

SUBSCRIPTION

Kuwait Times



THE FIRST DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF

THURSDAY, JANUARY 21, 2016

RABI ALTHANI 11, 1437 AH

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4,431 arrested in security campaigns in Hawally, Riggae



At least 21 dead in 'Taleban' attack on Pak university



Israel plans to seize West Bank Farmland



Djokovic, Federer, Williams storm through



AMIR MEETS MEDIA CHIEFS, CALLS FOR UNITY, SECURITY

DOCTORS TO KUWAIT RATHER THAN OVERSEAS TREATMENT • STATE TO RATIONALIZE SPENDING



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AMIR FETES PENA NIETO



KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah honors Mexican President Enrique Pena Nieto with the Mubarak Al-Kabeer medal for his efforts in bolstering bilateral ties at Bayan Palace yesterday. Pena Nieto, on his part, awarded Sheikh Sabah with the Order of the Aztec Eagle medal. — KUNA (See Page 2)



KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets editors-in-chief of local dailies at Bayan Palace yesterday. — KUNA

By Abd Al-Rahman Al-Alyan
Kuwait Times Editor-in-Chief

KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah yesterday reminded about the important role of the media in maintaining unity and called for managing the decline in financial revenues, respecting the judiciary and enhancing GCC integration. The Amir was speaking during a meeting at

Bayan Palace yesterday with Minister of Information and State for Youth Affairs Sheikh Salman Sabah Salem Al-Sabah, Director General of Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) Sheikh Mubarak Al-Sabah, Kuwait Journalists Association board member Fatima Hussein Alissa and editors-in-chief of local daily newspapers. The mass media have to realize the responsibility placed on them for handling the issues

on the local scene, to maintain the security and stability of the nation as well as national unity. The Amir noted that media platforms must not be used to affect national unity. No opportunity must ever be offered to "whomsoever" to capitalize on the current conditions in the region and employ the media to inflame emotions, stir feuds or sectarian strife, the Amir told the meeting.

Continued on Page 13

CONDOLENCES

Kuwait Times management and staff convey their deepest condolences to

Behbehani family

on the sad demise of
Family Patriarch

Mohammad Saleh Yousif Behbehani

May Allah Almighty bestow His mercy on him



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sees off Mexican President Enrique Pena Nieto at the conclusion of his visit to Kuwait.



Minister of Information Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah and Mexican Foreign Secretary Claudia Ruiz Massieu on part of the Mexican Secretariats of Culture and Tourism sign an MoU on developing tourism.

KUWAIT, MEXICO SIGN AGREEMENTS, MEMOS

AMIR, MEXICAN PRESIDENT EXCHANGE MEDALS

KUWAIT: In the presence of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, President of the United Mexican States Enrique Pena Nieto, 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, several agreements and Memorandums of Understanding (MoU) were signed yesterday during the official rounds of talks held at Bayan Palace.

A MoU on the foreign affairs level was signed between First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and Mexican Foreign Secretary Claudia Ruiz Massieu.

A cultural and technical cooperation agreement as well as an MoU on developing tourism was signed by Minister of Information, Minister of State for Youth Affairs, and Chairman of the National Council for Culture, Arts, and Letters (NCCAL) Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah and Mexican Foreign Secretary Claudia Ruiz Massieu on part of the Mexican Secretariats of Culture and Tourism.

An energy cooperation MoU was signed by Minister of Commerce and Industry, Acting Minister Finance, and



KUWAIT: Mexican President Enrique Pena Nieto awards His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah with the Order of the Aztec Eagle medal.

State for Municipal Affairs Essa Al-Kanderi and Mexican Secretary for Transportation and Communication Gerardo Ruiz Esparza.

A MoU on healthcare was signed by Minister of Health Dr Ali Al-Obaidi and Mexican Foreign Secretary Claudia Ruiz Massieu on part of the Mexican Health Secretariat. An MoU to encourage

leading a senior-level delegation, he met with His Highness the Amir in the presence of His Highness the Crown Prince. The official rounds of talks between the two countries began afterwards with the Kuwaiti side being presented by His Highness the Amir, His Highness the Crown Prince, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, and other state officials while the Mexican side was represented by President Nieto and senior Mexican officials.

Deputy Minister of the Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah said in a statement that the meeting focused on boosting relations between the two nations on all possible domains to serve the interest of the Kuwaiti and Mexican people. The talks also focused on issues of mutual interest. Meanwhile, His Highness the Amir honored President Nieto with the Mubarak Al-Kabeer medal for his efforts in bolstering bilateral ties. President Nieto, on his part, awarded His Highness Sheikh Sabah with the Order of the Aztec Eagle medal. Later, His Highness the Amir held a lunch banquet in honor of Nieto. The Mexican President also met separately with His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, and Parliament Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem.

Economic ties

Also, President Nieto and his delegation visited Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI). President Nieto, who was accompanied by Amiri Diwan Advisor Sheikh Fahad Saad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah, was received by the chamber's Chairman



Minister of Health Dr Ali Al-Obaidi and Mexican Foreign Secretary Claudia Ruiz Massieu on part of the Mexican Health Secretariat sign a MoU on healthcare. —Amiri Diwan photos

Ali Thunayan Al-Ghanem, Minister of Commerce and Industry Yousif Al-Ali and members of the chamber. In his speech upon the visit, Nieto praised the strong economic ties between Kuwait and Mexico, stressing the importance of boosting such relations to expand commercial exchange.

Meanwhile, Ghanem also performed a speech where he noted the important role of Mexico's economy (second biggest in Latin America), in connecting the economies of the Pacific and the Atlantic Oceans. He also mentioned that Kuwait's economy also plays a similar role in connecting the economies of the Gulf region with those of the Arab World, Europe and Southeast Asia.

Ghanem said that the commercial exchange between Kuwait and Mexico did not reach the level that both countries aim for yet. Moreover, the official hoped that this visit would be a starting point to boost commercial ties and achieve the highest levels of economic partnership in the fields of industry, tourism and energy.

Kuwait's development plan involves attracting huge foreign investments, said the chairman, adding that the banking, financial and investment sectors have developed prominently in the recent years. Mentioning the negative impact of the severe drop in oil prices on the two countries' economies, Ghanem stressed that "It is vital for both Kuwait and Mexico to cooperate in keeping oil prices stable and achieve economic diversity."

\$2 trillion

Meanwhile, CEO of ProMexico Francisco Gonzales Diaz said that Mexico anticipates joining the global Halal food market, a lucrative force which comprises more than 112

nations and amounts to more than \$2 trillion in annual revenues.

In a statement, Diaz said while Kuwaiti and Mexican commercial ties have improved over the years, there is still room for additional growth. The volume of trade exchange between the two countries has significantly increased, going up from \$14 million

on the global economic stage. Ghanem also acknowledged Mexico's prominent position in the global economic arena, saying that there is unlimited potential for increased cooperation between Kuwait and Mexico. Director General of Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority (KDIPA) Sheikh Dr Meshaal



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah bids farewell to Mexican President Enrique Pena Nieto before his departure.

Acting Oil Minister Dr Yusef Mohammad Al-Ali and Mexican Energy Secretary Pedro Joaquin Coldwell.

An agreement on promoting high educational ties was signed by Minister of Education and Minister of High Education Dr Bader Al-Issa and Mexican Minister of Public Education Aurelio Nuno Mayer. An aviation service agreement was signed by Minister of Communication and Minister of

direct investments was also signed head of Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority (KDIPA) Sheikh Dr Meshal Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and CEO of ProMexico Francisco N Gonzalez Diaz.

Medals of honor

President Nieto had concluded a short visit to Kuwait yesterday. Shortly following his arrival to the country



Mexican President Enrique Pena Nieto, accompanied by Amiri Diwan Advisor Sheikh Fahad Saad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah (second from left), is welcomed upon his arrival at Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry by Chairman Ali Thunayan Al-Ghanem (right) and Minister of Commerce and Industry Yousif Al-Ali (left).

to \$38 million last year, Diaz noted. Mexico is the seventh biggest mobile phone exporter to Kuwait and the fifth biggest steel exporter, a sign that trade ties between the two nations are more robust than what appears on the surface, Diaz noted.

Moreover, Ghanem said that "Kuwait has a vision for a more competitive economic scene", pointing to the country's increasingly active role

Al-Sabah highlighted the longevity of Kuwaiti and Mexican ties, saying the relationship between both nations has grown exponentially over the years. Sheikh Meshaal listed some of KDIPA's landmark achievements, including its ability to procure \$1.2 trillion worth of foreign investment, a sign that the Kuwaiti market has become a magnet to foreign investors, he said. —KUNA

AJMAN TRIBE LEADER PRAISES KING SALMAN

KUWAIT: Ajman tribe's leader Sheikh Sultan bin Salman Al Hethleen stressed that the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdul Aziz leads the political arena with his wisdom and active mobilization of Arab and Muslim nations. Hethleen said Islam is protected by Almighty Allah and that King Salman had realized the plots and schemes by Islam's enemies and acted accordingly.

"Today, King Salman is one of the most supportive Muslim leaders of Islam worldwide," he said, pointing to his decision to launch the 'Decisive Storm' operation against the Houthis in Yemen and whoever supports them in order to counter treacherous plots tailored by enemies of Islam hiding behind various covers and masks with the ultimate goal of looting the Muslim world's wealth.

"King Salman has become an iconic Arab and Muslim leader who is feared by enemies of Islam," he added, noting that serving and protecting Islam had

been the main reason for Saudi Arabia's prosperity, development and strength. He added that present-day Saudi Arabia is the best proof of the great futuristic vision of the founder and unifier of the Arabian Peninsula, the late King Abdul Aziz Al Saud and his sons.

Hethleen said that Allah has honored King Salman by making him responsible for protecting Islam and that he was very keen on carrying out this mission and message to its best forms. He added that King Salman is very keen on rejecting humiliation of Muslims worldwide and accordingly, he supports Muslims in Syria, Yemen, Myanmar and Palestine.

"King Salman is really a great manifestation of the saying 'like father, like son' and was the best advisor for his late brothers," said Hethleen, noting that since he came to power, King Salman has been working hard on developing Saudi Arabia and catching up with the accelerated pace of progress and development in various fields.



Sheikh Sultan bin Salman Al Hethleen



KUWAIT: Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem is pictured with head of the joint parliamentary government committee delegation MP Adel Abdulrahman Al-Asoumi, and his accompanying delegation. — KUNA

SPEAKER RECEIVES BAHRAINI DELEGATION

KUWAIT: Speaker of the National Assembly Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem received at his office yesterday head of the joint parliamentary government committee delegation, MP Adel Abdulrahman Al-Asoumi, and his

accompanying delegation. Ghanem discussed with Asoumi, who is also head of the government parliamentary committee to redirect support the Bahraini Council of representatives, bilateral ties and means of boosting

and developing them, especially in the parliamentary scene. Meanwhile, Ghanem received Kuwaiti Ambassador to Iraq Ghassan Al-Zawawi at his office. The meeting was attended by MPs Rakan Al-Nisf. —KUNA

FEMALE CANDIDATE WINS SEAT IN LABOR SYNDICATE

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: The workers' syndicate at the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor held its elections on Tuesday, which ran smoothly and featured notable participation by general assembly members who gathered to elect a new board of directors. Zainab

Jasser Al-Enezi was elected as the first female member to ever join the syndicate. In a statement to the press, she expressed her joy and gratitude to all those who voted for her and promised to work hard, along with her colleagues, to defend employees' rights, namely those of women.



KUWAIT: Zainab Al-Enezi is pictured during elections of the workers' syndicate at the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor.



Dr Yousif Al-Awadhi — Photos by Fouad Al-Shaikh



Fahd Al-Shuraian



Khaled Al-Otaibi

CANDIDATE REJECTS BRIBE TO PULL OUT OF ELECTIONS

DR AWADHI HAILS KUWAIT'S HEALTH SERVICES

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: Candidate Fuhaid Al-Ajmi yesterday claimed he had rejected an offer of half a million dinars to withdraw from the by-elections in the third constituency. He called for changing all Cabinet members except for the minister of awqaf, because he studied with him in Cairo and knows him well.

On the eighth day of filing nominations for the by-elections, the total number of candidates reached 42 including one female candidate, said the elections department manager Lt Col Salah Al-Shatti, noting that candidates would be refunded their KD 50

deposit after the elections if they get at least 10 percent of the votes, otherwise the sum would be sent to the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor.

Health services

Speaking after filing his application, candidate Dr Yousif Al-Awadhi stressed that health services were excellent in Kuwait with minor exceptions of some medical errors. "Being a doctor myself and being in such a small country, news about mishaps travels faster than they would in larger countries," he said, pointing out that medical errors happen worldwide and he was very proud of

Kuwaiti doctors.

Candidate Fahd Al-Shuraian said that he served as a public servant for 35 years and that his electoral program would mainly focus on the economy. Candidate Abdul Wahab Al-Ameer said that he would mainly focus on national unity and urged everyone to compete in showing their love for Kuwait, especially at this very critical turning point in its history in view of the tense regional and international situations. Candidate Khaled Al-Otaibi said that his program focuses on fighting corruption in all forms. He added that voters already know him through his work in the co-op field for eight years.

FM, UK MINISTER DISCUSS TIES

KUWAIT: First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah received a phone call yesterday from UK Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs Philip Hammond. During the call, they discussed bilateral relations in all aspects, and ways to coordinate efforts to address the current challenges in the region. They also considered the latest regional and international developments as well as issues and matters of mutual interest.

Meanwhile, Director of Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA) Bader Al-Saad and visiting Lord Mayor of London Jeffrey Evans reviewed aspects bilateral economic and investment cooperation. In a press statement, Saad hailed the role of KIA as a long-term investor in promoting ties with the UK as well as playing a vital role in maintaining the strength of the relationship between the two countries. "The UK is keen on continuing partnership with Kuwait in its desire to sustain economic growth," Evans said. —KUNA

KUWAITI WINS KING FAISAL INT'L PRIZE

RIYADH: President of the Center for Research and Studies on Kuwait (CRSK) Professor Abdullah bin Youssef Al-Ghunaim was proclaimed as winner of the 38th King Faisal International Prize - 2016. His collection of researches on "Muslim's geographical heritage" won the award for the category of Islamic Studies, Prince Khalid Al-Faisal bin Abdulaziz, adviser to Saudi King and governor of Makkah Region, announced at a ceremony on Tuesday night. Ghunaim's works such as

"Al-Lu'lu'a," "Arab geographic heritage," and "record of Arab earthquakes," helped document several geological phenomena in the Arab region and revive Arabic terminology relating to the surface of Earth, noted Prince Khalid who is also the Executive President of King Faisal Foundation and Chairman of King Faisal International Prize. Ghunaim is the second Kuwaiti laureate of the King Faisal International Prize after late Dr Abdulrahman Al-Sumait won the award for serving Islam and

Muslims in 1996. The ceremony to announce the laureates of the international prize was held at Al-Khozama Center, in the presence of members of the selection committees. Prince Khaled Al-Faisal praised the efforts of Kingdom of Saudi Arabia under the leadership of King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud and the Crown Prince and the Deputy Crown Prince to serve Islam and Muslims of the world. He also paid tribute to the organizers of the prestigious prize. —KUNA

KUWAIT SUPPORTS UN EFFORTS IN WEAPONS DISARMAMENT, CIVILIANS PROTECTION: DIPLOMAT

WASHINGTON: Kuwait supports UN efforts in weapons' disarmament and civilians protection and it calls for measures to bring those responsible for violating international humanitarian law to justice, said a senior Kuwaiti diplomat late Tuesday.

Speaking at the UNSC debate on the protection of civilians, acting charge d'affaires of the Kuwaiti permanent delegation to the UN headquarters in New York



Abdulaziz Al-Jarallah

Abdulaziz Saud Al-Jarallah said that the increasing number of armed conflicts had brought the number of refugees and displaced to 60 million worldwide. He

added that the conflicts also resulted in the need for urgent humanitarian aid which is barely covering the needs of refugees and displaced.

Despite the adoption of resolution 1265 on September 17th, 1999 connected with the protection of civilians during armed conflicts, the international community did not provide effective measures to protect innocent people who continue to suffer the consequences, said the Kuwaiti diplomat who called for steps to hold violators accountable for their murderous acts.

In connection with the issue at hand, the Kuwaiti diplomat touched on the Palestinian situation, noting that through six decades, Israel had been violating rights of the people of Palestine. He said that the international community should take serious measures to halt the inhumane Israeli policies against Palestinians.

Jarallah also touched on the Syrian conflict, saying that the ongoing crisis was the worst in modern history, stressing that the UNSC should take serious measures to protect Syrian civilians. The upcoming fourth donors conference in Syria, to be held in London on February fourth, will continue what Kuwait has started in the three previous events, affirmed Jarallah, saying that the international community should intensify its efforts to help the Syrian refugees. The donors' conferences in Kuwait had gathered \$7 billion in which Kuwait donated a sum of \$1.3 billion. Jarallah also reflected Kuwait's keenness on bringing security and peace to Yemen, calling for measures to help civilians caught in the conflict there. —KUNA

KUWAIT'S AMBASSADOR MEETS ZIMBABWE'S PARLIAMENT SPEAKER

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Ambassador to Zimbabwe Bader Nasser Al-Houti yesterday met with Zimbabwe's parliament speaker Jacob Mudenda at the parliament house in Harare. During the meeting, they discussed bilateral relations between both countries and ways to enhance them, beside the activities of the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED), the Kuwaiti embassy in Zimbabwe said in a statement to KUNA. Arrangements are underway for a planned visit by speaker Mudenda to Kuwait, it said. — KUNA

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KUWAIT: Senior Interior Ministry officials, including Undersecretary Lieutenant General Suleiman Al-Fahad oversee a crackdown on lawbreakers in Hawalli and Al-Reqie



CRACKDOWN NABS 4,431 LAWBREAKERS: MINISTRY

KUWAIT: In its campaign to nab lawbreakers, the Ministry of Interior combed the suburbs of Hawalli and Al-Reqie where it arrested 4,431 lawbreakers, a press statement by the ministry said yesterday. A strong show of force was carried out by ministry personnel on the scene in those suburbs to prevent lawbreakers from fleeing the

area, said the statement. After thorough vetting, 1,786 of the people arrested were let go because their residency status were deemed correct, said the statement. It stressed that all expat residents must carry with them at all times proof of identification documents to avert being arrested and potentially at

some point being deported, said the statement. Further, it urged businesses, citizens, and residents to make sure that those whom they hire for work have valid residency permits and not to hire anyone with no residency documentation or with an expired one to avoid legal accountability. —KUNA

GOVT, MPs MEET NEXT WEEK OVER SUBSIDIES

LAWMAKER CRITICIZES KIA ACTIONS IN STOCK MARKET

KUWAIT: A national assembly team elected by MPs last week to negotiate with the government over its plans to reduce subsidies and other measures, will meet next Sunday to work out its strategy.

Head of the team MP Youssef Al-Zalzalah said yesterday the team will discuss the issue of scrapping some subsidies and will coordinate with the assembly bureau to set a date for a meeting with the government team in the same week.

During the meeting, the government is expected to brief the assembly team about its plans to reduce or lift subsidies provided to commodities and services.

The government had assured the assembly that it will not take any decision regarding the issue unilaterally.

The state budget is projecting a deficit of KD. 7 billion but economic reports expected a smaller shortfall. This deficit will be the first after 16 years of consecutive windfall that allowed Kuwait to build massive fiscal reserves in excess of \$600 billion.

Petrol is expected to be on top of a list of subsidies to be reduced or totally scrapped, followed by electricity and water. The measures are expected to extend to a large number of social aid mechanisms. The bill for energy subsidies in the current fiscal year budget is around KD. 2.1 billion with social aid and support accounting for some KD. 2.4 billion.

'Chaotic' dealing

MP Abdullah Al-Turajji meanwhile criticized what he called the government's 'chaotic' dealing with the issue of subsidies and facing the consequences of the sharp fall in oil prices, adding that contradictory statements from government officials have made citizens concerned over the issue.

The lawmaker blasted the government's confusing policies and cited the example of Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA) using the so-called national portfolio to support selected shares on the Kuwait Stock Exchange.

He said it is strange that the government is tak-

ing a tough line toward citizens by scrapping or



MP Youssef Al-Zalzalah



MP Abdullah Al-Turajji

reducing subsidies while at the same time uses the national portfolio to provide hundreds of millions of dinars in support for the bourse.

He said that there is no interpretation for this policy except that the government will use the funds it saves through reducing subsidies to support sides which do not deserve any support.

TWO ARMED ROBBERIES IN WAHA

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Two cases of armed robbery were registered at Waha police station by a bedoon and an Egyptian. In the first case, an Egyptian man said he went to an address to deliver a meal worth more than KD 12, and when he arrived a man took the meal and pulled him inside. He then beat him along with another man, then threw him out.

In the second case, a bedoon man who works in a feed store said he was selling feed out of a

car when a person asked for two bundles and gave him KD 20. When the bedoon was about to give him the change, he snatched his wallet and dragged him when he hung onto the car.

Drivers mugged

A citizen accused an unidentified person of stealing KD 5,100 from his car after he broke the car's side window. Meanwhile, an Ethiopian who drives a roaming taxi told Fahaheel police that an unidentified person pulled a knife on him and stole his 2008-model car.

SHEIKH SABAH AL-KHALED CHAIRS OIC EMERGENCY MEETING TODAY

JEDDAH/RIYADH: First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah chairs today an emergency meeting for the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Council of Foreign Ministers. The one-day meeting, to be held at the OIC headquarters in Jeddah, was called for by Saudi Arabia to discuss repercussions of recent attacks on the Kingdom's embassy in Tehran and its consulate in Mashhad. Kuwait is the president of the current session of the OIC's Council of Foreign Ministers.

The opening session will start with a statement by head of the meeting, followed by the OIC Secretary General Iyad Amin Madani. Then, a closed session will be held. Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled and Madani will hold a press conference to announce the final communiqué of the emergency meeting.

Ambassadors of OIC member states will hold a preparatory meeting prior to the foreign ministers. On January 3, Riyadh severed diplomatic ties with Iran after protestors broke into the Saudi embassy and consulate in the country following the execution of 47 people on "terrorist" charges in the Kingdom.

Separately, Board Chairman and Director General of Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) Sheikh Mubarak Al-Duaij Al-Ibrahim Al-Sabah called the meeting of representatives of news agencies of Gulf Cooperation Council

Urgent meeting

Separately, Board Chairman and Director General of Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) Sheikh Mubarak Al-Duaij Al-Ibrahim Al-Sabah called the meeting of representatives of news agencies of Gulf Cooperation Council



Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled

(GCC) member states an 'urgent one,' in light of growing turmoil in the region. The one-day meeting in the Saudi capital Riyadh is a forum that aims to enhance regional media cooperation and discuss the current regional and international developments.

In a press statement upon arrival,

Sheikh Mubarak Al-Duaij underscored the importance of the meeting, amidst a critical time in the region, which necessitates persistent cooperation amongst Gulf news agencies. Various suggestions will be discussed during the meeting, ones that will be conveyed to Information Ministers of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member states for their scheduled meeting slated for March in Riyadh.

Gulf media organizations, particularly, news agencies have seen vast improvements in productivity, Sheikh Mubarak Al-Duaij noted. The Director General of KUNA also called on regional news agencies to employ the latest technological means to attain further growth and facilitate the works of journalists.

Sheikh Mubarak Al-Duaij also acknowledged efforts made by KUNA's Center for Development of Media Skills in assisting aspiring journalists to hone their skills through an array of productive training courses. He also thanked Chairman of Saudi Press Agency (SPA) for hosting the meeting, one that would go a long way in enhancing cooperation amongst Arab news agencies. —KUNA



DIVE TEAM LIFTS BOAT SUNK IN KHIRAN MARINA FOR 20 YEARS

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Dive Team, an organization of the Environmental Voluntary Foundation, salvaged a boat that had been dangerously left on the tourism company's seabed for two decades on Tuesday 19 January. The boat was 22 feet long and weighed 3 tons.

Waleed Al-Shatti, the Dive Team's Marine Operations Officer, reports that the boat was sunk 6 meters under the park's northern dock. Full of sludge and debris, the sunken vessel created pollution problems around the area and posed a potential hazard to sailors and swimmers as well as marine life.

Taking advantage of the day's good underwater visibility and weather, Team divers went down to the boat and used ropes, belts, and large air bags to carefully lift the boat from the seabed. Once the boat was floating underwater, volunteers and workers on the marina's dock helped maneuver the boat free of the pier. Another boat

tugged the submerged vessel to the marina's boat launch, where it was removed by bulldozers.

Shatti said that this operation was one of the Kuwait Dive Team's many volunteer-based environmental projects intended to preserve Kuwait's marine environment and coasts. The Team's most prominent activities include salvaging boats and ships, abandoned fishing nets, and other debris from Kuwait Bay in order to protect wildlife and enhance safety for seafarers. In 2015, the Dive Team successfully removed 70 meters of damaged oil pipelines in cooperation with the authorities. Shatti thanked Al-Shatti Touristic Enterprises Company and EQUATE Petrochemical Company for their cooperation and support for this important work.

The Kuwait Dive Team also runs a Mobile Beach Clean-up Unit, engaging students and community members in removing small rubbish from the country's coastlines.

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- 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: US Ambassador to Kuwait Douglas Silliman is pictured with representatives of organizers and other officials while touring the Horeca Kuwait 2016 exhibition.

US AMBASSADOR PRAISES HORECA KUWAIT 2016

KUWAIT: The United States' Ambassador to Kuwait Douglas Silliman highly praised the 'outstanding level' of the Horeca Kuwait 2016 exhibition, pointing out that the exhibition had gained good reputation for the superb way it is organized and its ability to attract a large number of companies specialized in hospitality, food industries, hotel equipment and tourism.

Speaking to reporters while touring the exhibition along with his spouse, Silliman stressed his satisfaction with the multitude of American

companies taking part in the exhibition. Silliman was accompanied in the tour by Nabila Al-Anjeri, the General Manager of Leaders Group Company for Consultancy and Development, Joumana Dammous, General Manager of Hospitality Services Company, and Mohammed Najia, Chairman of the event's organizing committee.

The exhibition was also visited on its second day by the International Women Group that includes wives of a number of ambassadors designated to Kuwait, in addition to a large number of businessmen specialized in

hospitality, food industries, hotel equipment and tourism and hundreds of visitors interested in these sectors.

The organizing committee held a lunch in the honor of participating companies, during which it honored participants, sponsors and the members of the cooking competition jury panel. On its conclusion yesterday, the exhibition also witnessed launching the chefs' club with participation of 40 founding chefs who exchanged expertise and consultations to develop their profession and to jointly take part in international culinary contests.



Members of the cooking competition jury panel are honored during the event.

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Al-Anbaa

THE FIRST KUWAITI GRADUATE

By Dr Saleh Al-Ojairi

In 1846, a boy was born under the name of Musaed Abdullah Al-Azmi in Kuwait, where he grew up and developed great passion for knowledge and science. Having no other alternatives for breadwinning at that time but diving for pearls, Musaed took up that profession, knowing that Kuwaiti divers travelled to seabeds in Ceylon, which was then known as Serendib and is now known as Sri Lanka. But on arriving in Sri Lanka, he learnt that the British company hiring divers to dive for pearls had postponed the project for three years to allow pearl oysters to breed and let the sea 'rest' for a while.

He was shocked by the news because he neither spoke the language to communicate with people nor had enough money to sustain himself. Accordingly, he had to work as a porter at the port. Meanwhile, a large ship docked at Ceylon port and the captain announced hiring some hands to work onboard. Musaed applied and worked on that ship that sailed to Aden, then northwards through the Bab Al-Mandab Strait into the Red Sea until it reached the Suez Canal, where sailors had to wait for three days until the ship was allowed to sail through.

"This is the best chance for anyone wishing to see Egypt", they were told and all sailors went ashore including Musaed, who went to Cairo and joined Al-Azhar university for seven years before he graduated with a habilitation degree (al-alamiyya) in religious sciences, jurisprudence (fiqh) and Arabic grammar.

Now a cleric, Azmi asked one of his Azhar teachers if there was chance for him to learn a profession in Egypt so that he could use it when he went back to Kuwait. The professor told him that some Belgian doctors had arrived from Europe to vaccinate the Egyptians against chickenpox. So Musaed went to those medics and learnt the profession, and thus became the first Kuwaiti graduate and vaccinator against chickenpox in 1881.

Azmi later went to perform hajj with Egyptian pilgrims, and in Makkah met some Kuwaiti pilgrims with whom he returned to Kuwait, where people were very happy and proud of him. As the first graduate and specialized vaccinator, he started vaccinating people against the epidemic. He used to import food from India or Bahrain and, sometime, make it himself.

However, an unexpected development happened when he said something that was traditionally unacceptable at those times. He asked people to teach their daughters to read and write, which angered people who deemed this as against both tradition and morals. Accordingly, Sheikh Musaed Al-Azmi had to leave for Bahrain, where he settled down, bought some palm trees and lived until he passed away in 1943.

In my opinion, Sheikh Musaed Al-Azmi was ahead of his time and thus Kuwait did not benefit from his Azhar degree, nor from being the first Kuwaiti graduate and vaccinator. May Almighty rest his soul in peace!

— Translated by Kuwait Times



MINISTRY EMPLOYEE QUESTIONED OVER STEALING ENERGY FEES

KUWAIT: Security authorities sent an employee at the Ministry of Electricity and Water's consumers sector to be public prosecution for questioning after he deceived some consumers into believing that he was able help them pay their large debts, then he gets the money to himself.

Ministry sources said the suspect

was charged with stealing public funds by taking the money of consumers for himself. "The ministry represented in its undersecretary Mohammad Bushari, and Consumers Sector Affairs Secretary Abdallah Al-Hajiri are determined to collect the ministry debts and this matter is governed by decisions that cannot be bypassed," said the sources who

spoke on the condition of anonymity.

The ministry had earlier warned consumers against following practices that are contrary to its instructions. It said the ministry exempts some cases and facilities payments for consumers as long as they have documents proving their inability to pay according the decision in this regard. — Al-Qabas



KUWAIT: Kuwait Fire Service Directorate discussed the activation of a communication program that helps handicapped persons if any of them gets involved in an emergency with the disabled public authority, during a meeting between KFSM Director General Lt Gen Yousef Al-Ansari and Director General of DPA Hamad Al-Shatti. — By Hanan Al-Saadoun

Al-Anbaa

SALMAN: KING OF DECISIVENESS, DETERMINATION

By Sami Al-Nisf

The first anniversary of the succession of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdul Aziz is only a few days away. Ever since he was the governor of Riyadh, King Salman has been known to be very decisive with great passion for culture, and had many friends amongst Arab and foreign intellectuals and politicians, which made him a remarkable strategic leader. His achievements earned him historic GCC, Arab and Islamic leadership that is admired and appreciated by various peoples.

King Salman learnt that, just like in sports, the rule of the game shows that focusing on defensiveness and courtesies would lead to no wins. It would only lead to draws or defeats and that the only way to victory was to take the initiative, just like he and his young commanders and leaders did, without being beguiled by

King Salman learnt that, just like in sports, the rule of the game shows that focusing on defensiveness and courtesies would lead to no wins.

sweet talk that hides bad intentions and greed. He learnt historic lessons passed down to us by Imam Ali bin Abi Taleb, such as his saying that: "People invaded in their own land live in humiliation" and that of Abi Tammam that says: "Swords are more truthful than words, fortunetellers and diplomats' correspondence."

The Deputy Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, Second Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense, Prince Mohammed bin Salman warned Saleh and Houthi troops in Yemen and their defiance only brought them bad consequences when King Salman formed an Arab alliance (then a Muslim one) to defend Arab countries starting with Yemen, where the alliance managed to free 75 percent of it in a few months.

We can only imagine how things could have been like if it had not been for the Arab alliance intervening in Yemen where its troops put an end to Houthis' expansion schemes since the beginning of their coup.

— Translated by Kuwait Times

GOVT REFERS KFA TO COURT

KUWAIT: The government filed several lawsuits against chairmen and members of Kuwait's football, volleyball, basketball and swimming associations demanding compensation for what it described as their actions that led to the suspension of Kuwait sports activities. The government asked for an initial KD 5,001 compensation from each association pending further demands of KD 400 million that had been spent on sports in the past five years. The case brief said that Kuwait Football Association (KFA) had missed the deadlines to contest the suspension decisions before international courts, and thus deliberately brought damage to Kuwait sports activities, leading to suspending them and defaming Kuwait worldwide. The case brief also noted that the Kuwait Olympic Committee had conveyed false messages to the International Olympic Committee concerning sports laws in Kuwait, claiming that the government interferes in sports. — Al-Qabas



STRICT MEASURES TO PREVENT EXPORTING SUBSIDIZED GOODS

KUWAIT: In a bid to protect public funds and fight unjustified foodstuff price increases, the ministry of commerce and industry contacted the customs department calling for following very strict measures to prevent subsidized consumer goods from leaving the country. Referring to previous Cabinet decisions, the ministry banned exporting meat, poultry, fish and other subsidized goods and urged relevant ministry departments in addition to the Ministry of Interior, the Kuwait Ports Authority and Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources to strictly put this ban into practice. — Al-Rai

Crime

Report

Crackdown on 'suspicious' cafes

KUWAIT: Capital security forces raided some suspicious cafes in an inspection campaign that resulted in closing down six of them for operating without licenses and arresting six workers in violation of residency laws. The campaign, led by Major General Ibrahim Al-Tarrah, also resulted in removing 12 abandoned vehicles, arresting two truck drivers for dumping construction rubble and filing 26 traffic citations.

Fatal crash

An Asian man was instantly killed when he lost control over his vehicle and it flipped over along Abdaly highway, said security sources. An investigation was opened to determine the circumstances behind the accident.

Thieves caught

Farwniya detectives arrested three Asians for robbing a compatriot, said security sources, noting that detectives also found that the three suspects were in violation of residency laws.

Watches stolen

An Asian watch salesman accused a woman who had asked him to deliver seven valuable watches to her in Jahra of stealing the watches and fleeing without paying for him. According to the case papers, the man said that he was sent to show the watches to the customer so that she could select one. On arriving in Jahra, he called her and she met him somewhere, taking all the watches and asking him to wait till she got the money.

Girl harassed

An ill girl, who just left Egaila clinic after seeing a doctor, reported that an unidentified person harassed her in the clinic's parking lot, said security sources, noting that the girl called the police. When a police patrol arrived, the harasser fled, but the girl provided them with his vehicle registration number.

Drug possession

A citizen and a bedoon were arrested in Sulaibiya with two bags of meth and a joint ready for smoking, said security sources. Another citizen was also arrested in Saad Al-Abdullah with 41 hashish joints and meth, said security sources.

Couple sentenced

The court of misdemeanors sentenced a female citizen and her boyfriend to three months in prison for exchanging pornographic photos over Instagram, said security sources. Case papers indicate that the woman's husband saw the photos on his wife's mobile phone and hired a lawyer to file the case.

BURGAN BANK'S THURAYA DRAW WINNER ANNOUNCED



KUWAIT: Borgan Bank recently announced its Thuraya Account winner of the Audi R8 sports car. The winner Sanaa Khaleel Ismael Khaleel expressed her excitement for being the new winner of the Audi R8 with Al-Thuraya Salary Account from Borgan Bank. Al-

Thuraya Account is the only salary account in Kuwait that provides its customers with the chance to win Audi R8 Cars on a quarterly basis. The account aims at raising the frequency of customers winning one of the world's most admired sports cars. Opening an

Al-Thuraya account is simple; customers are required to visit their nearest Borgan Bank branch and obtain all the necessary details, or simply call the bank's Call Center 1804080. For further information, customers can visit the bank's website on www.borgan.com.

AL-TIJARIA SPONSORS ENGINEERING, PETROLEUM STUDENTS



Shoug Al-Radwan in Marketing and Communication Department has stated that the Real Estate Company is constantly supporting youth education especially the College of Engineering and Petroleum students thru financially supporting them all year around, encouraging

them to do research and be creative. To come up with graduation projects that serves the urban and social development in the State of Kuwait.

Al-Tijaria Real Estate Company is keen on developing youth and encouraging them to give their best as part of its social responsi-



bility contribution and commitment to apply and enhance corporate governance principles. Al-Tijaria also believes in the importance of developing this category considering it the rock of developing economic and social wellbeing and representing future leadership positions.

Radwan has added that Al-Tijaria Real Estate Company is dedicating its efforts and care towards the youth as part of its social responsibility program and is liaising all of its resources to support them throughout education and supplying the labor market with distinguished capabilities.



Military chiefs gather in Paris to bolster Islamic State fight

FACED WITH EU, US CRITICISM, ISRAELI INSULTS FLY

21 KILLED IN PAK UNIVERSITY ATTACK

TALEBAN MAKE CONTRADICTING RESPONSIBILITY CLAIMS

CHARSADDA, Pakistan: At least 21 people died when gunmen armed with grenades and Kalashnikovs attacked a university in Pakistan yesterday, with all four attackers killed by security forces who moved in under thick fog to halt the bloodshed. The assault was claimed by a Pakistani Taliban faction but branded "un-Islamic" by the umbrella group's leadership, who vowed to hunt down those responsible.

Police, soldiers and special forces swarmed the Bacha Khan university in the northwestern town of Charsadda from the ground and the air to try to shut down the assault. Television images showed female students running for their lives and witnesses reported at least two explosions. Pir Shahab, superintendent of investigations in Charsadda, said the 21 dead included one professor, two gardeners, one caretaker, and 17 students. Four attackers killed by security forces were not included in the toll, he said.

Regional police chief Saeed Wazir, who also put the toll at 21, told AFP that most of the student victims were shot dead at a hostel for male students. An AFP reporter saw pools of blood and overturned furniture at the hostel, where security forces cornered the four gunmen. "More than 30 others including students, staff and security guards were wounded," Wazir added. He said the attackers had "taken advantage of the fog," adding that visibility was less than 10 m at the time.

Umar Mansoor, a commander of the Hakimullah Mehsud faction of the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistani (TTP), claimed responsibility for the attack. Security forces believe he was the mastermind behind a similar attack on an army-run school in nearby Peshawar in 2014 that left more than 150 people dead. The TTP's central leadership denied any involvement. "TTP strongly condemns today's attack and disassociates itself completely from this un-Islamic attack," spokesman Muhammad Khurasani said on Twitter, vowing that the group would bring those behind it to justice.

The denial appeared to indicate continued infighting in the Pakistani Taliban, as the Islamic State group seeks to recruit its disaffected fighters. A senior security official said the faces of the attackers were recognizable and their fingerprints had been taken, adding: "We hope we will soon identify them." One had a mobile phone in his hand connected to Mansoor's faction, he said. The official said two of the attackers were teenagers while

the others were in their early 20s. They were armed with hand grenades and Kalashnikovs.

Teacher Fighting Back

Witnesses said the professor killed in the assault, Syed Hamid Husain, had fought back against the intruders, adding he had been known as "The Protector" even before he died shielding his students. Geology student Zahoor Ahmed said the chemistry lecturer had warned him not to leave the building after the first shots were fired. "He was holding a pistol in his hand," he said. "Then I saw a bullet hit him. I saw two militants were firing. I ran inside and then managed to flee by jumping over the back wall."

Another student told reporters he was in class when he heard gunshots. "We saw three terrorists shouting, 'Allah is great!' and rushing towards the stairs of our department," he said. "One student jumped out of the classroom through the window. We never saw him get up." He also described seeing the chemistry professor holding a pistol and firing at the attackers. "Then we saw him fall down and as the terrorists entered the (registrar's) office we ran away." "He would always help the students and he was the one who knew all their secrets... He was referred to by students as 'The Protector,'" geology student Waqar Ali told AFP.

A university security guard told AFP the attackers had scaled a wall to enter the campus, apparently killing a caretaker in a school guesthouse before moving on to the boys' hostel. An AFP reporter described a TV remote lying in a pool of blood in front of the television near an electric heater and thermos of tea inside the guesthouse, whose walls were scarred by bullets. Shabbir Khan, a lecturer in the English department, said he was about to leave his university housing for the department when firing began. "Most of the students and staff were in classes when the firing began," Khan said. There had been no threat against the university, its vice chancellor said. The gunmen attacked as the university prepared to host a poetry recital yesterday afternoon to commemorate the death anniversary of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, a popular ethnic Pashtun independence activist after whom the university is named. Vice Chancellor Fazal Rahim told reporters that the university teaches over 3,000 students and was hosting an additional 600 visitors for the poetry recital.



CHARSADDA, Pakistan: Pakistani students look at a pool of blood following an attack at Bacha Khan University outside the city of Peshawar yesterday. — AP

Echoes of 2014 Massacre

Yesterday's attack spurred widespread outrage from social media users in Pakistan, with a candlelight vigil for the victims held in the southwestern city of Quetta and dozens of people protesting in the port mega-city of Karachi. Pakistan's Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif declared a national day of mourning today and directed the country's security agencies to hunt those responsible for the attack, his office said. The assault, which Amnesty International said could be branded a war crime, was

also condemned globally, including by India, the EU and the US. It had chilling echoes of the Taliban assault on the Army Public School in Peshawar in Dec 2014, Pakistan's deadliest-ever attack. Most of the victims were children. After a public outcry, the military intensified an offensive in the tribal areas where extremists had previously operated with impunity, and the government launched a crackdown. Mansoor, the alleged mastermind behind the attack who also claimed yesterday's assault, vowed in 2014 to continue his "revenge" for the military crackdown. — Agencies

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AIRBNB'S WEST BANK SETTLEMENT LISTINGS SLAMMED

NOFEI PRAT, West Bank: Like many vacation rental operators around the world, Moshe Gordon has listed his property on Airbnb, luring visitors with a stunning vista of desert landscape and boasting of proximity to both Jerusalem and the Dead Sea. What it doesn't mention is that the "cozy fully furnished" apartment, with its cable TV, Internet and hiking trails, is in a West Bank settlement.

Airbnb is coming under Palestinian criticism for such listings, which some find misleading for failing to mention the property is on occupied land claimed by the Palestinians. Such criticism puts Airbnb in the crosshairs of an increasingly aggressive global boycott movement and has injected a dose of Mideast politics into the sharing economy.

The Palestinians say that by contributing to the settlement economy, Airbnb, like other companies doing business in the West Bank, helps perpetuate Israel's settlement enterprise. Senior Palestinian official Saeb Erekat sent a letter to Airbnb's CEO last week demanding the company cease working with settlers.

"Any international company like Airbnb that profits from the occupation and from our blood must be held accountable and brought to justice," said Husam Zomlot, a Palestinian ambassador at-large and former adviser to Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas.

The complaint coincides with the release Tuesday of a report by Human Rights Watch that said that businesses operating in settlements contribute to and benefit from "an inherently unlawful and abusive system that violates the rights of Palestinians". Israel captured the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and east Jerusalem in the 1967 war and began building settlements soon after. While Israel withdrew from Gaza in 2005, the settler population in east Jerusalem and the West Bank has ballooned to almost 600,000. The Palestinians claim these areas as parts of a future state, a position that has wide global support.

Impatience

The Palestinians and much of the international community have grown

impatient with Israel's settlement policies, saying the construction runs counter to the goal of establishing a Palestinian state alongside Israel. On Monday, the European Union, Israel's largest trading partner, said that all its agreements with Israel must "unequivocally and explicitly" show that they cannot apply to occupied territories. The move followed a November decision to label Israeli products made in the West Bank. Many Israelis fear the step could be a precursor to a full-fledged ban on settlement products such as wines, dates and cosmetics, which make up a tiny percentage of Israeli exports but would set an ominous precedent.

Also alarming to Israel has been an international movement calling for boycotts against settlement products or any company doing business in the West Bank. The so-called BDS movement claims responsibility for pressuring some large companies to stop or alter operations in Israel or the West Bank, including carbonated drink maker SodaStream, French construction company Veolia and interna-



WEST BANK: In this photo taken Jan 17, 2016, a cat jumps at a guesthouse advertised on Airbnb in this settlement. —AP

tional mobile phone giant Orange.

Although the boycott movement's economic impact has been minimal, it has helped tarnish Israel's international

image. While the Human Rights Watch report said it was not calling for a boycott, it urged businesses to cease their settlement operations. —AP

FACED WITH CRITICISM, ISRAELI INSULTS FLY

JERUSALEM: US and European criticism of Israeli actions in the occupied West Bank have drawn a furious response from Israel this week, including a former official dismissing the US ambassador to Tel Aviv as a "little Jew boy". Although the concerns expressed by Israel's closest allies were partly cloaked in diplomatic language they struck a nerve in Israel, which is anxious to counter what it sees as growing attempts to isolate it over its policies towards Palestinians.

Ambassador Dan Shapiro's supposed misstep was to observe in a speech to a security conference that Israel applies the law differently to Israelis and Palestinians living in the West Bank. "There seem to be two standards," he said. It is a point diplomats and human rights groups frequently make, identifying the fact that Palestinians are subject to Israeli military law as part of Israel's 49-year occupation, while Israeli settlers are subject to civil law.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu immediately jumped into the fray, calling Shapiro's comments "unacceptable and wrong". He met with Shapiro, who is Jewish and is usually regarded by Israeli officials as a "close friend", to discuss it. There was no such attempt to paper over differences from Avigdor Liebesman, a former adviser to Netanyahu and a frequent commentator on Israeli TV. After viewing a clip of Shapiro's comments during a debate on Channel 2, Bushinsky said: "To put it bluntly, it was a statement typical of a little Jew boy," he said, using the derogatory Yiddish term "yehudoni" to describe the ambassador, who is in his mid-40s. The US embassy declined to comment.

The criticism heaped on Shapiro was not dissimilar to that aimed at Swedish Foreign Minister Margot Wallstrom, who last week

called for an independent investigation into Israel's efforts to quell a surge in violence, saying that in some cases Palestinian assailants were being killed "extrajudicially". Netanyahu's energy minister called Wallstrom "anti-Semitic, whether consciously or not", and the prime minister did not back away from that characterization, saying of Wallstrom's suggestion: "it's outrageous, it's immoral and it's stupid."

Appearing before the foreign media last week, Netanyahu was asked for his response to those who say Israel increasingly acts as if it is above criticism and cannot be reined in. "Israel's not above criticism," he said, "but it should be held to the same standard that everyone else is being held to. 'I mean, people are defending themselves against assailants wielding knives who are about to stab them to death, and they shoot the people, and that's extrajudicial killings?'"

US and EU Allied

At the event, Netanyahu played up Israel's strong ties with India, China, Japan and Russia, countries that rarely criticise. On the other hand, he acknowledged relations with the European Union, Israel's biggest trading partner, needed a "reset". The EU has been straightforward in opposing Israeli settlement growth in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, a policy seen as illegal by most of the world.

To draw clearer lines between Israel proper and the land it has occupied since the 1967 Middle East war, the EU has called on member states to put labels on imports from the settlements and is considering other ways of "differentiating" between Israel and land the Palestinians seek for their own state. That has enraged Israel, which says it is being boycotted. —Reuters



JERICO: Palestinian chief negotiator and Secretary General of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) Saeb Erekat shows a map as he addresses journalists yesterday during a visit to a site where Israel is moving to declare 150 hectares in the occupied West Bank as state land. —AFP

ISRAEL MOVING TO SEIZE WEST BANK FARMLAND

PALESTINIANS DENOUNCE LAND GRAB

JERICO: Israel is moving to declare 150 hectares in the occupied West Bank as state land in what would be the largest such seizure since 2014, officials and media reports said yesterday. If approved, the move is likely to draw international condemnation in line with previous seizures. Palestinian chief negotiator Saeb Erekat visited the site yesterday and said the land was being stolen from the Palestinians. The farmland is located in the Jordan Valley south of Jericho and, according to settlement watchdog Peace Now, would mark the biggest declaration since a seizure of 400 hectares in 2014.

The Israeli defense ministry unit that oversees civilian affairs in the West Bank, known as COGAT, said in a statement that "the lands are in final stages to be declared as state lands". It did not provide further details, including who was considered the current owner. Peace Now said the land had been taken over by Israeli settlers years ago for farming. Israeli media reported that the land amounted to 150 hectares and said it was north of the Israeli settlement of Almog.

Hanan Ashrawi, a senior official in the Palestine Liberation Organization, described Israel's reported move as a violation of international law. She challenged the international community to hold Israel to account. "Israel is stealing land specially in the Jordan Valley under the pretext it wants to annex it," she told Reuters. "This should be a reason for a real and effective intervention by the international community to end such a flagrant and grave aggression which kills all chances of peace."

Israel has previously used a law that dates back to the Ottoman era to declare property that has not been used as state land, rights groups say, though it was not clear if the same law would be invoked in this case. Earlier seizures have been harshly criticized by Palestinians, rights groups and much of the international community. Such moves erode the territory Palestinians see as part of their future state, further complicating peace efforts. "The government's decision is another step on the way to destroying the possibility for a two-state solution," Peace Now said in a statement.

Erekat, speaking to journalists at the site, called the seizure theft. "As you see, they call it a security area but you don't see a single security thing here," said Erekat, also secretary general of the Palestine Liberation Organization. "And if you go between here and 70 kilometres straight you will see nothing but farms of grapes, palm trees, vegetables, stealing the water from Palestinians, the land from Palestinians." Defence Minister Moshe Yaalon's office declined comment.

Diplomatic Pressure

Israel faced international condemnation after the 2014 seizure near Bethlehem in the area of the Gush Etzion settlement bloc. The move followed the killing of three Israeli teenagers snatched from a roadside in the same area. Netanyahu's government has faced pressure from settlers and rightwing members of his cabinet over a wave of Palestinian knife, gun and car-

ramming attacks that erupted in October. The fatal stabbing of an Israeli woman at the entrance to her home in a West Bank settlement on Sunday, allegedly by a Palestinian teenager, drew Israeli outrage and calls for action.

The seizure would come at a time of increased attention to Israeli settlements and its policies in the West Bank. Some 60 percent of the West Bank

is under full Israeli control and more than 500,000 Israeli settlers live in the territory and east Jerusalem. US ambassador Dan Shapiro said this week that "we are concerned and perplexed by Israel's strategy on settlements". The European Union has also strongly opposed Israeli settlement activity and has decided to label products imported from those areas.

KURDS DESTROY THOUSANDS OF ARAB HOMES IN IRAQ

BAGHDAD: Western-backed Kurdish forces fighting jihadists in Iraq have destroyed thousands of homes in an apparent bid to uproot Arab communities that may constitute war crimes, Amnesty International said yesterday. The rights watchdog said the destruction took place in areas of northern Iraq recaptured from the Islamic State group, which overran swathes of the country in 2014. The United States has carried out air strikes in support of forces from Iraq's autonomous Kurdish region since August 2014 and other countries have also backed them with air support, training and weapons.

Kurdish forces "appear to be spearheading a concerted campaign to forcibly displace Arab communities," Amnesty's Donatella Rovera said in a statement. "The forced displacement of civilians and the deliberate destruction of homes and property without military justification may amount to war crimes," she added. Destruction of homes and property theft have occurred frequently during the war against IS, angering residents whose support security forces need to hold recaptured areas, and sowing the seeds of future conflict.

"Peshmerga forces from the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and Kurdish militias in northern Iraq have bulldozed, blown up and burned down thousands of homes in an apparent effort to uproot communities in revenge for their per-

ceived support" of IS, Amnesty said. The rights group carried out a field investigation and interviewed witnesses. Satellite images also provided evidence of "widespread destruction", it said. Arab civilians who fled fighting have also been barred from returning home.

Kurdish Denial

Dindar Zebari, a KRG official, blamed combat for the destruction. "Many houses were destroyed because of clashes between peshmerga forces and Daesh members in villages located in war zones," Zebari said, using an Arabic acronym for IS. "Bombing by the international coalition also caused the destruction of houses, and Daesh members rigged houses in the villages to blow up the peshmerga forces," he said. He also accused residents of affected areas of working with IS. "On the arrival of Daesh members to these areas, a number of tribal leaders cooperated with Daesh and these villages became a source for terrorists."

"They stole the belongings of the citizens in these areas and killed many young Yazidis," committing genocide and crimes against humanity against them, he said, referring to IS's campaign of mass killings, kidnappings and rapes targeting the minority group. Amnesty documented evidence of "forced displacement and large-scale destruction of homes" by Kurdish forces in three provinces: Nineveh, Kirkuk and Diyala. —AFP



This satellite combo image taken on June 23, 2014 (left) and Jan 20, 2015 (right) shows the Iraqi village of Jumeili before and after its destruction by Kurdish forces. —AP



RIYADH: Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz and Chinese President Xi Jinping yesterday attend the inauguration ceremony of the Yanbu Aramco Sinopec Refining Company (YAS-REF) project, a symbol of Beijing's deepening involvement in the Middle East. — AFP

SAUDI KING SALMAN MARKS YEAR IN POWER

RIYADH: When Saudi Arabia's king Abdullah died a year ago on Saturday, his subjects expected their country to keep a steady course under new King Salman. They were in for a royal shock. Within hours of ascending to the throne, Salman, then 79, named his son Mohammed bin Salman, who was not yet 30, as defense minister, setting in motion a year of change while sticking firmly to the Islamic kingdom's conservative foundations. It was Mohammed, as much as Salman himself, who became the face of the monarchy presiding over one surprise after another during a tumultuous 12 months.

The world's major Sunni power adopted a more assertive foreign policy, began austerity measures to address a record budget deficit, confronted increasing violence from jihadists and faced heightened global concern over its human rights record. "The key shift, I'd say, is the more assertive foreign policy," said Adam Baron, a visiting fellow at the European Council on Foreign Relations. "We've seen the Saudis take a much stronger leadership role in the region, spurred both by feelings of an increased power vacuum

and their anxieties over Iran's influence."

The September death of about 2,300 foreign pilgrims during a hajj stampede in Western Saudi Arabia only added to tensions with Shiite Iran, which claimed hundreds of victims. Three months after taking office from the cautious reformer Abdullah, Salman ruptured with the past and ensured a shift to a younger generation of rulers. He named a new heir in Crown Prince Mohammed bin Nayef, 56, while Mohammed bin Salman became Deputy Crown Prince and second in line to the throne.

The kingdom also got a more youthful foreign minister with Adel Al-Jubeir, 53. This generational shift was positive, said Iman Fallata, 46, a founder of the Baladi Initiative, which helped prepare women to participate for the first time in municipal elections last December. "The mentality of the people who govern changed a lot," she said, with younger leaders now in "front position". Such an endorsement reflects an administration "very in tune with what the Saudi population want," a Western diplomat said. —AFP

PALIN ENDORSES 'MASTER' TRUMP FOR US PRESIDENT

PALIN'S SON ARRESTED OVER DOMESTIC VIOLENCE



CARACAS: Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro speaks on Tuesday. — AFP

MADURO SEEKS TO SHARE PAIN OF ECONOMIC 'EMERGENCY'

CARACAS: Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro's move to decree an "economic emergency" seeks to make the ascendant opposition share the political cost of the South American oil giant's economic mess, analysts say. The decree, which gives Maduro 60 days of extraordinary powers to combat a deep recession and triple-digit inflation, was issued Friday and now passes to the opposition-controlled National Assembly, which must approve it, reject it or demand changes within eight days.

That presents a conundrum for the fractious opposition coalition, the Democratic Unity Roundtable (MUD), which rode voters' frustration to a landslide victory in legislative elections last month. "It's a trap by Nicolas Maduro's government to share the political costs with the opposition," said economist Luis Oliveros. While the decree may allow Maduro to take "some measures" to right the sinking economy - such as cutting huge gasoline subsidies - it contains few new ideas to fight the crisis, he told AFP.

More of the Same
Maduro has held similar decree powers in the past, but at the time they were rub-

berstamped by a friendly National Assembly. This is the first time the legislature has been in his rivals' hands since his late mentor, Hugo Chavez, came to power in 1999, launching Venezuela on a socialist "revolution". Economic analysts say rather than make fundamental changes to the oil-dependent economy, Maduro will probably double down on the state-heavy policies of the past 17 years.

For many, his appointment of a radical leftist sociologist, Luis Salas, as his new economy minister only deepened concerns. More of the same will not fix the Venezuelan economy, especially as oil prices continue to collapse, analysts said. "Mr Maduro's previous emergency decrees - he ruled by decree for most of last year - have resulted in zero economic policy changes," said research firm Capital Economics. "It's difficult to see the economic crisis alleviating anytime soon."

Looming Collapse
Diego Moya-Ocampos, a Latin America analyst at IHS Country Risk, predicted the legislature would reject the decree or at least demand sweeping changes. "The government is likely to deem this as unacceptable and claim that the opposition is attempting to obstruct or sabotage its efforts, leaving the government-controlled Supreme Court to take a decision over the enforcing of the decree," he said. That, he said, would set up further power struggles and policy paralysis - increasing the risk of violent protests like those that rocked Venezuela in 2014, leaving 43 people dead.

Even the one area where Maduro and the opposition appear to agree - the need to end fuel subsidies that allow Venezuelans to fill their cars for less than a dollar, but which are estimated to cost the state more than \$12.5 billion annually - is politically explosive. Venezuelans exasperated with standing in long lines to scour bare supermarket shelves for goods they cannot afford may explode into violence at any further deterioration in their living standard, warned Moya-Ocampos.

Somehow, something must change, said economist Orlando Ochoa. With oil prices at 12-year lows, by the second half of this year, "it will be impossible to supply the country with food and medicine and service the debt with this same political and economic model," he said. — AFP

WASHINGTON: Former vice presidential nominee Sarah Palin endorsed Republican billionaire Donald Trump yesterday, saying the real estate mogul would "lead the charge" as America's next president. Palin, who flirted with her own White House run, emerged as a conservative icon and political powerbroker following her failed 2008 vice presidential bid. Since then she has endorsed several far-right candidates who went on to win seats in Congress. As the former Alaska governor and gun-enthusiast jumped back into the political limelight, it emerged that her son had been arrested on domestic violence charges after a fight involving a rifle.

On the political front the coveted endorsement of Trump comes just 13 days before votes are cast in Iowa, the debut contest in the presidential primary race, and it could give a welcome boost to Trump, the current Republican frontrunner. "No more pussyfooting around!" boomed Palin as she stood alongside Trump at his campaign rally in Ames, Iowa. "The president has to keep us safe economically and militarily," stressed Palin, who rocketed to political stardom when John McCain plucked her from obscurity to be his running mate.

Trump is a "master" dealmaker, she said. "He knows how to lead the charge. So troops, hang in there because help's on the way." Using rhetoric that has helped her rally supporters on the campaign trail, Palin drew huge cheers - and smiles from Trump - when she blasted President Barack Obama as a "weak-kneed capitulator in chief" who leads from behind, particularly when it comes to battling so-called Islamic State extremists. "Are you ready for a commander in chief who will let our warriors do their job and go kick ISIS' a**?" she asked.

The endorsement came as news emerged that Palin's son Track, 26, was arrested on domestic violence charges Monday after an armed altercation with his girlfriend, according to court documents filed Tuesday. During the drunken fight at his mother's house in Wasilla, Alaska, Track Palin allegedly brandished a rifle and threatened to shoot himself, according to the documents filed in court and posted online.

Media Heads 'Spinning'
Palin repeatedly knocked the Republican establishment for seeking to derail Trump, warning that they have been "wearing this political



AMES, Iowa: Former Alaska Gov Sarah Palin endorses Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump during a rally at the Iowa State University on Tuesday. — AP

correctness kind of like a suicide vest". And she used her trademark on-stage drama to mock reporters she says have criticized her for years. "Media heads are spinning," she snickered. "This is going to be so much fun." Trump said he was honored to receive Palin's endorsement. "She is a friend and a high-quality person whom I have great respect for. I am proud to have her support," he said.

Palin's Trump nod is seen as a snub to conservative Senator Ted Cruz, who is neck and neck with Trump in Iowa and running second to him nationally. She campaigned for Cruz during his Senate race in Texas, and Cruz, perhaps getting out front of the Trump endorsement, tweeted his appreciation for Palin on Tuesday. "Without her support, I wouldn't be in the Senate," he wrote. "Regardless of what she does in 2016, I will always be a big fan."

Trump began the day by receiving an

endorsement from the daughter of iconic US actor John Wayne. "He represented strength, he represented power," qualities "missing" from today's president, Trump said at the John Wayne Birthplace Museum in Winterset, Iowa, where a life-size wax figure of the actor served as a backdrop. Wayne made his mark in a Hollywood career that stretched from the 1930s to the 1970s, mainly portraying tough cowboys.

Meanwhile it was more bad news for Democrat Hillary Clinton's campaign Tuesday, when CNN released a new poll showing her main rival, Senator Bernie Sanders, holding a whopping 27-point lead over her in New Hampshire, the state which votes second in the nomination race. Support for Sanders has surged by 10 points since the previous CNN/WMMUR poll, with 60 percent of likely voters backing him, compared with 33 percent supporting Clinton. — AFP

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OBAMA, ERDOGAN VOW COOPERATION ON TERROR

ANKARA/WASHINGTON: US President Barack Obama and Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan on Tuesday pledged continued cooperation in the fight against militants, including Islamic State and Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) militants, the White House and Turkish presidential sources said. During his phone call to Erdogan, Obama offered his condolences for last week's bombing in Istanbul, when 10 German tourists were killed in a suicide attack blamed on Islamic State, the White House and Turkish presidential sources said.

Obama also condemned a recent string of attacks by the PKK against Turkish security forces, and he stressed the need for de-escalation, the White House said in a statement. The two leaders said the fight against terrorism would be among a number of topics on the agenda when US Vice President Joe Biden visits Turkey on Saturday. NATO member Turkey, a member

of the US-led coalition battling Islamic State in Syria and Iraq, has increasingly become a target for the Sunni Muslim militants.

Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu blamed Islamic State for the bombing on Jan 12 in Istanbul's historic heart. The suicide bomber is thought to have crossed recently from Syria. Islamic State is also believed to be behind other attacks last year in Turkey, including one in the capital Ankara in which more than 100 people were killed. Turkey's predominantly Kurdish southeast is currently engulfed in the worst violence since the 1990s after the collapse last July of a two-year-long ceasefire with PKK militants. Last week the PKK, deemed a terrorist organization by the United States and the European Union as well as by Turkey, attacked a police station in a Diyarbakir district with a truck bomb, killing six people including a baby and two toddlers. — Reuters

CARSON TEAM IN FATAL CRASH, CAMPAIGNING SUSPENDED

WASHINGTON: Republican Ben Carson temporarily suspended his US presidential bid Tuesday when four members of his campaign team were involved in a fatal car accident in Iowa, where the first votes in the nomination process will be cast. A van transporting the group "hit a patch of ice and flipped on its side where it was struck by another vehicle," Carson's campaign said in a statement. A volunteer named as Braden Joplin, 25, died, while three others including a campaign staffer who was driving the vehicle were checked and later released from a hospital.

"I'm suspending all campaign activities today due to a car accident involving members of our team," Carson said on Twitter. Carson traveled from South Carolina to Omaha to meet the dead volunteer's family and released a statement saying it was a privilege to have worked with Joplin. "One of the precious few joys of campaigning is the privilege of meeting bright young men and women who are so enthusiastic about their country that they will freely give of their time and energy to work on its behalf. America lost one of those bright young men today," Carson said. — AFP

DEEP FREEZE ACROSS BALKANS MAKES MIGRANT JOURNEYS HARDER

WARSAW: Subfreezing temperatures and snow have settled over Central Europe, adding to the difficulties of migrants heading to Western Europe but not weakening their determination to continue their journeys.



SOFOIA: Bulgarians enjoy their time in a snow-covered park in Sofia. After weeks of unseasonable weather with spring-like temperatures, a cold spell gripped Bulgaria. Snow blanketed the Balkan country with up to 15 inches in some areas and temperatures going down to -10 degrees Celsius, (14 degrees Fahrenheit) while forecasters say there is more on the way. — AP

vide immediate assistance. Even when they are sick they are not willing to stay here in a hospital.' The organization Save the Children said this week that women, children and babies in particular are in danger of hypothermia.

Exhausted mothers have told the group's aid workers they are unable to keep their babies warm and dry, and that some have slipped while carrying them on the icy roads.

In Romania, 70 people, among them 45 children and several Israeli tourists, spent the night in mountaintop huts after a cable car broke down. The Interior Ministry sent two helicopters yesterday to rescue the group, which was stranded near Balea Lac, a glacial lake at an altitude of 2,000 meters (6,600 feet) in central Romania.



PARIS: French Defense Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian (center) poses for photographers with defense leaders from Australia: Marise Payne (left); Italy: Roberta Pinotti (2nd left); Germany: Ursula von der Leyen (center left); US: Ashton Carter (center right); United Kingdom: Michael Fallon (2nd right) and The Netherlands: Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert (right) after a meeting at the defense minister residence in Paris yesterday. — AP

MILITARY CHIEFS GATHER IN PARIS TO BOLSTER ISLAMIC STATE FIGHT

CONCERNS MOUNT OVER RUSSIAN BOMBINGS IN SYRIA

PARIS: Defense chiefs from the United States, France, Britain and four other countries met in Paris yesterday to examine ways to build on gains made against Islamic State, including increasing the number of police and army trainers.

US Defense Secretary Ash Carter said the talks, which also include Germany, Italy, Australia and the Netherlands, would focus on how to accelerate the campaign. This could include an increase in the number of trainers and police who can help hold territory seized from Islamic State.

forces can retake territory against Daesh," a French official said.

No Arab nations are joining the meeting. Fallon said many Arab allies have been occupied with the Saudi-led campaign against Houthi militants in Yemen but there would be a meeting with Arab ministers in Brussels in the next few weeks.

Last week, Carter offered US troops heading to Iraq an upbeat assessment that emphasized advances by Iraqi forces - including retaking control of the city of Ramadi - and by US-backed rebels in Syria. He focused on efforts to "collapse" the Islamic State's power centers of Al Raqqa, in Syria, and Mosul, in Iraq.

THOUSANDS RALLY BEHIND A DUTCH EX-SOLDIER WHO FOUGHT JIHADISTS

THE HAGUE: Thousands of people have rallied behind a Dutch ex-soldier suspected of killing Islamic State group jihadists in Syria, hailing him as a hero and demanding he should not be prosecuted in the Netherlands.

"Killing an IS fighter therefore could mean being prosecuted for murder," the statement said. But furious supporters have flocked to his defense, with the launch Friday of a Facebook page "Justice for Jitse" and an online petition.

It recalls that even Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte has said "we are at war" against the Islamic State group which has captured a swathe of Iraq and Syria as it seeks to set up an Islamic caliphate across the Middle East.

Prosecutors said that a police investigation is being carried out, after which it will be decided whether to bring charges against Akse. "Fighting terrorism is not a crime," says the Facebook page "Justice for Jitse" which by yesterday had received more than 23,000 likes in the past few days.

JIHADIST THREAT, SLOWING ECONOMIC GROWTH WORRY THE ELITE AT DAVOS

RISE IN THREAT POSED BY CYBER ATTACKS

DAVOS: Rising risks to the global economy and a string of jihadist attacks around the world overshadowed yesterday's opening of an annual meeting of the rich and powerful in a snow-blanketed Swiss ski resort. The Taliban assault on a university in Pakistan that left at least 21 dead was a jolt to the billionnaires, business titans and leaders, including Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, gathering in the Swiss Alpine village of Davos.

Fears over the obstacles facing major emerging economies were on everyone's lips at the annual gathering after the International Monetary Fund lowered its outlook for global economic growth this year. The slowdown in Chinese growth was especially darkening the mood of policymakers after Beijing announced that gross domestic product expanded at its slowest in a quarter of a century last year.

The Chinese policymakers have "fumbled," he said. "They have made some mistakes. And they have added to the uncertainty and the volatility by their behavior." China's problems will be discussed by the Davos delegates, "but they won't say it in public, they will say it in the hallways," Behravesch said, noting that "the public Davos is a little different than the private Davos."

Business leaders heard yesterday of the rising threat posed by cyber attacks. "These weapons, and they are weapons, are moving towards a level of mass destruction," said James Stavridis, who was NATO supreme allied commander for Europe from 2009-13 and is now dean of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University in the United States.



DAVOS: A Swiss police officer surveys the area during the World Economic Forum (WEF) annual meeting in Davos yesterday. — AFP

cannot afford to stumble into a cyber cold war but I fear that is where we are headed," he said.

Migrant furor in focus The former military chief warned, too, of heightened tensions in Asia following North Korea's January 6 nuclear test. "We have a young leader there who is very unstable and it is in the middle of this cauldron of tension between Japan, China, South Korea to some degree, North Korea," he said.

armed approach to refugees. Later in the week, leftist Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras looks horns once again with his bete noire, German Finance Minister Wolfgang Schaueble. Today, Argentine President Mauricio Macri will make his first appearance at Davos since his election in November, setting out his case for economic reform in a country with a turbulent recent past.

Also today, Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari is expected to face questions about his handling of the Boko Haram insurgency in Africa's most populous country. Oscar contender Leonardo DiCaprio, a long-time environmental campaigner, used his appearance at Tuesday's opening ceremonies to urge leaders to keep the commitments they made at last year's UN climate talks in Paris to limit global warming and curb fossil fuel use.

IPOB LEADER DENIES TREASON CHARGES IN NIGERIAN COURT

ABUJA: The leader of a pro-Biafra group, whose arrest sparked a wave of protests by supporters in Nigeria's southeast, pleaded not guilty in court yesterday on treason charges.

The prosecution alleges Kanu and others at large in Britain between 2014 and last year called for some southern states to secede from Nigeria to form an independent Republic of Biafra. The call was made on Radio Biafra, of which Kanu is director, and was done "with (the) intention to levy war against Nigeria," according to the charge sheet.

He has emerged as the new face of the campaign for a separate Biafran state, nearly 50 years after a previous unilateral declaration of independence sparked a brutal civil war. The conflict from 1967 to 1970 left some one million people dead, many from starvation and disease, as Nigerian troops blockaded the fledgling Republic of Biafra.



Nnamdi Kanu

MUSLIM BOY QUIZZED OVER 'TERRORIST HOUSE' MISTAKE

LONDON: The family of a 10-year-old Muslim boy demanded an apology yesterday after he was quizzed by British police for writing that he lived in a "terrorist" house instead of a "terraced" house during an English class.

Since July, British teachers have been legally obliged to report any suspicious behavior by pupils. "You can imagine it happening to a 30-year-old man, but not to a young child," the boy's cousin told the BBC. "If the teacher had any concerns it should have been about his spelling."

townhouse that shares its side walls with others. Miqdaad Versi, assistant secretary-general of the Muslim Council of Britain, Britain's largest umbrella group for Islamic associations, blamed the government's "Prevent" program, aimed at countering radicalization.

SINGAPORE DEPORTS 26 BANGLADESHIS FOR TERROR LINKS

SINGAPORE: Singapore said yesterday it had arrested 27 Bangladeshi construction workers late last year for supporting "the armed jihad ideology of terrorist groups" and deported 26 of them. The workers were being groomed to return to their home country to wage holy war and had studied booklets on assassination techniques, the Ministry of Home Affairs said in a statement.

Home Affairs Minister K Shanmugam added in a Facebook post that while the group were planning attacks overseas, "they could have easily changed their minds and attacked Singapore". Several of members of the group also contemplated joining "armed jihad" with the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, according to the MHA. The 27 men, aged between 25 and 40, were arrested between November 16 and December 1 last year under Singapore's Internal Security Act. They all worked in construction in Singapore, where large numbers of laborers mostly from South Asia live in often cramped dormitories.

"The group members took measures to avoid detection by the authorities. They shared jihadi-related material discreetly among them-

self, and held weekly meetings and gatherings where they discussed armed jihad and conflicts that involved Muslims," the ministry said, adding that the group was also actively recruiting members. One of the group was not deported and is serving a jail sentence for attempting to flee Singapore after learning about the arrests of the other members. He will be repatriated to Bangladesh after he completes his sentence. The man was said not to have been a member of the group but was "in the process of being radicalized".

'Silent killings'

According to the ministry's statement, the group's members were encouraged to return to Bangladesh and "wage armed jihad" against the government there, while some had sent money to terror-linked entities in their country. The ministry said they possessed radical and jihadi-related materials, including footage of children undergoing training in what appeared to be militant camps. Excerpts from a video released by the ministry showed young boys dressed in black and wearing white caps firing pistols and automatic rifles during training.

There was also a document entitled "Techniques of Silent Killing" that contained graphic images and instructions on how to carry out assassinations, using different methods and weapon. The announcement of the arrests came less than a week after militants mounted attacks in the Indonesian capital Jakarta, leaving at least eight people dead, including four suspected attackers.

The Islamic State (IS) group claimed responsibility for the coordinated bomb and gun assault on a central thoroughfare in the capital. Kumar Ramakrishna, a counter-terrorism analyst at Singapore's S Rajaratnam School of International Studies, said the arrests would likely be "disconcerting" to the public as foreign workers have become part of Singapore's social landscape. Singaporean officials have said that the city-state remains a target by militants because of the presence of a large number of multinational corporations and its status as a regional financial centre. Singapore authorities in late 2001 foiled an attempt to carry out bomb attacks on US and other foreign targets in the city-state, arresting several suspects in the process. —AFP



SINGAPORE: A worker polishes a bronze statue of a bird along the river quay next to the financial business district in Singapore. —AFP

IRAN ELITE GUARDS TO GAIN REGIONAL AND ECONOMIC POWER IN POST-SANCTIONS ERA

GUARDS TO GET MORE MONEY FOR REGIONAL STRUGGLES

ANKARA: Iran's Revolutionary Guards did well under international sanctions, and the elite military force is destined to become still richer now they've been lifted. Iran's clerical rulers have supported economic growth of the Guards, rewarding the group for sanctions-busting as well as suppressing dissent at home and helping Tehran's allies abroad - notably Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad. Now the country is expecting an economic boom in the post-sanctions era and the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC), will be a beneficiary. Likewise, the leadership will ensure it is well funded to continue the effort in the regional crisis, including the Syrian civil war.

The Guards aren't entirely off the hook, even though the United States, European Union and United Nations lifted most sanctions on Saturday under a deal with world powers where Tehran agreed to curbs on its nuclear program. Washington has noted that "US statutory sanctions focused on Iran's support for terrorism, human rights abuses, and missile activities will remain in effect", and these will be enforced against certain members and actions of the Guards. But the Guards have long proved successful in defending their economic interests, including in recent years when the sanctions were at their tightest, effectively excluding Iran from the global financial and trading system.

"Even under very difficult economic circumstances, the funds for the IRGC's activities, whether domestic or overseas, remained intact," said a former official close to the government of pragmatist President Hassan Rouhani. Created by the Islamic Republic's founder Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the Guards first secured an economic foothold after the Iran-Iraq war of the 1980s when the clerical rulers allowed them to invest in leading Iranian industries. Their economic influence grew particularly after former guardsman Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was elected president in 2005.

Helping your friends

Iran - the dominant Shiite Muslim power which is in rivalry with Saudi Arabia and the United States' other Sunni Arab friends - has fought decades of sectarian proxy wars in Syria, Lebanon, Iraq and Yemen. Tehran is not about to end these activities just because its relations with the West have thawed with the nuclear deal. On the contrary, it

hopes the economy, freed from the sanctions, will create new wealth that can be used for these ends.

One senior security official signaled financing would grow for the Guards and its overseas arm, the Qods force. "The IRGC and the Qods Force are Iran's key assets in the region, where we are determined to back our allies and those oppressed nations," said the official. "All parts of the establishment have reached a consensus on this. If you are a rich person, you can help your friends more, right?" Iran has already spent billions of dollars propping up Assad and in recent months provided elite teams to gather intelligence and train Syrian forces. Its casualties are

flicts but we will continue to help our allies." Away from the battlefield, Tehran credits the Guards with helping the domestic economy to survive under the sanctions that Washington first imposed after the 1979 Islamic Revolution and which expanded and tightened over the years.

One Western diplomat who follows Iran closely estimated last year that business activities controlled by the Guards had an annual turnover of \$10-12 billion. Iran refuses to reveal their market share. But an Economy Ministry official said the Guards have been involved in a wide range of industries, including energy, tourism, auto production, telecommunications and construc-

line on the Tehran metro. "There was no chance to compete with the Guards-affiliated companies. Most of the time, they were offered contracts without even entering a bid," said an Iranian trader based in a Gulf country who does business with some IRGC-affiliated firms. As the US and EU sanctions on Iran's oil and finance sectors in 2012 started to bite, the Guards responded by setting up complex operations involving the likes of Dubai and Turkey.

"The IRGC started to buy hundreds of small and medium-size companies around the country to use as front companies," said a trader involved in importing parts for the oil industry. "These companies part-



TEHRAN: Iranian drivers refuel their vehicles at a gas station in the capital Tehran. Iran has announced a major boost in oil production after the lifting of sanctions under its nuclear deal, while condemning new US measures against its missile program. —AFP

rising, with several commanders killed, and foreign experts believe Tehran may have as many as 3,000 troops there.

Stronger guards

Another senior official confirmed that a flourishing economy, which is currently 60 percent dependent on oil exports, would mean extra cash for the Guards' foreign activities. "It is very clear that our leaders will not hesitate to allocate more funds to the IRGC when needed. More money means more funds for the IRGC," said the official. "We don't want any con-

tion. "There are many IRGC-affiliated companies that are involved in various sectors. The Guards helped different sectors to resist the unfair sanctions imposed on Iran for decades."

The Guards were also rewarded with major contracts after suppressing pro-reform protests that followed Ahmadinejad's disputed reelection in 2009. A company affiliated to the IRGC bought the state-run telecoms company for about \$8 billion. The Guards' construction branch, Khatam Al-Anbia, has also won a \$1.2 billion contract to build a

nered with some foreign companies to bypass sanctions. Most of the time cash was delivered to a foreign account in a neighboring country." Tehran also asked the Guards to take over energy projects vacated by Western oil companies due to the sanctions, with Khatam Al-Anbia leading development of the giant South Pars gas field. However, this exposed the limits to their expertise. "The IRGC had the loyalty but its affiliated companies lacked the technology and knowledge and ability to carry out projects," said a hardline former official. —Reuters



BHUBANESWAR: A villager climbs down from a coconut tree after picking up fresh coconut on a cold foggy morning on the outskirts of the eastern Indian city of Bhubaneswar, India. Coconut trees are no longer considered trees in the tropical Indian state of Goa, where authorities have reclassified them in order to clear the way for unfettered felling. —AP

COCONUT TREES 'NO LONGER CONSIDERED TREES' IN GOA

PANAJI: Coconut trees are no longer considered trees in the tropical Indian state of Goa, where authorities have reclassified them as palms to allow farmers to cut them down more easily. Officials said they dropped the coc nucifer from Goa's official list of trees in order to help coconut farmers cull old or ailing stands without having to deal with red tape. But environmentalists and the state's opposition lawmakers are incensed, and accuse the state of catering to industry and developers.

"The move will not benefit farmers as much as it will help real estate and corporate interests chop coconut groves for development of plots and setting up industrial units," opposition legislator Vijal Sardesai said. The state's forest minister, Rajendra Arlekar, defended the decision to amend a 1984 law forbidding the felling of certain trees without permission, saying coconut trees shouldn't have been listed at all. "We have only corrected the anomaly in the act," Arlekar told state assembly members last week. Goa produced more than 1 million coconuts in 2013 from groves sprawling over 25,000 hectares (62,000 acres) in the western resort state, a holiday hotspot known for its sandy beaches lined with the iconic, swaying palms.

Even before the coconut tree became a background fixture for tourist photos it was an important part of local lore thanks to the usefulness that

earned it the Sanskrit name of kalpvruksha, which means "a tree that fulfils all desires." Pulp scraped from coconut shells is an essential ingredient in the region's traditional fish curries and meat stews. The sap from the trunk, known as toddy, is a popular drink, while fermented toddy is used as a yeast substitute in baking, and distilled toddy is a favored brew. Many homes also use the hollowed shell as a serving ladle. They weave the fronds into roof mats and use the sturdy wood to build homes. "If permission is not needed to cut coconut trees, then naturally there will be more concrete," environment activist Claude Alvares said.

Environmentalists along with several local media outlets demanded that the state's coalition government, led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalist party, reverse the decision. In an editorial Tuesday, Goa's Herald newspaper accused Modi's party of being "lost in the woods" and said those who will benefit most from the reclassification "are those who want to build huge housing estates and hotels and establish breweries and beer factories." The state's highest elected official, Chief Minister Laxmikant Parsekar, said he was not worried about coconut groves disappearing. "We Goans love coconut trees. We will never cut them," he said. "Those who are opposing the amendment ... are resorting to emotional blackmail." —AP

ACTIVISTS SKEPTICAL; KERALA BECOMES THE FIRST IN PRIMARY EDUCATION GOAL

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: Activists welcomed the south Indian state of Kerala being named the first in the country to give a primary education to its entire population, but stressed the need to improve the quality of education. Vice President Hamid Ansari last week declared the coastal state of 34 million - popular among tourists for its backwater canals and lagoons - had achieved its goal to educate its population to the primary standard of grade 4.

Officials attribute the success to a scheme called Athulyam, which targeted over a period of five years more than 200,000 people between the ages of 15 and 50, including school dropouts, prison inmates and physically disabled people. Athulyam, which means unequalled, used limited resources, officials said, and relied on the participation of volunteers and civil society groups to identify and enrol individuals in more than 4,000 education centers across the state.

But activists in Kerala said they were not impressed by the declaration, adding that programs like Athulyam would only make a difference if more investment went toward improving the overall quali-

ty of education. "Programs like Athulyam may bring accolades to Kerala, but it will not help the people. A total revamp of the education system is needed if Kerala has to build on the achievements the state has made in the education sector," activist and writer M N Karassery said on Wednesday. Other activists agreed. "Several universities in the country are denying admission to students from Kerala as they feel that they got inflated marks," said M G Sasibhooshan, an activist and historian.

"The Delhi University, for example, reduces 10 percent marks from the total marks obtained by a student in Kerala for admitting them to their course," he added. Education and literacy have long been established as key to improving human development and social indicators, helping to break the cycle of poverty and prevent problems such as child marriage, teen pregnancy and violence against women. According to India's 2011 census, Kerala had a literacy rate of 93.9 percent, the highest in the country. But in 2013, northeastern Tripura claimed it had surpassed Kerala as the most literate state in India, with a literacy rate of 94.7 percent. —Reuters

TEACHER DEFIES TALEBAN IN PAKISTAN UNIVERSITY ATTACK

CHARSADDA: A chemistry teacher who tried to protect his students by opening fire on Taliban militants during a deadly attack at a Pakistani university has been hailed as a "martyr" and a "gentleman". Lecturer Syed Hamid Husain, an assistant professor of chemistry at the Bacha Khan university in Charsadda, ordered his students to stay inside as Taliban gunmen stormed the school near the city of Peshawar yesterday, leaving at least 21 people dead. Students told of how he opened fire on gunmen as they rampaged across campus, giving the young people time to flee before he was cut down in a hail of bullets. "We saw three terrorists shouting, 'Allah is great!' and rushing towards the stairs of our department," one man told reporters. "One student jumped out of the classroom through the window. We never saw him get up."

He described seeing Husain holding a pistol and firing at the attackers. "Then we saw

him fall down and as the terrorists entered the (registrars) office we ran away." Geology student Zahoor Ahmed said Husain had warned him not to leave the building after the first shots were fired. "He was holding a pistol in his hand," he said. "Then I saw a bullet hit him. I saw two militants were firing. I ran inside and then managed to flee by jumping over the back wall." "They fired directly at" the professor, sociology student Muhammad Daud said, describing Husain as "a real gentleman and a respectable teacher."

Tributes were paid to the slain academic on Twitter. "Martyr of #education: Prof Hamid who was killed by terrorists in #BachaKhanUniversity#Pakistan," tweeted journalist and academic Raza Ahmad Rumi. Another message on the site read: "Very sad news Prof Dr Syed Hamid from Chemistry dept embraced shahadat (martyrdom) in an attack in #BachaKhanUniversity#Charsadda." Pakistan's President Mamnoon Hussain con-

firmed the lecturer had died, and expressed his grief and condolences to the man's family. Security officials said an operation to halt the bloodshed at the school ended several hours after it began, with police saying at least 21 people had been killed.

The military said it had killed four extremists. It was not clear if they were included in the death toll. The Taleban have claimed responsibility for the attack. Teachers in northwest Pakistan were given permission to carry firearms in the classroom after Taleban militants massacred more than 150 people, the majority of them children, at a school in the city of Peshawar in 2014. The attack on an army-run school in the city, some 50 kilometers from Charsadda, was the deadliest in Pakistani history, and saw heavily armed militants go from room to room slaughtering students and staff. Teachers' associations had objected to arming staff, saying it was not their job to fight off militants. —AFP

IN VIETNAM, PEOPLE HAVE VIRTUALLY NO SAY IN CHOOSING LEADERS



HANOI: A street barber (right) serves a customer at a public park in downtown Hanoi. From Soviet-style letters of denunciation to outlandish rumors of a coup, Hanoi is abuzz with political gossip ahead of a key leadership change this week that has plunged the ruling communist elite into turmoil. —AFP

HANOI: Vietnam's Communist Party will hold its 12th congress Jan 21-28 to elect a new set of leaders for the next five years. Here's a look at how the process works.

Center of power

Vietnam's 93 million people do not directly elect their top leaders, who are chosen by the Communist Party of Vietnam. Article 4 of Vietnam's constitution formally gives the Communist Party the right to rule the country. It controls the government, legislature, military, police, judiciary and virtually every public organization including farmers', youth and women's organizations.

Party congress

It is held every five years to elect the all-powerful party Central Committee, which this year will have 180 members, up from 175 currently, and the Politburo, which this year could be more than the current 16. It also chooses the party general secretary and endorses the nominees for the posts of the president, the prime minister and the chairman of the National Assembly, or parliament. The general secretary is the most powerful

official in the collective leadership. The prime minister is considered No. 2 in the hierarchy. The president holds a largely ceremonial post although he is nominally the head of the military.

Secret affair

The party congress is held behind closed doors in complete secrecy, except for the ceremonial opening and closing sessions that are broadcast live on state television. A total of 1,510 Communist Party delegates representing 63 provinces, ministries, government agencies and party commissions attend the party congress in the capital, Hanoi. The outgoing central committee issues a list of candidates for the new Politburo and the new central committee, which the congress members will then debate. These lists have more names than available positions, allowing for the delegates to vote on their choices.

Do people have any say?

Not really. The people do elect the 500 legislators in the National Assembly, most of whom are Communist Party members, but it is mostly a rubber-stamp body. The new

assembly, to be elected in May, will hold its first session in June, where it will formally select the president, prime minister and Cabinet members chosen by the party congress in elections that normally have only one candidate. Because of this process, Vietnam's government says that leaders are the people's choice.

Power struggle

In the days leading up to the congress, there appeared to be a power struggle between General Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong (pronounced "Nyu-en Foo Chong") and Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung (pronounced "Nyu-en Taan Dzoong"). Trong, 71, took over as secretary-general in 2011 even though he should have been ineligible for the post because of the compulsory retirement age of 65 from the Politburo. An exception was made to allow him to be re-elected to the Politburo and take over the top post. Unofficial reports leaked from party meetings say that Trong has been nominated as the sole candidate for General Secretary for a second term, effectively removing Dung from the race. —AP

BEIJING ACCUSES SWEDE OF FABRICATING INFORMATION

EU WORRIED ABOUT CHINA'S DETENTION OF EUROPEANS

BEIJING: The Chinese government has accused a detained Swedish national of operating an unlicensed rights group in China, which "fabricated and distorted" information about the country and organized others to "interfere" in sensitive cases. Beijing confirmed earlier this month that authorities had detained Peter Dahlin, the 35-year-old co-founder of the Chinese Urgent Action Working

Union citizens detained in China, were issues of "grave concern," said EU ambassador to China, Hans Dietmar Schweisgut. "We wish to see full transparency and access," Schweisgut said at a news conference, adding that the EU had raised its concerns with China. Xinhua said Dahlin's organization "hired and trained others to gather, fabricate and distort information about China."

the Chinese Urgent Action Working Group, denounced the accusations against Dahlin. "It's absurd to claim Peter was engaged in malicious efforts to attack or discredit China," Caster said.

"To purport that Peter was 'planted' in China by foreign forces is part of a trend by Chinese authorities of blaming 'hostile foreign forces' for domestic grievances," he said. Xinhua said Dahlin had confessed that all of the reports on China's human rights were "compiled via online research and could not reflect reality." "Not seeing some cases myself, I cannot guarantee they are true," the report quoted him as saying. Sweden's embassy in Beijing said it continued to work "intensively" on the matter and that its diplomats had visited Dahlin on Saturday. "He is feeling well considering the circumstances," Gabriella Augustsson, head of public diplomacy for the Swedish embassy in Beijing, said in an email.

Dahlin suffers from Addison's disease, a potentially life-threatening disease unless properly medicated daily, according to his organization. Asked whether Dahlin had been threatened with a withdrawal of medication in order to secure a confession, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Hong Lei said the Swede had seen doctors while in detention and received medication. "China protects the legitimate rights of foreigners in China in accordance with the law," Hong said at a daily news conference. State television broadcast footage of a casually dressed Dahlin confessing to "hurting the feelings of the Chinese people," although it was not possible to verify if he was speaking of his own free will.

The footage comes two days after a Swedish bookseller whose mysterious disappearance sparked fears he may have been abducted by Chinese agents said on state media that he had voluntarily turned himself in to the authorities over a fatal drink-driving offence more than a decade ago. Critics say these accounts deprive the accused of the right to a fair trial. It was not possible to reach Dahlin for comment and unclear whether he has a lawyer. On Tuesday, Britain said it remains deeply concerned about Lee Bo, a British publisher of books critical of China's leaders who went missing in Hong Kong and is pressing for information about his welfare. Hong said he was "unclear" about Lee's case, and declined further comment. —Reuters



In this image made from undated video released by China Central Television (CCTV), Peter Dahlin, a Swedish co-founder of a human rights group, speaks on camera in an unknown location. —AP

Group, on suspicion of endangering state security. The organization worked with Chinese human rights lawyers.

Chinese police and national security authorities said in a statement they had "smashed an illegal organization that sponsored activities jeopardizing China's national security". The statement was released via the official Xinhua news agency late on Tuesday. China's crackdown on human rights, as well as several cases involving European

"It also organized others to interfere with sensitive cases, deliberately aggravating disputes and instigating public-government confrontations to create mass incidents," it said, using the Chinese euphemism for protests. Two other unidentified members of the organisation said "Western anti-China forces had planted Dahlin and some other people in China to gather negative information for anti-China purposes such as smear campaigns," it said. Michael Caster, a spokesman for

RED DOORS MARK OUT THE ASYLUM SEEKERS' HOUSES IN ENGLISH TOWN

DOORS MAKE EASY TARGET FOR RACISTS

LONDON: Asylum seekers in the northern English town of Middlesbrough are suffering abuse because they have been housed in properties that almost all have red front doors, making them easy targets for racists, the Times newspaper reported yesterday. The houses are owned by a subcontractor of G4S, the outsourcing giant which has been embroiled in a series of scandals over alleged incompetence and abuses. A spokesman for G4S said the subcontractor, Jomast, would repaint the doors. Asylum seekers living in the Middlesbrough houses described having eggs and stones thrown at their windows, dog excrement smeared on their doors and racist jibes shouted at them, the Times said in its report.

Britain has not received migrants in the same huge numbers that arrived in other European countries last year, but public concerns over immigration are running high and tensions have risen in many communities with high concentrations of migrants. Immigration Minister James Brokenshire said he had ordered an urgent audit of housing for asylum seekers in northeast England, which is provided by G4S under a government contract. "If we find any evidence of discrimination against asylum seekers it will be dealt with immediately as any such behaviour will not be tolerated," Brokenshire said in a statement.

The Times quoted Ahmad Zubair, from Afghanistan, as saying he had repainted his front door white to stop the abuse, but a Jomast worker had repainted it red citing company policy. "Asylum houses have red doors. Everyone knows that," Zubair was quoted as saying. "People were shouting outside the house, calling

String of scandals
"It is ludicrous to suggest that this constitutes any form of discrimination, and offensive to make comparisons to a policy of apartheid in Nazi Germany," he said in a statement. Local police declined to comment because they are not required to keep statistics that break out hate crime as a separate cat-



MIDDLESBROUGH: Photo shows a row of houses in Warren Street in Middlesbrough, England yesterday. —AP

egory. The Times said it had identified 168 houses owned by Jomast of which 155 had red doors. Reporters spoke to people living at 66 of the properties with red doors and found that 62 of them housed asylum seekers of 22 nationalities. The G4S spokesman said Jomast accepted that the majority of houses where asylum seekers lived had red doors, and had agreed to repaint them so that there would be no dominant color. The Times said Middlesbrough had one asylum seek-

er for every 173 residents, the highest concentration anywhere in Britain. The Home Office, or interior ministry, said its guidelines were that no area should have more than one asylum seeker for every 200 residents and it was "working closely with G4S to implement a reduction program" in Middlesbrough. G4S is one of the largest private employers in the world, with around 611,000 employees in more than 100 countries. It is the world's largest security company and has annual revenues of 6.8 billion pounds (\$9.63 billion). The firm failed to provide enough security guards for the London 2012 Olympics and the army had to fill the gap. In 2013, it admitted overcharging on a British government contract to tag criminals by billing for some who were dead or not tagged.

Earlier this month it said it had fired four workers over alleged use of unnecessary force and improper language at a British training centre for young offenders. In Australia, officials slammed G4S over staff's handling of a deadly riot at an immigration detention centre in 2014. With criticism mounting, then CEO Nick Buckles stood down in 2013 after eight years. He was replaced by Ashley Almanza, who was relatively new to G4S and has kept a lower profile. Shares in the firm were down 2.8 percent in mid morning trading on Wednesday, giving it a market valuation of 3.3 billion pounds. —Reuters



PYONGYANG: North Koreans stand on the frozen Taedong River as a man (right) ice fishes in Pyongyang, North Korea. The depths of winter have hit North Korea, with temperatures dropping lower than last year. —AP

WINTER RETURNS TO PYONGYANG WITH MORE BITE THAN LAST YEAR

PYONGYANG: A cold snap in the North Korean capital has residents ice fishing on the Taedong River. The whole country was colder than minus 10 C (14 F) on Tuesday, and the North's official weather forecaster predicted that Pyongyang would sink to minus 16 C (3 F) yesterday. "This kind of cold can come once or twice a year," said Ri Yong Nam of the State Hydro-Meteorological Agency. "It seems that the 'Taehan' has not forgotten and now it's here." Taehan means "great cold," and North Koreans are quite familiar with it. Small groups of men brave the cold to squat on the frozen Taedong River running through central Pyongyang in hopes of catching a few fish. They hack holes through 40 centimeters (16 inches) of ice to send thin lines into the water below.

A man pulls out a tiny reward, a fish

called sokari in Korean, golden Mandarin fish in English. Thermal underwear, multiple layers, big coats, hats and hoods, scarves and gloves to cover any remaining exposed skin are necessary to survive the winter in Pyongyang. And there is only so much one can do to come in from the cold: North Korea's power shortages mean that few public buildings, homes and offices have much heating. Strong winds have made the cold much more biting in Pyongyang over the past few days, but Wednesday was a relief from the wind and much calmer. Ri said this winter is colder than the last, and the worst is still to come, with temperatures expected to drop further over the weekend. After that it should get warmer, although warmer means closer to the freezing point. —AP

SPANISH KING IN SPOTLIGHT AS HE TRIES TO END POLITICAL LOGJAM

MADRID: The mediation skills of Spain's King Felipe VI are being put to the test this week as he meets with political leaders to try to end the impasse the country has faced since an inconclusive general election. The political crisis is the biggest challenge Felipe, 47, has faced since he took over the throne when his father Juan Carlos abdicated 18 months ago to try to revive the popularity of the scandal-hit monarchy. Juan Carlos is credited with helping to smooth Spain's transition to democracy after the death of longtime dictator Francisco Franco in 1975, notably by standing against an attempted military coup in 1981.

But he never faced the dilemma now confronting his son who must propose a candidate for prime minister following a December 20 election which for the first time produced a hung parliament. Up until now election results did not allow for "speculation, either because a party won with an absolute majority or because it had a big enough majority to attract support," said Antonio Torres del Moral, a constitutional law lecturer at Spain's UNED university. All Juan Carlos had to do was nominate the head of the party that had won the most seats in that election, he added.

No absolute majority

This time around, the election result put an end to decades of dominance by the conservative Popular Party (PP) and the Socialists (PSOE), who have alternated in power since Franco's death. Acting Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy's PP won the most

seats in the December poll - 123 out of 350 - but fell far short of an absolute majority. PSOE came in second with 90 seats and two new parties, which tapped into voter anger over corruption, high unemployment and economic inequality — anti-austerity Podemos and centre-right Ciudadanos-won 69 seats and 40 seats respectively.

The remaining 28 seats went to six small parties. While the monarch has traditionally invited the party winner of the most seats to form a government, he can opt for an alliance of other parties if they can deliver a more stable option. In a bid to end the impasse, Felipe on Monday began a week of talks with the leaders of all political parties which won representation in the new parliament. The leader of the party who he will nominate - most likely Rajoy—must then win a vote of confidence in parliament to take office.

'Very delicate moment'

If there is still a deadlock two months after this first vote, the king must call fresh elections. "It is a very delicate moment for the king because if political parties do not provide him with a solution by coming to an agreement, he must take decisions," said Jose Apezarena, author of several books about Felipe. The crisis comes as the new king seeks to boost the standing of the monarchy which began to lose its lustre during the twilight years of Juan Carlos' reign. He outraged Spaniards in 2012 by going elephant hunting in Botswana at the height of the country's recession. —AFP

CALAIS REFUGEES TAKE CHANCE ON 'POT-LUCK' SMUGGLING SERVICE

CALAIS: Smuggling yourself from France to Britain can be hugely expensive for refugees, but there is a cheaper "pot-luck" option—the only snag being you might end up in a French military base. Some who have used the 500-euro (\$550) smuggling service at a motorway rest stop near the northern French port of Calais, have found themselves heading in completely the wrong direction, winding up in lorries to Germany or Belgium rather than their dream destination of Britain. "The guys who run it know the trucks where the driver is not around or sleeping, and they can get you inside," said Adam Mohammed, a 30-year-old from Ghana. "But they don't know the destination. They look for English

number plates, but you are still taking a chance." One group of three young men and two women came back to Calais saying they had woken up in a French military base. "They said the door opened and they had laser lights on their bodies because soldiers were pointing guns at them," said Mohammed Adam, a Sudanese doctor, who is not related to the other migrant. "They were really panicked. They were handcuffed and police came and arrested them and brought them back here," said Adam, speaking in the migrant shantytown on the outskirts of Calais known as the "Jungle" where thousands are trying to make their way across the English Channel. —AFP



Palestinian children play on the beach as the sun sets in Gaza City on Tuesday.— AP

DUBAI HOTEL FIRE CAUSED BY SHORT-CIRCUIT: POLICE

DUBAI: The fire which engulfed one of Dubai's most prominent hotel skyscrapers ahead of New Year fireworks was caused by an electrical short-circuit, Dubai's police chief said yesterday. In a presentation to media, police officials said there had been no trace of any flammable liquids such as petrol at the site of the blaze at the 63-storey hotel and residential block, close to the world's tallest building. "The direct cause was an electrical short-circuit," police commander Khamis Mattar Al-Mazeina told reporters. "No one was arrested. There is

no suspicion of a crime... There was no negligence," he said. He declined to say whether the cladding - layers fixed to the outside of buildings for decoration, insulation or protection - had affected the development of the fire, and directed queries about building materials to the Dubai Civil Defence authority. The building was quickly evacuated with only minor injuries reported, and authorities went ahead with a New Year's fireworks display at the 160-storey Burj Khalifa tower a few hundred metres away.

Flames shot skywards from one side of the luxury Address Downtown Dubai, owned by developer Emaar Properties which stands across a plaza from the Burj Khalifa tower where people had gathered for the fireworks show. In a statement, Dubai police said the short-circuit which caused the fire occurred in an area between the 14th and 15th floors of the hotel at around 21.25 local time.

On the night, television pictures showed pieces of blazing debris raining down from The Address as evacuated occupants hurried away from the building, some running. Emaar said on Jan 3 the fire should have "no material impact" on the company because the building and risk of fire were covered by its insurance. The company also said it had hired a local contractor, Dubai-based DUTCO Group, as a contractor to clear and restore the building. Some experts have asked whether cladding - which is used widely on the towers which crowd the Dubai skyline - may in some cases make them more vulnerable to fire. — Reuters

AMIR MEETS MEDIA CHIEFS, CALLS FOR UNITY...

Continued from Page 1

HH the Amir emphasized the necessity of keeping away from offending any of the components of the society, placing the nation's interests, security and stability over and above all considerations. He stressed the neutrality of the judicial authority, and emphasized the necessity of respecting the judiciary and the judicial rulings.

The Amir warned that due to the dramatic decline in global oil prices, Kuwait must tighten its belt financially including seriously considering steps to rationalize the state budget. He specifically mentioned the excesses of programs like the treatment abroad which is often subject to abuses. The Amir suggested that the state was looking into plans to bring doctors to Kuwait to treat citizens as opposed to sending them abroad, an expensive prospect which often includes months of travel expenses for patients and their families.

He called for joining government and popular efforts to embark on economic moves to and reduce items on the state budget to handle the decline in resources. In light of falling oil prices, from \$120 per barrel to only \$20 per barrel, the government and the people must share responsibility of rationalization, following in steps of other Gulf states, the Amir said, referring to an orientation to restudy subsidies on certain items. The Amir reiterated the importance of maintaining dignified life conditions for citizens, and providing their basic living needs, urging the National Assembly to "cooperate with

the government for the issuance of legislations to lessen the deficit in state budget and replenish the decline in the financial resources".

The Amir also noted that subsidies would be reviewed to target the wasteful overuse of electricity for nonessential purposes like lighting up houses as if they were monuments. He stressed that any decisions taken regarding subsidy cuts or other economic steps would be made with an emphasis on maintaining a dignified life for citizens and not compromising their basic living requirements.

On the Gulf scene, the Amir said that Kuwait is part of the fabric of the GCC, underlining the necessity of pushing ahead with Gulf joint work to bolster the bloc's march toward integration in all fields to realize people's expectations, and achieve prosperity, development, security and stability. Referring to the divided neutral zone with Saudi Arabia, HH the Amir said there is no difference over it, adding that the issue of oil production and exports from the area will be settled with the kingdom soon. Meanwhile, the Amir reiterated Kuwait's commitment to the Saudi-led coalition supporting legitimacy in Yemen, referring to the effective participation of the Kuwaiti forces in the mission.

He also praised HH the Amir during the meeting brotherly relations between the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member states. Deputy Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah and Deputy Minister of Information Tarek Eid AlMizrem also attended the meeting.



DUBAI: This undated handout image from the Dubai police shows the exterior of The Address Downtown hotel after the New Year's Eve blaze that engulfed the 63-storey skyscraper. — AP



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• Kuwait 1 (the New str.) • Kuwait 2 (Panasonic Tower) • Hawalli 1 (Tunis str.) • Hawalli 2 (Bin Khaldon str.) • Shuwalkh (4th Ring road) • Al-Rai (4th Ring road) • Salmiya (Salem Al-Mubarak str.) • Farwanija (Behind police Station) • Fahsheel (Opp. General Parking) • Jahra (Opp. Main Co-op.) • Airport (Departure Hall)

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EGYPT: WHO'S AFRAID OF JANUARY 25?

By Ahmed Abouleenein

Egyptian activists Ali Al-Khouly and Mohamed Ali had just sat down at a Cairo coffee shop when plainclothes officers grabbed them and hauled them off to a police station. What they most wanted to know was: What are your plans next Monday? As the fifth anniversary of Jan 25 protests that ended Hosni Mubarak's 30-year rule approaches, the toughest security crackdown in Egypt's history is a clear sign that authorities are worried. "They are employing scare tactics because they themselves are frightened," Khouly told Reuters a day after his release. "I honestly have no idea why I was taken or why I was released but there is no justification for this horror."

With thousands of government opponents behind bars, the likelihood of massive protests is slim. However, analysts and activists say, the crackdown reveals an insecurity that has grown since general-turned-president Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi ousted the Muslim Brotherhood from power two years ago. Then, Sisi's popularity was sky-high. But with a promised economic revival having yet to materialize and the threat of Islamist militancy looming, he is at pains to stamp out open dissent, they say.

"There is a high level of paranoia on the part of the government. It is an inadvertent admission that there have been a number of failures," said Timothy Kaldas, nonresident fellow with the Tahrir Institute for Middle East Politics. After the military ousted

ed the Brotherhood's President Mohamed Morsi following protests against his rule, the group was able to mobilise thousands onto the streets. But security forces have since killed hundreds of his supporters and jailed thousands, accusing the group of terrorism.

Authorities have since expanded their sweep. Over the past few weeks, they have rounded up scores of activists, closed down cultural centres and worked to ensure imams tell their followers that protests against Sisi are sinful. In recent days, police have also been conducting mass searches of flats, primarily in the downtown Cairo area near Tahrir Square, epicentre of the 2011 uprising. They say they have found dozens of foreigners who have overstayed their visas, recalling the Mubarak government's actions in 2011, when foreigners were accused of inciting protest.

Khouly and Ali, both secular, are not prominent activists but they were still caught up in the dragnet and held for five hours at a police station, their lawyer said. They were separated and questioned about their political views and opinion of Sisi, and whether or not they would protest on Jan 25.

Oppression the Fuel of Protest

While Sisi remains popular among many Egyptians, he no longer enjoys the reverence which once saw his image, complete with a military beret and sunglasses, on everything from posters to women's underwear in this conservative Muslim nation.

One negative is the economy, which remains in the doldrums with a rising cost of living and stagnating wages, Kaldas said. Egypt also faces an Islamic State insurgency in the Sinai, a strategic peninsula bordering Gaza, Israel and the Suez Canal, where militants have killed hundreds of soldiers and police. Sisi has promised to end the militancy but results are mixed.

"This is a regime that knows it has something to be scared of. It knows it did not achieve what Egyptians expected," said Ayman Al-Sayyad, the editor of Weghet Nazir political journal. But most Egyptians are not actively in opposition to Sisi, Ali said, and many activists are tired of confronting what human rights groups say is an increasingly ruthless state in the face of such apathy. "It's just not happening, we can't force people. Even if we oppose the regime we must respect the public's wishes," Khouly said.

Reuters spoke with three other activists who declined to be named for fear of reprisal, in contrast to the days when Egyptians took to Tahrir Square by the hundreds of thousands. They all said they would stay home on Jan 25 after many colleagues were arrested and their gathering places shut down. Many of those arrested are not prominent activists but run Facebook pages calling for demonstrations. Marches and rallies in 2011 were often organized by youth activists on Facebook and other social media platforms.

At least four cultural spaces, including an art gallery and a publishing house in

downtown Cairo, were either raided or shut down in the past month. "We have taken several measures to ensure activists don't have breathing space and are unable to gather, and several cafes and other meeting places have been closed, while some have been arrested in order to scare the rest," an official at the Homeland Security Agency told Reuters.

Two employees of the Town House art gallery described how 20 people, many of them police officers, raided the premises under the guise of administrative violations. It remains shut down. "Security forces believe in beating the citizen until they reach an agreement; they believe in fear and intimidation," said Mohamed Hashem, owner of Merit publishing house, which was raided the day it was scheduled to hold a seminar by an author of a book about corruption.

The Ministry of Religious Endowments, which supplies preachers with weekly talking points and scripture to quote, has also joined the campaign. The last two Friday prayer sermons explicitly warned against protesting on Jan 25. One, entitled "The Blessing of Safety and Security," says that those who aim to disrupt stability are committing a major crime in the eyes of God. Political analysts said the government is walking a fine line between discouraging protest and squeezing too hard. "Oppression is the fuel of protest and protest is the first step to violence," Sayyad said. "The regime fears reaping what it has sown." —Reuters

SMUGGLING SOARS AS VENEZUELA'S ECONOMY SINKS

By Girish Gupta

Clutching egg cartons on his shoulder, a young man wades precariously through a muddy river on Venezuela's western jungle border where a Colombian shopkeeper will happily buy them up. On a peninsula jutting into the Caribbean, a fisherman sails under the cover of darkness to the nearby island of Aruba carrying everything from fish to flour. In neighboring Guyana, miners and police officers drive vehicles fueled by contraband gasoline from Venezuela. Driven by a deepening economic crisis, smuggling across Venezuela's land and maritime borders - as well as illicit domestic trading - has accelerated to unprecedented levels and is transforming society.

Although smuggling has a centuries-old history here, the socialist government's generous subsidies and a currency collapse have given it a dramatic new impetus. As the formal economy tanks and businesses go under, more and more people have turned to myriad illicit schemes to trade food, medicine and gasoline. Criminal gangs, the poor, professionals and government officials are all cashing in. The most eye-catching subsidy is for gasoline: filling a car costs just a few US cents. A 40,000-liter tank truck can be filled for \$10 at the black market rate and sold in Colombia for around \$20,000 - a profit of nearly 200,000 percent.

For many facing recession and triple-digit inflation, it is a matter of survival. "We're obliged to engage in contraband," said Alejandra, 41, who once raised chickens but now smuggles fuel across fields into Colombia to help feed her six children. She earns far more in a day than the roughly \$10, at the black market rate, she used to in two weeks. "Soldiers, teachers, engineers, doctors, dentists - all types of professional come here to sell gasoline because salaries aren't worth anything," added Alejandra, in the fields of Guanarito, meters from the border.

In interviews with scores of smugglers and visits to more than a dozen sites - from the western village of Boca del Grito to the eastern port of Guiria and the borders with Brazil and Guyana - Reuters saw evidence of widespread unchecked smuggling. President Nicolas Maduro's government says the illicit trade is worth more than \$2 billion a year and is bleeding Venezuela dry with 30 percent of imported food, 40 percent of all goods and 100,000 barrels of oil per day smuggled out.

Crabs, Birds, Erotica

Blaming smugglers for worsening scarcity, Maduro last year closed crossings into Colombia and around 2,000 sus-

pects were rounded up. Authorities nabbed two men smuggling 14,000 crabs to Trinidad, one man taking 57 tropical birds to Italy, and the owners of a sex shop trading "dangerous erotic products". On a larger scale, Venezuela's navy detained a state-owned oil tanker smuggling fuel. Much of the smuggling stems from subsidies, intended to help the poor, on an array of goods from flour to fuel.

Rice, for example, is officially priced at 16 bolivars per kg, worth just two US cents at the black market rate. On Venezuela's streets, it sells for 30 times that, and even more abroad. Smuggling reduces the goods available to Venezuelans, thus worsening shortages. Frustration over shortages and the broader economic chaos led to a sweeping opposition victory in legislative elections last month and even some socialists are clamoring for policy changes.

"I don't mean the state has to renounce transferring subsidies to the poor, but the way it's done promotes and creates the conditions for smuggling," Temir Porras, former aide to Maduro and his predecessor Hugo Chavez, told Reuters. Vast differences between Venezuela's multiple exchange rates also fuel smuggling. There are three official rates: the strongest is 6.3 bolivars per dollar but on the black market the dollar sells for around 900 bolivars.

Dozens of smugglers said that officials are often themselves on the take or turn a blind eye. At smuggling points, soldiers and policemen routinely fail to intervene as traffickers pass by. "We pay the National Guard a few thousand bolivars to get across, depending on what we have in the truck," said one smuggler in the downtrodden western border town of Paraguachon, who moves food into Colombia in his pickup. The government acknowledges some rotten apples in its ranks, but blames the chaos on an "economic war" by business groups and the opposition. Neither the National Guard nor government responded to requests for comment.

'Bachaquero'

A year ago, smugglers would openly walk into Colombia carrying pasta, flour and vegetable oil, or drive across to have fuel siphoned off their vehicles. Since the crackdown, they work surreptitiously, wading across rivers, using hidden tracks or paying discreet kickbacks along the 2,300-km border. "It's impossible to block the border. These are two countries which need each other, like husband and wife," said shopkeeper Luis Olarte, 38, in the Colombian town of Puerto Santander, across a river from Boca del Grito. He buys all his goods - from toothpaste to eggs - from smugglers. Hundreds of miles to the east, in the Guyanese jungle

town of Mabaruma, gasoline, flour, shampoo and other goods are brought across by boats. Flour marked only for sale in Venezuela is available in the markets of Guyana's capital Georgetown. In the northeastern Venezuelan state of Sucre, fishermen sell gas on the high seas. They pay less than a cent at the black market rate for 60-liter jerry cans and then sell them for around \$10 each to seafarers who scurry them off to nearby islands. "They have to because a poor fisherman with a family doesn't earn enough to survive," said Manuel Gonzalez, 70, president of the local fishing association, in a beachside bar.

On top of products smuggled abroad, price-controlled goods are also bought up and hawked internally for many times their official price. It is so common that a new word has entered Venezuela's lexicon: "bachaquero," named after a leaf-carrying ant. "Bachaqueros" line up time and again to buy subsidized goods for resale, mainly to the middle classes. "We have contacts inside the supermarket and colleagues working at other locations who tell us what is arriving, when and where," said a 24-year-old "bachaquera" outside a supermarket in the poor Caracas district of La Yaguara. "No one wants to line up for eight hours," she said.

So profitable is "bachaquero" that many Venezuelans have given up formal jobs to do it full time. The number of informal workers is set to rise a third to 40 percent of the workforce this year, local think-tank Ecoalitica says. "(Smuggling) is very much a double-edged sword: subverting the formal economy and nurturing corruption yet also an important coping strategy that helps people survive difficult times," said Peter Andreas, whose 2013 book "Smuggler Nation" charts the importance of contraband in US history.

Exchange rate spreads have also created some white-collar schemes. Bond traders, for instance, boasted huge profits a decade ago when some were able to obtain hard currency at preferential rates. Hundreds of years before today's "bachaqueros" and bond traders, smuggling flourished in this former Spanish colony. In the 18th century, Spain's Royal Guipuzcoan Company was the sole legal buyer of Venezuelan goods from coffee to coconuts. However, enterprising locals, using the same routes as today's illicit traders, would smuggle them out for higher prices than the Spanish paid.

Today's enterprising locals also see bypassing the state as the best way to stay afloat. At Las Piedras village on the northwestern Falcon peninsula, a 25-year-old fisherman recently prepared to smuggle fish, mayonnaise and butter to the island of Aruba. "This is the best work you can get in Venezuela!" —Reuters

Focus

BEFORE MARRIAGE, COUPLES IN GAZA GET US-STYLE HELP

By Nidal Al-Mughrabi

Hesitant but curious, several Palestinian couples walked into a classroom in Gaza this week to attend the first marriage guidance program in the conservative, Hamas-run enclave. The initiative, backed by three Palestinian ministries, the Islamic University and British-based charity Interpal, is designed to prepare young couples for married life, including religious, legal, medical and psychological counseling. Courses are free, with couples offered gifts worth \$60 to encourage them to attend the 15-hour course. Some classes are mixed and some are held with the partners separated.

"So far it is a trial course of 90 brides and grooms," said Hassan Al-Jojo, head of the Higher Religious Judicial Council, one of the program's sponsors. "We want to encourage couples to come because there is still hesitation." Marriage is a big business in Gaza, with 20,000 unions last year, 5,000 more than in 2014, when a 50-day war between Israel and Hamas militants interrupted plans. Much of the rubble and destruction of that conflict remains.

Since more than half of Gaza's 1.95 million people are aged under 25, the marriage figures are only likely to grow. Most Gazans cannot easily leave the densely-populated coastal territory, which is blockaded by Israel and Egypt. But even if marriage is popular, it does not mean it is always a success, particularly with many unions arranged. While US-style counseling feels awkward for many Muslims, the promoters hope it will make marriages stronger.

There were 10 couples in Tuesday's class, with brides being taught about their rights and duties under Islam and the men receiving advice from a psychiatrist about how to open up and maintain a smile in the face of hardship. "A wife should understand that life sometimes is different from the dreams she had while a single," said Bilal Yassin, the project's coordinator and a trainer in Islamic matters. "Using nice words like sweetheart when asking your husband to do something or bring you something would have a nice impact."

Dialogue

Five of the women wore niqab, the full Islamic covering showing only their eyes, while the others covered their heads. Since Hamas seized control of Gaza in 2007, the population has broadly adopted more conservative ways. "I explain to them the different ways they express themselves, expressing love and hate and emotions," said psychiatrist Jamail Tahrawi. "I call upon them to open up in all matters." Once married, Tahrawi urges couples to discuss everything, including their sex life.

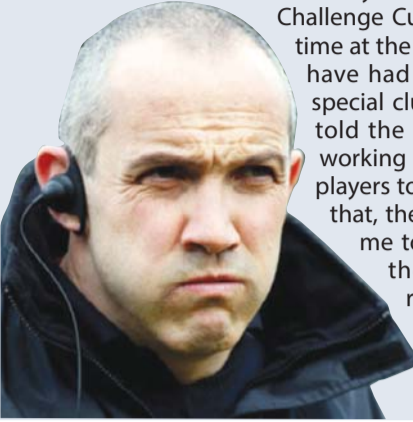
Jojo said a lack of mutual understanding, rather than poverty or hardship, was the main reason for divorce in Gaza. Divorce remains a last choice for a failed marriage and less common in comparison to neighbouring Arab countries, yet the course's backers hope their guidance will minimize it. "We want to change the conception of the male, where some may think a woman is only a machine for breeding," said Jojo. "The woman is a human being due appreciation and respect."

While shy and reticent to speak about their attendance, some participants were impressed by the classes. "I was shocked to see that only a small number of people were here," said Hassan Meqbel, 25. "Many young people are completely ignorant about marriage, all they know is that they want to get married and then they go on with their heritage of tradition," he said, suggesting changes were necessary. —Reuters

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CONOR O'SHEA TO STEP DOWN AT HARLEQUINS

LONDON: Conor O'Shea will step down as director of rugby at Harlequins at the end of the current English Premiership season, he announced yesterday. The former Ireland full-back, 45, has been at Harlequins since 2010 and guided the London club to glory in the English Premiership for the first time in their history in 2012. They have also lifted the European Challenge Cup and the Anglo-Welsh Cup during his time at the helm. "I will have been very fortunate to have had the opportunity to contribute to this special club for over six years come May," O'Shea told the club's official website. "I have enjoyed working with everybody at Harlequins, from the players to the staff to the supporters. Having said that, the end of this season is the right time for me to move on." Quins are currently third in the Premiership table and have already reached the quarter-finals of the Challenge Cup, ahead of Friday's sixth and final pool game away to Montpellier. —AFP



FERRARI SPORTING DIRECTOR RIVOLA MOVES TO ACADEMY

LONDON: Ferrari sporting director Massimo Rivola is stepping down to take on a new role at the helm of the team's young driver academy, media reported yesterday. The Gazzetta dello Sport said he would take over from Luca Baldisserri, who has left Maranello to manage the career of former academy driver Lance Stroll. Canadian teenager Stroll, whose billionaire father Lawrence made a fortune with fashion brands Michael Kors and Tommy Hilfiger, joined the Williams driver development program last November. There was no official confirmation from Ferrari but a letter from Rivola, who joined Ferrari in 2009 after working as team manager for Minardi and their successors Toro Rosso, was circulating on social media. "After 18 years of F1, of which 12 have been on the pitwall, it's time to make a pitstop," he wrote to his team mates explaining the switch. Ferrari, the sport's oldest and most successful team, finished runners-up to champions Mercedes last season with four times world champion Sebastian Vettel winning three races. The new season starts on March 20 in Australia. —Reuters

MESSI AND SUAREZ TO MISS BARCA CUP GAME AT BILBAO

MADRID: Barcelona forwards Lionel Messi and Luis Suarez have been left out of the squad for the King's Cup quarter-final, first leg match at Athletic Bilbao yesterday. Messi had to come off at half-time in Sunday's 6-0 demolition of the Basque club in La Liga and while tests on Monday ruled out a hamstring strain the Argentina captain has been rested as a precaution. Suarez was given a two-match ban for allegedly provoking a fracas in the tunnel following the first leg of Barca's last 16 tie against Espanyol this month. The Uruguay striker served one half of the ban in last week's return game, when Barca progressed 6-1 on aggregate, and the club were waiting to hear if Spain's Disciplinary Committee for Sports (TAD) would grant their appeal. —Reuters



NO 8 SMU STILL UNDEFEATED

DALLAS: Nic Moore scored 23 points and had some part in five consecutive SMU baskets down the stretch as the eighth-ranked Mustangs remained Division I's only undefeated team with a 77-73 victory over feisty Houston on Tuesday night. Markus Kennedy had 16 points and 10 rebounds, and his two free throws with 5:35 left broke the game's 12th and final tie to put the Mustangs (18-0, 7-0 AAC) ahead to stay. Kennedy's tip-in a minute earlier tied the game and was part of an 8-0 spurt.

Moore, the senior point guard, then had consecutive baskets before missing two in a row - one tipped in by Sterling Brown and the other followed by Ben Moore to make it 67-64. Danyean Dotson was on the 3-point line for a long jumper that got the Cougars (13-5, 3-3) within a point before Nic Moore's pass to Brown for a 3-pointer. Dotson had 16 points to lead the Cougars, who lost their third straight game after a 13-2 start. Danrad Knowles had 14 points and Galen Robinson Jr had 11. Sterling Brown had 15 points for SMU, and Ben Moore had 10. At 7-0 in the American, the Mustangs have their best conference start since finishing 12-0 in the Southwest Conference in 1955-56 on way to their only NCAA Final Four appearance. That was part of their school-record 20 consecutive wins that season.

Coach Larry Brown's team is ineligible for the postseason this year because of NCAA infractions. And the Mustangs are playing short-handed, with only seven scholarship players available after junior point guard Keith Frazier left the team. Houston led for more than 15 1/2 minutes of the first half, and was up by eight after Robinson's layup with 3:02 left. But the Cougars didn't score again before halftime. Nic Moore tied the game at 34-all with a step-back jumper after dribbling out much of the final 30 seconds of the half. That was set up by Kennedy's rebound that ended a possession when the Cougars missed two 3s and the front end of a bonus. Moore's jumper with 2:48 left had started the half-ending run. There was also Brown's inbound bounce pass with 4 seconds on the shot clock to Shake Milton for a layup.

No 7 Maryland edges Northwestern

Melo Trimble scored 18 points, Diamond Stone made a pivotal three-point play with 1:13 left in overtime and No 7 Maryland squeezed past Northwestern 62-56 on Tuesday night. The Terrapins (17-2, 6-1 Big Ten) shot 44 percent and were outrebounded 41-31 by the scrappy, hustling Wildcats (15-5, 3-4). But Trimble came up big in overtime, opening the scoring with a three-point play and getting assists on two baskets, including the layup by Stone that put Maryland ahead 58-55. Stone finished with 11 points and Robert Carter Jr added 10. Despite struggling mightily in this one - giving up 16 offensive rebounds and collecting only four - the Terrapins swept the season series after beating the Wildcats 72-59 on Jan 2.

Aaron Falzon scored 13 points for the Wildcats before fouling out with 3:36 left in overtime. Bryant McIntosh had 12 points on 5-for-18 shooting. Thanks to its domination on the offensive glass, Northwestern took 17 more shots than Maryland and made two more baskets (23-21). But the Terrapins outscored the Wildcats 16-5 at the free throw line. Northwestern opened the second half by missing six of seven shots from the field to fall behind 39-31. Maryland then went 4 minutes without a point, and a runner in the lane by McIntosh made it 39-38. Minutes later, Tre Demps capped the 12-2 run with a jumper for a 45-43 lead with 7:41 remaining. The Terrapins went ahead 48-47 on a 3-pointer by Jake Layman with 4:43 left - the final basket by either team until overtime. Regulation ended with Trimble firing a shot that, appropriately, clanged off the rim. Maryland trailed for the majority of the first half before using a late 10-0 run to take a 31-29 halftime lead. Northwestern controlled the boards in the opening minutes and got eight points from Derek Pardon in going up 16-9. The Terrapins answered with an 8-2 run, but successive 3s by Scottie Lindsey and Falzon restored the seven-point cushion. It was 27-21 before Maryland center Damonte Dodd scored on a follow and Jared Nickens added a three-point play. Trimble followed with a 3 to give Maryland its first lead.

Brogdon's 20 lift No 13 Virginia

Malcolm Brogdon scored 20 points and

Anthony Gill had two big baskets late as No 13 Virginia squandered most of a 13-point lead and then held on to beat Clemson 69-62 on Tuesday night. The Cavaliers (14-4, 3-3 Atlantic Coast Conference) led 52-39 after a 17-4 run with 9 minutes left, then saw the Tigers close within 55-53 with about 3 1/2 minutes remaining. But Gill scored on a put-back after a miss by Brogdon, then took a feed from Brogdon moments later for a fast-break dunk that built the margin back up to 59-53. The Tigers (12-7, 5-2), seeking their sixth consecutive victory and third straight over a ranked team, got back within 62-59 on a 3-pointer by Jordan Roper and three free throws by Jaron Blossomgame with 1:36 to play, but Brogdon made two free throws with 30.7 seconds for the Cavaliers.

Gill finished with 12 points despite foul trouble for Virginia while Devon Hall had 11 and Isaiah Wilkins 10. Blossomgame made four 3-pointers and scored 23 for the Tigers and Landry Nnoko added 15. The game was tied at 35 until Brogdon scored on a driving bank shot with 16 minutes to play. The shot sparked a 17-4 run that gave Virginia a 52-39 lead and twice brought the crowd at John Paul Jones Arena to its feet. The Cavaliers had lost three of their last four. Devon Hall scored five points in the burst and Brogdon, Mike Tobey and Wilkins each had four, with the crowd especially appreciating a one-handed dunk by Tobey off a slick feed from Wilkins that pushed the lead to 50-39. Virginia outscored Clemson 13-8 over the last 7 minutes of the first half and led 31-28.

No 10 Texas A&M win

Jalen Jones scored 20 points and freshman Tyler Davis tied a season-high with 18 to lead the No 10 Texas A&M to a 71-57 victory over LSU on Tuesday night, extending their winning streak to nine games. The win improves the Aggies (16-2) to 6-0 in Southeastern Conference play, which is their best start to league play since they won their first seven in 1993-94 when they were in the Southwest Conference. The lead changed several times throughout the first half and the early part of the second half and it was tied at 44-44 with about 15 minutes left.

The Aggies took over, using a 16-3 run to make it 60-47 with about 9 minutes remaining. Alex Caruso scored four points in that span and he was under heavy pressure from Ben Simmons when he passed to Jones, who finished with a two-handed dunk to highlight the run. Tim Quarterman had 12 points for LSU (11-7, 4-2). Simmons, LSU's freshman star, entered the game averaging 20 points but was held to 10 points with 11 rebounds and Craig Victor added 10 points while dealing with foul trouble most of the game. The Aggies haven't lost since Dec 5, and their winning streak is their longest since the team won 13 straight from Nov 26, 2010 to Jan 15, 2011.

LSU had three turnovers and went more than 5 minutes between field goals as A&M built the lead. Simmons made a layup with about 13 minutes left and the next basket for LSU didn't come until Quarterman's layup with less than 8 minutes left made it 60-50. But the Tigers couldn't build on that and A&M used a 6-2 spurt after that to push the lead to 66-52 with 4 1/2 minutes remaining. LSU led by two points after a 3-pointer by Antonio Blakeney with about 6 minutes left in the first half before A&M scored the next eight points to take a 38-32 lead. Simmons added two free throws a few seconds later and neither team scored for the rest of the half to leave the Aggies up 38-34.

No 16 Providence down No 18 Butler

Ben Bentil scored 13 of his 20 points in the second half, and 16th-ranked Providence rallied late to outlast No 18 Butler 71-68 on Tuesday night. Rodney Bullock added 16 points for the Friars (16-3, 4-2 Big East), who improved to 3-1 this season against ranked opponents. It was Providence's second victory over Butler this season. The Friars fought through some early foul trouble and poor shooting to overcome a four-point deficit in the closing minutes. On Butler's final possession, Kelan Martin missed a 3-pointer, the Bulldogs got the rebound and Kellen Dunham fired up a desperation 3 at the buzzer that missed everything. Dunham led Butler (13-5, 2-4) with 21 points, including six 3-pointers, while Roosevelt Jones added 16. The Bulldogs have lost four straight games to ranked foes. Providence's Drew Edwards connected on one of two free



PROVIDENCE: Drew Edwards #25 of the Providence Friars and teammate Jalen Lindsey #21 press Kelan Martin #30 of the Butler Bulldogs in the second half on January 19, 2016, at the Dunkin' Donuts Center in Providence, Rhode Island. — AFP

throws to tie the game for the 12th time at 66 with 2:44 to play.

Following a Butler miss, the Friars took the lead for good after a scramble for the ball ended up in the hands of Bentil, who slammed in a two-handed dunk. An errant pass led to a turnover on Butler's next pos-

session, and Kris Dunn banked in a 3-pointer that made it 71-66 with 1:04 left. The Bulldogs held the Big East's two leading scorers - Bentil and Dunn - to 12 points in the first half. Dunn finished with nine. They entered the night averaging 19 and 17 points, respectively. While Dunn was sad-

dled with first-half foul trouble, Bentil had a tough time early converting on the looks he got as Butler sent extra defenders at him. It led to some stagnant possessions at times for the Friars, who were forced into some hurried shots. Neither team managed to get much separation in the first half. — Agencies

SCOREBOARD

CANBERRA: Scoreboard from the fourth one-day international between Australia and India at Manuka Oval yesterday:

Australia	
D. Warner b I. Sharma	93
A. Finch c I. Sharma b Yadav	107
M. Marsh c Kohli b Yadav	33
S. Smith c Singh b I. Sharma	51
G. Maxwell c sub (Pandey) b I. Sharma	41
G. Bailey c R. Sharma b I. Sharma	10
J. Faulkner b Yadav	0
M. Wade run out	0
J. Hastings not out	0
Extras (lb7 w6)	13
Total (8 wickets, 50 overs)	348
Fall of wickets: 1-187 (Warner), 2-221 (Finch), 3-288 (Marsh), 4-298 (Smith), 5-319 (Bailey), 6-319 (Faulkner), 7-321 (Wade), 8-348 (Maxwell)	
Did not bat: K. Richardson, N. Lyon	
Bowling: Yadav 10-1-67-3 (2w), Kumar 8-0-69-0, I. Sharma 10-0-77-4 (2w), Singh 3-0-24-0, R. Dhawan 9-0-53-0 (1w), Jadeja 10-0-51-0 (1w)	
India	
R. Sharma c Wade b Richardson	41
S. Dhawan c Bailey b Hastings	126
V. Kohli c Smith b Richardson	106
M.S. Dhoni c Wade b Hastings	0
G. Singh c sub (S. Marsh) b Lyon	5
R. Jadeja not out	24
A. Rahane c Smith b Richardson	2
R. Dhawan c Warner b Richardson	9
B. Kumar c Smith b Richardson	2
U. Yadav c Bailey b Marsh	2
I. Sharma c Wade b Marsh	0
Extras (w5 nb1)	6
Total (10 wickets, 49.2 overs)	323
Fall of wickets: 1-65 (R. Sharma), 2-277 (S. Dhawan), 3-277 (Dhoni), 4-278 (Kohli), 5-286 (Singh), 6-294 (Rahane), 7-308 (R. Dhawan), 8-311 (Kumar), 9-315 (Yadav), 10-323 (I. Sharma)	
Bowling: Lyon 10-0-76-1, Richardson 10-1-68-5, Hastings 10-0-50-2 (1w 1nb), Faulkner 7-0-48-0 (1w), Marsh 9.2-0-55-2 (2w), Maxwell 1-0-10-0 (1w), Smith 2-0-16-0.	
Result: Australia won by 25 runs.	



CANBERRA: Indian batsman Rohit Sharma dives into his crease as the ball bounces in front of him during their One Day International cricket match against Australia in Canberra, Australia yesterday. — AP

INDIA COLLAPSE TO HAND AUSTRALIA VICTORY

CANBERRA: A spectacular Indian batting collapse gave Australia a 25-run victory in the one-day international in Canberra yesterday, their fourth successive victory in the five-match series. After winning the toss and choosing to bat, Australian openers Aaron Finch and David Warner both posted big scores to take the home side to a massive 348 for eight. The Indians looked well on target when Shikhar Dhawan (126) and Virat Kohli (106) put on 212 for the second wicket to reach 277 for one, smashing the attack all over Manuka Oval. Neither batsman was in any

trouble on a lifeless pitch and none of the Australian bowlers were spared.

But once Dhawan fell cutting John Hastings to George Bailey at point, the Indian wickets began falling regularly and the Australians began to assert control. Skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni fell for a duck before Kohli hit a catch to Australian captain Steve Smith at mid-off, his only false shot in a magnificent 92-ball innings. With four wickets down and in-form batsman Ajinkya Rahane hampered by split webbing on his hand, the Indians began to panic as they lost Gurkeerat Singh (5), Rahane

(2) and Rishi Dhawan (9) in quick succession. The tailenders put up little resistance and Australia took the last nine wickets for just 46 runs to wrap up an unlikely victory.

"It's a funny game isn't it?" said a delighted Smith. "It looked like they were cruising for a while there, but a couple of wickets always changes the swing of things. We had a never say die attitude tonight, which is something I want to instil in these guys. We worked incredibly hard to get back into that game and when we got a sniff we ran with it." Dhoni said he took responsibility for the loss after failing

to capitalize on the good start to the run chase. "That's what my job in the team is, to finish off the games from that type of position, but unfortunately I got out," he said. "There was a bit of pressure on the youngsters but I think certainly we should have done much better. The way we started was what we needed and the partnership between Shikhar and Virat was magnificent."

Earlier Finch made 107 and Warner 93 in a huge opening stand of 187. Smith then smashed 51 off only 29 balls and Glenn Maxwell 41 from 20 in a display of powerful

shotmaking. Warner brought up his 50 from 46 balls with eight fours and one six. Finch was more sedate than his partner, taking 61 balls for his half century, but began to pick up the pace soon afterwards. His innings was especially damaging to umpire Richard Kettleborough, who was hit on the shin by a powerful on-drive and had to be replaced in the middle by Paul Wilson. After breaking the opening stand India took regular wickets to slow the scoring down until Maxwell let rip in the last two overs to post a target that eventually proved too much. — AFP

CHINA STARS TACKLE JAPAN, AUSTRALIA ON ROAD TO RIO

SYDNEY: Double Olympic gold medalists Sun Yang and Ye Shiwen will headline a 24-strong Chinese team against Australia and an emerging Japan at the 2016 Perth Aquatic Super Series in February. The 2012 London victors and Australia's reigning world champions Emily Seebohm, Bronte Campbell and Mitch Larkin will be the main drawcards for the first international meet of 2016 on the road to the Rio Olympics, organizers said.

Japanese stars including two-time Olympic medalist Takuro Fujii and women's World championship breaststroke medalist Rio Kaneto will also compete in Perth on February 5 and 6. The Australian Dolphins will include 2013 World Champion Cate Campbell and fellow 2015 Kazan medalists Cameron McEvoy, Madi Wilson, Jess Ashwood and Mack Horton. "It's a great way to start the year, we are going to have some

tough competition and everyone is racing not just for themselves but for the team," said Cate Campbell.

"It's quite a small Australian team with a few new faces on it which will be really exciting; blooding some new athletes will be great especially in the lead up to an Olympic Games." Sun-China's first male Olympic gold medalist with the 400m and 1500m freestyle holds the 1500m world record and won the 400 and 800m freestyle double at the World Championships in Kazan last year. He will race young Australian Mack Horton in both the 400m and 1500m freestyle. Ye, who won double gold in the 200m and 400m individual medley in London at the age of just 16, will face Australians Keryn McMaster and Tessa Wallace. Japan has also named a 24-member team led by two-time Olympic relay medalist from 2008 and 2012, Fujii. — AFP

DOMINANT ENGLAND AIMING TO COMPLETE 3-0 TRIUMPH

PRETORIA: England, with a series win already secured, can complete South Africa's ignominious fall from the top of the rankings when the final test of the four-match series starts at Centurion Park in Pretoria tomorrow. Dominant England went 2-0 up after Stuart Broad's venomous spell set the platform for an emphatic win in the third test in Johannesburg. In contrast their hosts, about to lose top place in the International Cricket Council rankings to India, are in a state of disarray, having switched captains mid-series and extended a winless streak to nine tests.

The absence of injured key fast bowler Dale Steyn has not helped and he will again not play in the fourth test, having only contributed for just a single innings at the start of the series in Durban last month. The likes of Broad, Joe Root and Ben Stokes have all displayed match-winning brilliance for England in this series. "The future of this team could turn into something special," said coach Trevor Bayliss in the wake of the seven-wicket win at the Wanderers. A shell-

shocked South Africa are set to hand a debut to 33-year-old opener Stephen Cook as they attempt to solve one of several problems in a side that last won a test more than a year ago.

New captain AB de Villiers had promised an aggressive and "in your face" approach for his first game in charge after replacing Hashim Amla but watched his team meekly fold as they were skittled out for a paltry 83 runs in their second innings in Johannesburg to be beaten inside three days. The obvious lack of confidence is exacerbated by uncertainty over De Villiers' own future in the test arena as he seeks to lessen his workload to continue playing all formats of the international game. South Africa can only point to past statistics for a glimmer of sunshine. Centurion Park has been their most successful home venue since it hosted its first test 20 years ago. South Africa have won 15 times, drawn three and lost only to England in 2000 and Australia in 2014 in 20 previous tests at the ground. — Reuters



KHULNA: Bangladesh cricketer Mosaddek Hossain (left) is bowled as the Zimbabwe wicketkeeper Richmond Mutumbami looks on during the third T20 cricket match between Bangladesh and Zimbabwe at the Sheikh Abu Naser Stadium in Khulna yesterday. — AFP

ZIMBABWE UPSET BANGLADESH

KHULNA: Malcolm Waller and Vusi Sibanda set up a big total as Zimbabwe crushed Bangladesh by 31 runs in the third Twenty20 international in Khulna yesterday to stay alive in the four-match series. Opener Sibanda struck 44 off 33 balls and Waller hammered 49 off 23 as Zimbabwe posted 187-6 before restricting Bangladesh to 156-6 in a packed Sheikh Abu Naser Stadium. Sabbir Rahman made 50 off 32 balls for the home side, who won the first two matches by four wickets and 42 runs respectively, but found Zimbabwe's total too much of an ask.

Sabbir put on 67 runs with Soumya Sarkar (25) for the second wicket to give Bangladesh a positive start before Zimbabwe took control of the game through their spinners. Leg-spinner Graeme Cremer claimed 3-18 while Sikandar Raza chipped in with 2-7. After losing the first two matches, Zimbabwe's Sibanda came out firing with stand-in skipper Hamilton Masakadza, putting on 45 in the opening stand in just four overs. Mohammad Shahid, playing his debut T20 for Bangladesh, broke the stand, with Mosaddek Hossain taking a catch at point to dismiss Masakadza for 20.

Shakib Al Hasan, who claimed 3-32, removed Richard Mutumbami (20) and Sibanda in successive overs to bring some

respite for the home side. But Waller, who hit two fours and four sixes, and Sean Williams (32) added 74 for the fourth wicket to ensure Zimbabwe did not stall. Apart from Shahid, a string of other Bangladesh players made their T20 debut including Mosaddek, all-rounder Muktar Ali and paceman Abu Hider. Batsman

Imrul Kayes has also been brought into the squad, while several others were rested and batsman Mushfiqur Rahim and paceman Mustafizur Rahman are nursing injuries. The fourth and final match of the series will be on January 22 at the same ground. — AFP

SCOREBOARD

KHULNA, Bangladesh: Scoreboard of the third Twenty20 international between Bangladesh and Zimbabwe at the Sheikh Abu Naser Stadium in Khulna yesterday:

Zimbabwe		Bangladesh	
H. Masakadza c Mosaddek b Shahid	20	Imrul Kayes b Chisoro	1
V. Sibanda c Sabbir b Shakib	44	Soumya Sarkar c Masakadza b Cremer	25
R. Mutumbami c Sabbir b Shakib	20	Sabbir Rahman c Muzarabani b Raza	50
S. Williams lbw b Hider	32	Mosaddek Hossain b Raza	15
M. Waller c Soumya b Shakib	49	Shakib Al Hasan c Waller b Cremer	3
S. Raza c Sabbir b Hider	7	Mahmudullah c Mutumbami b Cremer	6
P. Moor not out	10	Muktar Ali not out	19
G. Cremer not out	0	Nurul Hasan not out	30
Extras (lb2, w3)	5	Extras (b1, lb 2 w3, nb1)	7
Total (for six wickets; 20 overs)	187	Total (for six wickets; 20 overs)	156
Fall of wickets: 1-45 (Masakadza), 2-80 (Mutumbami), 4-89 (Sibanda), 4-163 (Waller), 5-177 (Williams), 6-186 (Raza)		Fall of wickets: 1-2 (Imrul), 2-69 (Soumya), 3-92 (Sabbir), 4-100 (Mosaddek), 5-102 (Shakib), 6-107 (Mahmudullah)	
Did not bat: B. Vitori, T. Chisoro, T. Muzarabani		Did not bat: Mashrafe Mortaza, Mohammad Shahid, Abu Hider	
Bowling: Hider 4-0-40-2, Shahid 3-0-32-1, Muktar 2-0-17-0, Mortaza 4-0-37-0, Shakib 4-0-32-3, Mosaddek 2-0-10-0, Mahmudullah 1-0-17-0 (w3)		Bowling: Chisoro 4-0-15-1, Vitori 4-0-45-0 (w1), Muzarabani 3-0-41-0 (w1), Williams 3-0-27-0 (nb1), Cremer 4-0-18-3, Raza 2-0-7-2.	
Result: Zimbabwe won by 31 runs.		Result: Zimbabwe won by 31 runs.	



England bowler Stuart Broad



MELBOURNE: Damir Dzumhur of Bosnia and Herzegovina hits a backhand return to David Goffin of Belgium during their second round match at the Australian Open tennis championships in Melbourne yesterday.— AP

'HEAVY' MATCH-FIXING IN TENNIS LOWER TIERS

MELBOURNE: Match-fixing is commonplace in tennis's lower levels and efforts to fight it are inadequate, a senior anti-corruption official said after cheating claims rocked the sport during the Australian Open. After an explosive report claimed match-fixing was repeatedly going unpunished, Chris Eaton of the International Centre for Sport Security (ICSS) criticized tennis's "opaque and secretive" anti-corruption body. The controversy is just the latest to hit the tainted sports world after claims of a doping cover-up shook athletics and multiple scandals engulfed football's governing body, FIFA.

Eaton, directory of integrity at the ICSS, said professional betting analysis showed "nil manipulation" of matches at the top levels of

tennis, where players are highly paid and less susceptible to bribery. "However in the second and lower levels, manipulation indicators are heavy and regularly occurring," the former FIFA security chief said via email. "We are not the only sport integrity organization to observe this." Eaton's comments follow the BBC and BuzzFeed report that said 16 players who had reached the top 50 over the past decade had repeatedly been suspected of fixing matches, but never punished. Three matches at Wimbledon had fallen under suspicion and at least eight of the "core group" of players on the fixing radar were at the Australian Open Grand Slam tournament, which began on Monday, it said.

Tennis authorities rejected any suggestion

that evidence was suppressed and defended the workings of the Tennis Integrity Unit, which was set up in 2008 and has landed 18 convictions, including six life bans. The BBC and BuzzFeed report's claims are backed up by anecdotal evidence including from Serbian world number one Novak Djokovic, who said he was once offered \$200,000 to fix a match in Russia. Retired American player Andy Roddick said a fellow former professional had told him he could probably name "at least 8-9" of the 16 suspected of repeatedly fixing matches.

'Operating in the shadows'

Eaton said hundreds of thousands of dollars can be made by gamblers using accumulators to bet on the outcomes of multiple

matches, a practice that is especially popular in eastern Europe and Russia. It creates a powerful incentive to fix matches—something which is particularly easy to do in tennis, which has many poorly paid players and where it only takes one bribe to secure the desired outcome. Eaton said tennis was the third most popular sport, behind football and cricket, for betting worldwide "and as a direct consequence it is third in the magnitude of identified suspicious matches". "Tennis is not as lucrative for fixing as football or cricket. But it takes less corruptive effort to fix individual outcomes in a tennis match, so the frequency of winning on a single match can be vastly higher than in cricket and football," he said.

Eaton also hit out at the "poor choice of

structure and process" for the Tennis Integrity Unit, saying it needs to be more open and relies too much on betting analysis, rather than field investigations. "Integrity is by definition open and transparent. The TIU is neither... by operating in the shadows they fail to practice what they preach," he said, calling for a "new independent and integrated integrity model. If not, then tennis will continue to be targeted at its most vulnerable levels, and as intimidated or compromised players and others advance they bring that vulnerability with them." His comments chime with top players Roger Federer and Andy Murray, who both said they were glad to see the issue of match-fixing brought to light and would like to see more details.— AFP

RISE OF MOBILE FUELING SPORTS BETTING BOOM CORRUPTION CONCERNS MOUNT

SYDNEY: The rise of mobile betting is transforming global sports wagering faster than regulators can react, flooding the industry with cash and potentially contributing to corruption scandals like the one roiling world tennis, experts and insiders say. Allegations this week that tennis authorities failed to deal with widespread match-fixing has rocked the game, following similar allegations that have blighted cricket, football and other sports. The ubiquity of mobile phones and tablets has helped transformed bookmakers from operators of dingy, smoke-filled betting shops into multi-billion dollar de facto tech firms, pouring resources into developing apps and complex algorithms and marketing to younger and broader demographics.

"We're no longer restricted by geography or the limited choices of one betting company. And we have wall-to-wall sport every day of the week from across the globe beamed into our lounge rooms, on our smartphones," said Scott Ferguson, a wagering industry consultant. "Technology is everything." The greatest danger for mobile gambling to intersect with corruption lies in the ease of fixing a one-on-one sport like tennis, darts or snooker, according to experts and professional gamblers. Mobile apps that allow in-game betting on individual points or games allow athletes to stealthily manipulate the results and may strike some of them as less unethical as throwing an entire match, said Sally Gainsbury, a senior lecturer at Southern Cross University who has written a book on the subject.

'A perfect combination'

Most major bookmakers operate from small offshore jurisdictions, making accurate predictions of industry worth extremely difficult, said Gainsbury. "There's a large grey sort of offshore market ... in every country, where it's actually just not

possible for the government to regulate these sites that are based in all these tiny remote jurisdictions," she said. "So it's difficult to get a really accurate size of how much people are betting because a lot of it is actually illegal."

Patrick Jay, a betting consultant and former head of trading at Betfair, estimates the global sports betting market is likely worth about \$1 trillion a year, having doubled in size in the last five years. He expects it to double again in the next five. The Australian government, citing a 2015 United Nations conference at which Jay was a speaker, put that figure as high as \$3 trillion, of which 90 percent was "illegal" or in contravention of laws regulating gambling in which the bet was placed. That range of figures, which includes betting on sports from soccer, cricket and tennis to much less widely followed sports like snooker, darts and table tennis but excludes racing, illustrates the difficulty in accurately valuing the overall market.

"It has grown because of mobile technology. It allows people to place bets anywhere, anytime," Jay told Reuters. "People are also dealing in credit, and therefore accounts are being run all over the world. It has created a perfect combination." Leading bookmakers including Betfair Group PLC, Ladbrokes PLC, Paddy Power PLC and William Hill PLC did not respond to requests for comment. There have not been any allegations of wrongdoing by the bookmakers in the World Tennis scandal. Worried about the boom in sports betting and incidents of match fixing, countries like Australia and across the European Union are in the process of reviewing laws that experts like Gainsbury say are "hopelessly outdated". In Australia, for example, 2001 laws regulating Internet sport betting bar anyone from placing a bet on a sporting event online once it has begun, despite allowing live betting over the phone or at retail bookmakers.—Reuters

AL ATTIAH WELCOMES PARTICIPANTS AT QATAR INTERNATIONAL RALLY 2016

KUWAIT: Doha will host the opening round of Middle East Championship for rallies in the period between 4-6 Feb, 2016. In this regard, Nasser Al Attiyah President QMMF welcomed participants in Qatar International rally 2016 - the opening round of Middle East Championship for rallies 2016 - wishing them all the best of luck. He confirmed full readiness of the technical and administrative teams of QMMF for this important international event, evaluating the positive role carried out by QMMF in order to promote the motor sport in middle East and North Africa (MENA).

Al Attiyah stated that this rally is distinguished with many characteristics which are rarely found in other rallies. The most important one of them is that it comes the



Nasser Al Attiyah, President QMMF

first round of each Middle East championship. "I would like also to take this opportunity to express my deep sincere gratitude for the support and permanent guidance of His Highness the Emir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al-Thani and His Highness Sheikh Abdullah Bin Khalifa Al-Thani - without whom this rally and many other achievements would have not been scored in Qatar. I would like also to thank all FIA representatives, sponsors, promoters, partners, organizers and friends for their ongoing contribution to the success of this event, once more welcome everyone in Qatar," he added.

It's worth mentioning that the registration for Qatar International rally will be closed at 6 pm on Friday (21/1/2016). QMMF has approved the final agenda of Middle East championship for rallies 2016 which will consist of 7 rounds with minor amendments in some dates - such as Kuwait rally 2 weeks later than 2015 schedule, as it will be organized in the last week of March 2016. Also Jordan international rally - 6th round for 2015 season will be organized in the first week of May (the 3rd round in the season), while Lebanon and Cyprus rallies will be the same as last year in September, and the same also for the final 2 rounds in this season (Oman and Dubai) in the 1st and 3rd weeks of November 2016.



NEW DELHI: India's No 1 junior golfer and junior world golf championship winner Shubham Jaglan, 11, practices at the Delhi Golf Club in New Delhi.— AFP

INDIAN VILLAGE BOY, 11, SEEKS GLORY ON WORLD GOLF STAGE

NEW DELHI: In 11-year-old Shubham Jaglan's poor Indian village surrounded by sugar cane fields, few had ever heard of golf until recently let alone know someone playing the sport internationally. But Jaglan has stunned his family and village since picking up a club at the age of just five, winning back-to-back junior titles in the US in 2015 and finishing sixth in a junior international event there.

"In our village, boys were either into wrestling or boxing. Hardly anybody in my family had heard about golf," said Jaglan, whose father earned 10,000 rupees (\$150) a month from farming a small plot of land. Jaglan's passion for what remains a rich man's sport in India started when a US-based golfing enthusiast opened a coaching clinic in his hamlet, not far from the capital New Delhi. Although the clinic closed three months later because youngsters were more interested in other, traditional Indian sports, Jaglan was hooked and continued practicing his drives in the fields.

For chipping and putting, his father set up an improvised three-hole green in the family garage, while sand piled on top of the roof served as a practice bunker. "We knew the sport was expensive, the equipment and all," said his father Jagpal Jaglan, who is now his caddy. "It was a big struggle initially. Everything appeared beyond us." "But our son was so passionate about this sport that we decided to give it our all," he said. Jaglan's achievements—his handicap is already down to zero, or "scratch" in golfing parlance—now dominate conversation in the quiet village where elders spend the days sipping chai (tea) and smoking hookah on charpoys (traditional furniture) outside their homes.

Masters dream

As Jaglan started competing in local junior tournaments, his talent began to dominate talk among Delhi's golfing elite. An intrigued Nonita Lal Qureshi, one of India's best-known women golfers, travelled to Israna village in Haryana state for a first-hand look at the young player. "I was really impressed by what I saw. But I wanted to test him further, so I invited him for a nine-hole game in Delhi," she said. "What I then witnessed just blew me away. I told the family they would have to move to Delhi if they wanted their son to become a golfing star."

For the family of three used to rural village life, it was a huge decision to make. But the move has been eased by the Golf Foundation, a local sports charity run by former golfer Amit Luthra which helped find them cheap accommodation near the Delhi Golf Club. The prestigious club has given Jaglan free membership, while a reputed public school has waived his tuition fees. And his trips to the US to compete at top junior level have also been funded by the same charity. "Had there been proper facilities back in our village, I think I would have stayed there because that's my native place, I could get to be with all my friends," Jaglan said wistfully.

Jaglan, who idolizes Spanish legend Seve

Ballesteros, knows he faces huge challenges to compete on the world stage, but says he dreams of one day winning the US Masters. Only three Indians have ever qualified for the major championship which takes place in April at Augusta: Anirban Lahiri, the current Asian Tour Order of Merit champion who is ranked in the world's top 50, veteran Jeev Milkha Singh and Arjun Atwal. "He is an exceptional talent no doubt," Qureshi said, throwing a glance at Jaglan as he practiced, wearing a pale green jumper with his name embossed on the collar. "Our job is to keep him grounded," said Qureshi, who has taken up coaching Jaglan. "God willing if everything goes well, who knows, we have a star in the making."—AFP

TOP-RANKED SPIETH AND NO 3 MCILROY COLLIDE IN ABU DHABI

ABU DHABI: The latest stop for Jordan Spieth on his tour of the golfing world is the Middle East and an eagerly anticipated head to head with Rory McIlroy at the Abu Dhabi HSBC Championship this week. It seems that two of the sport's biggest names have clashed before the first tee shot has even been struck. For some pre-tournament publicity, Spieth and McIlroy were among those taking part in a "Ryder Cup" challenge that included riding motorized golf scooters - so-called GolfBoards - along a fairway on a local course in the gulf emirate.

"It was quite competitive," McIlroy said with a smile. "Actually, Jordan nearly took me out. We collided halfway down the fairway - thankfully I didn't fall off." Today, it will be McIlroy trying to knock the top-ranked Spieth out of his stride. Fresh off an eight-stroke win in Hawaii on his 2016 debut that backed up his sensational 2015, Spieth will make his first appearance in a regular European Tour event when he joins McIlroy and Rickie Fowler in a stellar three-ball for the first two rounds at Abu Dhabi Golf Club.

For No 3-ranked McIlroy, it will be a first start of the year and a chance to see his biggest rival up close. "I don't play the game on (laying down) markers at all," McIlroy said. "I want to play my best, and I don't have to just beat Jordan Spieth this week. I have to beat another 142 guys." Since

McIlroy last played competitively, in winning the World Tour Championship to clinch the European Tour's Race to Dubai, Spieth has competed in Australia, the Bahamas and Hawaii. What has become a virtual global tour for golf's new big thing started in October with the President's Cup in South Korea and continues with his Middle East debut in Abu Dhabi and an appearance at the Singapore Open next week.

"It's a bit tiring," said the 22-year-old Spieth. In fact, he looked as bouncy and excitable as ever yesterday. "Last year, I kind of wanted more of a break. This year I kind of wanted to go out and take advantage of the year and see places that I had never seen before, on and off the course." While Spieth has been travelling, McIlroy underwent - and has been recovering from - laser eye surgery which he hopes will improve his short game and putting. He emerged from a two-month winter break with week of practice in Dubai last week, and says he is refreshed and refocused.

After four runners-up finishes in Abu Dhabi, including the last two years, McIlroy wants to take the extra step this week to give him momentum at the start of a seven-tournament stretch before the Masters at Augusta National, where he will bid once again to complete the career grand slam of majors.—AP

GRIFFITHS GRABS HAT-TRICK; CELTIC HUMBLE HAMILTON

GLASGOW: Leigh Griffiths scored a hat-trick as Celtic handed Hamilton a humiliating 8-1 defeat to extend their lead at the top of the Scottish Premiership. The game, a rearranged fixture from December, was over as a contest as early as the tenth minute as an explosive start saw Celtic grab three quick goals. Mikel Lustig nodded home the first, Nir Bitton grabbed the second with a sizzling strike before Australian international Tom Rogic's deflected strike made it 3-0.

Top scorer Griffiths got his 25th of the season in the 22nd minute with a strike from a tight angle before tapping in his second ahead of the break. The goals continued to flow in the second half as substitute James Forrest made it 6-0 in the 53rd minute before Griffiths pun-

ished some poor defending to complete his hat-trick a minute later. Eamonn Brophy grabbed a 73rd minute consolation for Hamilton before Callum McGregor made it 8-1 in the 89th minute to move the Scottish champions six points clear of Aberdeen at the top of the table. "It was a fantastic night and a very good performance. We scored a lot of goals and could have scored more," Celtic manager Ronny Deila said. "I am very pleased with the performance and the boys."

'Unacceptable'

Hamilton manager Martin Canning said the manner of the defeat was bitterly disappointing. "When you lose goals in that manner and you concede three

goals in ten minutes, you are giving yourself no chance," Canning said. "We didn't have enough leadership on the park tonight and to lose in the manner that we did is unacceptable."

Griffiths had already had a shot blocked on the line in the first minute before Lustig headed home a fourth minute opener. Stuart Armstrong swung a free-kick in from the left and the stand-in skipper glanced his header past Michael McGovern from close range. Celtic continued to press forward and their second came in the ninth minute with a sensational strike from Bitton. The Israeli midfielder collected a pass from Callum McGregor before rifling an unstoppable 20 yard shot past McGovern into the top right-hand cor-

ner of the net.

Hamilton barely had time to regroup before the Hoops added a third 90 seconds later. Lustig's cut-back found Rogic lurking in the box and the Soccerstar's effort took a deflection off Hamilton's Michael Devlin on its way into the net. Gary Mackay-Steven made the most of a rare start as he set up Griffiths to make it 4-0 in the 22nd minute. The winger waltzed through the Hamilton defense before laying the ball off to Griffiths who took a touch before firing the ball under McGovern from a tight angle. There was to be no let up for Hamilton as top-scorer Griffiths added another in the 34th minute. Rogic collected the ball out on the right and, with the Hamilton defense in chaos, he

picked out Griffiths at the back post to tap the ball in from a couple of yards out.

Scott Allan then teed up Forrest to drill a low angled shot beyond McGovern as the half-time substitutes combined for Celtic's sixth in the 53rd minute. Some kamikaze defending from Hamilton allowed Griffiths to complete his hat-trick straight from the restart. The striker charged down Devlin's attempted clearance before chipping McGovern to make it 7-0. Hamilton grabbed a consolation goal in the 73rd minute as Brophy scampered into the box to get on the end of Greg Docherty's through ball before slotting his shot through the legs of Craig Gordon. McGregor grabbed a late eighth for Celtic with a rasping drive on a night Hamilton will want to forget. — AFP

ITALIAN CUP

ANTI-GAY SLURS MAR INTER-NAPOLI GAME

NAPLES: Inter Milan won at Napoli 2-0 to reach the Italian Cup semifinals but anti-gay slurs by Napoli coach Maurizio Sarri at Inter counterpart Roberto Mancini overshadowed the match on Tuesday. Mancini and Sarri were sent off in stoppage time following a touchline argument. "Sarri is a racist. Men like him cannot be in football," Mancini told Rai Sport. "I got up to ask the fourth official why there were five minutes of added time. He then began to rant at me, shouting 'faggot' and 'poof' at me. He's 60 years old, he should be ashamed."

"I am not interested in talking about the game. This cancels out everything. ... I went to find him in the locker room and he apologized, but I replied that he has only to be ashamed. In England, someone like him wouldn't even be allowed on a training pitch." Mancini did not attend the post-match news conference. Sarri said he "lost clarity of thought" after the dismissal of Napoli winger Dries Mertens, with two minutes remaining, following a second book-

ing for diving in the penalty area. "I was annoyed at the decision on Mertens, I didn't have anything against Mancini," Sarri said. "I apologized to him ... I think that tomorrow he will accept my apology."

"I don't even remember what I said. Maybe I offended him, but it should end there. Am I homophobic? That seems over the top. I said something out of rage ... I was not discriminating against anyone. However, if I did use words that could have offended the gay community, I clearly apologize." Inter, third in the league, will face the winner of Wednesday's match between Lazio and Juventus. Stevan Jovetic struck 16 minutes from time with a delightful chipped effort from 25 yards out. It was only Inter's second shot on target. Adem Ljajic then sealed the result in stoppage time, running from the halfway line onto Jovetic's through ball and slotting into the bottom left corner from the edge of the area. Inter goalkeeper Samir Handanovic pulled off several fine saves. — AP



PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain's Argentinean forward Angel Di Maria (left) vies with Toulouse's Serbian defender Uros Spajic (right) during the French Cup football match between Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) and Toulouse (TFC) on January 19, 2015. — AFP

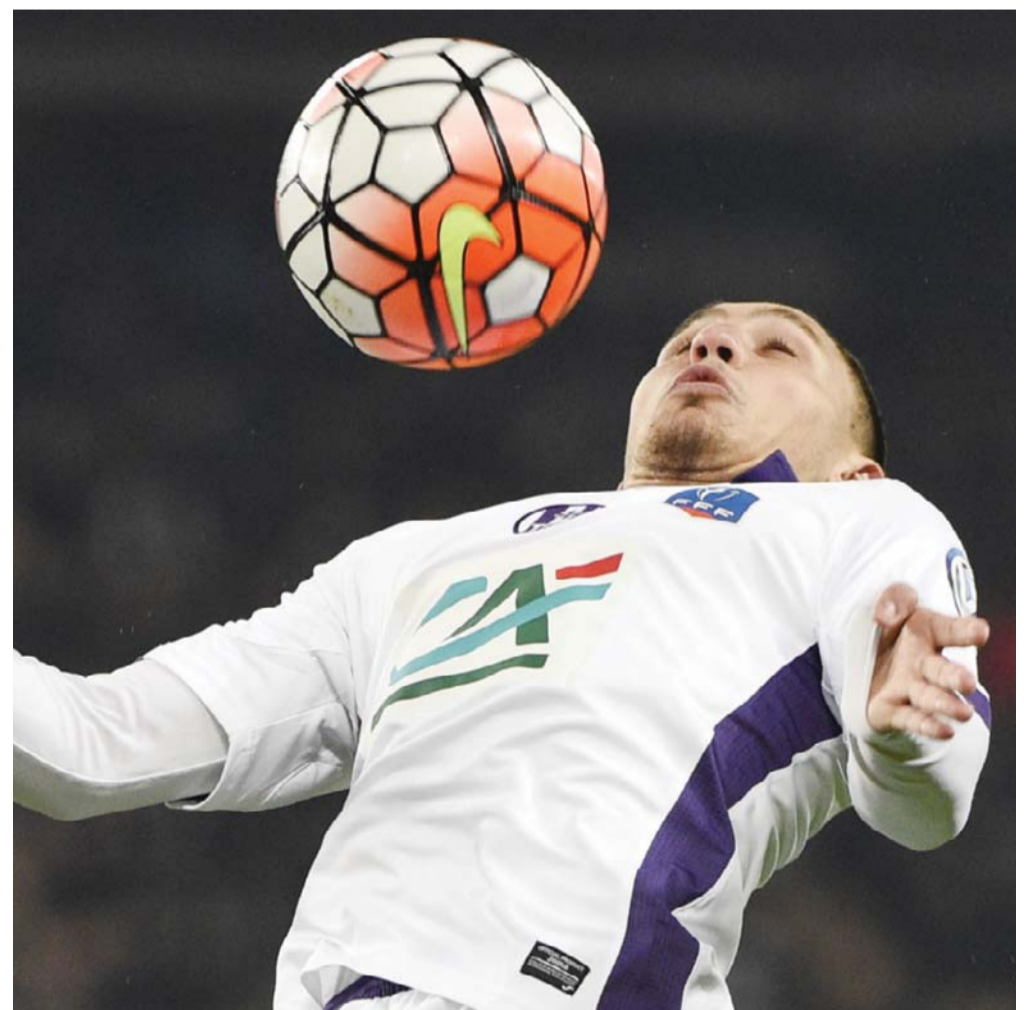
FRENCH CUP ROUNDUP

IBRAHIMOVIC KEEPS PSG ON TREBLE TRACK

PARIS: A late and controversial penalty converted by Zlatan Ibrahimovic sealed a 2-1 come from behind win as Paris Saint-Germain edged past Toulouse in the French Cup on Tuesday. Francois Moubandje had given Toulouse an 11th minute lead over a PSG missing several injured stars, but a David Luiz header from a corner on 54 minutes and Ibrahimovic's 21st goal of the season two minutes from time kept Paris on course to defend their domestic treble.

But the big Swede's penalty was highly controversial as Leyvin Kurzawa threw himself theatrically to the ground in the box under minimal contact. However, Ibrahimovic was emphatic with his spot-kick and Toulouse's hopes were dashed. "If that happened at the other end, it wouldn't have been whistled," moaned Toulouse coach Dominique Arribage. "It's difficult, when you referee Paris, to make the right decisions. I don't blame the referee." PSG also won 1-0 at Toulouse thanks to an Ibrahimovic strike on Saturday to take a 21-point lead in Ligue 1 over second-placed Monaco. And Toulouse must travel to Paris for yet another meeting with PSG in the League Cup semi-finals next week.

PSG are now set to embark on a run of eight matches in little over three weeks before hosting Chelsea in the first leg of their Champions League last-16 tie on February 16. "In the 88th minute I was a bit afraid we'd have to play extra-time," PSG coach Laurent Blanc said after the game. "We have to get through this month of January, which is difficult with this crazy schedule." Elsewhere, fourth division Sarre-Union caused the upset of the night by stunning second tier Niort 1-0. Second division Sochaux and Bourg-en-Bresse turned over top flight opponents away from home, respectively 2-1 at Bastia and 3-1 at Rennes. Meanwhile, Bordeaux won 2-1 at Angers while Corsicans Gazelec Ajaccio beat Guingamp 3-0. — AFP



PARIS: Toulouse's French-Moroccan midfielder Adrien Regattin controls the ball during the French Cup football match Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) vs Toulouse (TFC) on January 19, 2016. — AFP



NAPLES: Napoli midfielder Mirko Valdifiori (left) and Inter defender Yuto Nagatomo vie for the ball during their Italian Cup soccer match between Napoli and Inter Milan, at the San Paolo stadium in Naples, Italy on Tuesday, Jan 19, 2016. — AP

CONTROVERSIAL COURBIS TAKES REIGNS AT RENNES

RENNES: French outfit Rennes, sixth in Ligue 1, sacked their coach Philippe Montanier on Wednesday and replaced him with the controversial journeyman Rolland Courbis. The sacking comes a day after Rennes were knocked out of the French Cup by second tier Bourg-en-Bresse and a week after 62-year-old Courbis joined Rennes as an advisor to the club president Rene Ruello. While the club were sixth in Ligue 1 they had failed to win any of their previous ten home games. Courbis, who coined the 'Zizou' nickname for Zinedine Zidane while coaching at Bordeaux, has also handled Marseille, Montpellier, Toulouse, Ajaccio and Toulon in the French top flight.

The larger-than-life Courbis once enjoyed a jet-set lifestyle with an Italian

Countess, and the two were banned from all casinos in France in 1990 after a major win at the tables was followed by a fraud trial. Courbis was also shot in the gangland slaying of Corsican underworld character Dominique Rutily in 1996 in a car park at Hyeres, the killers were never found. A transfer scandal at Marseille also caught up with him and he was sentenced to 21 months in jail, before early release in February 2010 after five months, albeit wearing an electronic bracelet. So famous is he in France that he had his own puppet in the long running Canal Plus satirical tv show 'Les Guingnols', which was similar to Britain's 'Spitting Images'. Montanier is the sixth head coach to stand down in France this season. — AFP



Rolland Courbis

FURIOUS PANATHINAIKOS HIT WITH FRESH SANCTIONS

ATHENS: Panathinaikos accused Greece's deputy sports minister Stavros Kontonis of strengthening "a corrupt system" on Tuesday after the government ordered the partial closure of the club's stadium as a further punishment for crowd violence. Kontonis' ministry announced that Panathinaikos' famous Gate 13 area of their Apostolos Nikolaidis stadium-occupied by around 5,000 of the club's most fervent supporters-as well as the neighboring Gate 14, would be closed for the remainder of the season.

They were also fined 90,000 euros (\$98,136). The decision was part of a state

report on the crowd trouble which caused the Athens derby against Olympiakos Piraeus to be called off last November. The Super League match was called off before kickoff due to crowd trouble inside and outside the stadium which resulted in three police officers being taken to hospital. Panathinaikos had already been deducted three points, forfeited the match with a 0-3 scoreline, received a four-match supporter ban and been fined 190,000 euros by league authorities.

"The new punishment imposed by the deputy sports minister is unprecedented worldwide and is in fact predatory," the club

said in a statement. "Unfortunately, Panathinaikos believed last year's statements from Mr Kontonis about restoring the credibility of the long-suffering football scene, but as it turns out, he is anything but interested in that, instead reinforcing the operations of the corrupt system." Panathinaikos added in the statement that the club would launch an appeal to "each and every competent body of the justice system in order to overturn this highly illegal decision". Panathinaikos are currently fourth in the Greek championship, 20 points adrift of leaders and fierce rivals Olympiakos after 18 matches. — Reuters

Sports

Durant hot streak extended; Thunder roll past Nuggets



Ibrahimovic keeps PSG on treble track



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INDIA COLLAPSE TO HAND AUSTRALIA VICTORY

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MELBOURNE: Serena Williams of the US plays a forehand return during her women's singles match against Taiwan's Hsieh Su-Wei on day three of the 2016 Australian Open tennis tournament in Melbourne yesterday. — AFP

DJOKOVIC, SERENA STORM THROUGH IN MELBOURNE KVITOVA SENT CRASHING BY AUSSIE GIANT-KILLER

MELBOURNE: Defending champions Novak Djokovic and Serena Williams stormed into the Australian Open third round yesterday as tennis authorities came under fire over their efforts to fight match-fixing. Djokovic had a third-set tussle with French teenager Quentin Halys before winning their night match 6-1, 6-2, 7-6 (7/3), joining Williams and Roger Federer in the next stage.

As a match-fixing controversy continued to reverberate at Melbourne Park, Williams swatted Hsieh Su-Wei 6-1, 6-2 to reach the third round as she seeks a record-equaling 22nd major title. Williams eased lingering concerns over the state of her injured knee as she obliterated the Taiwanese, even pulling off possibly her first ever round-the-net shot for good measure. "It's always cool to do something fresh and new. I don't know if I

have done that," said the American world number one, who showed no signs discomfort from her knee. "I moved much better, so slowly but surely feeling a little bit better," she added.

Federer, who is trying to extend his record number of Grand Slam crowns to 18, then dismantled his 35th-ranked practice partner Alexandr Dolgoplov 6-3, 7-5, 6-1. The all-time Grand Slam king came unstuck in the third round last year, when he was shocked by Andreas Seppi, and he is wary of another upset with Grigor "Baby Fed" Dimitrov up next. "It's the least I expect to be in the third round of a Slam, obviously, so I'm pumped up, playing well, feeling good," Federer said. "But there's always a danger, you know. Like last year the third round was the end for me, so I hope to go further this time." Later

Djokovic was no match for Halys, 19, who had a net cord to thank as he broke the Serb in the third set, which went to a tie-break.

'Opaque and secretive'

Separately a senior anti-corruption official said that match-fixing was commonplace in tennis's lower levels and criticized the "opaque and secretive" Tennis Integrity Unit, which is tasked with finding cheats. Chris Eaton, director of integrity at the International Centre for Sport Security in Doha, was speaking after a report claimed several players suspected of being serial match-fixers had never been punished.

"Integrity is by definition open and transparent. The TIU is neither... by operating in the shadows they fail to practice what they preach," he said, calling for a "new independ-

ent and integrated integrity model". The controversy is just the latest to hit the tainted sports world after claims of a doping cover-up shook athletics and multiple scandals engulfed football's governing body, FIFA. Petra Kvitova became the latest women's top-10 player to fall, joining Simona Halep and Venus Williams on the sidelines when she was shocked 6-4, 6-4 by Australian giant-killer Daria Gavrilova.

In a positive evening for the hosts, the combustible Nick Kyrgios overcame a mix-up with his shorts to beat Pablo Cuevas and set up a showdown with world number six Tomas Berdych. "Just a bit of a mix-up before the game," shrugged Kyrgios, who had to change his shorts midway after the pockets on his first pair weren't deep enough to hold balls when he was serving. Agnieszka

Radwanska's sky-high confidence took another leap upwards when she halted Eugenie Bouchard, back in form after suffering concussion at the US Open, 6-4, 6-2.

On court earlier was five-time Grand Slam champion Maria Sharapova, who had little difficulty dispatching 105th-ranked Aliaksandra Sasnovich 6-2, 6-1. Japanese seventh seed Kei Nishikori beat his close friend Austin Krajicek 6-3, 7-6 (7/5), 6-3 as he pressed his bid for a first Grand Slam title. And Italy's Roberta Vinci overcame Irina Falconi to move towards a potential semi-final rematch with Williams-whom she stunned in the US Open last four, ending her bid for a rare calendar-year Grand Slam. "Yeah, I watch it every day," deadpanned Williams, when asked if she had seen a recording of the match. "Every night to get ready." — AFP

VILLA SET UP FA CUP DATE WITH MAN CITY

FA CUP ROUNDUP

LONDON: Late goals by Ciaran Clark and Idrissa Gueye gave Premier League strugglers Aston Villa a 2-0 win over fourth-tier Wycombe Wanderers in their FA Cup third-round replay on Tuesday. Bottom of the Premier League and seemingly destined for relegation to the Championship, Villa had only managed a 1-1 draw with Wycombe-currently seventh in League Two-when the two teams first met 10 days previously.

The reunion at Villa Park proved a similarly close-fought affair, but Clark's 75th-minute header and a last-minute Gueye strike earned Villa a fourth-round tie at home to Manchester City. "The most important thing was to win and go through," Villa manager Remi Garde told BBC radio. "We've been professional. It was not always easy. That is the fourth game in a row we are not losing, which is very good for momentum."

Villa's fellow Premier League side West Bromwich Albion also secured a

narrow victory, winning 1-0 at second-tier Bristol City. Venezuelan striker Salomon Rondon scored the game's only goal in the 52nd minute, chesting down Craig Dawson's cross and slotting home, to earn West Brom a home tie with third-division Peterborough United. Fifth-tier Eastleigh, the lowest-ranked team to make round three, were eliminated following a lively 3-2 defeat at Championship bottom club Bolton Wanderers. Eastleigh, of the Football Conference, went in front through Joe Partington in the 11th minute and pulled it back to 2-2 after falling 2-1 down, only for Darren Pratley to net a 58th-minute winner for Bolton.

Financially stricken Bolton, who avoided being liquidated at Britain's High Court on Monday, will host Leeds United in the next round. Second-tier Milton Keynes Dons — 4-0 winners against Manchester United in last season's League Cup-set up a home tie with Premier League cham-



BIRMINGHAM: Aston Villa's Rudy Gestede (left) and Wycombe's Joe Jacobson battle for the ball during the English FA Cup third round soccer match between Aston Villa and Wycombe Wanderers at Villa Park in Birmingham on Tuesday, Jan 19 2016. — AP

pions Chelsea after beating Northampton Town 3-0 in their replay. Portsmouth, FA Cup winners in 2008 but now in League Two, face a south-coast derby against top-flight Bournemouth after upsetting second-

tier Ipswich 2-1 at Fratton Park. The third-round replays conclude yesterday with Liverpool's home game against fourth-tier Exeter City and Tottenham Hotspur's trip to Leicester City. — AFP

OLYMPIC GOLD GLITTERS FOR MARIA SHARAPOVA

MELBOURNE: Maria Sharapova yesterday recalled being overwhelmed at the London Olympics as she looked forward to an attempt to claim gold for Russia at this year's Games in Rio. The Russian picked up the women's singles silver medal four years ago, thrashed by arch-rival Serena Williams in the final, but it was the experience of mingling with fellow athletes that left a lasting impression.

"I think going into it, of course, you always think of the highest prize and the best prize you can get at an event," she said of the Olympics after making the third round of the Australian Open. "But the experience of being an Olympian is so fulfilling." The 28-year-old, born in Siberia but based in Florida since she was young, said she was "so overwhelmed just by the experience of being around other athletes and just really respected". "Getting a chance to go into the Olympic village before the opening ceremonies and spending a few hours there and seeing all the different athletes," said the five-time Grand Slam champion, one of the world's richest athletes.

"Some were actually working out in the garden; some boxers were shadow boxing. It was just really special to see, and you felt a unity. "You felt these tremendous athletes maybe had never met or seen each other in person before, but we all really respected each other and really understood each other and what we go through as an athlete and the sacrifices and the hard work and the competition. "So that was special. Just to be an Olympian is an incredible experience, and then once you get to the court and you're facing opponents, of course you dream and visualize a gold medal." The Rio Olympics run from August 5-21. — AFP

Kuwait Times BUSINESS

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SLOWDOWN IN CHINESE ECONOMY RISKS GLOBAL DAMAGE

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TEHRAN: In this July 14, 2012 file photo two potential Iranian customers look at fabric bolts in Tehran's old main bazaar, Iran, as two merchants sit at left. — AP

IRAN'S BIG MARKET TEMPTS EUROPEAN FIRMS COMPANIES READY TO SEIZE BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

FRANKFURT: With many barriers to dealing with Iran suddenly lifted as part of a deal to curb its nuclear activities, some European companies are ready to seize business opportunities in a tempting market of 78.5 million people. At first glance, the allure is obvious - the second-largest economy in the Middle East-North Africa region after Saudi Arabia; the second most populous country after Egypt; and with lots of infrastructure and vehicles way overdue for an upgrade after years of sanctions.

Once inspectors confirmed that Iran was taking steps to curb its nuclear program, the United States and European Union on Saturday dropped many of the economic sanctions that have been keeping foreign companies from doing business there. But those that take the plunge face serious risks from the remaining sanctions relating to other issues, from geopolitical uncertainty and from red tape and corruption. Here's a look at who might be interested - and the hazards they will face if they venture in.

Who's hot to go in

Auto manufacturing is one field where interest could be strong. Before sanctions, Iran was a major market for France's Peugeot. One of the first out of the blocks after the announcement was Daimler AG's truck division, which on Monday announced joint ventures with Iranian partners that will enable it to restart its business there - a presence that went back to 1953 before being interrupted by sanctions from 2010 to 2016. Daimler foresees joint production of trucks and engines and a marketing company; it plans to reopen its representative office in the first three months of this year.

Division head Wolfgang Bernhard said in a statement he saw "huge demand" for commercial vehicles in Iran, where the company's Mercedes-Benz brand is well-known. The president of the Federation of German Industries, Ulrich Grillo, said that "Iran's need for making up lost ground in modernizing its industrial infrastructure is extraordinarily large," adding exports could double in five years from 2.4 billion Euros (\$2.6 billion) a year currently.

From their side, Iranian officials are touting the investment possibilities. Iran's transport minister told the official IRNA news agency on Saturday that his government had agreed to buy 114 new planes from the

European consortium Airbus. Airbus spokesman Stefan Schaffrath was more restrained, saying only that "we are studying our way forward in view of this new environment - in full compliance with all international laws."

Who's not

Deutsche Bank, Germany's biggest, withdrew from Iran in 2007 and says that until further notice it isn't doing any business connected to Iran. The company didn't go into the reasons, but it's hard to overlook the \$258 million in penalties it agreed in November to pay to US banking regulators for dealings with Iran and other countries in violation of earlier rounds of sanctions. More trouble with US regulators is the last thing the bank wants.

There are further risks for financial companies. Although the lifting of the sanctions imposed over Iran's nuclear program means it is now possible to do financial transactions in and out of Iran and to offer bank accounts, other sanctions remain in place over Iran's human rights record and what the U.S. authorities say is its support for terrorism. Many of those sanctions bar financial dealings with dozens of specific individuals; any bank would have to be certain it was not dealing with one of them or a company controlled by one of them.

And the nuclear deal has a "snap-back" provision meaning sanctions could be quickly reimposed if Iran is found not to be complying - more uncertainty. Thomas Schlueter, spokesman for the Association of German Banks, said members were "examining what is possible and what is not possible."

Why not

Although Iran is a big market, it has big problems. It ranked 119th out of 189 economies in the World Bank's ease-of-doing-business index, which measures obstacles posed by bureaucracy, slow public services and taxation. It finished 136th of 175 countries in the corruption perceptions index compiled by Transparency International.

Moreover, Iran is deeply involved in the violence convulsing the Middle East through its local supporters in Iraq and Syria, and tensions have risen sharply recently with regional rival Saudi Arabia. Disruption from conflict and politics is always a possibility. Industrial companies must be wary of yet more sanctions that bar the

import of dual-use goods that could be used to make nuclear weapons.

Germany's VDMA industrial machinery association warns that firms themselves will need to understand the complex rules, and not rely on government help. More than 100 participants have shown up for the association's information sessions on the end of the sanctions regime, it said.

Across the pond

American firms have to be much more cautious still. Deal or no deal, US sanctions not related to the nuclear program will still be in place and those bar most American companies from doing business with Iran. The deal drops so-called secondary sanctions, which were aimed at non-US entities. But primary sanctions barring involvement by US individuals and companies in Iran predating the nuclear controversy largely remain intact, according to guidance from U.S. officials issued Saturday. That means US companies are still broadly barred from doing business with Iran, with a few exceptions such as selling passenger aircraft and parts and importing rugs, pistachio nuts and caviar.

There is little doubt that some companies, from aviation to oil, are interested, if rules allow. But they could believe that the situation is still too foggy - that the next administration might reimpose sanctions. Even after implementation of the nuclear deal, the Obama administration announced new sanctions over Iran's ballistic missile program.

US interests can sell food, medicine, farm products and some other goods to Iran, "but aside from these areas, the US embargo is still fully intact," Richard Nephew, a former sanctions-policy official at the State Department and now at Columbia University, said in an email. US plane maker and Airbus rival Boeing Co. still faces hurdles. "There are many steps that need to be taken should we decide to sell airplanes to Iran's airlines. For now, we continue to assess the situation," said Boeing spokesman Marc Sklar. In 2014, Boeing received a US Treasury license to export to Iran spare parts needed to keep Iran's older Boeing planes safe. Iran's airlines have among the oldest fleets in the world at 23 to 27 years on average, according to the Centre for Aviation, an airline data and analysis firm based in Australia.—AP



RIYADH: This file image grab taken from the official Saudi Press Agency (SPA) on January 23, 2015 shows Saudi Arabia's new King Salman in his first public address. — AFP

WITH OIL DROP, SAUDI TAKES STEPS OUT OF WELFARE STATE

RIYADH: Faced with a massive decline in oil revenues, Saudi Arabia's King Salman marked his first year in power by taking steps to end his kingdom's generous welfare system. In a year that could set the pace for moving the Saudi economy away from near-total dependence on energy, the 80-year-old monarch took surprising decisions to cut subsidies and introduced other key economic reforms.

Analysts say that after decades of using its vast oil resources to subsidize domestic prices and pay generous salaries and benefits, the reality of falling oil prices is hitting home for Saudi authorities. "I believe we are on the verge of exiting the welfare state," Saudi economist Turki Fadaq said, speaking of a psychological shift in the Saudi ruling circle. "The final goal of these measures is to restructure the Saudi economy in a way to stop its total dependence on oil," Fadaq, head of research at Riyadh-based Al-Bilad Capital, said.

Oil prices have plunged to more than 12-year lows due to a glut in supply, dropping below \$28 a barrel in trading this week, and have lost three-quarters of their value since mid-2014. For years, 90 percent of state revenues in Saudi Arabia, the world's largest crude exporter, came from oil sales and high prices allowed the government to be generous. But the plunge in prices has left public finances reeling, with the kingdom recording an unprecedented \$98 billion budget deficit in 2015 and projecting a shortfall of \$87 billion this year.

Budget overstretched

Annual revenues have halved in the 19 months of declining oil prices and the kingdom has been forced to tap its huge fiscal reserves. The reserves, accumulated

when oil prices were high, dropped from \$732 billion at the end of 2014 to \$632 billion in November.

At first glance it appeared Salman would continue with the country's generous traditions when he took over following the death of his half-brother king Abdullah a year ago. Shortly after ascending to the throne Salman splashed out more than \$30 billion in handouts to government employees, the armed forces, students and others. That came after generous politically motivated salary increases and handouts made by king Abdullah in 2011 after the outbreak of the Arab Spring uprisings across the region. And subsidies on basic goods and utilities, including petrol, electricity and water, continued to keep prices low. But as oil prices have fallen, the high spending on wages and subsidies, coupled with the cost of Saudi Arabia's military intervention in Yemen and continued aid to many Arab countries, have left its budget overstretched.

"The challenge has become too big," Saudi economist Ihsan Bu-Halaiga said. "It started with the slide in oil prices that began even before King Salman came to power," said Bu-Halaiga, head of Joatha Consultants Centre. "The most important decision is the resolve to move from the welfare system to a productive economy," he said, pointing to a five-year program aimed at liberalizing energy prices along with other steps to boost non-oil revenues. Late last year the government took an unprecedented step by raising the prices of petrol, electricity and water, by up to 80 percent in some cases. Saudi Jadwa Investment estimates the country will save \$7 billion a year from reducing energy subsidies. The move was welcomed by credit ratings agencies, with Fitch praising the "significant reforms".—AFP

UNEASY TIMES: WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR AT DAVOS THIS YEAR

LONDON: Extremist attacks, plunging markets, and the break-neck pace of technological innovation...

Istanbul will be among the top issues, particularly for the political leaders, who will have the opportunity to hold multiple closed-door meetings...

Oil

The dramatic slide in energy prices is shaking up companies and economies. While making fuel cheaper for consumers...

Technology

This year's meeting is officially focused on how "the fourth industrial revolution" will change every aspect of society...

China

The future of China has become synonymous with the fate of the global economy and financial markets.

Security

The threat of extremist attacks of the kind that have hit Paris, Jakarta and



PRESEVO: A woman holds her baby as she waits with other migrants and refugees for a bus on January 20, 2016...

REFUGEES FACE QUALIFICATION HURDLES IN GERMAN JOB HUNT

ONLY FIVE-TO-TEN PERCENT OF ASYLUM SEEKERS QUALIFIED

FRANKFURT: From an economic point of view, it all seemed to make sense. There are hundreds of thousands of job vacancies waiting to be filled...

Wursthorn, a spokesman for the federal labor agency in Nuremberg. "It is not rare for young people to arrive in Germany with the dream of quickly earning enough money...

apprentices during their training. "The language, the language, the language," said Baier. "For a lot of them, the written exams are too difficult..."



DAVOS: Participants sit during the World Economic Forum (WEF) annual meeting.

GULF STOCKS BATTERED OVER OIL, WORLD ECONOMY WOES

KUWAIT CITY: Stock markets in the energy-rich Gulf States plunged yesterday, following the massive rout in global shares...

The Saudi Tadawul All-Shares Index, the largest Arab bourse, dipped more than 4.0 percent to fall below the key 5,500-point mark...

Arabtec construction plunged 5.2 percent and 7.7 percent. The Abu Dhabi Securities Exchange shed 3.1 percent...

closed down 1.95 percent to drop below the key 5,000-point mark, a level last seen more than 12 years ago.

prices and the state of the world economy. Oil prices were also trading at more than 12-year lows.

EXCHANGE RATES

Table with multiple columns: AL-MUZAINI EXCHANGE CO., ASIAN COUNTRIES, GCC COUNTRIES, ARAB COUNTRIES, EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES, GOLD, UAE EXCHANGE CENTRE WLL, CURRENCIES, DOLLARCO EXCHANGE CO. LTD, BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY, and Asia/Arab exchange rates.

WORLD STOCKS RESUME SLUMP, OIL HITS NEW LOW

LONDON: Global stocks suffered another rout yesterday as oil prices slid to fresh 12-year lows under \$28, heaping further pressure on financial markets from London and Paris to Russia and Shanghai.

on hopes of Chinese stimulus.

"It's not a pretty sight (on stock markets) with every single sector in the red... only serving to prove that yesterday's bounce was a short-lived relief rally," said Brenda Kelly, head analyst at London Capital Group.

Glut of crude

Yesterday, New York oil prices hit fresh 12-year lows below \$28 a barrel owing largely to a glut of crude that is set to worsen as Iran pumps out extra barrels after the lifting of Western sanctions on Tehran.

In London, Royal Dutch Shell shares

were down 5.7 percent, while among miners BHP Billiton shed 7.3 percent. Shell was hit also by the announcement that it expects a sharp decline in full-year net profits, as plunging oil prices slash the earnings of leading energy companies.

ability and relative prosperity.

Meanwhile in Asian trading yesterday, Shanghai's main stocks index swung in and out of positive territory before ending the day one percent lower.

Key figures

London - FTSE 100: DOWN 3.0 percent at 5,699.2. Frankfurt - DAX 30: DOWN 3.0 percent at 9,377.5. Paris - CAC 40: DOWN 3.3 percent at 4,133.

Daily Kuwait Stock Exchange Report

Tuesday 19 January 2016

Table with columns: Index, Change, Closing, Last Closing, High, Low. Rows include Price index, Weighted index, KSEX 15.

Table with columns: Volume, Value (KWD), Number of Trades. Values: 181,732,605; 16,800,966; 4,472.

Main stock exchange table with columns: Security, High, Low, Volume, Value (KD), Trades, Last, Change. Includes sub-sections for Oil & Gas, Industrials, Consumer Goods, Health Care, Financial Services, etc.



National Bank of Kuwait Financial Markets Daily Report At 02:00 PM Previous Day. Includes a line chart showing market movement.

Global Stock Indices table. Columns: Index, Previous Close, Last Price, Change, Daily Performance %, Yearly Performance %.

MENA Stock Indices table. Columns: Index, Previous Close, Last Price, Change, Daily Performance %, Yearly Performance %.

Global Currencies Exchange Rate table. Columns: Currency, Kuwaiti Dinar, Saudi Riyal, US Dollar, Euro, Sterling Pound, Swiss Franc, Japanese Yen, Australian Dollar.

MENA Currencies Exchange Rate table. Columns: Currency, US Dollar, Kuwaiti Dollar, Saudi Riyal, Bahraini Dinar, Qatari Riyal, Omani Riyal, Emirates Dirham, Egyptian Pound.

Global Interest Rates table. Columns: Currency, 1-Week, 1-Month, 3-Month, 6-Month, 1-Year.

Global Bond Yields table. Columns: Country, 2-Year, 5-Year, 10-Year, 30-Year.

Commodities table. Columns: Index, Previous Close, Last Price, Change, Daily Performance %, Yearly Performance %.

For more information, call Global Investment House on 1 80 42 42, www.globalinv.net

Source: National Bank of Kuwait



pads. The high-performance brakes can be emphasized by selecting optional front and rear orange brake calipers. Special features of the GS F's vehicle control systems include a newly adopted vertical G sensor in the ABS control, to ensure optimum brake force even when the vehicle is airborne.

The GS F's suspension parts have been redesigned with the aim of achieving the ideal geometry. The steering response has been improved by retaining high suspension rigidity, optimizing roll stiffness, and by harmonizing these with the steering system. The TVD torque control system is equipped as standard and provides optimal electronic control of the torque of the left and right rear wheels according to the driving situation, achieving ideal vehicle behavior during cornering. The GS F comes with three modes-Standard, which delivers a high level of stability and agility, Slalom, which places additional emphasis on steering response, and Track, which provides additional stability when driving at higher speeds, allowing the driver to accelerate with confidence. The 'Expert' mode, which is part of the VDIM system, allows drivers to hone their trackdriving skills. In this mode, VDIM is almost fully disengaged and only intervenes to prevent loss of control. VDIM has further evolved through integration of TVD with ABS, which uses acceleration sensors to deliver both high vehicle stability and an enjoyable ride.

Exterior design with dynamism and functional beauty

The exterior of the GS F exudes dynamism and functional beauty -the front view emphasizes a wide stance with a low center of gravity. From the side, the substantial overhang of the fender flares underscores the high performance of the V8 unit. The front fascia is defined by an aggressive representation of Lexus' trademark spindle grille, featuring a special 'F' series mesh and a pair of dramatically wide and tall air inlets beneath the headlights. These openings funnel massive amounts of air into specially-designed ducting inside the grille to maximize brake cooling and provide excellent performance. The grille also features a new black lacquer plated lower molding exclusive to the 'F' series, which provides down force to the front of the car. Wide front fender flares with large air outlets allow excess airflow to escape down the sides of the vehicle, while broad fenders and sculpted rocker panels provide visual muscle, hinting at the car's sporty character. In addition, the center pillar and outer mirrors are painted in a dark, glossy metallic hue that is coordinated with the color of the wheels to further enhance the element of sportiness in the 'F' series. The newly designed, 19-inch polished aluminum wheels are first forged, and then subjected to three-dimensional cutting. The rear of the vehicle follows the same aggressive design theme as the front, highlighted by the 'F' brand's trademark quad exhaust tips. Other highlights here include a downforce-generating rear spoiler mounted on the trunk lid, a rear diffuser beneath the rear bumper

section, fin-shaped aerodynamic enhancements adopted at the bottom edge of the rear bumper's lower garnish to improve airflow and reduce drag, and organically-shaped rear taillights. Available exterior paint colors include Lava Orange, Heat Blue, White Nova, Sonic Silver, Sonic Titanium, Mercury Gray, Graphite Black and Red.

Interior that promotes driving styles to the highest levels of luxury

The interior of the GS F tastefully melds superior craftsmanship and affluence with world-class ergonomics and functionality. However, with the GS F being a performance premium sedan, designers ensured that they place special emphasis on creating a driver-centric cockpit. This pilot-focused design theme is characterized by the information display/gauges positioned directly in front of the driver. Close attention has been paid to important details such as the size and thickness of fonts and indicators for easy recognition by the driver.

The large-diameter instrument panel is located in the center of the dashboard and displays essential driving data. The data content displayed on the large-diameter LCD center meter changes depending on which out of the four drive modes-NORMAL, ECO, SPORT S and SPORTS+is selected, while sports driving is supported through a carefully thought-out, easy-to-use multi-information display. The optional color heads-up display (HUD) allows the driver to view necessary information swiftly and without the need for excessive eye movement. On top of fundamental information

such as speed and basic mapping, in both of the 'Sport' modes, HUD also provides data on engine rpms and shift position.

The gauge hoods, upper part of the instrument panel, center console, palm rest and door trim armrests are finished in Alcantara(r) in a design that combines the performance of a premium sports model with the feel of a luxury interior. In addition, the surface of the instrument panel features four rivet plates bearing the Lexus logo, which were used in the legendary Lexus LFA and are a symbol of Lexus sports.

A new white LED interior illumination concept has been implemented that combines warmth with superior illumination qualities. Interior color schemes available on the GS F include Black and Accent White, Flare Red and Black.

Inside, the high-back sports seats fitted in the front of the GS F are manufactured through an integrated foaming technique, and have been designed to resemble form-fitting athletic sportswear to support and cosset occupants. The seats provide both high performance required on a track as well as the comfort needed for general driving. The specially crafted rear seats share design characteristics with the high-back sports seats used in the front, including the same distinctive sewing and stitching patterns.

The genuine-leather steering wheel has a thickness and grip perfected through repeated track outings by Lexus test drivers. The large paddle-shift levers are designed to be operated while holding the steering wheel, even when cornering. The steering wheel and shift knob employ three-color overlock stitching in white, black,

and blue -colors that symbolize the F series. The GS F utilizes aluminum sports pedals and foot rests.

The foldable rear center armrest is equipped with a cup holder, storage box and control panel to manage air conditioning, audio and electric rear window sunshade. The genuine aluminum ornament panel, front doors and rear armrest-in Naguri finish, medium-silver-are produced using Naguri machining techniques that have been recreated with the latest production technologies and workmanship. Carbon and forged composite carbon are available as additional options. In developing the audio systems for the GS F, the engineering team targeted a speaker system that replicates the sensation of sound experienced in a concert hall or movie theater. A 17-speaker Mark Levinson(r) surround sound system with an amplifier capable of outputting the equivalent of 750 watts, which includes GreenEdge(tm) speaker technology that enables more than double the sound output with the same amount of power.

Advanced safety technologies protect passengers through Lexus Safety System+

Lexus Safety System+ helps avoid or mitigate collisions across a wide range of vehicle speeds and conditions. Introduced globally as either standard or optional equipment, Lexus Safety System+ integrates several technologies:

Active Safety

- **Pre-Crash System (PCS):** Utilizing a camera and a millimeter wave radar sensor, the available PCS detects other vehicles or (depending on the region) pedestrians in front of the vehicle. If the system judges that there is a possibility of a collision, a warning is activated so that the driver may perform evasive maneuvers. After the warning, the amount of additional hydraulic brake pressure generated when the driver depresses the brake pedal is increased in stages according to the level of the collision possibility.
- **Dynamic Radar Cruise Control System (DRCC):** In addition to maintaining a set cruising speed, the DRCC also has a vehicle-to-vehicle distance control mode.
- **Lane Departure Alert (LDA):** The LDA issues an audible signal if the vehicle strays from its intended lane.
- **Automatic High Beam (AHB)/Adaptive High-beam System (AHS):** AHB helps provide optimal forward visibility during nighttime driving and automatically turns off the high beam headlamps when another vehicle is detected. When no other vehicle is present, the system turns on the high beams. AHS, an optional upgrade for the AHB, automatically optimizes the headlamp light distribution so that the high beams do not directly illuminate preceding or oncoming vehicles.
- **Blind Spot Monitor (BSM):** Employing aquasi-millimeter wave radar installed on the back of the vehicle, BSM can detect a vehicle present in adjacent lanes as well as the vehicle traveling at a high speed approaching into the driver's blind spot.





Unveiling Most powerful V8 performance cars ever developed by Lexus

NEW BENCHMARK FOR THE MIDDLE EAST LUXURY HIGH PERFORMANCE CAR SEGMENT



KUWAIT: Mohamed Naser Al Sayer has launched the "F" technology from Lexus powered by innovative engineering, setting new benchmark for the Middle East luxury high performance car segment. Under the F line two of the most powerful Lexus cars ever made: GS F performance-oriented GS F four-door sports sedan and RC F were unveiled.

The launch press conference was attended by Mr. Faisal Bader Al Sayer Vice Chairman Al Sayer Group Holding, representatives from Lexus Mr. Yukihiko Yaguchi Chief Engineer for GS F, Mr. Nobuyuki Takemura General Manager Sales and Marketing, Mr. Simon Frith Business Director and Mr. Bader Mosaed Al Sayer Deputy Business Director from Lexus Kuwait, General Manager from Al Sayer business units, Celebrities from social media Mr. Yaqoob Boushari, Ms. Fatema Al Momen, Mr. Abdulwahab Alissa, Mr. Mohamed Al Shemari along with distinguished members of the press and media.

With a style eminently suited to everyday driving, the Lexus GS F conveys the appeal of the "F" series to a wide demographic, thus enabling Lexus to further enhance its brand image of exhilarating performance. Speaking during the launch event Mr. Faisal Bader Al Sayer Vice Chairman Al Sayer Group Holding "Lexus brand is always in motion driving positive changes. During the past decades the transformation it has made is incredible. The 2 Lexus models - GS F and RC F which will be unveiled today under the F line, are groundbreaking, it will set new benchmarks in the industry."

The GS F embodies the philosophy of the "F" series which stands for fast dynamic response, high efficiency and seamless performance on everyday roads in addition to racetracks that can be enjoyed by everyone. The GS F is the first new "F" series sedan model since the launch of the IS F in 2007.

According to Chief Engineer Yukihiko Yaguchi, "With the GS F, our aim was to develop a car that combines the versatility of a sedan with the agility and dynamic character of the "F" brand. A car that is fun to drive every day, whether it is on a busy street or a winding road, regardless of one's driving skills. Having the driver say 'That was fun', 'That was great' after driving the car - that's what the "F" brand is all about." "To enhance its dynamic performance and hone its handling, our team also spent countless number of hours on some of the most famous tracks of the world, including Fuji Speedway in Japan and the Nürburgring in Germany," added Yaguchi.

Takayuki Yoshitsugu, Chief Representative, Middle East and North Africa Representative Office, TOYOTA Motor Corporation, said, "True to the spirit of all the "F"-line models, we developed the GS F to create a sense of excitement for our customers whenever and wherever they drive it. The GS F's high-speed performance and handling, which have been nurtured on race tracks around the globe, reflect our attempt to provide the ultimate driving experience."

Yoshitsugu added: "The sedan embraces the virtues

of sound, response and limitless power feel to support Lexus' "F" brand identity of a performance car. We look forward to delighting our customers with this latest model and would like to acknowledge their support over the years." Highlighting the Lexus F technology Simon Frith Business Director Lexus Kuwait "Lexus F cars are the pinnacle of performance. From concept to completion Lexus uses the most innovative engineering to help overcome any challenge. F is an exceptional achievement of obtaining optimal performance that would satisfy the most demanding of performance drive enthusiasts."

The GS F is based on the partially revamped GS model and boasts outstanding performance; the 5.0-liter V8 engine features enhanced response and engine-revolution smoothness, while chassis stiffness has been improved through cutting-edge technologies such as laser screw welding. Furthermore, the vehicle comes equipped with a variety of standard features to ensure both excellent driving stability and an enjoyable ride, including Torque Vectoring Differential (TVD), Vehicle Dynamics Integrated Management (VDIM) that incorporates an Expert mode and an Anti-lock Braking System (ABS) that utilizes vertical acceleration sensors. The interior and exterior of the GS F fuse a breathtaking

simplicity and elegance of design, and capture the mature, luxurious sportiness unique to the "F" series. In addition, the vehicle utilizes the Lexus Safety System+ active safety package to provide a multi-faceted approach to active safety, further enhancing the safety and peace of mind of its occupants.

GS F Key Features Engine that emphasizes sound, response and acceleration

Equipped with Direct Injection 4-stroke Gasoline Engine Superior Version (D-4S), the 5.0-liter V8 engine features an optimized Variable Valve Timing-intelligent (VVT-i) to produce exceptional power. The engine delivers 471hp at 7,100 rpm and 54.0kg-m of torque at 4,800-5,600 rpm. After assembly, the balance of each engine while running is adjusted, further enhancing the linear power and superior response that are characteristic of a naturally aspirated engine. The GS F's engine uses the Atkinson cycle to improve fuel efficiency and environmental performance. The Atkinson cycle essentially allows the engine's intake valves to remain open during combustion, improving the breathing qualities of the unit. This reduces pumping losses and increases the engine's thermal efficiency.

To maintain the same level of efficiency, the GS F's V8-engine comes mated to an equally efficient gearbox; the 8-speed Sport Direct Shift (SPDS) automatic transmission that offers smooth shift feel, excellent drivability, instantaneous acceleration and exceptional fuel economy under all driving conditions. In the M-position, the transmission takes as little as 0.1 seconds per shift, enabling the driver to enjoy genuine sporting performance. The Drive Mode Select system offers enhanced driving performance and enjoyment by allowing the driver to choose the most appropriate drive mode to match their preferred driving style and/or situation. Selections include NORMAL, ECO, SPORT S and SPORT S+ modes.

Transmission performance is further improved with the adoption of the Lexus G-force Artificial Intelligence Shift control (G AI-SHIFT). When driving in the SPORT S mode, the system selects the suitable gear ratio for sporty driving by monitoring the vehicle's G sensor while simultaneously tracking the degree of throttle opening; if the driver invokes a higher degree of throttle (i.e. wants to accelerate more briskly), a quicker upshift will take place due to high-response shifting. Furthermore, the G AI-SHIFT control further elevates spirited driving by intuitively and succinctly blipping the throttle on downshifts. When driving in the top-flight SPORT S+ mode, performance driving is further aided by the system allowing the engine to maintain a higher rpm level, which comes in handy when driving under high-load conditions such as on a race track or a winding road.

Active Sound Control (ASC) combines the natural noise of the vehicle's engine mainly with artificially produced sound in a new, advanced four-speaker system (two speakers in front and two behind) that provides more powerful engine and exhaust noises.

Exceptional performance that thrives on the track

To achieve superior body stiffness, the GS F makes use of the latest Lexus body technologies. These include laser welding, an increase in the number of spot welding points, high-stiffness adhesives and laser screw welding. The vehicle achieves high body rigidity well suited to all conditions, even on the track.

The GS F utilizes an engine under-cover with a flat, streamlined surface, allowing the vehicle to achieve outstanding aerodynamic performance. In addition, the attachment of aero-stabilizing fins to each section of the under-cover actively directs airflow to guarantee superb driving stability.

The GS F's stopping power is provided by Brembo(r) brakes that feature lightweight, highly rigid opposing six-piston aluminum mono-block calipers on the front, and opposing four-piston aluminum mono-block calipers on the rear. By increasing the diameter of the master cylinder and optimizing pedal ratios, the brakes achieve superb responsiveness and linear stopping performance. They also guarantee high rigidity and anti-fading performance through the use of high-friction





ADEL AL-GHANIM AUTOMOTIVE COMPANY RELEASING THE LATEST TWO MODELS OF MG

KUWAIT: Adel Al-Ghanim Automotive Company (exclusive dealer for MG British cars in Kuwait) has just launched two new models of MG (MG 5 Turbo and MG 6 Turbo) within the latest British Masterpiece of its kind, which is released in two new models for the first time in the State of Kuwait. These two new models were revealed at a press conference held at the (Company's Showroom in Shuwaikh - Airport Road), and was attended by the company's CEO, Mr Marzouq Adel Al-Ghanim and senior managers, employees, and a host of the representatives of the various media.

Discovering the Pleasure of Driving

In commenting on the release of the new MG 5 Turbo and MG 6 turbo, Marzouq Adel Al-Ghanim, the CEO of Adel Al-Ghanim Automotive Company, said in a press statement on this occasion, "MG cars are considered to be one of the most luxurious cars that rediscovers and redefines the driving pleasure, and it is one of the iconic British brands which has a long history of nearly 91 years in the Automotive industry. This legendary British brand is experiencing a powerful revival process thanks to scientific innovations and the various new technologies. MG has won numerous awards in recent years, including the third prize of the best factory by the Auto Driver British magazine.

Customer Care

Anthony Williams Kenny, the director of international design in MG, commented on this event on the same occasion: "MG brand has always been concerned with its customers

and innovated cars characterized by being reasonably priced and enjoyable without compromising the ideals. Consequently, MG represents a new development from its previous models, which will contribute to spread enthusiasm among customers and make them really distinguished. He also added that MG is preparing to release new models in the next two years which are characterized by advanced designs that distinguish it from its competitors as these models are equipped with higher specifications than competitors' at very competitive prices, and we are cooperating with "General Motors" concerning the development of engines.

Elegance through the Inspiration of the Past

The design of the new car MG 6 Turbo is characterized by elegance. While its engineering manufacturing has been carried out in Britain, the company was keen to draw inspiration from the past. Under the front hood of the car, there is a 1.8 L petrol turbocharged engine. The new lucrative MG 5 Turbo masterpiece is distinguished by the hatchback design; its red lines; and its elegant shape, which captivates the hearts and draws attention at first sight glimpse.

Points of Strength

The strengths of "MG 6 Turbo" is not limited only to the design and quality, but also include the magnificent brake and the six speed gearbox. The car is also characterized for the first time by the (Mirror Link) feature that allows the driver to connect the panel of



his smartphone to the main screen of the car and control it instead of using the phone.

MG 6 Specifications

1-1800 cc turbocharged engine and 158 horsepower with a tiptronic gear transmission with six speeds and the ability to use sport gear transmission through the steering wheel (F 1), rear camera for extra safety when parking the car with a rear sensor and hand one touch button brake; not to mention the pleasing and excitement with the audio enter-

tainment set (AUX - USB - CD) with a DVD, Bluetooth, and touch screen. For more comfort, the car is equipped with front and rear air condition with the possibility of adjusting the temperature for the front, and the luxurious-leather seats moving electrically in addition to the xenon lightings as well as a sunroof.

High-performance Safety

The car is supported by safety specifications including Antilock Braking System (ABS), Traction Control System (TCS), Electronic

Stability Programme (ESP), and Electronic Brake force Distribution (EBD), in addition to front and side airbags.

New MG 5

The exciting sport and inspiring MG 5 Turbo hatchback for this model is considered to be of the stylish and elegant cars for its unique specifications and characteristics among other brands.

The most that distinguishes it is the red lines where the seats and steering wheel of the driver are made of luxurious leather with embroidered red line to add more beauty to the car and its elegant breathtaking shape. The elegance and beauty of the car are enhanced through the specifications that highlight the sense of sporting for its fans. Under the front hood, there are a 1.5 L turbocharged engine and 129 horsepower with a tiptronic gear transmission with six speeds and the ability to use sport gear transmission through the steering wheel (F 1), rear camera for extra safety when parking the car with a rear sensor; and the audio entertainment set (AUX - USB - CD) with a DVD player, Bluetooth, and touch screen player. For more luxury, the car has luxurious-leather seats moving electrically in addition to a sunroof.

Safety in front of and around you

The car is supported by high-performance safety specifications including Antilock Braking System (ABS), Traction Control System (TCS), Electronic Stability Programme (ESP), Electronic Brake force Distribution (EBD), in addition to front and side airbags.

WARBA BANK LAUNCHES 'AL SUNBULAH', AN EXTRAORDINARY SAVING ACCOUNT!

KUWAIT: Warba Bank, the fastest growing bank in Kuwait, which provides a wide spectrum of Shariah compliant banking and investment, has announced the launch of its new product, Al Sunbulah, an investment savings account which is suitable for customers wishing to save funds while realizing good returns on their savings. It also gives them a chance to win monthly prizes of a total value of KD 10,000.

Warba Bank continues to offer distinct advantages to its customers. Al Sunbulah account presents added benefits to the bank's current products and services and offers six monthly cash prizes that can make dreams come true.

The new Al Sunbulah account from Warba Bank is available to both Kuwaiti nationals and residents with no obligation to transfer their salaries to Warba Bank. All eligible persons who meet the criteria to open an Al Sunbulah account can do so at any of the bank's branches in a matter of minutes or through the banking services on the bank website and through mobiles enabled with both Apple and Android systems. No minimum balance is required to open the account, however to enter the monthly draws, a minimum balance of KD 100 must be maintained in the account, and the more money the client saves in the account, the more chances he or she has to win one of the bank's prizes which are given throughout the year.

Like other accounts offered by Warba Bank, Al Sunbulah account enables its customers to benefit from all the bank's distinctive and innovative services including ATM access and credit cards. Al Sunbulah account by Warba Bank marks a new stage of banking services for customers that will meet their aspirations and expectations, in addition to promoting the concept of saving to them while they achieve good returns on their investments and remain eligible to win KD 10,000, whereby six people will have the chance to win each month. Al Sunbulah account is marked with convenience and flexibility which makes it the perfect account awarding customers with valuable cash prize in each draw.

As transparency is one of Warba Bank's founding values since the bank's inception, and because it is committed to the procedures set by the state of Kuwait, draws will be supervised by a representative from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry once the conditions are examined and met by the eligible customer accounts for the draw. Draws will be done electronically at random. The day of the draw will be the first Monday of each month (provided it is a working

day) and the first prize is KD 5,000, in addition to five prizes of KD 1,000 each. Prizes will be deposited directly in the winners' accounts within two days from the draw. For a customer to be eligible for the draw, he or she must have deposited the amount in Al Sunbulah account for a whole month before the draw date. For example, if the draw is on April 4th, 2016, the last date to deposit into the account must be before March 1st, 2016. Each customer will have one draw entry for every KD 100 he or she has in the account, and the number of entries will be based on the lowest balance a customer maintains during that month.

Moreover, Al Sunbulah account by Warba Bank is an investment saving account that totally complies with the Islamic Sharia law and has been endorsed by the fatwa and monitoring authority of the bank. Worth to mention that Warba Bank is mindful to provide its customers with outstanding services through innovative products that offer them new benefits which secure their investments. Therefore, Al Sunbulah account is one account with three benefits for our customers; including helping to promote savings culture, giving them good monthly returns on their investments in risk-free assets that are Sharia-compliant and giving customers monthly opportunities to win KD 5,000 provided he or she is eligible for the draw. The customer has the added capability to transact deposits and withdrawals electronically through the internet, smart phones and the bank's ATMs. There are no limitations on deposits or withdrawals in Al Sunbulah account, and there will be no fees for closing the account."

On the same note, Warba Bank is ambitiously pursuing plans to expand in the Kuwaiti market through its general strategic initiatives, and thus, it seeks to offer more services to attract a wider segment of new customers in order to raise its market share and maintain a competitive edge over other local banks. This is in addition to uplifting the Islamic banking industry through launching and offering services that are compliant with the principles of our Sharia jurisdiction, and giving customers practical solutions to their financial requirements. In this context, Warba Bank is keen on innovating financial services for individuals as well as corporations, especially in personal finance, investments and business banking. As such, we hope to satisfy our customers and to secure continuous and viable growth for the bank to achieve a pioneering role in Islamic banking, locally and regionally.

ETIHAD AIRWAYS RENEWS COMMITMENT TO ABU DHABI HSBC GOLF CHAMPIONSHIP

Etihad Airways is proud to announce the renewal of its sponsorship with the Abu Dhabi HSBC Golf Championship for the next five years, 2016 to 2020. The airline and Abu Dhabi Sports Council (ADSC) have signed an agreement to extend Etihad Airways' long-standing partnership with the annual European Tour event, which will take place from 21 to 24 January at the Abu Dhabi Golf Club. Etihad Airways' investment further supports Abu Dhabi's vision to position itself as a premier international golf tourism destination.

The announcement was made by Peter Baumgartner, Etihad Airways' Chief Commercial Officer, and His Excellency Aref Al Awani, ADSC's General Secretary, at a meeting held at the airlines headquarters in Abu Dhabi.

Etihad Airways, the official airline and gold partner of the golfing event since its inauguration in 2006, named the Abu Dhabi tournament's most successful winner, Martin Kaymer, as its Etihad Guest Ambassador in 2014.

The two-time Major winner and three-time Abu Dhabi champion Martin Kaymer, will be up against one of the championship's strongest-ever fields with world number one Jordan Spieth, making his Arab debut, alongside four-time Major winner Rory McIlroy, American hotshot Rickie Fowler and Swede Henrik Stenson.

Peter Baumgartner, Etihad Airways' Chief Commercial Officer, said: "The Abu Dhabi HSBC Golf Championship is a world-class event attracting some of the games' greatest competitors to Abu Dhabi. We are very proud to continue our support for this initiative as it fits perfectly with our strategy to reinforce Abu Dhabi as a leading hospitality and leisure destination."

As part of the four-day event, Etihad Airways has organised a series of community activities including a golf simulator at the Abu Dhabi Golf Club and a ladies best-dressed competition with a prize of two tickets on the airline's Airbus A380 service to New York.



(Left to right) Peter Baumgartner, Etihad Airways' Chief Commercial Officer, Martin Kaymer, Etihad Guest Ambassador, and His Excellency Aref Al Awani, ADSC's General Secretary.

In addition, members of Etihad Airways' loyalty program - Etihad Guest will get complimentary access to the event by presenting their membership card upon arrival. The airline also continues its 'Etihad Most Birdies Prize', won last year by Phil Mickelson. The player who cards the most birdies over the four rounds of the 2016 tournament will receive two Etihad Airways First Class return tickets to any destination on the airline's network.

His Excellency Aref Al Awani, ADSC's General Secretary, said: "Etihad Airways is the championship's longest-standing partner and its support over the years has played a key role in elevating the event, and golf in Abu Dhabi, onto the global stage. From enticing visitor packages and competitions, to the highly contested 'Etihad Most Birdies Prize', we look forward to

working closely with Etihad Airways and our title sponsor HSBC to continue lifting the championship's fan and player offering to new heights."

The partnership renewal follows HSBC's confirmation that it too will continue its title sponsorship of the championship until 2020, a clear demonstration of the bank's commitment to the event and belief in Abu Dhabi as a sporting destination. New sponsor Mercedes Benz will also drive support for the 2016 event.

The Abu Dhabi HSBC Golf Championship is owned and presented by ADSC. Tickets and tailored packages are available via the event's official website

www.abudhabigolfchampionship.com at AED50 for a daily pass and AED150 for a four-day pass. Guests staying at any Abu Dhabi hotel over the championship period can enter for free.

THREE KD 5,000 WINNERS IN NBK'S AL JAWHARA WEEKLY DRAWS

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) announced three lucky winners in Al Jawhara weekly draws during the month of December. The draws were conducted under the supervision of Ministry of Commerce Representatives.

Souad Abdulaziz Al Motery, Najam Abdullah Alshakhalha, and Ahmed Nasar Al Adwani each won KD 5,000. The winners expressed their gratitude and thanked NBK for its great services and promotions. The upcoming winner of Al Jawhara KWD 125,000 monthly draw will be announced live on Marina FM on Tuesday, 26th of January, 2016.

NBK has doubled customers' chances to win in the weekly, monthly and quarterly draws when they do not withdraw or transfer from their accounts. NBK customers have chances to win KD 5,000 weekly, KD 125,000 monthly and a grand

prize of KD 250,000 quarterly. Each KD 50 in a customer's account entitles them to one entry in the draw, thus more money in an account means more chances in each draw. The new feature introduced to Al Jawhara Account enables customers to double their chances when maintaining their balance without withdrawing or transferring from Al Jawhara account.

Al Jawhara is the most popular prize-giving account in Kuwait. Al Jawhara account entitles account holders to enter the weekly, monthly and quarterly Al Jawhara draws.

All prizes are automatically credited to the winners' accounts the day after the draw. Al Jawhara accounts are available for both Kuwaitis and expats and can be opened at any of NBK's branches around Kuwait, or through NBK website for existing customers.



HAVANA: Members of the Danza Voluminosa (Voluminous Dance) Cuban dance group rehearse at a private house. —AFP photos



HAVANA: Members of the Danza Voluminosa (Voluminous Dance) Cuban dance group rehearse at a private house.



HAVANA: Members of the Danza Voluminosa (Voluminous Dance) Cuban dance group rehearse at a private house.



HAVANA: The director of the Danza Voluminosa (Voluminous Dance) Cuban dance group Juan Miguel Mas (right) rehearses with his dancers at his home.



HAVANA: Juan Miguel Mas shows the wardrobe during a rehearsal.



HAVANA: Members of the Danza Voluminosa group get ready for a rehearsal.



HAVANA: Members of the Danza Voluminosa group rehearse at the National Theatre.



CUBA'S PLUS-SIZE BALLERINAS FEEL LIKE DANCING

'YOU COME HERE TO FEEL LIKE A BALLERINA'

HAVANA: With wide waists in white tutus, their figures are far from those of typical ballerinas-but these plus-size Cuban dancers are determined to defy stereotypes. In a land with a fiercely demanding dance tradition, the women have turned their large physique into an artistic virtue, proudly taking to the stage to perform "Swan Lake." "You don't come here to lose weight. You come here to feel like a ballerina," says Juan Miguel Mas, founder of the Danza Voluminosa troupe. "You are fat and you have the desire and the need to express yourself through movement."

Fighting fat

Cuba is world renowned for its slim, rigorously trained dancers. But 44 percent of its population is overweight, according to 2012 figures from state nutrition body SIS-VAN. Members of Danza Voluminosa typically weigh between 100 and 120 kilos (220 to 265 pounds), but

there is no limit. Mas, 50, a trained dancer with a rotund figure himself, founded the group in 1996. It once had 20 members, but only seven remain. Some left and two have died from obesity-related illnesses. "It has not been easy," says one of the members of the troupe, Maylin Daza, a 36-year-old housewife. "We have lost companions to obesity. And here we are, still fighting."

'Soft, wide bodies'

Mas set out to use his own professional dance experience to train people "with bodies like mine, softer and wider." "I had the idea of creating a space where those people could train and develop, and of creating dances using these bodies," he said. "It helps obese people to develop not only artistically, but also socially." The ballerinas, all women, practice twice a week in Mas's small apartment in Havana's working class Marianao neighborhood. Mas has spent 20 years exploring ways of making

an overweight body move "aesthetically better"—developing elegant moves adapted to bigger figures. "Our dances will not be the same as thin people's dances," he says.

Winning over the audience

The group recently put on a series of shows for the public. "The first few times we performed, there was this deathly silence. Some people got up and left. Some laughed," Mas recalls. "But when people saw how developed our work was and how impressive, with so much work behind it and such aesthetic meaning, in the end they applauded. We won over the audience."

Then one night in early January, three dancers from the troupe found themselves stepping out in front of an audience at the elite National Theater in Havana. In white tutus, leggings and headresses, they stepped along in tight formation to Tchaikovsky's score.

'Fat women don't dance ballet'

There are no jumps and few bends. In rehearsal, the ballerinas groan when made to hold a move for several seconds. But in the dressing room, excitement reigns. "I've always liked classical dance," said Daza.

"But everyone knows fat women don't dance ballet. And in my family no one helped me to lose weight." The National Theater show was part of a cultural exchange between the University of Massachusetts and the Cuban writers' and artists' union UNEAC.

For the dancers, it is a measure of how far they have come. Pulling on her long white gloves, Rubi Amaro recalls her first performances with the group. "It wasn't easy at first," the 34-year-old said.

"At the start people laughed. They didn't like it. But others did." "Now they pay more attention to the choreography. No one laughs at us now," she added. —AFP

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CBK REVIEWS ITS SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN 2015

2015 was another outstanding year for the Commercial Bank of Kuwait (CBK) in terms of its social responsibility and was full of activities showing its commitment to its social responsibility towards the whole society and NGOs.

In this regard, CBK's assistant manager for PR and publicity affairs, Amani Al-Wer stressed that CBK has had significant role over years towards various society segments in general and those with special needs in particular. She added that 2015 was rich in social, humanitarian and philanthropic activities that won both the interest and admiration of various social media followers and users. She highlighted that the activities included:

People with special needs at core of our attention

Reviewing the activities held for people with special needs, Al-Wer stressed that with

such programs, CBK aims at integrating those people into the society and granting them opportunities to prove themselves. She added that the activities included donating electronic devices and teaching aids to Al-Nour School and Al-Motanabbi school for slow learners. CBK also sponsored the 'Light & Color' exhibition organized by Al-Wafa school. The bank also shared the Qurqai'an joy with the Down Syndrome kids during Ramadan, took part in the National and Liberation Day anniversaries at the Physiotherapy hospital and with Al-Raja school kids.

Supporting various social activities

In this regard, and in collaboration with Kuwait Society for the Blind, CBK launched a camping to print copies of the Holy Quran for the blind. It also visited the victims of the terrorist attack on Al Sadeq Mosque in various hospitals.

'Hawwen Alaihom' Campaign
In addition and in a CBK creation, CBK also organized the 'Hawwen Alaihom' Campaign where a PR team and volunteering employees distributed gifts comprising of warm cloths, face masks and gloves to cleaning and construction laborers on various streets.

Supporting sports activities
CBK sponsored many sport activities organized by the Industry authority and various NGOs and state bodies and establishments.

Communicating with staff as one family
The Bank enhanced its role towards its employees by supporting their artistic talents by organizing the annual iAl-Tijari Hobbyist Exhibition. CBK also honored a number of its employees with outstanding sports and cultural performances.

Supporting educational activities
Within its activities to develop educational facilities in Kuwait, CBK annually supports the activities held by Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Science (KFAS). In a bid to attract the best Kuwaiti youth, CBK also took part in various vocational exhibitions held at GUST and the faculty of administrative sciences, KU to familiarize student with the advantages of working for CBK. CBK was also keen on activating communication with Kuwaiti students studying abroad by sponsoring the annual conference held by Kuwait Students Union in USA.

Supporting conferences and exhibitions
CBK sponsored and took part in a number of conferences and exhibitions in 2015 including the Small and medium Projects exhibition held in collaboration Tarmouk Mayor and the Manpower and Government

Restructuring Program.
Reviving heritage and Kuwaiti traditions
For over 25 years now, CBK has been keen on annually issuing its own calendar which includes artistic paintings documenting and telling stories about Kuwait's heritage and reflecting images of it. Accordingly, heritage revival has been associated with CBK which, for the third year and in view of the remarkable success it achieved in previous years, held its 'Ya Zeen Turathna' (What a beautiful heritage we have!) Campaign.
Finally, Al-Wer stressed that CBK would continue its activities and efforts tailored to highlight its social responsibilities towards all social segments by launching unique initiatives organized by the PR and advertising department and supported by the board of directors and various departments.



SHERATON KUWAIT BIDS FAREWELL TO TEJINDER AHLUWALIA

Sheraton Kuwait and Four Points by Sheraton Kuwait bids farewell to Mr Tejinder Ahluwalia who retired after having worked in the hotel industry for almost 30 years noting that his longest sustained period was at Sheraton Kuwait where he spent 14 productive years and accompanied the most essential evolution stages of both hotels, overseeing the renovations that Sheraton Kuwait went through over the last 10 years and the inauguration of the Four Points by Sheraton Kuwait in 2003 and had a vital role in its expansion in 2013. Today Mr Ahluwalia leaves Sheraton Kuwait to pursue a new calling which is family and to settle down in his hometown in India.

On this occasion, Mr Ahluwalia marked few words that

truly expressed his sincere feeling, saying: "I am privileged to have come across many good people during my journey and it is with gratitude that I look back to what we have achieved over the past 14 years that I have worked in such a large organization and a great school managed by an enormous and shining leader in the hospitality industry. I would like to also thank Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide who helped me build the first bridges in my career history since 1982. He also expressed gratitude and appreciation to Mr Fahed Abushaar - General Manager of Sheraton Kuwait and Mr Mounir Amer - General Manager of Four Points by Sheraton Kuwait for their sincere trust and enduring confidence that were given to him during the whole 14 years.

Mr Fahed Abushaar praised the efforts of Mr Tejinder who contributed in the development and renovation of the most important facilities of the hotel and worked day and night throughout the 14 years to ensure the safety of guests and staff. Mr Abushaar added: "It is with regret that we announce the retirement of Mr Tejinder Ahluwalia, one of the pillars of Sheraton Kuwait and Four Points by Sheraton Kuwait family who is leaving us to pursue traveling and playing with his grandchildren full-time. We will not only miss his technical expertise but his ever present good cheer. Thank you for being such a dedicated person at work, we wish you a relaxing and a well deserved retirement". In his turn, Mr Mounir Amer commended Mr Tejinder for the great

efforts made during his long working years.
At the same time Mr Abushaar and Mr Amer welcomed Mr Shaji Abraham who has been appointed as the Director of Engineering who carries almost 34 years of extensive experience acquired in the field of engineering in the hotel industry since 1981. Mr Shaji has several certificates that were gained through his long career path in addition to a bachelor in Engineering Management enabling him to efficiently manage engineering department in several hotels inside and outside Kuwait, in addition to overseeing the opening of different hotels in Kuwait and Bahrain. Mr Abushaar and Mr Amer welcomed and presented him the most sincere congratulations upon his new responsibilities.

ABK SPONSORS LOYAC'S 4TH BLOOD DONATION DRIVE

Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait announced its sponsorship of the Lothan Youth Achievement Center's (LOYAC) 4th Blood Donation Drive, which is scheduled to take place on Saturday, the 23rd of January. The event will commence with a bike motorcade that will start from the LOYAC offices in Al Qibliya School and end at the Dasman Diabetes Institution. The bikers participating in the motorcade will be donating blood upon arriving to the Dasman Diabetes Center, which will also be open to the public for interested donors from 12pm to 4pm.

Commenting on this sponsorship, Emiranda Winter AGM, Corporate Communications said: "At ABK we firmly believe in the importance of supporting initiatives that encourage individuals to contribute and make a life changing difference. By sponsoring the 4th LOYAC Blood Donation Drive, we are raising awareness among the public, and hope to elevate the spirit of giving and coming together to donate blood in support of those who need it the most. We would like to encourage everyone that is able to donate to Donate & Save a Life."

LOYAC is a nonprofit organization that works towards the overall development of the youth. It designs and develops many programs to facilitate the professional development and personal growth of the youth, ages 6 to 30. ABK continuously seeks to make a solid presence in the communities in which it operates by joining hands

with active organizations that aim to create a more prosperous future for Kuwait. For more information on Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait please visit

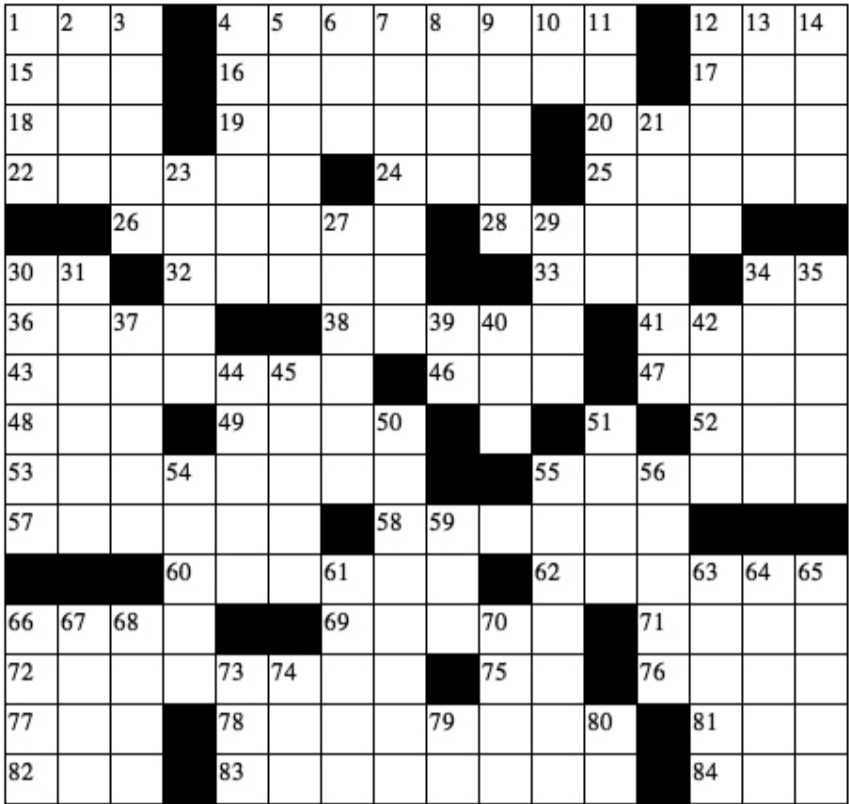
www.eahli.com or contact an ABK representative via 'Ahli Chat' or by contacting a customer service agent via 'Ahlan Ahli' at 1899899.



IMAX FILM PROGRAM

Thursday:	Friday:	Saturday:	Sunday:
** 9:30am Showtime Available for Groups Journey to Space 3D 10:30am, 7:30pm Kenya: Animal Kingdom 3D 11:30am, 6:30pm, 9:30pm	Journey to Space 3D 2:30pm, 6:30pm, 9:30pm Pandas: The Journey Home 3D 3:30pm Secret Ocean 3D 4:30pm Mysteries of the Unseen World 3D 5:30pm Titans of Ice Age 3D 7:30pm Kenya: Animal Kingdom 3D 8:30pm	** 9:30am Showtime Available for Groups Fires of Kuwait 10:30am Journey to Space 3D 11:30am, 2:30pm, 5:30pm, 8:30pm Mysteries of the Unseen World 3D 12:30pm Secret Ocean 3D 1:30pm, 6:30pm Galapagos 3D 3:30pm Pandas: The Journey Home 3D 4:30pm Kenya: Animal Kingdom 3D 7:30pm Titans of Ice Age 3D 9:30pm	** 9:30am Showtime Available for Groups Journey to Space 3D 10:30am, 6:30pm, 9:30pm Kenya: Animal Kingdom 3D 11:30am, 7:30pm
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		Notes: - All films are in Arabic, except 'Fires of Kuwait 2D' - For English, headsets are available upon request. - Film schedule is subject to changes without notice. For information call 1 848 888 or visit www.tscok.org.kw	

CROSSWORD 1144



ACROSS

- 1. A dark-skinned member of a race of people living in Australia when Europeans arrived.
2. Being ten more than one hundred ninety.
3. English scholastic philosopher and assumed author of Occam's Razor (1285-1349).

DOWN

- 1. A woman hired to suckle a child of someone else.

- 2. A very young child (birth to 1 year) who has not yet begun to walk or talk.
3. Horizontal beam used as a finishing piece over a door or window.
4. Be interwoven or interconnected.

Yesterday's Solution crossword grid with filled-in letters and empty cells.

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

There is much drive and inspiration for disciplined work. You win reward, recognition and authority through hard work and knowing the score. A friend could present you with a challenge this afternoon.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Long-range perspectives from foreign places are possible early this year. Purchase several notebooks for your personal use. Perhaps a blue notebook for your dreams by your bedside and a red one for your passions or thoughts.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Your ability to communicate is at a high. Fate favors you in the workplace. You will find this a perfect time to be assertive and to move forward in your career decisions.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

If you know that your job will lead to rewards you will work long and hard. You are a smart businessperson and others look to you for answers in many areas.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Workday projects are interrupted often this day. Your work may not be on the same time schedule used by others and some may seem short tempered.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

A job change is not appropriate at this time. However, if you feel it is time, do only the basics by sending out a few resumes to see if you get a response.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Respect, status and achievement are central goals for you as a new phase begins in your life. Creating a structure to empower and maintain your ideals and principles becomes a high priority.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

You will find, suddenly, that your work has become more productive and more people-oriented. Perhaps computer integrated. Working and networking with others in your work or interests will help you to build your confidence.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Your wishes can come true today as everything is working in your favor. There may be a particular fraternity or sorority, club or group you want to join.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Ideas and interaction with authority figures or older people may be in the forecast now. Working with the flow of progress should be easy to do.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Making sure your goals are getting off the ground, you will spend some time now in becoming better organized. Conferences or educational interests are positive moves.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

There are energies for opportunities with expansion and optimism. This could mean travel, excessive spending and opportunities to return to school or take a class.

WORD SEARCH PUZZLE

Computer Jargon 2

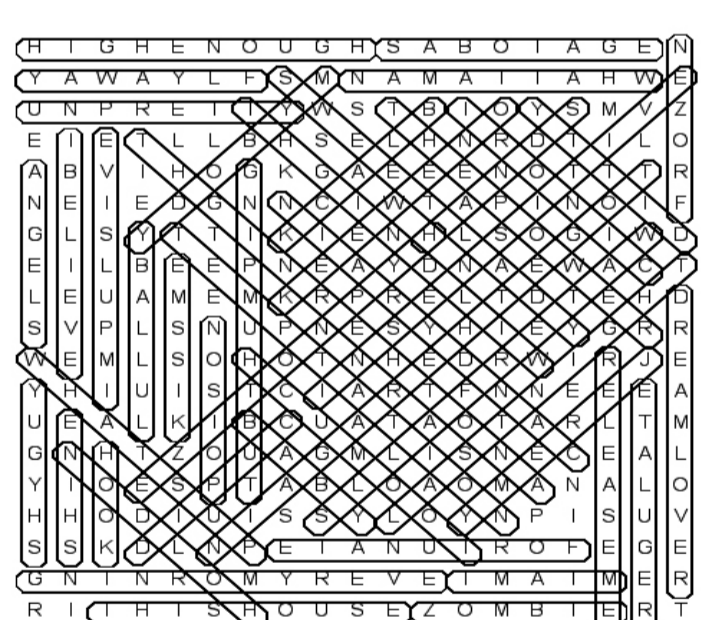
Find and circle all of the computer words that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell an additional computer word.



- ASCII, BANDWIDTH, BIOS, BUG, CACHE, CHIP, COPY, CPU, CRASH, CYBERSPACE, DATABASE, DESKTOP, DISK, DOCUMENT, DOWNLOAD, DRIVER, EMOTICON, ETHERNET, FAQ, FIREWIRE, FONT, FREEWARE, GIGABYTE, HACKER, HARDWARE, INPUT, JAVA, JPEG, KEYBOARD, LINUX, MENU, MULTIMEDIA, NETIQUETTE, OPEN, PASSWORD, PCI, PERIPHERAL, PORT, PRINTER, REBOOT, RESOLUTION, SAVE, SCROLL, SERVER, SMILEY, SOUND CARD, SPYWARE, TERAFLAP, TROJAN HORSE, UPLOAD, USB, USERNAME, VIRUS, WEB BROWSER, WINDOWS, ZIP FILE.

Yesterday's Solution

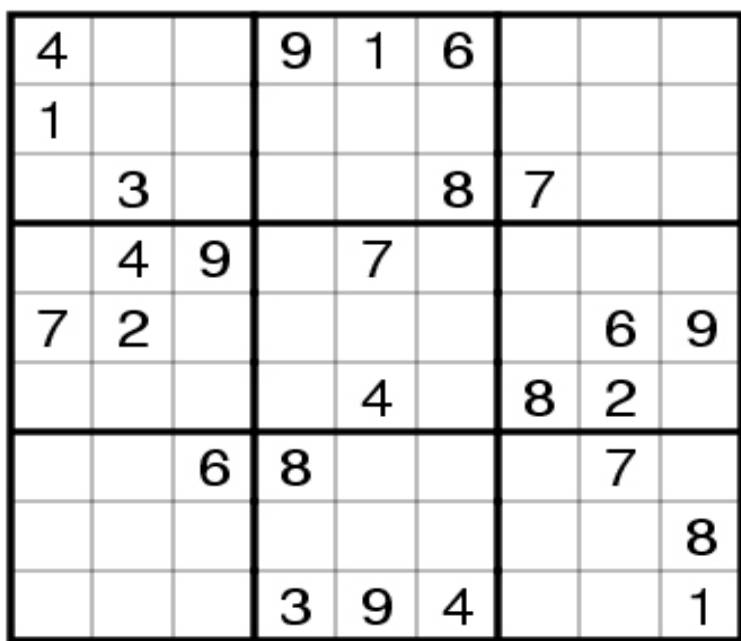
90's Songs 3



- ANGELS, ANOTHER NIGHT, BABY, BLACK, CANDY RAIN, CUPID, DITTY, DREAMLOVER, EVERY MORNING, FLY AWAY, FORTUNATE, FROZEN, HANDS, HIGH ENOUGH, HOLD ON, HOOK, HYPNOTIZE, I BELIEVE, IMPULSIVE, INSENSITIVE, IRONIC, JEREMY, KISS ME, LAST NIGHT, LULLABY, MIAMI, MY BODY, ONE WEEK, POISON, REGULATE, RELEASE ME, SABOTAGE, SHINE, SHY GUY, SWEET LADY, TEMPTATION, THE POWER, TOGETHER AGAIN, TOO MUCH, TUBTHUMPING, UNPRETTY, WATERFALLS, WHAT'S UP, WHATTA MAN, WILD NIGHT, ZOMBIE.

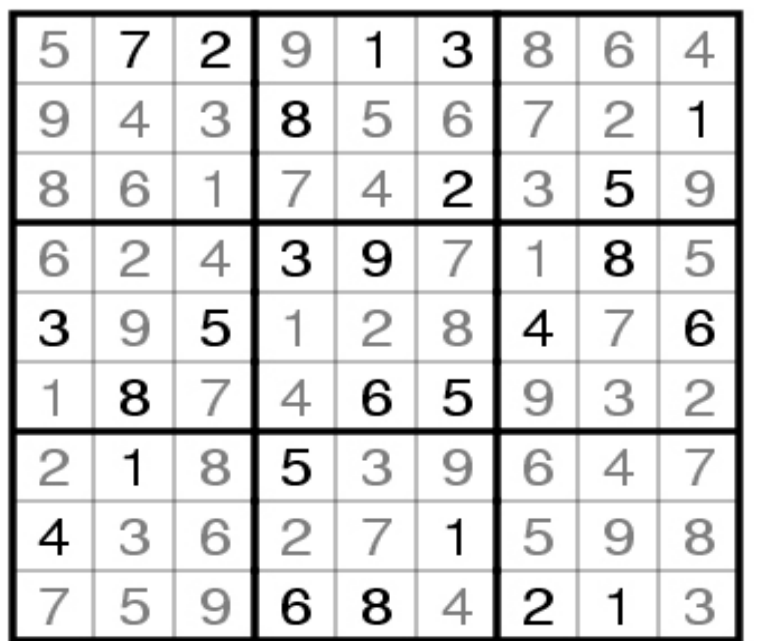
The hidden song title is: SMELLS LIKE TEEN SPIRIT

Daily SuDoku



medium

Yesterday's Solution



very hard



(From left) Screenwriter Josh Singer, actor Brian d'Arcy James, producers Blye Pagon Faust, Nicole Rocklin and Steve Golin, actress Rachel McAdams, journalist Sacha Pfeiffer, guest and Executive Producer Tom Ortenberg, winners of Best Picture Award for "Spotlight" pose in the press room during the 21st Annual Critics' Choice Awards at Barker Hangar. —AFP

Church child abuse scandals 'tip of iceberg' say real-life stars of Oscar-tipped film

The child abuse scandals plaguing the Catholic Church are only the tip of the iceberg, the journalists who exposed one of the hierarchy's biggest cover-ups said yesterday. Walter Robinson and Mike Rezendes, who won the Pulitzer Prize for uncovering how the Church had hushed up the activities of nearly 90 paedophile priests in Boston, told AFP that thousands more have escaped justice in the United States alone.

With the Hollywood film "Spotlight" about their painstaking probe of the scandal for the Boston Globe newspaper nominated for six Oscars and a slew of other prizes, they said research showed between six and 10 percent of priests have abused children. Robinson, who led the newspaper's Spotlight investigative team, said they found that around one in 10 priests in Boston were molesters after "the Church was forced to make its records public. In many other places the numbers reported by the Church are very small because they have not been forced to tell the truth," Robinson said. "That is true in France and many other countries, and parts of the US also."

'Six percent are child abusers'
Experts at the University of Toronto and Royal Ottawa Healthcare group believe

between 0.5 and 1 percent of the general population are paedophiles, although studies carried out in Germany, Norway and Finland have estimated that as many as five percent of men have had sexual thoughts about children. A leading authority on clerical abuse, Richard Sipe—a former Benedictine monk—found around six percent of priests were abusers after a 25-year study into celibacy.

His book "Sex, Priests and Power" is cited in the film, which was voted best film at the Los Angeles Critics' Choice Awards earlier this week—a reliable pointer to Oscar success. Pope Francis said the Church itself estimates two percent of priests are paedophiles, according to a private conversation he had in 2014 with an Italian journalist, details of which the Vatican later contested. "This figure should calm me, but I must tell you it does not calm me at all," the pope was quoted as telling the veteran founder of La Repubblica daily, Eugenio Scalfari.

While the Church's attitude to such cases has changed radically since the election of Francis, who has vowed to root out abuse, Robinson and Rezendes suspect the culture of secrecy still runs deep. "There have been big changes in how the Church deals with

this in Boston," said Robinson. "There are even classes for children in how to recognize molesters. But not so much (has been done) in other dioceses and around the world." Rezendes said the real problem was Church's attitude to sex and its insistence on a celibate clergy. "Because priests are people, many—maybe most—are having sex with women and men, and some with children. Because all sex is illegal in the eyes of the Church it is kept secret.

Teachings on sex

"A priest who is having sex with a woman or a man is not going to tell on a priest who is having sex with a child. Because all of it is wrong in the eyes of the Church, they protect one another," he said.

Robinson—who is played by Michael Keaton in the film—admitted that part of the blame lay with the press for not holding the Church to account earlier.

He himself failed to follow through on a story about clerical abuse in Boston years before his Spotlight team launched their major inquiry in 2002.

"Our generation of editors were too deferential to the power and supposed moral standing of the Church. Clearly we missed

clues," he said. "It was unthinkable that such a moral authority would allow and then cover up the crimes of thousands of priests for so many decades, and never care about what happened to the children." All four of the journalists who carried out the months-long inquiry are lapsed Catholics, and Robinson said it had shaken their confidence in the institution, if not his own faith.

The story also took a toll on the reporters and their families. "It was very emotionally draining for us to listen to the stories of so many people whose lives were ruined as children. It was horrible. We carried this burden. My wife, who is a nurse, believes we had a touch of post-traumatic stress disorder. We were brought to tears by what many of the victims had to say."

The Catholic Church, including Cardinal Sean O'Malley of Boston, has broadly praised the film, with Vatican Radio calling it "honest and compelling". It said the Boston Globe reporters were "examples of their most pure vocation to find the facts" and demand that justice be done. The Chilean film "The Club", which handles the same sensitive subject, narrowly missed out on a Golden Globe earlier this month after winning the Silver Bear at the Berlin Film Festival. — AFP

Watch the Oscars live and exclusively on OSN

'We All Dream in Gold'



The countdown for one of the most celebrated awards of the year has begun. Stay tuned to see all of the live action at the Academy Award ceremony with OSN, the region's leading pay-TV network, offering you exclusive access to the star studded event at the same time as in the US.

The 88th Academy Awards ceremony is organised under the theme 'We All Dream in Gold: Hosted by the iconic comedian, Chris Rock, viewers will be in for a treat as OSN, the home of blockbuster movies and series, telecasts the ceremony live across the region on OSN Movies Festival HD on February 29 at 3am KSA. Fans can watch all the excitement from the red carpet on E! Live on OSN as their favourite A-list celebrities show off the latest designs with interviews by renowned TV presenter Giuliana Rancic. In the run-up to the Oscars, a special teaser of Oscar winning movies will be shown on OSN Movies Premiere HD, including Birdman, The Theory of Everything, Still Alice, Boyhood, The Grand Budapest Hotel, Whiplash, The Imitation Game, Foxcatcher and Selma.



China's secret plan to use the force of 'Star Wars'

Long time ago in a country far, far away, Chinese authorities managed to obtain a copy of America's ultimate cultural weapon, a blockbuster movie with enough special effects to wow an entire planet. Summoned to a small theatre in the southern city of Guangzhou in 1980, artist Song Feideng was shown "Star Wars" and instructed to transform it into a traditional Chinese comic book, known as a "lianhuanhua", to promote scientific achievement to China.

Song was one of the first people in China to see George Lucas' magnum opus, at a time when it was still banned—a marked contrast to the status of the series' most recent install-



This picture taken on January 11, 2016 shows artist Song Feideng posing for a picture with his comic book showing a page with a drawing of Darth Vader in Guangzhou. — AFP

ment in a market Hollywood increasingly sees as crucial to success. "The objective was to take the world's advanced science and popularize it in China," Song, who worked for a state-owned publisher at the time, told AFP. He replaced the movie's X-wing spacecraft with Soviet rockets and jet fighters. In one illustration, Luke Skywalker wears a cosmonaut's bulky spacesuit, while rebel leaders are dressed in Western business suits. Darth Vader appears alongside a triceratops.

At the time, China was emerging from the isolation of the Mao Zedong era and "Star Wars" had still not been granted a release by Communist authorities, three years after it hit Western cinemas. The movie "was very novel, very exciting," Song said, adding that he felt as if he had seen "a glimpse of the world".

A New Hope

The project came amid a brief flowering of Chinese science fiction following Mao's decade-long Cultural Revolution, when the arts were reduced to glorifying the Communist Party. Mao's decision to send intellectuals to work in the countryside had

badly affected basic scientific research. Song spent the period on the then poverty-stricken Hainan island, producing propaganda slideshows. Science fiction has had a fraught history in China, where genre pioneer Ye Yonglie once called it "one of the barometers of the political climate." Shortly after the 1977 US release of "Star Wars", the Communist Party mouthpiece the People's Daily attacked it as a fantasy that demonstrated how Americans' "dissatisfaction with reality" had pushed them to "seek comfort in an illusory fairyland".

But the following year, as China began to reopen to the world, Beijing declared sci-fi critical to rehabilitating the country's sciences, releasing a flood of almost 1,000 new titles. A translated "Star Wars" script appeared on the mainland as early as March 1979, while Song's comic is believed to be the first illustrated standalone. It sold briskly, he recalled. "I could buy a TV, a stereo... it was just unimaginable."

Communism Strikes Back

But the initial hopes of the country's "reform and opening" quickly soured as artists began to criticize the government. Speculative stories imagining a China without communism were not the plotlines authorities were looking for, and they moved to ban science fiction again. Song's own works—he had moved into hard-boiled noir comics featuring private eyes, femme fatales, and a keen appreciation for the female form—were criticized for "spiritual pollution".

It was not until 1985 that "Star Wars" first appeared on Chinese screens, at a multi-city American film festival that drew millions of viewers. By the late 1980s, it was airing on local television stations, while pirate copies circulated on video.

But the movies never developed the broad, devoted fan base they have enjoyed elsewhere, and most Chinese learned of the franchise through the prequels—much maligned in the West. Song's comic went viral ahead of the release of the latest installment, "The Force Awakens", but a midnight premiere in Beijing this month had a mostly foreign audience. Even so the movie raked in \$90 million in its first week, according to film data website China Box Office.

Return of the Party?

The world's second-largest economy is also its second-biggest film market and Hollywood is keen to satisfy its moviegoers, who have shown a deep appetite for Western science fiction such as Avatar or the Transformers series. But Beijing has shown signs of resistance to that hunger, part of a wider pushback against the influence of "foreign culture". In 2011, the State Administration of Radio, Film and Television issued an edict discouraging movies featuring "fantasy" and "time travel" among other "bizarre plots". —AFP



Italian movie director Ettore Scola, right, receives the Donatello prize from German movie director Margaretha von Trotta in Rome for his film "The Family" in this April 29, 1987 file photo. — AP/AFP photos

'Grand master' of Italian film Ettore Scola dies at 84

Film director Ettore Scola, one of the last grand masters of Italian comedy, died on Tuesday at the age of 84, press reports said. Scola died in Rome's polyclinic, where he had been in a coma since Sunday after being admitted to the hospital's cardiac surgery unit. A leading figure in Italian cinema for more than three decades, Scola directed unforgettable master-



This file photo taken on October 18, 2015 shows Italian director Ettore Scola posing on the red carpet during the 10th Rome Film Festival in Rome.

pieces featuring Marcello Mastroianni, Sophia Loren, Vittorio Gassman and Nino Manfredi.

His work included "A Special Day," a 1977 Oscar-nominated movie featuring Mastroianni as a persecuted radio journalist and Loren as a sentimental housewife who meet on the day Hitler visited Rome in 1938. The scene where the two actors move between sheets drying in the sun on the terrace of the apartment block where they are staying is one of the most beautiful scenes in

Italian cinema, film critic Francesco Castelnovo said. "It still influences young directors," he told the SkyTG24 television channel. Scola also wrote and directed "We All Loved Each Other So Much", a 1974 comedy-drama about the post-war lives of three partisans fighting for the liberation of Italy. Tributes swiftly flooded in for the man who, through his films, had so skillfully told the story of Italy over nearly a half century, from the fascist years up to the early 21st century. Prime Minister Matteo Renzi paid tribute to Scola, saying he was a "master" of the screen, "with an ability that was as incredible as it was razor-sharp in reading Italy, its society and the changes it went through."

Culture Minister Dario Franceschini praised him on Twitter as a "grand master, an extraordinary man, still young until the last day of his life." Actress Stefania Sandrelli, who starred in one of his greatest films "We All Loved Each Other So Much" in 1974, expressed her sadness at his passing. "If I had to choose one word out of all, it would be 'us'. He gave me the magic of doing things together and what things we did together, what films!"

Writing on Twitter, actor Alessandro Gassman, son of Vittorio, said "Ciao Ettore, we all loved you so much". After entering the movie industry as a screenwriter in 1953, Scola got his first chance as director in 1964 with "Let's Talk About Women"—an innovative work of nine vignettes in which Vittorio Gassman plays different characters who seduce women. He directed 41 films over nearly 40 years, according to the Internet movie database, IMDb. Paolo Mereghetti, the Corriere della Sera daily's cinema critic, said Scola was a distinctive "political" voice in Italy's postwar cinema.

A former member of the Italian Communist Party, Scola even became minister of culture in a "shadow" cabinet set up by party leaders in 1989. "He understood where Italy was going, and few cinema directors have that insight," Mereghetti told Sky TG24. — AFP

'Ride Along 2' dethrones 'Star Wars' at N America box office



This photo provided by Universal Pictures shows, Ice Cube, from left, as James Payton, Olivia Munn as Maya Cruz, and Kevin Hart as Ben Barber in a scene from the film, "Ride Along 2."

Comedy "Ride Along 2" toppled "Star Wars: The Force Awakens" from its weeks-long spot atop the North American box office with a strong debut over a long holiday weekend, industry data showed Tuesday. "Ride Along 2" raked in \$41 million over the four-day Martin Luther King Day weekend, box office tracker Exhibitor Relations said. The film features funny man Kevin Hart as a rookie law officer who aspires to become a detective like his future brother-in-law, played by rapper and actor Ice Cube, as the two become embroiled with a murderous drug ring.

Major Oscar contender "The Revenant," a violent frontier revenge thriller starring Leonardo DiCaprio, came in second place at \$37.5 million. It likely earned a boost from the 12 Oscar nominations it received last week. "The Force Awakens," the latest installment in the popular "Star Wars" saga, finished in third place at \$33 million in its fifth week of release, boosting it to a worldwide total take of \$1.865 billion.

Debuting in fourth place was "13 Hours: The Secret Soldiers of Benghazi," about the 2012 attack on the US diplomatic compound in the eastern Libyan city that left four Americans dead. It earned \$19.2 million. Comedy "Daddy's Home" starring Mark Wahlberg and Will Ferrell finished in fifth place with \$11.9 million. Rounding out the week's top 10 films were:

- 1- "Norm of the North" (\$9.4 million)
- 2- "The Forest" (just under \$7.0 million)
- 3- "The Big Short" (\$6.4 million)
- 4- "Sisters" (\$5.5 million)
- 5- "The Hateful Eight" (\$4.3 million)—AFP



This file photo shows Eddie Vedder from Pearl Jam performs during the fourth annual Global Citizen Festival in Central Park Manhattan in New York. — AFP

Pearl Jam announces new tour, including Bonnaroo

Alternative rock giants Pearl Jam on Tuesday announced a new tour of North America that will include a headlining slot at leading summer festival Bonnaroo. The rockers will open the 22-date tour on April 8 in Fort Lauderdale, Florida and also play the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival as well as two dates each at a pair of historic baseball stadiums, Fenway Park in Boston and Chicago's Wrigley Field. Led by singer Eddie Vedder, Pearl Jam rose to stardom in the grunge era of the early 1990s but persevered to become one of the decade's top-selling bands, combining a left-leaning political sensibility with arena rock.

Pearl Jam last toured North America in 2014 and played across Latin America late last

year. Bonnaroo, whose June 9-12 edition will mark its 15th anniversary, has won a loyal following by creating a free-spirited communal atmosphere each year in rural Tennessee. Announcing its lineup late Tuesday, Bonnaroo said that other headliners would include Dead and Company, the jam band that includes most surviving members of legendary countercultural act the Grateful Dead.

Bonnaroo will also showcase LCD Soundsystem, the influential New York electronic band, who will reunite two months earlier at the Coachella festival in California. To mark 15 years, Bonnaroo also announced improvements at its venue-affectionately called "The Farm" by fans—that include flush toilets. — AFP

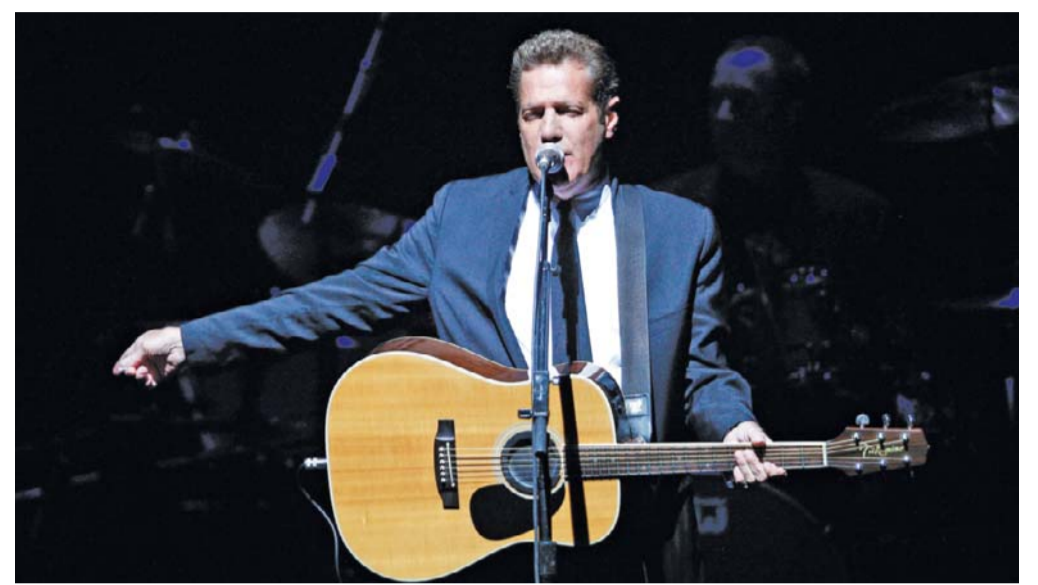
Country musicians in Nashville mourned the loss of Eagles' co-founder Glenn Frey as they remembered the band's timeless impact with their smooth harmonies and memorable lyrics that embodied the cool California country rock sound. Although they weren't the first to mix country and rock sounds, the Eagles popularized that musical cross-cultural style for a widespread fan base that would define the music of the 1970s. Decades later, their influence continues to ripple on in country music. Brad Paisley, Keith Urban, Lady Antebellum and many more posted tributes online to the 67-year-old prolific singer, guitarist and songwriter after his death on Monday.

Songwriter and singer JD Souther, Frey's longtime friend and collaborator on several Eagles hits including "Best of My Love" and "New Kid In Town," said they were both influenced by classic country artists when they began writing together after meeting in Los Angeles in the late 1960s. "He and I were listening to traditional country music, meaning Merle Haggard, Buck Owens and particularly George Jones, which was my fix," Souther said Tuesday. "And everyone knew Hank Williams."

They formed the band Longbranch Pennywhistle and were writing with Jackson Browne, before Frey and Don Henley met up to play in Linda Ronstadt's band. "We'd call ourselves the Gentlemen Boys, for reasons that were probably lost in the haze of some evening," Souther said. Despite breaking up in 1980, the Eagles, and their culturally ubiquitous greatest hits records, were one of the top influences on the sound of country music in the 1990s, said Peter Cooper, museum editor at the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum.

Multiplatinum

"Just about anyone playing music in a Nashville studio was heavily influenced by those records or has heard those records hundreds of times," Cooper said. Willie Nelson covered "Take It to the Limit" for his 1983 duet album of the same name with Waylon Jennings and Conway Twitty did his version of "Heartache Tonight" on his 1983 album, "Lost in the Feeling." The era's biggest country stars, including Brooks and



In this June 30, 2009, file photo, Glenn Frey, of the Eagles, performs at Belfast's Odyssey Arena in Northern Ireland. — AP

Dunn, Vince Gill, Trisha Yearwood, Alan Jackson and Clint Black, collaborated on an Eagles' tribute album in 1993 called "Common

Thread: The Songs of the Eagles," that went multiplatinum and was named album of the year in 1994 by the Country Music Association. Black said in a statement that Frey was one of the greatest American songwriters. "I've always said he and Don Henley were America's answer to Lennon and McCartney," Black said. Country singer Lorrie Morgan, who sang the Souther-Frey song "The Sad Cafe" on the tribute album, said in an interview Tuesday that the first concert her parents ever let her go see by herself, other than the Grand Ole Opry shows, was the Eagles. She instantly had a crush on the band. "It wasn't hard rock n' roll, and it wasn't hard on your ears," she said. "They had a cool looking vibe. And even to me back then, they sounded country to me. They had a steel guitar."

Common Thread

Country singer Suzy Bogguss, who sang "Take It to the Limit" on the tribute album, said their songs were some of the first that she learned to

play on the guitar. "A lot of the Glenn Frey songs are the real storytelling songs," Bogguss said Tuesday. "And then there were these big choruses which everyone could harmonize on." The popularity of "Common Thread," which hit No. 1 on Billboard's country chart and No. 3 on the Top 200, was one more reason to push the Eagles to reunite in 1994. They were truly accepted in all genres, as evidenced by their last studio album, "Long Road Out of Eden," a two-CD album released in 2007.

The Recording Academy gave them a Grammy award for best country performance by a duo or group with vocals for Souther's song, "How Long," and a Grammy award for best pop instrumental performance for Frey's song, "I Dreamed There Was No War." Souther said there are always younger artists that will try to emulate Frey's voice and songwriting, but he was a unique and gifted individual.

"I miss him already," Souther said. "I still think of him the way he was the first year we roomed together, just laughing a lot, writing songs every day and just that endless groove that seemed to live inside of him." — AP

Mos Def to stand trial in S Africa over 'world passport'

American rapper Mos Def will be tried in a South African court in March after being arrested for presenting a "world passport" when trying to fly out of the country, officials said yesterday. The 42-year-old hip hop artist, actor and activist, whose real name is Dante Terrel Smith, was arrested in Cape Town last week while attempting to board a flight to Ethiopia. He was later released on bail of 5,000 rand (about \$300). The Department of Home Affairs said the actor had entered South Africa with a legitimate US passport in November, and had a visitor's visa valid until February.

"The major problem why he could not get on the Ethiopian flight was the document he produced at the immigration counter, the World Passport, which South Africa does not recognize," home affairs director general Mkuseli Apleni told reporters. "Immigration officers had also detected that his spouse and minor child had overstayed their visit to the Republic. 'Mister

Smith will appear for trial on March 8 to answer the immigration charges."

Smith attempted to leave the country using a "World Government of World Citizens" passport, Apleni said. The World Government of World Citizens was established in 1953 by the late peace activist Garry Davis, an American who renounced his citizenship after World War II. Both WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange and intelligence leaker Edward Snowden are reported to be holders of world passports, which are not officially recognized.

Mos Def, who also uses the name Yassin Bey, faces charges including using a false identity, and "aiding and abetting his family to stay illegally in South Africa". His family's visas expired in April 2014, and they have been given until January 29 to leave South Africa. According to immigration officials, Mos Def entered the country ten times since 2013, always on a 90-day tourist visa using a US passport. He is believed to



Rapper Mos Def

have been living in Cape Town for some years.

"I haven't broken any law. And I'm being treated like a criminal," he said on a message released via superstar rapper Kanye West's Twitter feed. In 2014, Mos Def cancelled a planned tour of the US due to what his publicists called "legal and immigration issues". In his acclaimed hip-hop career he has produced classic solo songs as well as albums with Talib Kweli in the duo Black Star. — AFP

Lawrence to play Fidel Castro's lover for Sony

Jennifer Lawrence will star in "Marita," Sony's movie about Marita Lorenz, who had an affair with Fidel Castro and was involved in the CIA's assassination attempt on the Cuban leader. Sony

Academy Award nomination last week for "Joy" after winning a Golden Globe for the role. She won the Best Actress Oscar for Sony's "Silver Linings Playbook" and received nominations for "American Hustle" and "Winter's Bone."

Sony won a bidding war for the Lorenz rights against Universal, Warner Bros, Fox, Paramount and Lionsgate. Lorenz, a native of Germany, was incarcerated at the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp during World War II. After she had an affair at the age of 19 with Castro, she was approached by the CIA to kill the Cuban leader. Lorenz later testified before Congress in the JFK investigations, claiming that she was witness to a conspiracy between the CIA, Cuban operatives and Lee Harvey Oswald to murder the president, and even spied for the FBI on UN diplomats who lived in her building.

Ange Giannetti will oversee for the project for the studio. Lorenz wrote a 1993 autobiography "Marita: One Woman's Extraordinary Tale of Love and Espionage from Castro to Kennedy" and a second autobiography "Lieber Fidel - Mein Leben, meine Liebe, mein Verrat" in 2001. Her story was the inspiration for the 1999 TV film "My Little Assassin." Lawrence will next be seen in "X-Men: Apocalypse" and the sci-fi drama "Passengers" opposite Chris Pratt. She's attached to Darren Aronofsky's untitled project for Paramount and to Steven Spielberg's film "It's What I Do" about a female war photographer. Lawrence is reprised by UTA and attorney Mark Goschman. The news was first reported by the Hollywood Reporter. — Reuters



Jennifer Lawrence

has acquired Lorenz's life rights. The studio acquired a pitch from Eric Warren Singer ("American Hustle") that was developed with a quartet of producers—Lawrence, Scott Mednick, Andre Rouleau and Matt Tolmach.

Lawrence received her fourth

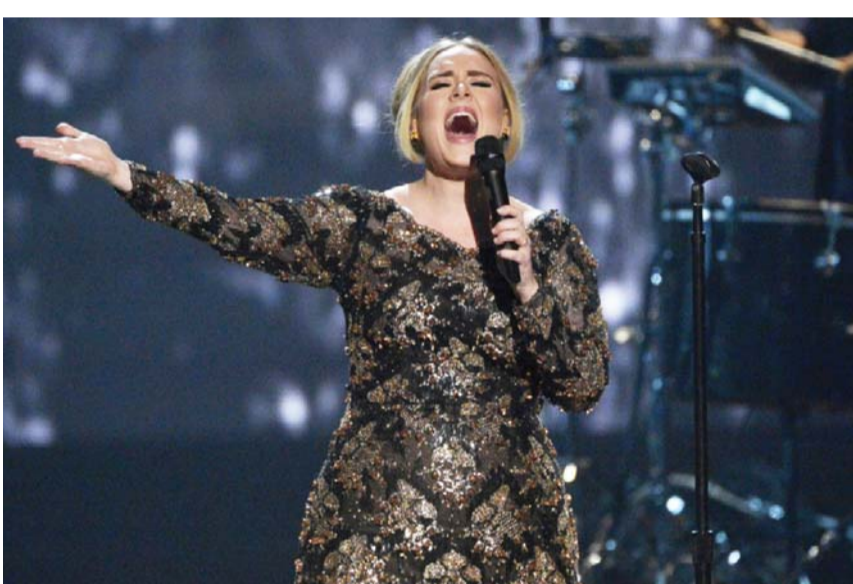


Clooney says Oscars moving backwards on diversity

Oscar-winning actor George Clooney has weighed in on the swirling controversy over the all-white roster of acting nominations for this year's Academy Awards, saying the industry is moving backwards and needs to do better. Clooney, one of Hollywood's biggest and most politically active stars, also said in an interview with industry magazine Variety that beyond nominating actors of color, filmmakers need to provide better roles and opportunities for black actors. "If you think back 10 years ago, the Academy was doing a better job. Think about how many more African Americans were nominated," Clooney said in comments published Tuesday.

"I would also make the argument, I don't think it's a problem of who you're picking as much as it is: How many options are available to minorities in film, particularly in quality films?" Last week, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences revealed the list of actors and films nominated for this year's Oscars, to be handed out on February 28. For the second year in a row, all 20 acting nominations went to white actors and actresses. The hashtag #OscarsSoWhite reappeared, and director Spike Lee—the recipient of an honorary Oscar last year—announced he would boycott the event.

"I think around 2004, certainly there were black nominees—like Don Cheadle, Morgan Freeman. And all of a sudden, you feel like we're moving in the wrong direction. There were nominations left off the table," Clooney said. He cited four films with black stars that he felt deserved more recognition: boxing drama "Creed," NFL drama "Concussion," starring Will Smith, "Beasts of No Nation" with Britain's Idris Elba and N.W.A. biopic "Straight Outta Compton." — AFP



In this Nov 17, 2015 image released by NBC, Adele performs at Radio City Music Hall in New York. — AP photos

Adele, Kendrick Lamar to perform at Grammys

Hello, it's Adele, and she's performing at next month's Grammy Awards. The Recording Academy told The Associated Press yesterday that the British singer, leading nominee Kendrick Lamar, the Weeknd and Little Big Town will perform at the Feb 15 show. Adele returned to music in top form with "25," her third album that has sold about 8 million units in the US since its November release. The lead single, "Hello," spent its first 10 weeks at No. 1 on Billboard's Hot 100 chart.

"This lineup of talented artists is just the beginning of what will, once again, prove to be music's biggest night. We look forward to celebrating what's been a wonderful year in music, honoring the

best of the best and featuring never-before-seen performances," Recording Academy CEO Neil Portnow said in a statement. Lamar is this year's top Grammy contender with 11 nominations, including album of the year for "To Pimp a Butterfly" and song of the year for the Pharrell-produced "Alright." Taylor Swift and the Weeknd follow with seven



In this Oct 24, 2015, file photo, The Weeknd performs at the 2015 We Can Survive Concert in Los Angeles.

nominations each, including bids for album of the year with "1989" and "Beauty Behind the Madness," respectively.

Little Big Town earned two nominations: best country album for "Pain Killer" and country duo/group performance for "Girl Crush." The latter, one of last year's biggest hits, earned song of the year and best country song nominations for writers Liz Rose, Hillary Lindsey and Lori McKenna (Little Big Town did not write "Girl Crush"). Adele, who has won 10 Grammys, will qualify for nominations at the 2017 Grammy Awards because she released music after the Sept. 30, 2015, deadline for the 2016 awards show. She famously took home six awards at the 2012 show, including album of the year for "21" and song and record of the year for "Rolling In the Deep." LL Cool J will host the 58th annual Grammy Awards, to air live on CBS from the Staples Center in Los Angeles. A special tribute to Lionel Richie, who is the Recording Academy's 2016 MusiCares person of the year, also will be featured on the Grammys telecast. — AP



In this Dec 4, 2015, file photo, Kendrick Lamar performs at Power 106's Cali Christmas 2015 in Inglewood, Calif.

Russell Crowe

takes in **Giorgio Armani** fashion from front row



Models wear creations for Dsquared2 men's Fall-Winter 2016-2017 collection, part of the Milan Fashion Week, unveiled in Milan, Italy. — AP/AFP photos

Two human reactions to turbulent times emerged as fashion concepts during Milan Fashion Week, which wrapped up its five-day run on Tuesday: cocooning and militarization. On one end of the spectrum, designers offered men myriad forms of comfort for next fall and winter, including soft-cut jackets; enveloping cashmere, vicuna and alpaca knitwear; silken pajamas meant as street wear and the ubiquitous long scarf that in many collections substituted for a traditional tie. Falling under the cocooning/emotional comfort trend, there was also a tendency toward returning to the past with embroidered details literally flourishing on jackets and trousers, especially denim; homely plaids for jackets and lumberjack shirts; and the sort of brimmed hats that project paternal security.

Rigid military looks led a counter-current, with battle-worn jackets, revamped uniforms and a plethora of double-breasted suits, albeit often softened with decorations and paired with gently fitting trousers. In keeping, bags tended to be utilitarian and large, shoes sturdy soled or boots. At the more extroverted end of the fashion spectrum, designers made liberal use of tinfoil silver fabric, creating a futuristic feel to overcoats, trousers and sportswear, as a sort of projection to possibility, escape from the now. But overall the color palette was somber: dark, blue, black, deep green and grays. Some highlights from the final day of shows Tuesday, with previews from Giorgio Armani and DSquared2.

Kilt revival

The kilt has gotten a martial arts makeover at Dsquared2. The Canadian designing twins Dean and Dan Caten creatively merged the traditional Scotsman's uniform with the deep-pleated Japanese hakama, traditionally worn over a kimono, for a cultural mash-up with a strong punk vibe. The kilt was invariably worn over trousers, either knee- or ankle-length, and often was more of a flourish, with just half or one-quarter panel adding drama to a look.

Long and black, the hybrid skirt was elegant with a black blazer and turtleneck, just the thing for a Ninja on a night out.

A sportier denim model was worn under a parka, while the short black mainstay proved versatile, equally matched with a kimono top, denim shirt or bomber jacket.

To underline the cultural crossover, the designers also gave it a run in a Manga print as well as traditional tartan, which was worn over matching trousers. Take away the kilt, and the looks were pure punk. Leather jackets had fluorescent studs, worn with patched baggy jeans. An oversized parka had a spaceman's silver lining. Hiking boots were the favorite footwear. —AP



Actor Russell Crowe poses for photographers prior to the start of the Giorgio Armani men's Fall-Winter 2016-2017 collection. — AP



Canadian fashion designers Dean, left and Dan Caten acknowledge the applause of the audience after presenting their Dsquared2 men's Fall-Winter 2016-2017 collection.



Model Tess Holliday navigates life, work in the mainstream

With accolades for her People magazine cover and the upcoming launch of her first clothing line, things are next level for Tess Holliday. The plus-size model and social media phenom who regularly shakes off haters has been reveling in the mainstream since May, when she donned a designer friend's black lace bodysuit to pose for People's 2015 body issue. "It's been crazy," the 30-year-old Holliday said after a recent panel chat on fat acceptance hosted by Refinery29.com. "My audience changed so much because it's a universal magazine. Everyone of all ages and backgrounds reads it and all of a sudden I was in every grocery store."

Behind the scenes, she found herself in flux, shedding unsupportive loved ones and making adjustments at home in Los Angeles. Holliday, whose real name is Ryann Maegen Hoven, moved in both her disabled mother and her Australian fiancé. Meantime, her 10-year-old son is adjusting to mom's higher profile as well. "When we're out in public people stop me. He rolls his eyes," Holliday said. "He gets it but it's still really weird for him. When he tells his friends, 'My mom's a model,' they kind of pick on him a little." Why? Because at 5-foot-5 and size 22, Holliday doesn't fit the ultra-thin mold. Fat and proud, covered in colorful tattoos - each with its own story of love and empowerment - that's just fine with her.

Media attention

"I feel like I'm learning who I am again because of the new media attention," Holliday said. "To people who had never heard the words 'body positive,' or who had never shopped at a plus-size clothing store and weren't plus-size themselves, it's been an adjustment for them, too." She's learned she can't educate all, including those who insist that her size compromises her health. And there are the usual trolls she's been dealing with for years on Instagram and elsewhere online, including Tumblr, the place where she

grew her own hashtag rallying cry that lives on today: EffYourBeautyStandards.

As the first model of her size and height to be signed by a prominent agency, Milk Management in London, Holliday was thrust further into the role of body positive activist, this after several years of modeling to her credit. The burgeoning body positive movement has the usual growing pains and disagreements from within and without, including whether use of the word 'fat' is OK. As far as Holliday is concerned, people should use the word or not use the word.

Acceptance means acceptance - at any size. Among other adjustments for Holliday has come a new approach to handling haters. "Before I would have just gone after somebody if they said something and attacked me," she said. "I'm not going to change their minds by one comment so why even bother? Why waste my energy. It's definitely been a learning curve. My fiancé's had to snatch the phone out of my hand multiple times. He's like, 'What are you doing?' He knows. I get this look on my face and he's, like, 'Are you commenting back to people?'"

She fights back in other ways. "When I'm having a bad day, that's when I usually take naked photos and post them online, which hasn't happened often because my mom moved in with us and she doesn't really appreciate that, that much. I don't know why," Holliday laughed, eyes sparkling under a long main of auburn red hair. But it HAS happened and Holliday is unapologetic. A no-clothes-at-all booty shot with a graphic bubble reading "oops" covering one exposed nipple had her showing off all her assets, including some of the many arm tattoos portraying women she admires. There's Divine, Dolly Parton, Miss Piggy and Mae West, "all strong outspoken women like myself."

Death threats

Holliday said nude pic was her most popular photo on Instagram, beating out her People



In this Jan 7, 2016 photo provided by Refinery29, plus size model Tess Holliday poses for a photo in New York. — AP

cover, her H&M modeling campaign and news of her signing with Milk. "Seems like the booty wins," she joked in the comments, using her homegrown hashtag. Life wasn't always easy

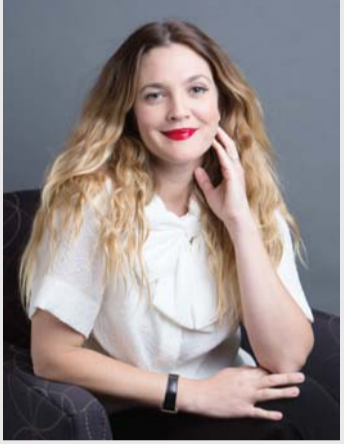
for Holliday. As a child, she moved nearly 50 times before fifth grade at the behest of her father. Her parents divorced and she hasn't spoken to her dad in three years. She was bullied relentlessly as a kid because of her size and other issues, finally dropping out on the first day of 11th grade after receiving death threats.

Holliday earned her GED and continued to pursue her dreams of modeling while working as a bank teller in Laurel, Mississippi, where she moved with her mom after her mom was shot twice in the head by a boyfriend and was left partially paralyzed. "I was bullied from fifth grade on," she said. "They started making fun of me because my mom was in a wheelchair, then they started making fun of me because I was poor and then it evolved to my size."

The Internet beckoned and she started posting pictures of herself, building a social media following over the last six or so years that led to modeling work and ultimately her breakthrough. One thing she hadn't anticipated was the intense scrutiny of her health. "It was so frustrating because I felt like I had worked so hard to get to this point and then people were taking away what I did and making it about my health and my size. And they still do," she said. "I feel like it's important to talk about my health, which is fine, and my size because there are young girls who see someone like me and can validate their own existence."

What's in store for Holliday? There's her clothing line that launches in March, though she was tightlipped ahead of the formal announcement about where it will sell. Her goal, she offered, was to provide plus-size women clothes they could live in at a reasonable price without being beholden to shapewear. "Everything is under \$100 and it starts at \$30," Holliday said. "It's mostly casual. I just know it's what I wanted to wear and saw lacking in the industry. All I want is to feel good and really own my body and that's what I tried to create." — AP

Barrymore's sets new sights for beauty brand



In this Oct 20, 2015 file photo, Drew Barrymore poses for a portrait to promote her new book "Wildflower," in New York. —AP

Hollywood actress, director and author Drew Barrymore may soon add a new title to her resume: international retailer. Barrymore launched her Flower brand of affordable cosmetics exclusively at Wal-Mart in 2013. Now she says she's in talks with retailers overseas to sell the cosmetics in such places as China, South America, Australia and the United Kingdom. She'll also be launching her own e-commerce business later this year.

Last year, she started selling an eyewear collection, also exclusively with Wal-Mart. And Barrymore told The Associated Press earlier this week she wants to expand into clothing, though it's unlikely it will be with Wal-Mart, even though she said she will always give the Bentonville, Arkansas-based discounter "first right of refusal." Barrymore didn't want to use her name for the brand, saying she's aware of the perils of a slapping celebrity name on a product.

"The name of the game is about how you financially succeed fast enough so somebody doesn't dump you, and grow slowly and thoughtfully so that you are just not a flash in the pan," said Barrymore, 40, in a one-hour address at the annual industry forum sponsored by investment bank Financo on Monday. Her father-in-law Arie Kopelman, the former president of Chanel, led the discussion in a room full of several hundred fashion industry executives.

Barrymore, the mother of two toddlers, has found a successful niche in the beauty business. Unlike other cosmetic brands that spend a big portion of their money on advertising, the Flower brand spends most of its money on formulations and packaging. That results in premium makeup quality, she said. Flower Beauty, launched in 1,600 stores, is now in 2,500 stores, according to Wal-Mart spokeswoman Molly Blakeman. Neither Barrymore nor Wal-Mart offered sales volume. The Flower Beauty line, which includes fragrances, ranges from \$5 for lip gloss to about \$14 for foundation. Barrymore's message is about self-empowerment and inner beauty, with messages like, "Happiness is the best makeup."

Wal-Mart says that the Flower eyewear is in all its stores that have vision centers, which number close to 3,000. Barrymore said it is the No. 1 brand of eyewear at the discounter, although Wal-Mart could not confirm that publicly. It ranges in price from \$39 to \$88. Wal-Mart, she said, has been a "great" partner. But, she added, "at the end of the day, it is business. It is not friendship. They will drop us like a hot potato if we are not doing well."

As for her clothing venture, Barrymore, known for her Bohemian chic style, noted she won't be offering expensive clothes. "It's not the way I shop," she said. Barrymore says that she gets inspiration from a lot of sources for her beauty collection "You will look at a woman's shoe and be inspired by the color," she said. "I am always looking at everything for pigments and colors. The other day I took my daughter's paint and I couldn't stop playing with it I think whatever keeps you up ... that is what you should be doing. And if it feels like you are forcing yourself to be inspired by it, that's the wrong road." —AP



Designer Anja Gockel, center, stands between the models and receives applause after her fashion show during the Fashion Week in Berlin, yesterday.



Models present Spring/Summer 2016 creations by Sadak at the Berlin Fashion Week. — AP/AFP photos

Lifestyle

THURSDAY, JANUARY 21, 2016

China's secret plan to use the force of 'Star Wars'

36



Dancers pose after performing "El Macho Raton", "El Toro Huaco" and "El Gueguense" traditional dances during San Sebastian festivity in Diriamba, province of Carazo, some 50 km south of Managua yesterday. Devotees of Saint Sebastian dance in traditional costumes between the cities of Diriamba and Dolores, which are some three kilometers away. (Inset) A dancer performs traditional dance during San Sebastian festivity. — AFP photos

'Cry in the mountains': Chapo arrest inspires ballads

A band sings about "people crying in the mountains" in one of the many "narco ballads" inspired by the recapture of Mexican drug kingpin Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman. It didn't take long for narcocorridos, as the controversial genre is known, to emerge on the Internet and in the streets of Mexico after Guzman was arrested in his northwestern home state of Sinaloa on January 8. The 58-year-old Sinaloa drug cartel leader has long been a muse for bands that glorify such infamous characters with beats driven by guitars, accordion, tuba and drums-and violence-laced lyrics.

Guzman has nurtured a Robin Hood image in the remote mountain towns of Sinaloa, where he hid until his capture by marines in the seaside city of Los Mochis. The sombrero-wearing group La Ventaja performed its new song in the capital of Sinaloa, Culiacan, a bastion of Guzman's criminal organization. Their song goes: "When I arrived at the mountain range, from afar I saw a little old lady crying. What's happening ma'am? They caught 'El Chapo.' If the news is right, poverty beckons." Irvin Sanchez, La Ventaja's singer and accordionist, said the song titled "People Crying in the Mountains" does not seek to "praise or offend anybody." But his tune does predict a third escape for Guzman, who has fled twice from maximum-security prisons, the first time by hiding in a laundry cart in 2001 and the second time through a tunnel in July. The song says: "Don't worry, they'll soon release him. Otherwise, he'll escape again, that has been confirmed."

Controversial genre

Other songs about the thrice-arrested drug baron that have appeared online include "The Lord's Recapture" by Conjunto Dinamico and "El Chapo's Capture III" by El Morro.



Merchandise is seen for sale during a concert by Mexican singer Alfredo Rios aka 'El Komander', in Texcoco, Mexico State. —AFP

One of the country's most famous narcocorrido stars, Alfredo Rios, who goes by the stage name "El Komander," is preparing to release his own song, "El Chapo Has Fallen." Last week, just days after Guzman's arrest, Rios performed the song in front of the house in Los Mochis where

Guzman had been hiding before it was raided by gun-toting troops.

"The gunfire from rifles was heard in Los Mochis, Sinaloa. Who could've imagined? It's already in the news, the big scoop, El Chapo Guzman has fallen," Rios sings in a

video posted on YouTube. Narcocorridos have many fans and detractors in Mexico, where some local governments have sought to prevent bands from performing them in concerts. Rios was fined nearly \$8,000 in 2013 for performing such songs in Chihuahua, a northern state plagued by brutal drug violence. The bands sometimes get too close to the action they sing about: More than 50 performers have been killed in the country amid a drug war that has left tens of thousands of people dead since 2006.

The kingpin and the actress

But this has not deterred drug balladeers. While Mexican authorities have launched proceedings to extradite Guzman to the United States, another band is predicting another great escape from the Altiplano prison, where he was returned after his arrest. "This story's not over because 'El Chapo' is still alive. Don't be fooled, sirs, I know what I'm talking about, he surely has a plan, even though the gringos want him," sings Gonzalo Pena, known as "La Pantera del Corrido." Guzman's surprise meeting with US star Sean Penn and Mexican-American actress Kate Del Castillo has also earned a few lyrics.

Revelations about the get-together have provided much material, especially after authorities said that Guzman was captured in part because the married drug lord was obsessed with seeing Del Castillo, 43, again. Authorities are now investigating whether Guzman invested in Del Castillo's tequila company. Pena wrote one of those songs, "The Hen that Laid the Golden Eggs," wailing that "they want to investigate her because Guzman gave her an interview. Look for the rats and moles, let's see what comes up." "The news was like a bomb," he sings. "A woman has always been the weakness of the great ones." —AFP



Carantonas pose during the Carantonas festival in Acehuche near Caceres in the southwestern Extremadura province yesterday. Mixing paganism and Christianity the monster-animal like "Carantonas", a patchwork of sheep, cow, rabbit and goatskins under painted masks, search for Saint Sebastian in the streets of the village eventually congregating at the village church, for a procession with the statue of the patron saint. — AFP

Japan's 'Tuna King' laments Tsukiji market move

Kiyoshi Kimura's ear-to-ear grin is tough to miss in Japan-it's splashed across ubiquitous billboards advertising his nationwide sushi chain. But the self-styled "Tuna King" isn't smiling about plans to move Tokyo's famous Tsukiji market, the world's biggest fish emporium, and warns that its unique identity is at risk of being destroyed. Kimura's office is a block away from the historic site where in 2013 he famously slapped down a record \$1.8 million bid at the traditional New Year bluefin tuna auction.

But this month's sale-where Kimura prevailed again with a comparatively modest \$117,000 bid for an enormous 200-kilogram (440-pound) tuna-will mark his last victory at the chaotic market, popular with locals and tourists alike. Backers of the controversial move, planned for November, say the sprawling, 80-year-old complex is tired and out-of-date with an ancient refrigeration system. Like many critics, however, Kimura-a former member of Japan's military who swapped dreams of becoming a fighter pilot for a life in the fish busi-

ness is not sold on the idea. "It's a bit sad that Tsukiji is moving," the 63-year-old told AFP at his office, which is covered with photos of top Japanese celebrities and politicians.

"For as long as I have been in the fish business, Tsukiji was here," Kimura added,

saying that it is hard to see the move in a positive light. Kimura abandoned plans to help build a leisure facility at the new site, which was set to feature a 1,000-seat food court, about 140 restaurants and retailers, as well as Tokyo's biggest hot spring, known as an onsen. —AFP



This file picture taken on January 5, 2016 shows Kiyoshi Kimura (right), president of sushi restaurant chain Sushizanmai, showing a 200-kilogram bluefin tuna at his main restaurant near Tokyo's Tsukiji fish market. —AFP