policies which are unique like exchange policies and free lifetime maintenance service. Their convenient gold exchange schemes ensure quality service and customer satisfaction.

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FASHION WEEK

LONDON



Models present the creations by Greek designer Mary Katrantzou during their catwalk show at the Autumn / Winter 2016 London Fashion Week in London. — AFP



Models present the creations of designer JW Anderson during their catwalk show at the Autumn / Winter 2016 London Fashion Week in London. — AFP photos



Majid Al-Muhandis

Hala Febrayr concerts light up Kuwait



Abdullah Al-Ruwaished



Abdullah Al-Ruwaished and Nawal



Abdullah Al-Ruwaished, Nawal and Majid Al-Muhandis



Wael Jassar

By Nawara Fattahova

The third musical concert of the Febrayr Al Kuwait 2016 festival organized by Rotana was held on Thursday night at the Baraka Ballroom at Crowne Plaza Hotel. Like other concerts, this one was also fully sold out. The concert commenced at 10:20 pm with popular Lebanese singer Wael Kfoury. He expressed his happiness to be performing in Kuwait and apologized that his voice was not OK as he feels ill due to the cold air-conditioning everywhere in Kuwait. Kfoury released his first album in 1994 and became popular in all Arab countries. He concluded at 11:45 pm.

The second star of this concert was the young Yemeni singer Balqis. Balqis' mother is Emirati and she lives in the UAE. She came onstage at 12:15 am. Balqis began her career in 2012, when she released her first album. She is the daughter of the popular Yemeni singer and composer Ahmad Fathi. In just a few years, she got very popular, and has many fans. She concluded at 1:25 am.

The concert concluded with popular Iraqi-Saudi singer Majid Al-Muhandis, who came onstage at 1:50 am to great applause from the audience, which comprised of a large number of Saudis. Muhandis noted he was very pleased to perform here and was happy that the audience knew all his songs by heart. Muhandis launched his career in the 1990s before releasing his first album. He became very popular after becoming one of the Rotana singers in 2002. He concluded at 4:10 am.

The second concert was held on Friday at the same place and started at 10:20 pm, when Lebanese singer Wael Jassar came on stage. This was the first time he performed in Kuwait, and was happy to meet his fans here. He is not very popular here, so the theatre was not fully occupied yet when he came onstage. He concluded at 11:35 pm.

At 11:50 pm, popular Kuwaiti singer Nawal came onstage. The audience welcomed her warmly but she

couldn't sing all the songs demanded by her fans. Nawal started her career in 1984 when she released her first album, and became the number one female star in the GCC region. He concluded at 1:35 am.

The concert concluded with veteran and popular Kuwaiti singer Abdullah Al-Ruwaished, who came onstage at 2:00 am. He started singing in 1980 after releasing one song, and three years later, he released

his first album. The organizers had prepared pleasant surprises for the audience, as Nawal came onstage and performed two songs with him. Muhandis then joined them, and the three stars presented parts of their songs together, with the audience applauding. Ruwaished then continued singing solo till 4:20 am.



Balqis



Wael Kfoury



Majid Al-Muhandis