

SUBSCRIPTION

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KUWAIT SET TO ENFORCE DNA TESTING LAW ON ALL

OFFICIALS REASSURE TESTS WON'T BE USED TO DETERMINE GENEALOGY



Min 10°
Max 21°
High Tide 13:10 & 23:48
Low Tide 06:48 & 18:27



By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: The DNA testing law that will go into effect this year is aimed at creating an integrated security database and does not include genealogical implications or affects personal freedoms and privacy. Senior officials told Kuwait Times that the law, the first of its kind in the world, will only be used for criminal security purposes. When the law (no. 78/2015) is applied, it will be binding on all citizens, expatriates and visitors too. A Kuwaiti security delegation had earlier visited Washington to study DNA testing systems there.

EXCLUSIVE

The National Assembly passed the DNA testing law on July 2, 2015 that will be mandatory on everyone in Kuwait in order to fight crime and terrorism. Kuwait Times was given exclusive and rare access to the DNA lab located at the General Department of Criminal Evidence in Dajeej in an effort to learn more about the latest developments regarding the law.

Senior officials in charge of the project, who spoke to Kuwait Times on the condition of anonymity, explained how the database will be used, the process of collecting samples and privacy concerns. (See Page 3)

KUWAIT: Technicians work in the DNA lab at the General Department of Criminal Evidence in Dajeej. — Photos by Joseph Shagra

KERRY REASSURES GULF ALLIES

RIYADH: US Secretary of State John Kerry, on a visit to Saudi Arabia, sought yesterday to reassure Gulf allies concerned about a perceived warming of ties between Washington and Iran. He also announced that the Syria Support Group of 20 nations and organizations will meet "very shortly" to help push peace in the war-ravaged country. Kerry spoke in Riyadh after meeting his Saudi counterpart Adel Al-Jubeir and other foreign ministers from the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council.



RIYADH: US Secretary of State John Kerry meets Saudi King Salman yesterday at the king's farm on the outskirts of the capital. — AFP

"The United States remains concerned about some of the activities that Iran is engaged in other countries," Kerry told reporters, citing as an example Iran's "support for terrorist groups like Hezbollah" in Lebanon. Saudi Arabia and its Gulf neighbors perceive a lack of US engagement in the region, particularly in the face of what they see as Iran's "interference" in Yemen, Syria, Lebanon and elsewhere.

Those feelings crystallized with the historic international deal which this month lifted crippling economic sanctions on Iran in return for a scaling back of its nuclear capabilities.

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IRAN, CHINA VOW TIGHTER TIES

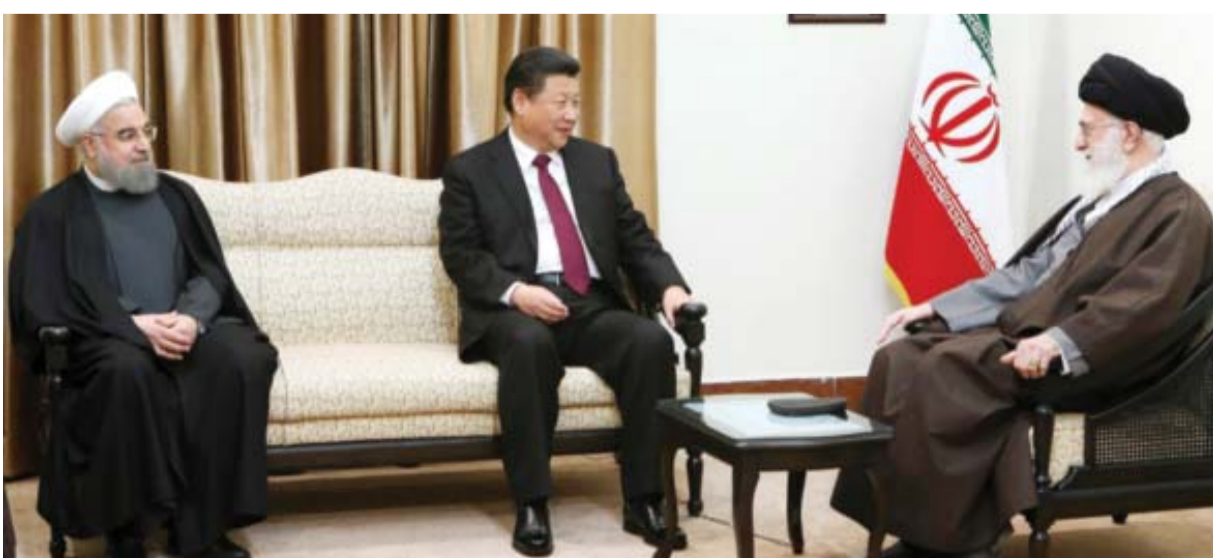
TEHRAN: Iranian President Hassan Rouhani yesterday hailed a "new chapter" in relations with China after talks with President Xi Jinping, who is touring the region to boost Beijing's economic influence. The Asian giant and the Middle East's foremost Shiite power aim to build economic ties worth up to \$600 billion within the next 10 years, Rouhani announced. The two leaders oversaw the signing of 17 agreements in areas including politics, the economy, security and cooperation on peaceful nuclear energy.

"With the Chinese president's visit to Tehran and our agreements, a new chapter has begun in Tehran-Beijing relations," Rouhani said in a televised speech, flanked by Xi. It is the first visit to Iran by a Chinese president in 14 years, state news agency IRNA said, and comes just days after sanctions against Tehran were lifted under a historic nuclear deal with world powers. "Iran is China's major partner in the Middle East and the two countries have chosen to boost bilateral relations," IRNA quoted Xi as saying. "China and

Iran are two important developing countries that must continue regional and international cooperation," Xi added.

Beijing has long taken a back seat to other diplomatic players in the Middle East, but analysts say the region is crucial to Xi's signature foreign policy initiative known as "One Belt One Road", touted as a revival of ancient Silk Road trade routes. China, the world's second-largest economy, also relies heavily on energy imports from the Middle East.

Continued on Page 13



TEHRAN: Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei (right) meets Chinese President Xi Jinping as Iranian President Hassan Rouhani looks on yesterday. — AP

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RIYADH: The GCC Foreign Ministers, including Kuwait's Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah (left), are pictured with the US Secretary of State John Kerry and GCC Secretary-General Abdullah Al-Zayani (right) ahead of their meeting in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia yesterday. — KUNA

GCC, US SHARE VIEWS ON REGIONAL ISSUES

RIYADH: Saudi Foreign Minister Adel Al-Jubeir and American Secretary of State John Kerry have reiterated that the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and the US share the same views on regional issues on the agenda of a joint meeting held in Riyadh yesterday.

The meeting between the GCC chief diplomats and Kerry discussed various issues of the region, developments in Syria, Yemen and Libya, in addition to the stalled Mideast peace process, Juber told a press conference. The talks also addressed the outcome of the Camp David summit that brought together US President Barack Obama and the GCC leaders last May.

The meeting that was characterized by transparency, frankness and objectivity,

discussed Iran's "negative role in the region and the Iranian interference in the internal affairs of countries of the region," the Saudi foreign minister said.

Iran still "supports terrorism and practices hostile activities that pose a threat to the region's security and stability," he said, reiterating that Tehran must be committed to the nuclear deal with the world powers (5+1).

Strategic partnership

Kerry, meanwhile, stressed his country's commitment to the strategic partnership and cooperation with the GCC member states, for joint interests, as well as defense against any threats. He also underlined support to Saudi Arabia against whatever threatens the Kingdom's

security and stability. On yesterday's meeting, Kerry said that discussions were "constructive" addressing several issues of common concern, such as the Syrian crisis, the developments in Yemen and the threats posed by the Houthis and Al-Qaeda, besides cooperation against the so-called Islamic State (IS). In addition, the US assured the GCC anew over the nuclear deal with Iran, as well as Tehran's activities in the region, and its support to Hezbollah through Syria, he said.

Referring to Geneva 3 conference on Syria due later this week, Kerry said he would meet later today with the Syrian opposition members and general coordinator Riad Hijab. Talks will focus on the opposition delegation to Geneva III. The US Secretary of State held Syrian presi-

dent Bashar Al-Asad responsible for attracting "terrorists" to the country, and for the spread of violence, killings and destruction there.

Conclusion

The GCC Foreign Ministers' joint meeting with Kerry concluded yesterday with the participation of First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. The meeting focused on deepening the roots of strategic cooperation between the GCC and the US, discussed international efforts on counterterrorism, and recent happenings in the region. After the meeting, the Kuwaiti Foreign Minister left the country and headed back to Kuwait.



BAGHDAD: Speaker of Kuwait's National Assembly Marzouq Al-Ghanem is welcomed by Iraqi parliament speaker Salim Al-Jabouri after his arrival to Baghdad yesterday.



BEIRUT: Speaker of Kuwait's National Assembly Marzouq Al-Ghanem meets Lebanese Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri in Beirut, Lebanon. — KUNA photos

PARLIAMENT SPEAKER IN BAGHDAD FOR PUIC MEETINGS

GHANEM, BERRI TALK EFFORTS TO RELEASE CITIZEN

BAGHDAD/BEIRUT: President of the Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union (AIPU) and Speaker of Kuwait's National Assembly Marzouq Al-Ghanem arrived in Baghdad yesterday to lead Kuwait's delegation participating in the 11th conference of the Parliamentary Union of the OIC (PUIC) members.

Ghanem was received at the Baghdad International Airport by Iraqi parliament speaker Salim Al-Jabouri and several Kuwaiti members of parliament. The two-day conference of the PUIC primarily revolves around efforts by PUIC members states against terrorism and extremism. The Kuwaiti speaker is expected to chair a coordinative meeting of the Arab group of the PUIC to discuss the agenda of the conference.

High-profile

Meanwhile, the media committee of the conference said that the Kuwaiti delegation tops other participants in terms of representation level and members. In a statement to KUNA yesterday, head of the media committee Mohammad Abo-Bakr reiterated Kuwait's the strong and high-profile representation, as the delegation led by Ghanem. He added that up to 40 delegations are taking part in the Islamic gathering, including 10 parliamentary speakers.

Ammar Teama, member of the Iraqi delegation to the PUIC conference, highlighted the high-pro-

file Kuwaiti delegation, a matter that reflects "Kuwait's support to the meeting." In addition, this implies Kuwait's seriousness to coordinate with other Muslim countries for countering extremism and terrorism, he noted. The main theme of the conference is "together to defeat terrorism and extremism."

Kidnapped citizen

Ghanem had left Baghdad coming to Beirut, where he visited the AIPU headquarters and met Lebanese parliament speaker Nabih Berri. In pre-departure statements, Ghanem said he had held talks with Berri about ongoing efforts by Lebanese authorities to find and release a Kuwaiti citizen kidnapped in Lebanon. He added that his visit had focused on the following-up of the activities of the Beirut-based Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union (AIPU).

The two sides also discussed developing ties between Kuwaiti and Lebanese parliaments as well as coordinating efforts at all levels, in addition to issues connected with regional and international developments, Ghanem said following the meeting. Ghanem was seen of at Beirut International Airport by Kuwaiti Ambassador to Lebanon Abdulaal Al-Qenaie. Ghanem's delegation includes MPs Faisal Al-Shaya, Khalil Abdullah and Dr Aouda Al-Rowaiee. — KUNA

BAHRAIN SPEAKER: GCC MEMBERS ABLE TO SAFEGUARD HUMAN RIGHTS

MANAMA: The GCC member states are undoubtedly able to promote and safeguard their human rights by means of introducing mechanisms and initiatives purposed to revamp and disseminate the culture of human rights, said Bahrain's parliament speaker Ahmad bin Ibrahim Al-Mulla. "The GCC leaders are determined and able to consolidate and protect human rights," the Speaker of the Bahraini Council of Representatives said in a keynote speech at the Second Human Rights in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Conference, themed "Human Rights Systems of the National, Regional and International Challenges."

However, he regretted that there are some external challenges pertinent to the stances of several organizations and countries which are in the habit of capitalizing on the issue of human rights for political purposes and strategic ends. Some organizations often adopt double standards and issue unfair reports and subjective information with the main goal of fomenting sectarian strife within the GCC society, and of dissuading the GCC countries from reform and development, he lamented. "Therefore, it's the responsibility of everyone in the GCC countries to stand united in face of these organizations and countries, and even to expose their lies, incitement and support to terrorists and extremists," Al-Mulla requested.

Partnership

Meanwhile, Secretary-General of the

Second Human Rights in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Conference Isa Al-Arabi hailed the gathering as mainly aiming to promote inter-GCC partnership in the domain of human rights. Al-Arabi, who doubles as Secretary-General of the Arab Federation for Human Rights, said the federation is seeking to unify efforts so as to create more integration and interaction among all Arab human rights organizations. Meanwhile, Arab Parliament President Ahmad Al-Jarwan highly acclaimed ongoing efforts exerted by the GCC countries to strengthen their human rights situations.

"The GCC members are unequivocally eager to promote their human rights through legislative and political regulations targeting equity among all spectrums of the Gulf society," Jarwan said to KUNA on the sidelines of the gathering.

But, he regretted that several international organizations and countries are trying to belittle the progress in the GCC members' human rights, rejecting such bids as having nothing to do whatsoever with human rights. The conference is co-organized by the Arab Federation for Human Rights, the Maan Human Rights Society and the International Gulf Organization for Human Rights.

National human rights institutions, GCC Secretariat-General, Arab League, Arab Human Rights Committee, independent human rights agencies, representatives of GCC, regional and international human rights NGOs are taking part in the conference. — KUNA

In my view

THE 2016 OIL CRISIS



By Muna Al-Fuzai

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The price of oil has dropped significantly during the past few weeks. It went down to below \$30 a barrel very quickly, and this is surely terrifying for us all. Now the question is how to react, and what effect will lower oil prices have in a highly volatile region like the Middle East? Can Gulf countries be impacted by this sharp decline?

Most OPEC countries have set their current financial budgets on the basis of oil at a minimum of \$80 a barrel, while some of them have set the price at more than \$100 in their budgets. It seems that the recent decline in world oil prices has created a state of confusion, which is normal. Many Middle East countries lack future strategies for the post-oil era or totally rely on oil and are not even prepared for lower demand and not necessarily the end of the oil era.

Some economists believe that Gulf states may not experience financial problems in the short term because of good financial assets that could be sold to cover the deficit in the budget. However, a continued decline in oil prices in the long term may reduce the typical government support to some key sectors such as healthcare, education and housing, which may affect the standard of living in these countries and thus the needs of the people.

The most important internal political challenges that are likely to face the governments of oil-producing countries that have created revenue systems dependent on oil are to meet their populations' needs and lifestyles, such as the large salaries and benefits that everyone believes is the country's duty to provide no matter the status of oil. For example, a hike now in fuel prices does not seem justified to some people, even if it is necessary and required.

It is unlikely that the current low price of oil will lead to a destabilization of the systems, especially in the Gulf states, that have relatively small populations and large financial reserves, and most reports indicate them to be the least affected. This is good to know.

Today, it is strange that oil prices are falling despite the conditions of security and threats in the Middle East, when usually oil prices rise due to disorder. What we see today is just the opposite, as Iraq and Libya, two main producers of oil, are confronting internal conflicts, but oil prices are collapsing at the same time.

Iraqi forces have been fighting a bloody military war against IS for several months now, which costs the Iraqi treasury a large financial burden. This is really a crisis that threatens the Middle East, especially Iraq's neighbors. The positive thing about this crisis is that the difficult conditions experienced by all oil-exporting countries may lead to a reduction of tensions between them in order to support the price of oil and raise the prices, so all international parties should sit down at the negotiating table to discuss their issues. Any agreement they reach would support to reduce geopolitical tensions and sectarianism in the Middle East.

A rally in oil prices needs clear international work and a lot of seriousness. Perhaps holding a mini-summit in Egypt, for example, to study the outcomes on the short and long term can be a good strategy. Egypt could be the right location to host such an initiative between the concerned parties.

This is a major crisis, but it can be temporary and controlled.

News

In brief

49 finalists for by-elections

KUWAIT: Forty nine candidates have registered to run for by-elections in the third constituency to select a parliament member to fill the vacant seat of late MP Nabil Al-Fadhil, who passed away last month. The by-elections take place on February 20th, while the deadline to withdraw candidacy is February 13th. Top candidates include the deceased's son Ahmad Al-Fadhil, veteran columnist Fuad Al-Hashim, Neurosurgery Consultant at Ibn Sina Hospital Dr Yousef Al-Awadhi, former MPs Abdullah Al-Kandari, Hisham Al-Baghli, Osama Al-Tahous and Taher Al-Failakawi, as well as Amani Al-Saleh as the sole female contestant.

Kidnapped journalists

RIYADH: GCC Secretary-General Dr Abdullah Al-Zayani condemned the kidnapping of Al-Jazeera Arabic news team, who is believed to have been snatched in the city of Taiz in southern Yemen. This act is "shameful and in violation to all international laws" that protect journalists, Zayani said in a press statement yesterday. Zayani held the abductors responsible for the safety of the kidnapped journalists, demanding their immediate release. Al-Jazeera Arabic correspondents Hamdi Al-Bokari and his crew, Abdulaziz Al-Sabri and Moneer Al-Sabai, were last seen on Monday night. — KUNA

Dental clinics

By A Saleh
KUWAIT: The Ministry of Health's Assistant Undersecretary for Architectural Affairs and Projects Naji Al-Saqer toured the dental clinics building at Farwaniya Hospital, which is still under construction. The 5-story building is considered the biggest dental center in Kuwait with 130 clinics, Saqer told reporters during the tour, adding that it can be expanded by 27 extra clinics in the future. He added that the project is considered one of the most important ones in the ministry's health development plan.

KUWAIT TO ENFORCE DNA TESTING LAW ON CITIZENS, EXPATS, VISITORS

TESTS WON'T BE USED TO DETERMINE GENEALOGY, AFFECT FREEDOMS



KUWAIT: The Interior Ministry's General Department of Criminal Evidence building, where the DNA identification lab is located. — Photos by Joseph Shagra

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: In an effort to learn more about the latest updates with regards to the DNA tests that will be applied in Kuwait this year on citizens, expatriates and visitors, Kuwait Times conducted the following interview with senior officials in charge with implementing the project at the Interior Ministry's (MOI) General Department of Criminal Evidence:

Q: Tell us about DNA testing and what is its basic purpose?

Back in the 1980s, Professor Sir Alec Jeffery discovered that every human being has a different DNA print that could be detected in each person's deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) in unencrypted areas and genes that cannot be affected or altered by diseases. This was a scientific breakthrough that had great impact on forensic medicine and helped identify culprits by matching samples of their DNA with evidence or crime weapons found at crime scenes using Locard's exchange principle theory.

DNA tests have proven very effective over the past decade and have been used in solving many crimes by matching biological evidence collected from crime scenes with databases. Therefore, many advanced countries started building their DNA databases according to regulations that ensured information confidentiality, which is reassuring for people subject to the test, be they suspects or volunteers willingly donating their specimens to serve justice. The process started in the UK where authorities started collecting specimens from suspects in 1995, then developed to include larger segments of people.

The US comes second in this regard, as it started building its DNA database in 1998 and now includes DNA fingerprints of over 15 million people from all states. More countries gradually started following the same steps of utilizing DNA databases in criminal investigations. Passing law number 78/2015 places Kuwait at par with those countries. Kuwait will have a database including DNA fingerprints of all citizens, residents and visitors. This law is the first of its kind in the world and Kuwait is the first country worldwide to apply the system.

Q: How will the test be used?

Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Sabah formed a special committee to study the method of putting law number 78/2015 pertaining building a DNA database into practice. Preparations are in progress now to set the regulating charter and commence taking mandatory samples from all citizens, residents and visitors.

DNA tests will be done through specimens taken from individuals to match their DNA in paternity cases

DNA tests will be done through specimens taken from individuals to match their DNA in paternity cases or as suspects in criminal cases

or as suspects in criminal cases. Specimens are often taken from saliva or through a few drops of blood placed on special cards. Specimens are then tested in labs according to international scientific and technical methods using special DNA examination equipment.



A senior official at the Interior Ministry's General Department of Criminal Evidence.

Q: How will the DNA samples and specimens be collected?

a. From Citizens: Collecting samples from citizens will be done by various mobile centers that will be moved according to a special plan amongst government establishments and bodies to collect samples from citizens in the offices they work in. In addition, fixed centers will be established at the interior ministry and citizen services centers to allow citizens give samples while doing various transactions.

b. From Residents: Collection will done on issuing or renewing residency visas through medical examinations done by the health ministry for new residency visas and through the criminal evidence department on renewing them.

c. From Visitors: Collection will be done at a special center at Kuwait International Airport, where in collaboration with the Civil Aviation Department, airlines and embassies, visitors will be advised on their rights and duties towards the DNA law.

Q: How will it respect privacy?

Privacy is undoubtedly the main concern of MOI in

general and the criminal evidence department in particular. It is our duty to protect the privacy of each and every citizen and resident taking into consideration that the DNA law highlighted this in articles 9, 10 and 11. Clause (A) of article 9 of the law states that "Without contradiction with any stricter penalty stipulated by another law, individuals making job-related secrets public or revealing any DNA database information they might come across as part of job duties, will be punished by a maximum of three years in prison".

Article 10 of the law also states that "Individuals forging DNA documents or knowingly using fake ones will be punished by a maximum of seven years in prison and/or a maximum KD 5,000 fine". In addition, article 11 of the law states that "Without contradiction with any stricter penalty stipulated by another law, individuals who damage the DNA database will be punished by a minimum of three and a maximum of 10 years in prison".

Technically speaking from a criminological point of view, a special work mechanism has been set for labs and sample collection, which will make it hard for lab staff and other staff dealing with the samples to identify the sources of those samples, by only using special barcodes on samples and specimens. Nonetheless, the executive charter is very strict with staff members dealing with the samples in order to win the trust of citizens, residents, visitors and anyone who has access to the database.

Q: In case of detecting any medical cases, how will you handle them?

The mandatory DNA tests only target non-encrypted genes that are not affected by diseases. The test is not done to diagnose any disease or obtain medical information because such information is part of individuals' privacy and the law bans access to it.

Q: MOI has promised not to use the test for lineage or genealogical reasons. What are the guarantees it won't do so?

This has been confirmed by the law itself. In addition, MOI plans building this database with the aim of limiting crimes and accelerate culprits' identification. The database will be also used in case of natural disasters or major incidents that leave behind bodies that can only be identified through DNA tests.

Q: Will the law be applied to foreign visitors? what if they refuse to take the test?

Yes, the test will be mandatory for visitors. As the executors are responsible to collect and examine samples, we will notify relevant authorities about whoever refuses to give a sample so that they could apply the measures stipulated in the law. We will also coordinate with various airlines and foreign embassies in Kuwait so that all visitors can have a good idea about the law and the possible consequences of rejecting its procedures.

Q: What links the smart passport with DNA tests? Will providing a DNA sample allow the issuance of a passport regardless of the results?

There was a study to place all biometric data in one database, but after passing the DNA law number 78/2015, the law separated the DNA database. Although the procedures followed for issuing smart passports are done by the criminal evidence department, issuing all categories of passports is the responsibility of the citizenship and passports directorate.

Q: When will the mandatory DNA tests go in effect?

Sheikh Mohammad has already prepared the law's executive charter and submitted it to the Cabinet. So, the law will go in effect once the Cabinet approves the draft in accordance to recommendations made in the law 78/2015 pertaining DNA testing.

Q: What about eye prints or retinal scans?

Eye prints (retinal scans) are not currently adopted as criminal evidence in Kuwait due to the presence of more accurate technologies including fingerprinting and DNA. Eye prints are used in some countries but there is no international cooperation in this field due to lack of international databases of eye prints.



An official at work at the DNA identification lab in the General Department of Criminal Evidence.



A worker examines a sample using high-tech equipment at the lab.



A lab technician works on a machine.



A worker uses a machine at the DNA testing laboratory.

ZAIN, OOREDOO, VIVA TO EXPLORE ROLE OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS IN SAVING LIVES

COMPANIES SPONSOR 2ND GLOBAL FORUM ON EMERGENCY TELECOMMUNICATIONS

KUWAIT: Kuwait's three telecommunications companies; Zain, Ooredoo, and VIVA, announced their platinum sponsorship of the 2nd Global Forum on Emergency Telecommunications - Saving Lives (GET 2016). The prominent forum is hosted by Kuwait's Ministry of Communications and the Communication and Information Technology Regulatory Authority during 25 - 28 January under the patronage of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Subah.

In a joint press statement, the three telecoms considered Kuwait's hosting of this forum as a step forward to the further development of the telecom sector in the region, as Kuwait is the second hosting country of this international forum after the wide success of the first event held at Geneva in 2007.

Disaster Management

GET 2016, organized by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), is considered one of the most globally recognized events that discuss the role of the telecom industry in Disaster Management, especially with the rapid changes in the telecommunications sector in the region, coupled with massive enhancements in the information technology arena. The event is expected to witness the attendance of about 500 participants from around 90 countries, including Telecom Ministers, Director-Generals of Regulatory Authorities, CEOs, and more.

ITU is the United Nations specialized agency for information and communication technologies. The Union allocates global radio spectrum and satellite orbits, develops



Eman Al-Roudhan

the technical standards that ensure networks and technologies seamlessly interconnect, and strives to improve access to ICTs to underserved communities worldwide.

With the help of its global membership, ITU brings the benefits of modern communication technologies to people everywhere in an efficient, safe, easy and affordable manner. The Union is unique among UN agencies in having both public and private sector memberships, with 193 Member States that include ICT regulators, many leading academic institutions and some 800 tech companies.



Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdullah Al Thani

ITU is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland, and has twelve regional and area offices around the world. ITU membership represents a cross-section of the global ICT sector, from the world's largest manufacturers and telecoms carriers to small, innovative players working with new and emerging technologies, along with leading R&D institutions and academia.

Key element

Commenting on Zain's sponsorship of this global forum, Eman Al-Roudhan, Zain Kuwait's Chief Executive Officer said,



Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al-Badran

"Telecommunications has become a key element of the development process within different fields and sectors. The industry has presented itself as a central player in the establishment of any community's infrastructure, which led it to become the backbone of the economy with technology becoming a critical tool to acquire information, propelling economic and social development."

Roudhan added: "Zain is committed to supporting the communities it serves, making vital telecommunications accessible to all. In emergency situations or natural disasters, the telecom industry is obliged to act

and help improve the quality of life for those people in need."

Roudhan concluded: "Sustainability is at the very core of our business and is reflected in every aspect of our day to day operational activities. We continue to take our role in society very seriously and are willing to live up to our responsibilities in the places we do business."

Vital role

Ooredoo Kuwait CEO and General Manager Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdullah Al Thani commented: "The role of the private sector in general, and the telecommunications sector in particular is vital in contributing to saving lives, and ensuring that we are ready to face disasters. This forum gives us the opportunity to discuss and execute strategies that will yield to a decrease in risks supported by communication technology. The main goal is to ultimately save lives and ensure public safety. We at Ooredoo are committed to the safety of the public, and we are proud to be part of this forum which gives the telecommunications sector a major role in disaster management."

Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al-Badran, CEO of VIVA, commented: "This sponsorship and VIVA's participation stems from our deep understanding of the rapid development of the information technology, in addition to the vital role we, as a communications service provider, play in addressing related challenges. VIVA is extremely conscious of the threats and risks Telecommunications may encounter, and VIVA is very well qualified to be one of the leaders in this domain."

SAUDI AMBASSADOR CONGRATULATES KUWAIT ON AMIR'S SUCCESSION, NATIONAL ANNIVERSARIES

KUWAIT: Saudi Ambassador to Kuwait Dr Abdul Aziz bin Ibrahim Al-Fayez congratulated Kuwait on the tenth anniversary of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's succession, 25th Liberation Day anniversary and 55th



Saudi Ambassador Dr Abdul Aziz Al-Fayez

National Day anniversary, noting that the National Day marked a remarkable turning point in Kuwait's history when the late Amir Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem declared Kuwait's independence in 1961.

In a press release, Fayez stressed that after Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem, Kuwait's rulers carried on with building Kuwait until the reign passed down to His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmed with all his wisdom, experience and accumulated experiences he had gained by assuming various

official positions.

"The passage of 55 years since Kuwait won its independence reminds us all of the great sacrifices made by successive generations who contributed to building modern Kuwait and its institutions," Fayez added, noting that the Kuwaiti people also made considerable sacrifices to liberate it from the aggressive invasion to mark a breakthrough. Within a short period, Kuwait managed to resume its march towards progress and prosperity as well as resume playing its role alongside other GCC sister states.

Fayez stressed that after 10 years in office, His Highness the Amir proved to be very capable of shouldering the responsibility due to his wisdom and experiences that enabled him to wisely lead Kuwait at such an important point in its history despite domestic and foreign challenges. "These three occasions are as dear to us all as they are for Kuwait," Fayez stressed, highlighting the deep-rooted historic relations between both countries under various leaders and all the way until the succession of the current Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdul Aziz and His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad.

Accordingly, Fayez expressed heartiest congratulations to His Highness the Amir, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, the Al-Sabah family and the Kuwaiti people.



Alghanim Industries team receiving a plaque from NUKS-USA.

NUKS-USA HONORS ALGHANIM INDUSTRIES FOR 32ND ANNUAL CONFERENCE SPONSORSHIP

KUWAIT: Alghanim Industries, one of the largest private companies in the region, was recently honored by the National Union of Kuwaiti Students - USA (NUKS-USA) in recognition of its participation and sponsorship of the 32nd annual conference that took place in San Diego from 26-28 November 2015, under the patronage and attendance of the Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education Dr Bader Al-Essa.

NUKS-USA was represented by students Fahad Al-Jadaan and Dawoud Al-Busairi who visited the company's headquarters whereby they met with the team that represented the company at the conference and honored them with a commemorative plaque in recognition of the company's role and on-going support of NUKS-USA.

Senior Director of Corporate Strategy, BD, and M&A at Alghanim Industries, Dari Al-Reshaid Al-Bader, said: "We sincerely thank

NUKS-USA for a well-organized conference, as we value such events that give us the opportunity to meet many of our special students. One of our activities in this year's conference was a special workshop that we hosted for merit students, as well as our involvement in other activities in which we interacted with many students and helped answer any questions they had about the company. We really look forward to future collaborations with NUKS-USA."

As part of its activities at this conference, Alghanim Industries hosted a special workshop entitled "Steer Your Career" to a group of merit scholars with varied majors studying in the United States, where company representatives introduced Alghanim Industries and presented career advice that will help them professionally, such as time management, goal setting, and writing a good resume. The team also presented the "Alghanim Industries Future Leaders Program" (AFLP), a program that extends over

12 months, and is designed to provide recent, high-potential Kuwaiti graduates with a comprehensive introduction to the different businesses and support functions in Alghanim Industries and includes world-class training and development activities. The program is comprised of four months of training and workshops, a one month-long business-based project, and seven months of job rotations and assignments across the company.

The support for education falls under Alghanim Industries' corporate social responsibilities initiatives. The company has goals towards youth empowerment, supporting education, entrepreneurship, and helping entrepreneurs grow. Part of Alghanim Industries' educational initiatives were the sponsorships of Nuqat conference, the NEST project to raise awareness and support education for underprivileged children in Mumbai, not to mention the continuous support to the INJAZ Kuwait organization.

DEPUTY FM IN MANAMA FOR ARAB-INDIAN FORUM

MANAMA: Kuwaiti Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Suleiman Al-Jarallah yesterday arrived in Manama leading a Kuwaiti delegation to the first ministerial session of the Arab-India Cooperation Forum (AICF). The meeting will be held today on the level of Foreign Ministers. The delegation was received by



Khaled Al-Jarallah

Bahraini Foreign Minister Abdulla Al-Dosary and Dean of Diplomatic Corps in the Kingdom, Kuwaiti Ambassador Sheikh Azzam Mubarak Al Sabah, and officials from the embassy as well as the Bahraini Foreign Ministry.

The one-day ministerial meeting will address a multitude of economic and political files of mutual interest, and means of boosting bilateral trade. Arab League Secretary General Nabil Al-Araby will attend the meeting, together with some Arab foreign ministers and India's External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj.

The meeting follows several preparatory meetings held for senior officials from both sides. In December 2008, the Arab League and the Indian Ministry of External Affairs signed a memorandum of understanding for establishing the AICF in a bid to enhance bilateral ties and create strategic partnership. The delegation includes Assistant Foreign Minister for the Affairs of the Deputy Foreign Minister's Office Ambassador Ayham Abdullatif Al-Omar, Assistant Foreign Minister for Arab World Affairs Aziz Al-Dihani and Kuwait's Permanent Delegate to the Arab League Ahmad Abdulrahman Al-Bakr. —KUNA



HORECA ATTRACTED OVER 6,000 VISITORS

KUWAIT: Leaders Group's General Manager Nabila Al-Anjeri stressed that Horeca Kuwait 2016 exhibition, which was recently concluded, achieved remarkable success and managed to attract over 6,000 visitors including experts, company owners, businessmen and a large number of ambassadors and diplomats.

Anjeri added that such success highlights the role that could be played by the private sector in activating commercial exchanges and boosting

the economy. "This would eventually provide enough job opportunities, support the government's development plan and help it set short and medium term strategies to diversify national income sources," she said, adding that sectors like tourism, hospitality, shipment and storage should be top priorities when considering such strategies.

Anjeri also thanked the Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth

Affairs Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah for patronizing the exhibition. She also thanked all participants, sponsors and members of the cooking competition's jury panel.

Further, Anjeri thanked Hospitality Services Company; the main organizer of all Horeca exhibitions throughout the Middle East for cooperating with Leaders Group in organizing Horeca Kuwait 2016.

GOVT COULD SCRAP EMPLOYEES' BONUSES

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: As part of the government's austerity measures, ministries will reconsider paying employees the 'excellent performance bonuses' in the 2016-2017 budget, well-informed sources said. These bonuses would not be paid according to present conditions, the sources said, adding that ministries would have to either cancel or reduce them down by limiting them to certain employees who match strict performance assessment conditions. The sources highlighted that the current average excellent performance bonuses were over KD 5 million in most ministries, which adds up to a very high cost. The sources added that the employees who get the bonus do not actually deserve it and it is most often given for profiteering and is followed by filing of many grievances by those who do not get it. "This calls for stricter regulations and conditions," stressed the sources, noting that cancelling bonuses in the oil sector could

be the beginning of cancelling them in other ministries. "The government will leave the final decision to respective ministries," added the sources.

In another development, the sources added that governmental instructions were issued to the ministerial economic committee to finish its study concerning cutting subsidies and increasing petrol, electricity and water prices so that they could be listed on the Cabinet's agenda for February.

Kuwait Airways

The parliament's financial affairs committee is due to discuss today the proposals made on amending law number 6/2008 pertaining with turning Kuwait Airways into a shareholding company. The committee meeting will be attended by Communication Minister Essa Al-Kandari. The committee's agenda also includes a bill on allowing the government to take funds from the general reserves as requested by Finance Minister and

acting oil minister Anas Al-Saleh, who is scheduled to attend the meeting as well.

Citizenship

The parliament's legal and legislative affairs committee is due to meet today to discuss a proposal on granting citizenship to the children of martyrs registered with the Martyrs Bureau. Meanwhile, member of the parliamentary interior and defense affairs committee MP Abdullah Maayouf said that the committee would discuss a bill granting citizenship to a maximum of 4,000 people in 2016.

Family safe

A huge fire broke out at a Kuwaiti family's house in Omariya, said security sources, noting that the fire started when a cooking gas cylinder exploded in a kitchen annexed to the house, blowing off parts of the ceiling and walls. The sources added that no casualties were reported.

KUWAITI TEAM IN GENEVA FOR ROADMAP ON SPORTS SITUATION

GENEVA: A Kuwaiti governmental delegation in Geneva was briefed on a roadmap suggested by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) before presenting it to competent bodies for careful deliberations. The delegation's head Mohammad Al-Faili said in a statement yesterday that the roadmap was tabled during a meeting held with IOC officials to discuss the IOC's recent decision suspending Kuwait's sports activities.

"During the meeting, we listened to the IOC's viewpoint, and we voiced our views on suspension too. We stressed that our sports legislations don't run counter with the Olympic Charter," he said. The 16-hour-long meeting was convened by the UN, Faili said, appreciating "sincere and relentless" efforts by the UN, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and Special Adviser to the UN Secretary-General on Sport for Development and Peace Wilfried Lemke to resolve the issue of Kuwait's internationally suspended sports activities.

Led by constitutional expert Mohammad Al-Faili, the Kuwaiti governmental team comprises Advisor to the Minister of State for Youth Affairs, Dr Saqer Al-Mulla and member of the Public Authority for Sports (PAS) Abdullah Al-Afasi.

Several officials of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) were present in the meeting. On October 27, 2015, the PAS board of directors had rejected a decision by the IOC suspending Kuwait's Olympic activities, over allegations that the "Kuwait's local sports laws contradict the Olympic Charter." — KUNA



CRACKDOWN AT STREET MARKET IN MAHBOULA

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: Kuwait Municipality launched an inspection campaign in an illegal street market in Mahboula, where three truckloads of vegetables, fruits and used clothes were confiscated, said the acting municipal affairs manager at Hawally and Ahmadi municipalities Fahd Al-Shtaili. All unauthorized and illegal markets would be targeted and strictly dealt with, he noted.

Medical services

Chairman of the Private Medical Professions Union Dr Adel Ashkenani highly commended His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah's instructions to develop domestic medical services and reduce reliance on treatment abroad. "Health sector officials should be fully aware of

this instruction by the Amir of wisdom and humanity. We should learn lessons from such statements," he underlined. Addressing Health Minister Dr Ali Al-Obaidi, Ashkenani said during his meetings with the minister, he detected sincere intentions and efforts to develop health services in general and regulate private health services in particular. "Such intentions need to see light now," he underlined, calling for getting rid of red tape and bureaucracy in issuing licenses. He also urged the Assembly and its health affairs committee to amend medical laws in order to develop the health sector and attract more investments and international hospitals that "will not operate in Kuwait under current circumstances", noting that it was high time the private sector played a more important role in developing medical and health services.

KUWAITI HELD IN TANZANIA RELEASED

KUWAIT: A Kuwaiti citizen, held in Tanzania since June, has been released and is back home, Assistant Foreign Minister for Consular Affairs Plenipotentiary Sami Abdulaziz Al-Hamad said on yesterday. The citizen was held there as of June 23 for violating the Tanzanian laws on exporting some animal species. The penalty in

this case is a tremendous fine, or 20 years behind bars, Hamad told KUNA.

But he was granted a release thanks to ceaseless efforts by the Kuwaiti Embassy in the East African country, based on orders from First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. The efforts were

fruitful, Hamad said, appreciating cooperation by the Tanzanian side. The Foreign Ministry urges Kuwaiti citizens to abide by laws when leaving other countries, and not to try to take out animals with them, he said. They have to comply with hunting laws in a host country, and to be cautious, making sure their permits are valid. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Firefighters and emergency medical technicians talk with a woman after saving her from a suicide attempt she had attempted in an apartment where she says she was locked for four days.

FIREFIGHTERS THWART SUICIDE ATTEMPT

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Hawalli firefighters yesterday succeeded in saving a 33-year-old Filipina who attempted suicide by jumping off a second floor apartment in a Hawalli building. The woman was held hostage inside the apartment for four days, said security sources, noting that firefighters had to break into the apartment and talk the woman out of her suicide attempt. Further investigations are in progress.

Unlicensed warehouses

In collaboration with Kuwait Municipality, Farwaniya security forces launched a wide scale inspection campaign in Hasawi, raid-

ing several illegal street marketplaces. The forces also searched five unlicensed warehouses used for storing vegetables and fruits that were all confiscated and sent to charities. The campaign also resulted in removing large quantities of wooden and plastic boxes of produce prepared for sale.

Boat owner summoned

In implementation of the environment law, the environment police spotted a boat that had run aground on Fintas shores, said security sources, noting that the owner was summoned and notified to remove the boat to avoid being fined for docking in an area not specified for docking. The sources added that leaving

the boat in the area was dangerous for marine life in the area.

Safety conference

Major General Khaled Yousif Al-Terkait, Deputy Director for Human Development at Kuwait Fire Services Directorate (KFSD) and Chairman of the Supreme Committee for the 4th International Firefighting and Safety Conference, said that the conference would be held under auspices of His Highness the Prime Minister in the period of March 1-3, 2016, and titled 'Best Experiences for Safe Future'. Terkait added that the conference would coincide with the National Holidays.

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Al-Qabas

YOU SHOCKED US... WITH ALL IT MEANS

By Iqbal Al-Ahmad

When the country is stripped of its people's loyalty and priorities for its love differ...when the name of the country is lost, all types of loyalties emerge...then the only diagnosis for this is for the country to commit suicide.

When MP so and so, and MP so and so among the nine MPs boycotted the National Assembly session in protest of as an expression of their stand towards the Abdaly cell verdict, they did not write on the announcement of their candidature that they are the candidates of this or that group, or that their role and responsibility towards the country that harbors them depends on matters bigger than them.

The statements of their candidatures were speaking about Kuwait and its love only, but as soon as confusion shrouded the boycott of those MPs of the session, it made us wonder whether the nation's MPs represent Kuwait with its interests in the first place, and that nothing is above the homeland, and no interest is above its interest.

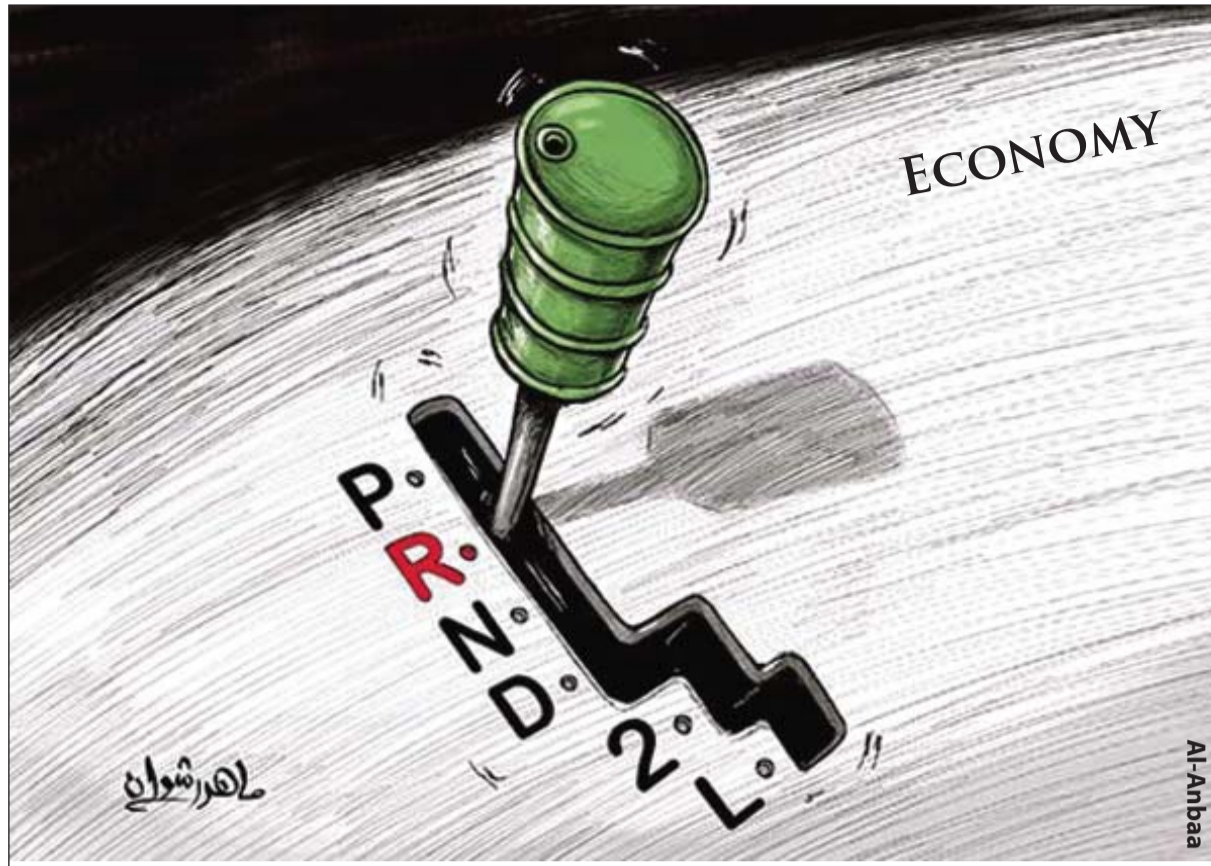
The world was shocked as we were towards what happened - how can an MP boycott a session in protest of verdicts issued against persons convicted of collecting and storing weapons in several areas, which constitutes a danger against Kuwait and its people, especially what was announced about communications and loyalties to foreign countries. To whom was the priority of belonging in their hearts compared to Kuwait, to which they belong according to their nationalities and IDs, which has all credit in providing them with all means of dignified life. Then they conspired to threaten the security of our homeland and its people. I personally challenge any one of those nine MPs to persuade me that there is a patriotic justification for his action and in the interest of Kuwait.

Sunnis and Shiites elected so and so among those because they trusted their loyalty and their love of the country (and this is a duty, and supposed to be today and every day), because their candidature slogans was playing on the patriotism card just like all candidates at the time.

When we rejected the Iraqi invasion, we did so as Kuwaitis and not as Sunnis and Shiites, and if it was Iran that occupied Kuwait at the time instead of Iraq, we would, both Sunnis and Shiites, also stand against it with the same strength and spirit. So what happened to make loyalties flip and for some MPs to personify their inclinations with such a stand?

If any rulings issued against any person who belongs to a group in Kuwait make MPs who belong to the same group hold a sectarian protest, then sessions will be void of MPs, and the work of MPs would change from legislation for the sake of the homeland to struggles. My wish for 2016 is to celebrate the return of the homeland to our hearts after it has been out for a long time and for many painful reasons. I fear is what happened is a reflection of this desertion. The danger of our illness in Kuwait is that the illness began in a very important part in Kuwait's body, that is its heart (the National Assembly), so there is no way it can be removed to save this body, unlike if it was a finger, hand or foot.

— Translated by Kuwait Times



Al-Anbaa

A POINT TO MAKE

By Dr Nermin Al-Houti

I should first thank the Governor of Sharjah Sheikh Sultan bin Mohammad Al-Qassimi and Information Minister Sheikh Salman Al-Humoud Al-Sabah for their continued interest in the father of arts - theater - and their action to push the Arab and Gulf theatrical movement forward, develop this art and preserve the "father of arts" so that it continues and flourishes in the Internet era.

My focus is on those who organized the five-day Arab Theater Authority festival. We lovers of theater got intense cultural doses, but we could not absorb and enjoy what was presented to us in the form of Arab and Gulf arts. My suggestions for them are written below so that they may be considered in the future, and before anything, I tell them "May you be strong":

* Each day had three plays at different places and various times, with multiple concepts, making the attendee's theatrical thinking scattered and dispersed. So why the days weren't extended with only one or two shows and not three?

* Seminars were held to discuss the day's theatrical activities. I stand for a moment with the organizer of the seminars and ask: Is it realistic to watch three shows over five hours starting at 5 pm, ending on some days at 11 pm, then ask spectators to participate in the seminars that in some cases extended to dawn? Why did you hold

the seminars in one place? Why didn't you use the theater in which the show being discussed was presented?

* Some of the honoring that proceeded the plays delayed some of the shows as far as its scheduled time was concerned, and the non-compliance of some officials with the show's timing led to the delay of the start of the show and rescheduling the shows after it, so we ask the organizing committee, as a suggestion, to have the honoring and prizes organized during hours other than of the shows and in places different from the theater. We also demand that some officials be committed to the show's time because theater is really a commitment.

* Workshops did not receive much interest from lovers of the "father of arts", and the reason is time constraints and lack of adequate announcements about them.

* Finally, the art shows did not receive much attention despite their contents of innovation in the theatrical world.

Finally, we thank Kuwait's guests and those who organized the festival, headed by Sharjah Governor Sheikh Sultan, and thank the information minister in particular.

— Translated by Kuwait Times



KUWAIT DIVE TEAM LIFTS BUOY, DEBRIS FROM AL-SHAMLAN PORT

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Dive Team of the Environmental Voluntary Foundation recently removed a free-floating buoy as well as two tons of plastics and debris from the waters in Al-Shamlan Port. Waleed Al-Fadhel, president of the Dive Team, reported that the Team raised the

iron-made buoy using equipment on loan from the Kuwait Municipality, given the buoy's weight of 1 ton. The buoy was found by the team run aground in Kuwait Bay and is believed to have floated in from the bay.

The Kuwait Dive Team regularly cleans

the Al-Shamlan Port, as well as other ports and coastal habitats around Kuwait. Fadhel said the team will continue to remove waste harmful to the marine environment and dangerous to seafarer safety. Sunken vessels and floating buoys must be removed in order to secure shipping lanes around Kuwait. The waste produced by fishing and tourist boats must be cleaned on a daily basis in order to remove harmful pollutants that negatively impact the country's fish stocks.

Fadhel thanked the Kuwait Ports Authority and the Municipality of Kuwait for their help in this operation, as well as the Environmental Public Authority, the Department of Fisheries, the General Administration of Coast Guards, the Fish Market administration, and the Kuwaiti Fishermen's Union for their continued efforts and cooperation in protecting the marine environment. Fadhel also called for fishermen and sailors to stop throwing waste into the sea in order to ensure the historic character of Al-Shamlan Port and Kuwait's seafaring activities are preserved.

News in brief

No plans to collect income taxes

KUWAIT: Kuwait has no plans to collect income taxes from its citizens neither soon nor at any time in the future, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Acting Minister of Oil Dr Anas Al-Saleh said. Instead, the government is studying measures in cooperation with the National Assembly pertaining with collecting taxes from companies' net profits, he said, adding that the government currently focuses on rationalizing subsidies and diversifying sources of income. — Al-Anbaa

Vehicle impoundment

KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Sabah gave orders to authorize traffic police to impound any vehicle for two months for violating the traffic law in the following conditions: Driving without a license plate, reckless driving, crossing the red traffic light, driving a vehicle that emits thick smoke, driving a vehicle that carries stickers that signify a sectarian group or unlicensed organizations, or driving illegally on the shoulder of the road. — Al-Rai

No raids without warrants

KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Sabah gave orders to Undersecretary Lieutenant General Suleiman Al-Fahad to make sure that officers obtain warrants from the public prosecution before raiding apartments in crackdowns against violators. The new instructions, which came after the Interior Ministry received complaints that police raid apartments without a warrant, further indicate that the raids must be carried out based on specific information obtained via investigations carried out by criminal detectives. Furthermore, the minister ordered police not to carry out raids at any cafe in Kuwait, as the municipality is the only state body with the authority to carry out such activity. — Al-Anbaa

Official files for retirement

KUWAIT: The Interior Ministry's Assistant Undersecretary for Borders Security Affairs Major General Anwar Al-Yassine has submitted his papers for retirement, a local daily reported yesterday quoting sources. Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Sabah had referred Yassine to the ministry's general diwan for administrative investigations pertaining with his alleged relationship with a case pending in court, Al-Rai reported. — Al-Rai

Subbiya unit back to service

KUWAIT: The steam unit number 20 at Subbiya Power Plant re-launched last Wednesday night following a two-year suspension due to a fire. The unit returned to service after all damages caused by a fire that happened on January 20, 2014 were successfully repaired, said Fuad Al-Oun, the Assistant Undersecretary for Operations and Maintenance at the Ministry of Electricity and Water (MEW). The unit's total production capacity reaches 220 megawatts per day, Oun added. — Al-Qabas

Crime

Report

Student in Jordan shot during fight

KUWAIT: A Kuwaiti student studying pharmacology in Jordan was injured when he was shot after he fought with three Jordanians over parking rights, said security sources, noting that the shooters fled the scene. The student's father told security sources that during the fight with the three suspects, one of them drew a gun and fired six shots, and one of them hit his son's foot. The father added that his son was rushed to hospital where the bullet was removed, while investigations are in progress to identify and arrest the culprits.

Fatal accident

A 21-year-old female citizen was killed when she lost control over an all-terrain vehicle (ATV) outside her family's camp and it rolled over, said security sources, noting that the girl was rushed to hospital in a critical condition but she died soon afterwards. Separately, Ahmadi detectives inspected a number of camps and confiscated 45 ATVs.

Police kill 'agitated' cow

A cow created panic in Rehab when it ran in the streets in an agitated manner, which called for police intervention, said security sources. Policemen shot 12 bullets at the cow but it still resisted, so they finally had to run it over with a patrol vehicle, the sources noted.

Bloodstains

Capital detectives were alerted on receiving a report about a vehicle with bloodstains on its exterior parked at the Friday Market. Checking on the owner, detectives found that he was a citizen wanted for various cases. The vehicle was impounded pending further investigations.

Driving under the influence

A female citizen wanted for financial claims was arrested while driving her vehicle under the influence of alcohol in Hawally, said security sources. Case papers indicate that a police patrol noticed that a vehicle was being driven erratically and on stopping it, the driver reeked of alcohol and had three bottles of whiskey. On checking her ID, detectives found that she was wanted. A case was filed and the suspect was referred to relevant authorities. Separately, Jahra detectives arrested four people under the influence of drugs with illicit pills at an Abdaly farm, said security sources.

Bad storage

Doha Port customs inspectors seized a shipment of inedible foodstuff from Iran, said security sources, noting that the shipment of potatoes and truffles arrived onboard three boats. On examining it, the foodstuff had already gone foul due to bad storage conditions.

Security campaigns

In the last raid before the interior minister issued a decision banning raiding private residences or cafes without a search warrant from the public prosecution, Ahmadi detectives stormed a Mangaf apartment that had been reportedly used for vice activities, said security sources. In a separate incident, Ahmadi detectives also inspected an illegal marketplace in Mahboula where 64 peddlers, 10 wanted expats and four others with expired residency visas were arrested, said security sources, noting that Ahmadi security director Brig Abdullah Saffah submitted a memo to Mol undersecretary demanding deporting the 64 peddlers.

Company sentenced

The court of appeal sentenced a local company to compensate its previous operations manager by KD 50,600 for dismissing him without due reason and not paying his indemnity and other allowances.

Witchcraft

Ahmadi detectives arrested an Asian man with some witchcraft items, said security sources. He was taken to the proper authorities to face legal action.

Fugitive caught

A citizen, who had been wanted for a KD 36,000 financial claim, was arrested in Ahmadi, said security sources. He was taken to the proper authorities for further action.

Drug possession

Police at a routine checkpoint in Dhafer suspected three juveniles and on searching them, detectives found meth with their possession. The trio were taken to the proper authorities to face charges.

Bank account hacked

A citizen reported that an unidentified person had made a KD 454 purchase that was deducted from his account, said security sources. A case was filed. — Al-Rai, Al-Anbaa

WINTER TIMINGS AT ENTERTAINMENT CITY

KUWAIT: The Entertainment City welcomes visitors on winter timings starting from today following the end of the spring break timings, the Touristic Enterprises Company (TEC) announced. The facility is open from 4:00 pm to 12:00 am on weekdays and from 10:00 am to 10:00 pm on weekends, Operations and Maintenance Manager Yousuf Al-Humoud said. The winter working hours will continue until February's end, he added.

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Conservatives launch Trump broadside

SAUDI-IRANIAN PROXY WAR SPREADS TO DAVOS

'SNOWZILLA' BLIZZARD PUMMELS US

AT LEAST NINE KILLED IN STORM-RELATED DEATHS

NEW YORK/WASHINGTON: A monster blizzard that paralyzed the US East Coast intensified yesterday afternoon as it barreled into New York City, prompting a travel ban on area highways as high winds whipped up record-setting tides in New Jersey and Delaware. After dumping nearly two feet (60 cm) of snow on the suburbs of Washington, DC, overnight, the storm unexpectedly gathered strength as it slammed into the New York metropolitan area, and forecasters bumped up snowfall predictions to up to 30 inches (76 cm) by today.

New York Governor Andrew Cuomo announced a ban on all travel on New York City area roads, including on Long Island, except for emergency vehicles, as of 2:30 pm (1930 GMT). All bridges and tunnels into the city will also close, he said. Subways running above ground and trains operated by the Long Island Railroad and Metro North will stop service at 4 pm because snow falling at a rate of 3 inches per hour proved too much for plows on roads and railways, Cuomo said.

Broadway theaters canceled matinee and evening performances at the urging of New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio, who warned that the storm may rank among the top five blizzards ever to hit the nation's largest city. "We're loving it. We definitely want to come back," said Michelle Jones, 46, a mortgage company controller who had tickets to see "The Phantom of Opera" with her daughter. "We love the snow because we don't get this in Atlanta," she said, about an hour before the Broadway shutdown was announced.

Heavy snow bands were moving across Long Island, New York City and northeast New Jersey, with wind gusts of up to 80 kph, the National Weather Service said. New York City buses operated by the Metropolitan Transportation Authority were suspended at noon. New Jersey Transit, earlier on Saturday, suspended all bus, rail and light rail service. The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority took the rare step of suspending operations through Sunday.

More than 4,300 US flights were canceled, including virtually all travel into New York City airports, according to the FlightAware.com tracking website and transportation officials. Cuomo declared a state of emergency in New York yesterday, becoming the 11th state to take the step.

"Our message, and we need the public to listen, is to stay home and to stay off the streets. That includes people who are attempting to drive, but it also includes people who are walking," said Washington Mayor Muriel Bowser.

However, some residents said they just could not resist seeing famous monuments frosted with snow. "We haven't made snow angels yet, but we're looking forward to doing that in front of the White House," said Robert Bella Hernandez, 38. "We're just going to walk around, see some snow covered D.C. landmarks. And then when it's unsafe, maybe go back in for a minute."

Higher Tides than During Sandy

High winds battered the entire region, reaching 70 mph in Wallops Island, Virginia, late on Friday, and whipping up the tides, said meteorologist Greg Gallina of the National Weather Service. Tides higher than those caused by Superstorm Sandy three years ago caused major flooding along the Jersey Shore and Delaware coast and set records in Cape May, New Jersey, and Lewes, Delaware, said NWS meteorologist Patrick O'Hara.

A high tide of 8.98 feet (2.74 m) was recorded at 7:51 am yesterday at Cape May - slightly higher than the record of 8.9 feet previously set by Sandy on Oct 29, 2012. A high tide of 9.27 feet was recorded at Lewes, higher than the 9.2 high tide recorded in March 1962. "All the factors that affect the tides, it's all happening at once," O'Hara said. Even so, there were no reports of evacuations along the New Jersey Shore, where thousands of residents had to abandon their homes during the devastating 2012 storm.

The barrier islands in Atlantic County were experiencing significant tidal flooding, said Linda Gilmore, the county's public information officer, affecting Atlantic City and at least four other towns. While the county typically sees flooding during nor'easter storms, the current situation more dangerous than usual. Gilmore said the risk would grow more severe with each high tide through today morning, but at present it was too early to draw any comparisons with Sandy.

At least eight people were killed in car crashes due to icy roads in North Carolina, Kentucky, Tennessee and Virginia, and a ninth person died of a heart attack while



WASHINGTON: A pedestrian walks in the center of a snow-covered residential street yesterday. — AFP

shoveling snow in Maryland. The Pennsylvania National Guard was called in to help stranded motorists along I-78 in the western part of the state, local media reported.

The worst appeared to be over for Washington, although moderate snow was expected to keep falling until late Saturday, with the deepest accumulation of 23 inches recorded in Poolesville, Maryland, north of the nation's capital. Snowfall measured 13 inches near the White House and 3.5 inches near the National Mall yesterday morning, the NWS reported.

"Records are getting close - we're getting into the top

five storms," Gallina said. The record high of 28 inches of snow in the nation's capital was set in 1922 and the deepest recent snowfall was 17.8 inches in 2010. The storm developed along the Gulf Coast, dropping snow over Arkansas, Tennessee and Kentucky on Friday. On the East Coast, warm, moist air from the Atlantic Ocean collided with cold air to form the massive winter system, meteorologists said. The storm was forecast to move offshore in southern New England early next week. Philadelphia and New York were expected to get up to 18 inches of snow before the storm abated. — Reuters

ISRAELI GUARD KILLS PALESTINIAN GIRL

JERUSALEM: A 13-year-old Palestinian girl was shot dead by an Israeli security guard she allegedly tried to stab at a settlement in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, Israeli police said yesterday. It was the latest fatality in an almost four-month-long surge of violence that has raised concern of wider escalation, a decade after the last Palestinian uprising subsided, and it followed two stabbings this week inside settlements carried out by Palestinian teenagers, according to Israeli authorities. Police spokeswoman Luba Samri said initial investigations showed the teenager "had fought with her family and left her home with a knife and intending to die".

Holding a knife, she ran toward the security guard at the entrance to Anatot settlement and he opened fire at

her, Samri said. Her father arrived at the scene shortly after the incident and was arrested, she added. Eight seconds of security camera footage published on Israeli Channel Two News's website showed the armed guard running through the settlement gate and a young woman running after him with an object, possibly a knife, in her hand.

The family of the teenager, Ruqayya Abu Eid, confirmed her death. Her mother, Reeda Abu Eid, said there had been no trouble before her daughter left the family home, a tent in the Palestinian village Anata. "Her father works in a farm and Ruqayya used to go to him. I didn't see her when she left so I expected she had gone to her father," she said. "Ruqayya is a small girl, how could she stab someone?" — Reuters

UGANDA BANS MAIDS FROM SAUDI ARABIA

KAMPALA: The government of Uganda said on Friday it will stop sending housemaids to Saudi Arabia, eclipsing a deal between the two nations to ship workers to the wealthy Gulf nation amid complaints of poor conditions and mistreatment. The ban will remain until working conditions in Saudi Arabia are "deemed fitting," the Ugandan government said.

The two nations had signed a deal in July for the deployment of university graduates to work in oil-rich Saudi Arabia. It was seen as a way of addressing high unemployment rates among young people in Uganda. But the Ugandan government has gotten complaints of workers being treated inhumanely by their employers in Saudi Arabia, according to the Ministry of Gender, Labor and Social Welfare.

The ban also comes after an audio recording was widely circulated this week on social media of Ugandans in Saudi Arabia who said they were being tortured and imprisoned. According to official Ugandan figures, some 500 housemaids have shipped to the wealthy Arab nation since the deal took effect. However, an immigration official at Entebbe Airport, speaking on condition of anonymity, said about 100 Ugandans on average leave each day to seek work in Saudi Arabia. — Reuters

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FOUR KILLED IN CANADA SCHOOL SHOOTING

WINNIPEG/VANCOUVER: The gunman suspected of killing four people and injuring several others in Canada's worst school violence in a decade first shot his two brothers at home before opening fire at the remote community high school, a family friend and the town's acting mayor said on Friday. Police said a suspect was arrested after the shooting in La Loche, Saskatchewan, an impoverished community about 600 km north of the city of Saskatoon.

The town's acting mayor, Kevin Janvier, told AP that his 23-year-old daughter Marie, a teacher, was shot to death. He also said police told him that the gunman first shot two of his siblings at home and then made his way to the school. Officials have not given a motivation for the shooting or named the suspect or victims. Mass shootings are rare in Canada, which has stricter gun laws than the United States. In the country's worst school shooting, 14 college students were killed at Montreal's Ecole Polytechnique in 1989. A shooting in 1992 at Concordia University in Montreal killed four.

A family friend said the teenaged suspect shot his two younger brothers before going to the school and shooting a teacher and an assistant. "After he shot his two brothers, he walked back to school and he shot ... a teacher and a girl. They're both dead. Four of them died," said Joe Lemaigre, a family friend who lives on the outskirts of La Loche. "I know the family. Their mother worked in Fort McMurray and his grandfather went to Meadow Lake to do some shopping. That's when he shot them."

Multiple Shots

The shooting occurred in the high school and a second location, Canadian police said, adding they took the suspect into custody outside the school and seized a gun. Chief Bobby Cameron of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, which represents more than 70 of the province's Indian bands, said a few students were in surgery Friday evening in Saskatoon, the province's largest city. "Everyone is still in shock and disbelief," Cameron

said. "It's a very, very horribly tragic event."

La Loche student Noel Desjarlais told the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation that he heard multiple shots fired at the school, which has about 900 students. "I ran outside the school," Desjarlais said. "There was lots of screaming, there was about six, seven shots before I got outside. I believe there were more shots by the time I did get out." A cellphone video taken by one resident and broadcast by the CBC showed students walking away from the school across the snow-covered ground and emergency personnel moving in.

"Obviously this is every parent's worst nightmare," said Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, who initially reported five people were killed. He was in Davos, Switzerland, for the annual World Economic Forum. Among Canada's provinces, Saskatchewan had the highest rate of police-reported family violence in 2014, double the national rate of 243 incidents per 100,000 people, according to a Statistics Canada report on Thursday.

Extra doctors and nurses were sent to treat patients in Keewatin Yatthe Regional Health Authority's 16-bed hospital, said spokesman Dale West. He declined to say how many people had been injured. "It's really sad in La Loche today, very depressing," said Tenisha Lemaigre, who lives in the town of less than 3,000 people and said she knew many students. Unemployment runs above 20 percent in the area but three-quarters of working-age people are classified as retired or not looking for work, according to 2011 government figures. Residents say the real unemployment rate is above 50 percent.

In 2014, a teacher expressed concern about violence at the La Loche school, noting that a student who had tried to stab her was put back in her classroom after serving his sentence, and another attacked her at her home. "That student got 10 months," Janice Wilson told the CBC of the student who tried to stab her in class. "And when he was released he was returned to the school and was put in my classroom." — Reuters

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US CONSERVATIVES LAUNCH TRUMP BROADSIDE

WASHINGTON: US conservatives shaken by the rise of Donald Trump called on fellow Republicans Friday to reject his presidential candidacy, triggering a fiery squabble over the party's controversial frontrunner just days before the nomination contest kicks off. "Against Trump," declared the cover of the venerable National Review magazine, for decades a leading voice of the American right founded by the late commentator William F. Buckley. "Trump is a philosophically unmoored political opportunist who would trash the broad conservative ideological consensus within the GOP in favor of a free-floating populism with strong-man overtones," it said in a biting lead editorial.

The publication followed up with essays by 22 conservative figures who took turns denouncing Trump, who leads all rivals in the race for the Republican presidential nomination. Calling him "astoundingly ignorant," a "charlatan," a "glib egomaniac" and plain "crazy," the conservatives expressed revulsion at the prospect of a President Trump - and what he might do to the nation and to the Republican brand. With just over a week to go before the first presidential nominating vote in Iowa, their views also reflected the panic that Trump has set off within a Republican establishment deeply at odds with the celebrity billionaire's angry, populist message.

But the magazine's broadside nonetheless triggered an angry response from the Republican National Committee, which disinvited the National Review from being a partner of the party's candidate debate on Feb 25. "Debate partners can't have a predisposition towards or against any candidate," RNC spokesman Sean Spicer said. Review publisher Jack Fowler appeared to take the move in stride. "We expected this was coming. Small price to pay for speaking the truth about the Donald," he wrote Friday in a blog post. Former Florida governor Jeb Bush, who trails Trump considerably in the polls, warned the RNC was wrong to punish such a "cherished conservative mouthpiece" as the Review. — AFP

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GERMAN IRE OVER COLOGNE ASSAULTS TARGETS NORTH AFRICANS

DUSSELDORF: Even 73-year-old retiree Edris says he has not been spared suspicious questions from Germans after a rash of sex assaults in Cologne blamed on North Africans. "If there is a criminal Moroccan, it boomerangs back to all of us," said Edris, who moved to Germany from Morocco 47 years ago, adding that criminal Arabs are "pigs". Germany's Maghreb community has come under a harsh spotlight after hundreds of women were groped and robbed by mainly North African suspects on New Year's Eve outside the Cologne's main train station. Only one suspect-an Algerian asylum seeker-has been arrested so far over the sex crimes and 25 Moroccans and Algerians count among the 30 suspects under investigation, police said.

"Over the last three weeks, the Maghreb community has been stigmatized like the enemy," Samy Charchira, a social worker in the western city of Duesseldorf, which is also home to the biggest number of Algerians and Moroccans in Germany. "That has had serious consequences with people subject to verbal or physical attacks. It's very worrying," said Charchira, who is also a

government advisor on issues relating to Islam. Even before the full scale of the Cologne rampage emerged, Berlin had already been watching with concern at a sudden jump in the number of Moroccan and Algerian asylum seekers in December.

German authorities recorded 847 Algerian asylum seekers in June, but six months later, that figure reached 2,296. For Moroccans, the number had jumped from 368 in June to 2,896. The Cologne violence has only added impetus to the authorities' plans to bring down the numbers. Chancellor Angela Merkel wants the North African countries to be added to a list of nations of "safe origin", meaning that their nationals would have little chance of winning asylum. Berlin is also pressing Algiers and Rabat to take back their nationals who have failed to win asylum, so as to free up resources to deal with bona fide refugees among the nearly 1.1 million migrants who arrived in Germany in 2015.

'Known troublemakers'

Social workers lament that many in Germany now regard Moroccans and

Algerians as criminals in the wake of the Cologne melee, even though the majority are upstanding citizens who have lived and worked alongside other communities in peace in Germany for decades. The first North African migrants arrived in the 1960s to keep Germany's factories running or to take on the dirty and tough job of coal mining. Since the end of the 1980s, their profiles have changed, and many who have arrived are students.

Members of the North African community are quick to distance themselves from a handful of petty criminals who they say are sullying their reputation. "We are unsettled," said Mohammed Aljannai, who heads the Moroccan community association in the Cologne district of Kalk. "Many women don't trust us anymore in this district because of these people, who have acted so unconsciously that I am at a loss for words," he told Stern magazine.

Charchira said that "in Duesseldorf, it's a group of 40 to 50 young men who are known" trouble-makers giving the community a bad name. "Some are street kids in their home countries," he said, adding that "others came from Spain, Italy or



SPIJKENISSE: Dutch populist far-right Party for Freedom (PVV) leader Geert Wilders (center) distributes a color spray for women which they can use to prevent sexual assault, saying it was needed to protect Dutch women after the New Year's Eve assaults in Cologne, Germany.—AFP

France where they have resided illegally'. A 38-year-old hairdresser of Moroccan origin who declined to give his name said "these youth who have come to Germany have no future". "Our district was normal but many things have

changed now," said the man, who was born and bred in Duesseldorf. "I don't go to certain areas because I am afraid of gangs there," he said, adding that the New Year's Eve chaos has "destroyed our reputation".—AFP



Ouagadougou: A view of the Splendid Hotel, destroyed earlier this month by jihadists during an attack, in Ouagadougou.—AFP

WEST AFRICAN HOTELS HEIGHTEN SECURITY AFTER BURKINA ATTACK

RECENT ATTACKS EXPOSE THREAT TO TRAVELERS

DAKAR: West African hotels from Dakar to N'Djamena are strengthening security, adding armed guards and increasing cooperation with local authorities as a pair of high-profile attacks have exposed a growing Islamist threat to foreign travelers. Al-Qaeda fighters killed 30 people on Friday at a hotel and restaurant in Ouagadougou, the capital of Burkina Faso. The assault, the country's first militant attack on such a scale, came just two months after Islamist militants killed 20 people at a Radisson hotel in Mali's capital Bamako.

In both instances the attacks targeted establishments popular with Westerners, dozens of whom were taken hostage. Witnesses to the Ouagadougou attack spoke of gunmen singling out white foreigners for execution. High-end hotels in major cities across the region have been quick to react in the wake of the violence, which diplomats and analysts warn likely marks a new strategy by al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb and its allies.

Abidjan and Dakar, the largest cities in Ivory Coast and Dakar, are viewed as particularly attractive to Islamist militants due to their large Western expatriate populations and steady flow of tourists and business travelers. "If you strike the capital, you are seen to be striking harder and the threat is there for other cities like Dakar and Abidjan," Cynthia Ohayon, West Africa analyst at International Crisis Group, said by phone from Ouagadougou. But diplomats said they had no information on specific threats in either city.

At the Sofitel Hotel Ivoire, one of Ivory Coast's most luxurious hotels, uniformed police officers were posted around the grounds. The use of metal detectors and body searches was being ramped up. Guard dogs were used to help patrol the lobby. The 358-room luxury hotel is regularly fully booked as Ivory Coast's booming economy draws investors and business people from around the world. It also plays host to large international meetings at its adjoining conference centre. "Since the beginning of the week, the security measures have been reinforced," said Alfred Kouassi, a hotel employee working in the lobby. "The police often come to speak to us with us."

In Senegal, gendarmes have been deployed at roundabouts and on major streets in neighborhoods popular with Westerners. Dakar's Radisson Blu, the sister hotel of the establishment attacked in Bamako in November, installed additional cameras inside and outside, ordered vehicle barriers and had increased security personnel well before the Ouagadougou attacks. "Of course, there is always a risk, but I can assure you that we have in place all the precautions to control the building in the most professional way," said Jorgen Jorgensen, the hotel's general manager. In Chad's capital N'Djamena, which was hit by deadly attacks by Islamists in June and July, the government has called upon hotels to carry out car and body searches as well as

increase their collaboration with local authorities.

Tourism threatened

While tourism to the region has long been hobbled by poor infrastructure and expensive air travel, it had recently seemed that change was in the air. Low-budget airlines have launched or expanded in the continent. West Africa had 13,500 hotel rooms in development in 2014, a third of the continent's total. Senegal - one of three countries in the region, along with Nigeria and Ghana, that had surpassed 1 million international arrivals - aims to triple tourists by 2025. Ivory Coast had the third-largest growth of visitor arrivals in Africa in 2014, according to the African Development Bank.

But suddenly the outlook looks much less rosy. Even in Senegal, long considered to be a bulwark of stability, France has urged citizens to avoid public locations including nightclubs and stadiums. At the Hotel du Phare, a budget hotel in Dakar that hosts weekly parties popular among twenty-something expatriates, bag checks and security guards for their soirees had increased and secondary doors had been closed. Penelope Theodosios, who manages the hotel along with her husband, said she had a guard stationed outside at night, but added that she was walking a fine line between making her guests feel safe and frightening them. "We only have nine rooms ... A guardian inside the hotel would cause more fear than reassurance."—Reuters

UN COUNCIL, AU MEET FOR BURUNDIAN CRISIS TALKS

ADDIS ABABA: UN Security Council ambassadors and African Union leaders met yesterday for crisis talks on Burundi, after the government refused a proposed AU force to stem violence in the troubled country. The meeting, in the AU headquarters in Ethiopia, comes a day after the UN envoys met with President Pierre Nkurunziza in Burundi, where they appealed for him to take urgent action to stop the violence sparked by his re-election.

UN council envoys have pushed for the government to hold talks with the opposition and agree to the presence of international troops-such as a proposed 5,000-strong African Union force-to restore stability. AU Peace and Security Council chief Smail Chergui said yesterday it was crucial the international community "remain united on Burundi", which has been gripped by violence since April.

Chergui said there was a "strong convergence of views" among AU and UN envoys on the "urgent need for inclusive political dialogue" to resolve the crisis. Street protests, a failed coup and now a simmering rebellion began when Nkurunziza announced his intention to run for a controversial third term, which he went on to win in July elections. United States Ambassador Samantha Power, speaking after meeting Nkurunziza late on Friday, said the envoys "didn't achieve as much, frankly, as I think we would have liked". "There is a 'cri de coeur' from many, many people in Burundi for outside help and for urgent, urgent mediation to get a solution," Power added.

More than 400 people have died since then and at least 230,000 have fled the country, but Burundi's government insists there is no need for foreign troops and has branded AU peace-

keepers an "invasion force". Nkurunziza took a hard line during the meeting at his hilltop residence in Gitega, some two hours outside of Bujumbura, where he rejected calls for inclusive dialogue, renewed mediation efforts and an international intervention force. "I can guarantee that there will not be a genocide in Burundi," Nkurunziza said, adding that Burundi is "99 percent secure". Nkurunziza's refusal to compromise has raised the prospect of tougher measures ahead to stop almost nightly outbreaks of violence.

'Stop this bloodletting'

The proposed force is expected to be a key element of talks at an AU summit in Ethiopia on January 30-31. It was the second time the UN ambassadors have travelled to the Burundi in less than a year, amid fears of the risk of renewed civil war. Burundi is still recovering from its ethnically-charged 13-year civil war between majority Hutus and minority Tutsis, which cost an estimated 300,000 lives. On Thursday, two former Burundian presidents appealed to the council ambassadors to take action and pleaded for an AU force to be sent. "We really need that force," said Domitien Ndayizeye, who led the landlocked nation from 2003-2005. Jean-Baptiste Bagaza, in power from 1976 to 1987, urged the council envoys to "stop this bloodletting that is making our young people disappear". Bagaza warned that without urgent international action, Burundi could "become another Rwanda", referring to the neighboring country's 1994 genocide. UN envoys wrap up their visit later.—AFP

AUSTRIA GIVES GREECE SCHENGEN WARNING

BERLIN: Greece faced fresh pressure yesterday on its handling of the migrant crisis after Austrian Interior Minister Johanna Mikl-Leitner warned that Athens faced "temporary exclusion" from the EU's passport-free Schengen zone. In midweek, Greece's top migration official slammed a report in the Financial Times alleging several European ministers and senior EU officials believe threatening suspension from Schengen could persuade Greece to protect its borders more effectively.

Junior interior minister for migration Yiannis Mouzalas said the report contained "falsehoods and distortions" but Mikl-Leitner said temporary exclusion was a real possibility. "If the Athens government does not finally do more to secure the (EU's) external borders then one must openly discuss Greece's temporary exclusion from the Schengen zone," Mikl-Leitner said in an interview with German daily Die Welt. "It is a myth that the Greco-Turkish border cannot be controlled," Mikl-Leitner insisted.

"When a Schengen signatory does not permanently fulfill its obligations and only hesitatingly accepts aid then we should not rule out that possibility," she added. "The patience of many Europeans has reached its limit ... We have talked a lot, now we must act. It is about protecting

stability, order and security in Europe," she insisted.

International Monetary Fund chief Christine Lagarde added her voice to Schengen concerns when she said the refugee crisis had pushed Europe to a "make or break" point. "The refugee crisis is a bit of a make or break, from my personal perspective," Lagarde said at the World Economic Forum in the Swiss ski resort of Davos. Asked if it endangered Schengen, she said: "Yes, I think so." Cash-strapped Greece has for months come in for criticism from its EU partners on its attempts to manage the largest flow of migrants in decades as hundreds of thousands flee war and repression.

Many of the migrants have reached Greek islands from nearby Turkey after perilous sea voyages before streaming further north, with many targeting a new life in Germany, Europe's economic powerhouse. The EU last month ruled out excluding Greece from Schengen, with Luxembourg's Minister of Immigration Jean Asselborn observing that "it is not legally possible to exclude a state from the Schengen zone." But the issue came to the fore once again with Wednesday's FT report. But a spokesman for Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras denied the EU made any threat to that effect.—AFP

NEW EUROPE POLICE CENTRE 'WILL HELP ANTI-TERROR COORDINATION'

DAVOS: A new European counter-terrorism centre opening this month will improve information-sharing among national police forces whose performance is under scrutiny after the jihadist attacks in Paris in November, the director of Europol has said. "It establishes for the first time in Europe a dedicated operation centre," Britain's Rob Wainwright said in an interview at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, on Friday.

"It will provide French and Belgian police services and their counterparts around Europe with the platform they need to share information more quickly and to crack down on the terrorist groups that are active." Although the creation of the centre was announced seven months before the Paris attacks, the coordinated shootings and suicide bombings in the French capital by a team mainly based in neighboring Belgium have given the 28-country project new impetus.

"We will be working to improve intelligence sharing and to maximize our capability to track terrorist financing," Wainwright said. The centre at Europol's headquarters in the Hague will also monitor the way in which Islamic State (IS) and other extremist groups "are abusing the Internet and social media, in particular for their propaganda and recruitment purposes," he added. French investigators believe the attacks that killed 130 in Paris were planned by a Belgian national, Abdelhamid Abaaoud, who was widely thought to have been in Syria fighting with IS forces.

The apparent ease in which Abaaoud slipped back into Europe and moved around the continent has thrown into

question the intelligence-sharing capabilities of EU police forces. Wainwright said the attacks had already acted as a catalyst. "In the context of what happened after the attacks in Paris, France and Belgium have established an extremely close working relationship involving Europol," he said. "What I have seen over the last few years but particularly in the last year, in the face of the worst terrorist attacks we have seen in Europe for over a decade, is intensified cooperation."

'Significant growth in fake ID'

Wainwright said he was deeply concerned about the "significant growth" in the faking of ID documents for use by extremists. Investigators believe at least two of the Paris suicide bombers entered Europe through Greece, posing as migrants and using Syrian passports that were not theirs. Their true identity remains unknown. The Europol chief said national police forces needed to have better access to a database compiled by its international counterpart, Interpol, of stolen and fake documents. "There are many criminal actors that have become more active, more sophisticated and also the quality of the faked documents they are providing (has improved), and they responded to the opportunities that the migration crisis in 2015 gave us," he said. "So we need to make sure that our border guard officials are alive to that threat, that they are better trained, of course, and to make sure that there is access to the right databases, including the dedicated database that Interpol has on lost and stolen documents."—AFP



DAVOS: The Alpine resort of Davos is seen under snow during the World Economic Forum annual meeting yesterday.—AFP



MIDDLETOWN: Buildings at St George's School rest on top of a hill in Middletown, RI. The exclusive New England boarding school, whose alumni include Astors, Vanderbilts and Bushes, has been rocked by a sex abuse scandal. —AP

SEX ABUSE SCANDAL ROCKS EXCLUSIVE US PREP SCHOOL

DOZENS OF FORMER STUDENTS 'RAPED OR MOLESTED'

MIDDLETOWN: For more than a century, St George's School has been part of the pedigree of some of America's richest and most influential families. Astors, Vanderbilts and Bushes have attended the exclusive boarding school, where students can go sailing, play on world-class squash courts or simply enjoy a sweeping view of the sea from the hill-top campus. But since at least the 1970s, leaders at St George's kept a secret. Dozens of former students have come forward to say they were raped or molested by employees and schoolmates over the past four decades.

St George's acknowledged in a report it issued shortly before Christmas that it repeatedly failed to notify police and child welfare authorities as required by law. The school's current leadership has characterized the abuse as a problem of the past and said it discovered the extent of the misconduct only recently. But many accusers have disputed that, and much of their anger has fallen on Eric Peterson, headmaster since 2004. Peterson was told in 2004, 2006, 2011, 2012 and 2015 about numerous allegations of abuse, according to interviews with alumni and documents obtained by The Associated Press.

Arrogant exceptionalism

Many alumni are calling on Peterson to step down. Some want the entire board swept clean. "It's like a charade of arrogant exceptionalism that is endemic in the school, in the leadership of the school," said Hawk Cramer, an alumnus who says he was molested by the choir director in the 1980s and told Peterson about it in 2004. Some alumni have charged that the school's leaders hushed up the abuse to protect the reputation of St George's, which was founded in 1896 and counts among its graduates the poet Ogden Nash, the late Sen Claiborne Pell and Fox News commentator Tucker Carlson. The \$56,000-a-year Episcopal institution just outside Newport has about 400 high school-age students and a rich endowment of more than \$140 million.

A spokeswoman for both the school and Peterson declined to comment on specific allegations, citing an independent investigation underway. St George's previously issued a statement apologizing

"for the harm done to alumni by former employees and former students." "We also apologize that the way in which the school addressed these incidents has served to compound this harm," the statement said. Separately, Rhode Island state police are looking into possible sex-crime charges and other offenses, including failure to report abuse. There is no statute of limitations on rape in Rhode Island.

In-house report

The problems at St George's burst into view in mid-December, about a week before the in-house report was issued, when The Boston Globe reported the story of Anne Scott, who said she was repeatedly raped by athletic

trainer Al Gibbs as a 15-year-old in the 1970s. She sued the school as "Jane Doe" in 1988. St George's tried and failed to reveal her identity publicly and aggressively fought the case, even though her lawyer, Eric MacLeish, says evidence emerged during the lawsuit that Gibbs had assaulted four other girls. Scott dropped the case the following year, receiving nothing, and agreed to a gag order preventing her from speaking about it.

More such allegations quietly piled up in the years that followed. It was not until last spring that St George's sent a letter informing the entire school community about possible sexual misconduct "many years ago" and asking graduates to report anything they knew. In November, the school reported allegations of abuse to the Rhode Island state police for the first time. MacLeish, a St George's alumnus and a lead lawyer in the Boston Catholic Church sex abuse lawsuits, said he is aware of at least 40 people who say they were abused at the school and 12 alleged abusers, either employees or students. The most recent misconduct alleged dates to 2004. The school did take some action over the years, firing or forcing out three teachers in the 1970s and '80s, according to its December report. They were: Gibbs, who was fired in 1980 and died in 1996. The school acknowledged he raped or

molestation and other inappropriate behavior. The school said it did not notify child welfare authorities on the advice of its legal counsel. MacLeish said he has now spoken to six of Coleman's alleged victims. Coleman did not return messages seeking comment.

Neither White nor Coleman has ever been charged. Both went on to other schools around the US before retiring several years ago. One graduate said he was molested by Coleman in 1987 during an overnight trip to Boston. The man told the AP that he reported it to the school the following year, after he learned Coleman had asked another boy to sleep in his bed during a choir tour of England. The man said he spoke with Peterson's predecessor as headmaster, Charles Hamblet, and met with Peterson in 2006 to discuss the abuse. Both Hamblet and Peterson offered to pay for therapy, which he accepted, he said.

"This offer is an attempt to right a wrong," Peterson wrote to the man in a 2006 letter obtained by the AP. He added that the school's willingness to pay for therapy was "in no way an admission of responsibility." Dan Brewster, a 1974 graduate, went on to serve on the board of trustees in the early 1990s. He said that then-headmaster Hamblet and Howard Dean, a former board chairman and father of the 2004 Democratic presidential candidate, told him that in some past cases of teachers accused of abuse, the school would quietly let the educator go with a lump-sum payment, a nondisclosure clause and an agreement barring the faculty member from taking a job at another boarding school.

Brewster said that when he asked why the school didn't notify parents and the authorities, the two men replied that teenagers might be dragged in to testify and that their parents might also bring an "avalanche of lawsuits" against the school. Hamblet and Dean are now dead. "I do believe they were honestly wrestling and did care about an obviously difficult issue. I also felt they came to the wrong conclusion," Brewster said. "It was because the prestige and the fundraising capacity of the school was more important than any one kid." —AP



MIDDLETOWN: A sign rests at an entrance to St George's School in Middletown, RI. —AP

THE BATTLE OVER ITALY GAY CIVIL UNIONS HEADS FOR THE STREETS

ROME: Italy's battle over legalizing same-sex civil unions is about to get heated, with supporters and opponents ready to take to the streets as lawmakers address the deeply divisive issue. Italy is the only major Western European country not to have enacted legislation allowing gay couples to have their relationships legally recognized and protected. A bill, which the Senate will start examining on Thursday, is the first to get to parliament.

The draft legislation will enable same-sex couples to commit themselves to one another before a state official, to take each other's names and, in certain circumstances, adopt each other's children and inherit each other's residual pension rights. "It is the bare minimum," said Marilena Grassadonia, chair of the Rainbow Families (Famiglie Arcobaleno) group. Gabriele Piazzoni, the national secretary of Italy's biggest gay rights group, Arcigay, calls it a first step towards Italy catching up with its neighbours and ending a situation "that does our country no credit whatsoever".

Under the slogan "Wake Up Italy! It is time to be civil", supporters of the reform are due to hold demonstrations in 90 towns and cities across the country on Saturday. "We are not trying to make a big impression, it is more about going out and meeting people," Grassadonia said. Opponents of the bill, in contrast, are planning a show of strength at a demonstration scheduled for January 30 in Rome's Circus Maximus. Hundreds of thousands are expected to attend the self-styled "Family Day," organized by mainly Catholic

groups under the battle cry of "Defend our Children".

Massimo Gandolfini, the neurosurgeon who is coordinating the planned rally, says the proposed law will undermine marriage. "It is unacceptable to think of our children, our grandchildren, being taught that there are different models of families," he said. In Gandolfini's view, Italy cannot afford to extend the pension inheritance rights currently enjoyed by the married to gay couples who sign civil unions "when we have 1.4 million families living under the poverty threshold".

'Grave and irresponsible'

Above all it is the draft legislation's provision on adoption which provokes the ire of its opponents with the Catholic Church unwilling to accept the principle that, in the eyes of the law, a child can have two fathers or two mothers. Angelo Bagnasco, the chair of the Italian conference of bishops, has denounced the whole debate as a "grave and irresponsible distraction from the real problems of the country".

In the world of politics, dividing lines cut across party loyalties. A minority faction within the ruling Democratic Party supports junior coalition partner the New Centre Right (NCD) in opposing a reform championed by Prime Minister Matteo Renzi. Renzi, who has allowed his allies a free vote on the "issue of conscience", can however count on backing from most of the opposition Five Star movement, left-wing fringe parties and even sections of Silvio Berlusconi's Forza Italia. —AFP



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CHINA HIT BY EYE-WATERING COLD SNAP



BEIJING: A group of visitors take a photo of themselves in Tiananmen Square in Beijing, yesterday. According to state media, temperatures in Beijing are expected to hit a 30-year low of -17 C (1 F) as an unusually strong cold snap has brought plummeting temperatures and snow to parts of China. —AP

BEIJING: Much of China shivered yesterday as a teeth-chattering cold snap broke decades-old records and snow fell in some parts for the first time in years, cancelling flights and forcing many indoors. An orange alert was issued across the country as forecasts predicted eye-watering lows of -41 Celsius (-42 Fahrenheit) in some parts, the National Meteorological Center (NMC) said.

Orange is the second most severe cold weather warning on China's four-tier scale, and forecasters said 30-year records were on course to be shattered in several parts of the country over the weekend, with two-thirds of the country facing temperatures below -12 C. The north braced for the worst, with the temperatures predicted to plummet

to -41 C in Genhe in Inner Mongolia. Neighboring Mohe in Heilongjiang province didn't fare much better with the mercury expected to dip to -39 C.

The NMC said temperatures would not peak above the freezing mark in most parts of the country, with the exception of a few spots in the south, and state-run CCTV television urged people to stay inside to avoid the frigid weather. More than 100 flights were cancelled and nearly 200 delayed in the southeast metropolis of Chongqing as snow blanketed the city for the first time in 20 years, airport authorities said. Snow dumped down in several other regions where the white stuff is scarcely seen, according to CCTV citing weather officials.

Bright sunshine bathed the capital Beijing where skies were clear blue, but the bright conditions brought little respite as thermometers dipped to -17 C in the morning. In the mountainous areas on the outskirts of the city, temperatures plummeted to an eye-watering -29.8 C. Even the normally tropical beaches on the southern island of Hainan were not spared, with temperatures clocking in at a cool 13 C, according to state-run CRI radio. Yesterday afternoon the temperature had dropped to 6 C in the island province's capital Haikou, 13 degrees below the seasonal average according to CRI. Conditions are expected to return to slightly warmer seasonal norms from Tuesday in the north and by the end of next week in the south, CCTV said. —AFP

WARRING FACTIONS IN SOUTH SUDAN MISS KEY DEADLINE

REBELS REJECT NEW STATES

NAIROBI: Warring rivals in South Sudan missed a key deadline yesterday to forge a unity government, with rebels rejecting President Salva Kiir's creation of new regional states as fighting continues. The rivals were supposed to form a government by January 22, but rebels say Kiir's near tripling of the number of regional states in December undermines a fundamental pillar of an August power-sharing deal to end two years of civil war. Rebel spokesman Mabior Garang criticized "anti-peace hardliners within the government" and said they would base negotiations on the old system of 10 states and not the current 28. Garang however said rebels are "fully committed to peace and shall not entertain a return to war."

Key international backers—the so-called Troika, made up of key donors Britain, Norway and United States, as well as the European Union this week said the talks were "deadlocked". Amid mounting frustration, they cut payment of hotel bills for rebel

delegates in Juba. During previous peace talks mostly held in Ethiopia, delegates have run up vast hotel and bar bills as they agreed and then swiftly broke a string of ceasefire deals. Civil war began in December 2013 when Kiir accused his former deputy Riek Machar of planning a coup, setting off a cycle of retaliatory killings that have split the poverty-stricken country along ethnic lines.

UN lists horrific abuses

Despite the August agreement fighting continues, with the conflict now involving multiple militia forces who pay little heed to paper peace deals and are driven by local agendas or revenge attacks. Heavy fighting was reported this week in the southwestern Western Equatoria region, including street battles in the state capital of Yambio on Thursday, close to the border with Democratic Republic of Congo, aid workers said. The clashes were between soldiers and a local

militia known as the Arrow Boys, reportedly aligned with Machar's rebels. United Nations rights monitors this week added more details to a long list of horrific abuses in the more than two-year war. The report detailed "gross violations" of human rights including "gang-rape, sexual slavery and forced abortion", in a joint report by the UN peacekeeping mission, UNMISS, and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

Earlier this week the United Nations said over 200,000 South Sudanese civilians are sheltering inside peacekeepers' camps from civil war, a bleak barometer of ongoing conflict. To add to its woes, South Sudan's economy is in ruins. Its government budget depends almost entirely on oil revenues, but it is currently effectively paying to export its oil, due to falling world prices, combined with a fixed fee for the use of export pipelines to neighbor Sudan. The pipeline fee is now more than that earned for the oil itself. —AFP



OHIO: Small American flags have been placed in the trees in front of the Warmbier family home, in Wyoming, Ohio. North Korea on Friday announced the arrest of Otto Warmbier, a university student from Ohio, for what it called a 'hostile act' orchestrated by the American government to undermine the authoritarian nation. —AP

AMERICAN STUDENT DETAINED IN N KOREA 'OVER HOTEL INCIDENT'

SEOUL: Otto Warmbier, the American university student being held by North Korea, was detained before boarding his flight to China over an unspecified incident that had taken place earlier in the trip at his hotel, his travel company said yesterday. North Korea's official KCNA news agency said on Friday that Warmbier "was caught committing a hostile act against the state", which it said was "tolerated and manipulated by the US government".

Charlotte Guttridge, a tour leader at Young Pioneer Tours and the only outside witness to Warmbier's detention, said the 21-year-old University of Virginia student was not with other tourists when the events that appear to have prompted his arrest occurred. "What happened, happened at the hotel and my belief is that Otto kept it to himself out of hope it might go unnoticed," Guttridge said. Guttridge and colleagues at Young Pioneer Tours declined to share further details of exactly what had taken place, citing the safety of their client.

Warmbier had been staying at the Yanggakdo International Hotel when the incident that led to his arrest occurred. The Yanggakdo is a towering structure on an island in the middle of the Taedong river, which cuts through central Pyongyang. China-based Young Pioneer Tours is a North Korea travel specialist that describes itself on its website as "an adventure tour operator that provides budget tours to destinations your mother would rather you stayed away from".

During his five-day New Year's tour of North Korea, staff at Young Pioneer Tours said Warmbier had acted normally, and was seen to see daily life in one of the world's most isolated countries, which is visited by around 6,000 Western tourists a year. Ten other US citizens were on the tour. "Throughout the trip, Otto behaved as a typical tourist - taking pictures, enjoying himself. We had no indication that anything untoward had happened until the airport," Guttridge said.

Delayed at immigration

When Warmbier's group reached the airport, he appeared to have been purposefully delayed at immigration, Troy Collings, director of Young Pioneer Tours

said. As the tourists checked-in at the gleaming, recently-renovated terminal, Warmbier was taken aside by two airport officials and escorted into a small immigration room behind a wooden door to one side of the check-in area. "He was not dragged away and he wasn't yelled at," Guttridge said.

As Guttridge waited for Warmbier to come out of the room, she instructed the rest of her tour group to board the North Korean Air Koryo flight bound for Beijing. "When it became clear that he wasn't coming, I had to board the flight before it departed," said Guttridge, who still had colleagues in Pyongyang with another group of tourists. "I was the last to board the flight." As the Russian-made Tupolev airliner prepared to leave the terminal, an airport official boarded the plane and told Guttridge that Warmbier had been "taken to hospital".

Soon after, a North Korean contact passed on a message concerning Warmbier's detention to Young Pioneer Tours founder Gareth Johnson, who was in Pyongyang with a separate group due to catch a train to the Chinese border. "I stayed back when I heard Otto had been detained," Johnson told Reuters. "It was an automatic response. I wanted to try and work out what the situation was and it was my hope that I would at least be able to speak with him." Johnson said his company was in contact with Warmbier's family, US officials and the Swedish Embassy in Pyongyang, which represents US interests in North Korea.

Staff at the tour operator said as far as they knew Warmbier had not been in possession of any religious or political literature. Foreign visitors have been detained in the past for attempting to distribute religious literature in the country. The US and Canadian governments advise against travel there. The US State Department, in a statement, said it was aware of reports that a US citizen had been detained in North Korea but gave no further details, citing privacy concerns. Calls to the Warmbier family home in Cincinnati, Ohio, were not immediately answered on Friday and nobody answered when a Reuters reporter knocked on the door of the house. —Reuters

AUSCHWITZ SURVIVOR TRIUMPHS IN SELL-OUT DANCE DUET AT AGE 90

BUDAPEST: "It's never too late," smiles Eva Fahidi, a Hungarian Holocaust survivor who, at the age of 90, is currently starring in a sold-out duet production with a much younger dancer. "First I felt only my limits, what I can't do," the handsome white-haired Fahidi said during a rehearsal in a Budapest studio. "Then

designated Holocaust memorial day marking the 1945 liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, the largest of the Nazi death camps.

The 100-minute long performance, which incorporates both dance and speech, looks at how an elderly woman with a traumatic past and a younger person communicate with

'Gesture of death'

Fahidi was an 18-year-old schoolgirl when she was put on a train and deported from Debrecen in eastern Hungary to Auschwitz-one of nearly 440,000 Hungarian Jews sent to death camps between May and July in 1944. Some 49 of her relatives perished in the Holocaust, including

camp's liberation, it took Fahidi nearly six decades before she was ready to open up about her trauma. A 2003 visit to the camp exactly 59 years after her first journey there prompted her to write her memoir. "It dawned on me that this was my vocation, to tell as many people as I could about Auschwitz, it's the least I can do," she said. Her book—"The Soul of Things"—was published in German in 2004 and later translated by Fahidi into Hungarian. English and Finnish editions are also planned.

Audience moved to tears

These days, dance is Fahidi's chosen tool of expression. "Gestures and movements can be freer than words and say more about a person," she said, in reference to her duet with 36-year-old dancer Emese Cuhorka. Even her own grandchild who had previously balked at reading or hearing about the Holocaust was "amazed" by the show, Fahidi adds. One of the most powerful moments occurs when Cuhorka lifts Fahidi like a baby, according to the show's director. "People often cry when watching that scene, although it has nothing to do directly with the Holocaust," Szabo noted.

The show's name, she explains, was inspired by a plant able to grow in poor soil, a symbol of Fahidi's tough life. Last April, Fahidi came once again face to face with her past when she appeared as a plaintiff at the closely covered trial of Oskar Groening, known as the "Bookkeeper of Auschwitz". Groening was sentenced to four years in jail as an accessory to murder in 300,000 cases. The pain does not fade but you learn to live with it, Fahidi says. "Not a day goes past when I don't think of Auschwitz," she observed. "But I discovered that hatred is just a burden. What happened, but I am still alive—a happy person who enjoys living." —AFP



BUDAPEST: Hungarian Holocaust survivor of Auschwitz-Birkenau extermination camp, Eva Fahidi, 90, performs on stage at the Vigszhaz theater in Budapest. —AFP

slowly, as I learned to warm up, it was wonderful how my old body wanted to do something again," she added, after gracefully completing a stretch on the floor. Her show, called "Sea Lavender or The Euphoria of Being", has played to full houses eight times in Budapest's prestigious Vigszhaz Theatre since its October launch.

It now premieres in Berlin on January 24, three days before a UN-

each other. Director Reka Szabo said she got the idea for the show last year when she heard Fahidi speak at a presentation of her memoir. "She talks about her life and the Holocaust in a way that makes you feel like she is not a victim but a human being trying to deal with her past, to be able to live a full life," said Szabo who runs the Symptoms dance-theatre company.

her parents and 11-year-old sister. She last saw her mother and younger sibling on a sorting ramp after arriving at Birkenau. Fahidi recalls how one insignificant gesture decided their fate.

"A small movement of the finger from (camp doctor) Josef Mengele meant life or death, whether you go right to work or left to the gas chambers. I went right," she said. After the

parents of the dead child attacked her and her boyfriend Te Lu, also 34, with a butcher's knife.

Te, who was a co-defendant in the macabre case, was acquitted. In his closing arguments, Julien Eyraud had told the court: "When I learned of this case I was overcome by the horror of what happened, imagining the smell of blood, this butchery in the bathroom, this violence." As the trial opened on Tuesday, Hui confessed to the killing, saying: "It's true, I killed them, and I will regret it for the rest

of my life." She and Te had decided to offer the child's parents money to try to get them not to report the boy's death.

Electric saw

They invited the parents to their home, but said their plans quickly went awry faced with the fury of the grieving couple. Te testified Tuesday that he fell unconscious during the fight and remained so while Hui chopped up the two bodies in the bathroom with an electric saw, using

the washing machine to cover the noise. "I was sucked into a whirlwind of nightmares but I am innocent," Te told the court. Hui then wrapped the body parts in rubbish bags and scrubbed her apartment clean. Te later helped her get rid of the remains, transporting them "by foot or public transport" to the forest of Vincennes east of Paris, a policeman said.

Eyraud cast doubt on Hui's claim of self-defense and said there was no proof Te had taken part in the murders. The case first came to light in

June 2012 after two joggers came upon a leg, cut off at the ankle, in Vincennes forest. Several days later, a guide dog found a human torso in the same area, but the hunt for further remains was fruitless. Before the bodies could be identified, Hui and Te turned themselves in. They then directed police to the locations of more body parts around the forest. However, they did not find the baby's body, which Hui said she had thrown in rubbish bins along with some of the other remains. —AFP

CHINESE NANNY GETS 20 YEARS FOR CHOPPING UP EMPLOYERS

PARIS: A Paris court on Friday handed a 20-year jail term to a Chinese nanny for murdering and chopping up her employers after their two-month-old baby died in her care. The woman, 34-year-old Hui Zhang, had admitted killing the couple, Ying Wang and Liangsi Xui, during a violent row at her home after they learned the little boy had died. The judge followed the prosecutor's recommendation of 20 years behind bars for Hui, who had claimed she acted in self-defense as the furious



An Iranian student of a climbing school uses ice-axes to scale a frozen waterfall on Friday in the village of Meygoon, 60 km northeast of the capital Tehran in the Alborz mountain range. — AFP

KERRY REASSURES GULF ALLIES

Continued from Page 1

Kerry has long sought to calm concerns among his Gulf allies about the overtures to Iran, the world's leading Shiite power whose relations with Sunni rival Saudi Arabia have worsened this month. Saudi Arabia and some of its allies cut diplomatic ties with Iran after protesters there burned Riyadh's embassy in Tehran and a consulate in Mashhad city.

The violence broke out after the kingdom executed dissident Saudi Shiite cleric Nimr Al-Nimr, a driving force behind anti-government protests. Nimr was one of four Shiites put to death on Jan 2 alongside 43 Sunnis. All were convicted of "terrorism". Jubeir told reporters that he did not see a "coming together" of the US and Iran. "Overall I think the United States is very aware of the danger of Iran's mischief and nefarious activities... I don't believe the United States is under any illusion as to what type of government Iran is," Jubeir added, while Kerry appeared defensive and less at ease than usual.

A senior State Department official earlier told journalists the US understands Saudi anger over the embassy attack but that "lessening tensions is an important objective". Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei on Wednesday said violence against the Saudi embassy was wrong, and against Islam.

Kerry later met with King Salman and the monarch's son, Deputy Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, who is also the defense minister. He also held talks with Riad Hijab, Riyadh-based general coordinator of Syria's largest opposi-

tion coalition. UN-brokered peace talks are targeted for Monday in Geneva but there is disagreement, including from Moscow, over opposition representation. "We are confident that with good initiative in the next day or so those talks can get going," Kerry said.

Yesterday, he and his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov discussed by telephone the makeup of the opposition team. "Particular attention was given to the need to form a genuinely representative opposition delegation," a Russian foreign ministry statement said. Kerry told reporters the Syria Support Group will meet "very shortly" after the first round of Syria talks "because we want to keep the process moving".

The group has devised a plan for a political transition aimed at ending the nearly five-year war in Syria that has cost more than 260,000 lives and displaced millions. It includes Saudi Arabia, the United States and other countries who say President Bashar Al-Assad can have no role in Syria's future, and Assad's allies Iran and Moscow. Kerry spoke of the "urgency" of ending the conflict but said there are still "obstacles" to finding a political settlement. "We know it's tough," he said.

Saudi Arabia and Iran back opposite sides in the Syria and Yemen wars. A Saudi-led military coalition since March has been supporting local forces and the internationally recognised government of Yemen against Iran-backed Houthi Shiite rebels. "We have made it clear that we stand with our friends in Saudi Arabia" on Yemen and the threat of violent Sunni extremism, said Kerry, who travels today to Laos in Southeast Asia. — AFP

IRAN, CHINA VOW TIGHTER TIES

Continued from Page 1

Beijing is Tehran's top customer for oil exports, which in recent years were hit by US and EU sanctions over Tehran's nuclear program.

Trade between the two countries was worth \$52 billion in 2014. They did not elaborate on their goal of developing relations worth \$600 billion over the next decade. According to Iranian media, more than a third of Iran's foreign trade is with China. The two presidents issued a joint statement outlining a long-term "comprehensive strategic partnership". The two countries agreed to enhance cooperation including in fossil and renewable energy, transportation, railways, ports, industry, commerce and services, said the statement published by Mehr news agency.

In the statement Iran welcomed China's commercial "belt" and the "21st century Silk Seaway" projects, pledging to help the initiative. China has committed to "invest and finance upstream and downstream energy projects in Iran", it said. China "acknowledges Iran's constructive role in the fight against terrorism and maintaining peace and stability in the region", it added, while supporting Tehran's increased regional and international role.

China, along with the United States, Britain, France, Germany and Russia, was among the countries that agreed with Iran in July to curtail its nuclear activities in exchange for ending international sanctions. Xi was accompanied by three deputy premiers, six ministers

and a large business delegation. Late yesterday, he met supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who said Tehran "would never forget" Beijing's cooperation during the years of international sanctions against Iran.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran has always sought relations with reliable and independent states like China," Khamenei's website quoted him as saying. That is why the agreement on long-term strategic relations is "very wise and prompt", and must be "seriously followed up" until it becomes operational, he said. "Westerners have never been able to gain the trust of the Iranian nation," he added.

Xi was quoted as saying that "the economies of Iran and China complete one another". Countries on the Silk Road route can "protect their interests against the American pattern of disrupting the regional economic balance by boosting cooperation," Xi added. "Some superpowers seek the rule of monopoly... but the development of emerging economies has taken the power of monopoly from them." Xi's tour, his first of the Middle East as China's president, has also taken him to Saudi Arabia and Egypt.

Riyadh and a number of its Sunni Arab allies broke diplomatic ties with Tehran this month after protesters angered by the execution of a prominent Shiite cleric ransacked Saudi diplomatic missions in Iran. In Cairo, Xi offered \$55 billion in loans and investments to the Middle East, a region where China wants to strengthen its economic presence. — AFP



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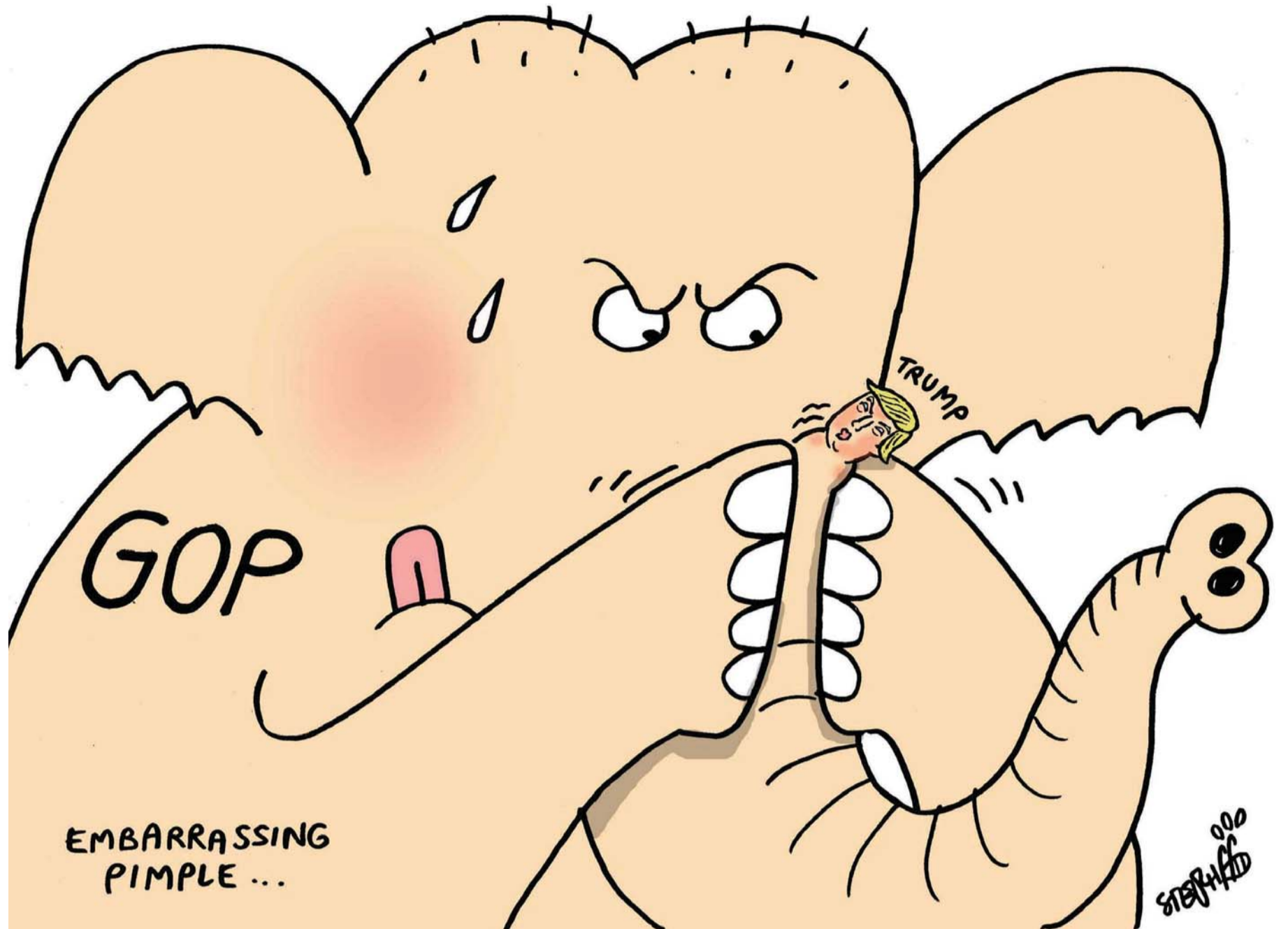
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Focus

POLAND CLOUDS
NATO'S NUANCED
RUSSIA PLAN

By Robin Emmott and Wiktor Szary

Poland is putting its own spin on a nuanced NATO plan to deter Moscow in eastern Europe without stationing permanent troops on Russia's borders, prompting disquiet from allies including Britain, which needs Warsaw's help in EU reform negotiations. Poland's defence minister on Thursday seized on Britain's announcement that it is sending troops for exercises in the country, telling local radio that London would station 1,000 military personnel in Poland from next year.

Britain's defence ministry declined to comment, but alliance diplomats say there are no such plans. Britain is providing nearly 1,000 troops for two NATO exercises later this year, as well as 1,000 personnel in four years' time, when Poland will lead the new NATO rapid-reaction spearhead force. But the subtlety of the language used to promote the new NATO deterrent policy in the east is an opportunity for Poland's new conservative government. Warsaw, which is hosting the NATO summit in July, has called for a permanent NATO troop presence in the past and the new government has intensified those demands.

NATO's current compromise aims to have a "persistent" - rather than "permanent" - military in the east, based on a new network of eight small NATO outposts, more war games, and, if needed, a rapid response force, including air, maritime and special operations components of up to 40,000 personnel. "Some people say 'permanent', others use 'persistent', other people use 'rotation'. In fact we are talking about the same thing," General Petr Pavel, chairman of NATO's military committee, told a news conference on Thursday.

The idea is to reassure the ex-Soviet countries in NATO that they are protected from the kind of annexation Russia orchestrated in February in 2014 in Crimea, while avoiding a return to the Cold War, when the United States had some 300,000 service personnel stationed in Europe. NATO also wants to keep a 1997 promise to Moscow not to permanently station forces on the Russian border, thereby avoiding antagonizing a newly-assertive Russia and reach a peace settlement in eastern Ukraine, where NATO says Russia supports the rebels with weapons and troops.

Russia responded on Friday by saying it will form four new military divisions this year to strengthen its western and central regions because of the stepped-up exercises, which NATO set out in a calendar published on Thursday. That is exactly the kind of reaction NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg wants to avoid, saying last year that he will not be "dragged into an arms race".

Brexit Link

Publicising NATO's message is a sensitive task, because eastern and Baltic NATO allies hope that a persistent NATO military presence in the east may one day become permanent, whereas NATO wants to avoid giving that impression. Poland and the Baltic states prepared a joint position in May last year to lobby NATO for the permanent stationing of a brigade. All three former Soviet republics have Russian minorities and fear Kremlin moves to inflame tensions there after the pro-Russian insurrection in eastern Ukraine.

Polish President Andrzej Duda said last week at NATO he wanted any NATO troop presence to be "permanent to the greatest extent possible". NATO allies such as Germany and Britain are against stationing forces permanently in the east. But Britain is also wary of publicly criticizing the Polish government as London seeks its support in negotiations aimed at keeping Britain in the European Union ahead of a referendum on "Brexit" expected in June.

Poland is understood to be open to compromise over British demands to limit the rights of EU migrants if London helps build up NATO's presence in central Europe. NATO's main focus is on a 5,000-strong "spearhead" force, part of which can move within 48 hours. But Poland's Foreign Minister Witold Waszczykowski said that was not enough. "A few years ago, it was assumed that (the eastern flank's security) could be guaranteed through a support mechanism, a spearhead," he said on Thursday at a joint news conference with German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier in Warsaw. "Today, this position is evolving and is starting to head in the direction of security guarantees being fulfilled through ... a presence of allied troops." —Reuters

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Washington Watch

IOWA WILL BE IMPORTANT

By Dr James J Zogby

For both Democrats and Republicans, this year's presidential contest is another "Armageddon election", the outcome of which will decide critically important domestic and foreign policy concerns. Despite its significance, we are just days away from the "first in the nation" Iowa caucuses and the direction of this election is still very much "up in the air" and about as confusing as any in recent memory. Iowa, therefore, will be important.

On the Republican side, Donald Trump remains atop the field holding a commanding lead. The prospect of a Trump victory is panicking the party's leadership who don't trust his commitment to conservative principles and fear the damage he may do to the party's chances to win the White House and keep control of Congress.

The establishment's concerns are compounded by two key factors. They must be careful that in attacking Trump they don't alienate his supporters - since Republicans will need them to win in November. And there is no logical establishment alternative to Trump. The pretenders to that throne have all run rather lackluster campaigns and have drawn considerable blood attacking each other. A recent poll demonstrates the GOP's problem. In that poll, 20 percent of Republican voters said they will not vote for any candidate in November other than Trump, with another 20 percent saying they will not vote for Trump if he is the party's nominee - a conundrum, indeed.

Dynamics

In fact, at this point, Trump's only real competition is coming from another anti-establishment candidate, Ted Cruz. While the GOP leadership fears Trump,

they truly dislike Cruz. Iowa is important. If Trump wins Iowa and goes on to win in New Hampshire, he would be positioned to win the Republican nomination. However, if Cruz, a favorite among Evangelical Christians, wins in Iowa, it could knock Trump off his pedestal creating a very different dynamic for the contests in New Hampshire and beyond. The problems of no clear establishment favorite and what to do about Trump's supporters will remain, but it will be a very different election for the GOP.

On the Democratic side, the once inevitable Clinton candidacy has shown signs of fading in the face of a surprisingly strong challenge by Bernie Sanders. Sanders' candidacy has been powered by his authenticity and principled progressive politics. Recent polls show Sanders in a virtual tie with Clinton in Iowa and beating her rather decisively in New Hampshire.

Once again, Iowa is important. If Sanders loses Iowa, his insurgent campaign will no doubt continue, but without the same energy. If, however, Sanders wins both Iowa and New Hampshire, it will change the entire dynamic of this contest energizing his supporters while at the same time exposing Clinton's weaknesses as a candidate. It will not, however, be decisive because the Democratic party establishment has many of the same concerns about Sanders as the GOP has about Trump.

Another concern shared by many Democrats is that while they want to keep the White House and win control of the Senate, they fear the polarized partisanship that has long paralyzed Washington politics. With either Sanders or Clinton as the party standard-bearer, they are concerned that we will see only more rancorous rhetoric from the GOP and more paralysis.

Outcomes

Should Sanders win both Iowa and New Hampshire, two outcomes are possible. One is that, the Clinton-Sanders contest will get more heated and will continue until one emerges bloodied but victorious at the end of a drawn out fight. Another possibility is that Joe Biden may be pressed to reconsider his decision to enter the race. While Biden has, in fact, missed the filing dates to compete in a number of states, there are enough major states (which account for well over one-quarter of all the party's delegates) in which he could still qualify to appear on the ballot - states Biden may not win outright, but in which he may win enough delegates to ensure a "brokered convention" that will have to vote on the eventual nominee.

In such a scenario, the contest would pit Sanders and Clinton against Biden, with Biden rightly claiming to be both the heir of the Obama coalition and legacy, and the one Democrat who can expand that coalition and work to end the partisan divide. With many Democrats nervous about the ability of Sanders and Clinton to change Washington's poisonous atmosphere, Biden could emerge as an interesting choice. While some Democrats might dread a wide-open convention, such a truly democratic exercise might actually create a very positive dynamic that could help energize the party faithful for the November contest.

The bottom line is that we are just days away from the Iowa caucuses and only two things are clear: The stakes are high and the shape of this contest is still uncertain. Iowa will be important.

NOTE: Dr James J Zogby is the President of the Arab American Institute

RUSSIA'S TONE FAMILIAR AFTER POISON REPORT

By Jim Heintz

President Vladimir Putin has made no public comment on the sensational report by a British judge that concluded the Kremlin leader probably approved a 2006 plan to kill a Russian dissident in London. Instead, his subordinates went before reporters and portrayed it as a groundless accusation concocted by a relentlessly hostile West. Moscow apparently believes that Western leaders' eagerness to stem the tide of Syrian refugees will make them hesitant to push Russia too strongly in the murder case, fearful of hindering peace talks on Syria that are scheduled to begin next week.

Russia's reaction to Thursday's report on the poisoning death of Alexander Litvinenko - a former security operative who became a fierce Kremlin critic - is a familiar one in the Putin era: a denial of any wrongdoing amid aggrieved contentions that foreign puppeteers are aiming to push Putin from power and weaken Russia. In recent years, Russia has denied claims that it sent troops into eastern Ukraine to fight with rebels, that it supplied a missile that shot down a Malaysian airliner over Ukraine, and that its warplanes were bombing Syrian civilians and supporting the troops of Syrian President Bashar Assad.

The tactic works well at home, feeding Russians' strong appetite for perceiving their nation as ever-besieged. This kind of appeal has helped keep Putin's personal approval ratings high even as the economy deteriorated sharply in the past two years. In the West, it only reinforces Russia's image as truculent and obstructive. A series of sanctions were imposed on Russia over its actions in Ukraine, and Moscow's relations with Washington and many European countries are at best strongly troubled.

Wedges

But Russia also has wedges it can employ with the Western world, particularly regarding Syria. Assad is Moscow's longtime ally, and Russia can wield more influence with him than the countries that overtly seek his ouster. Despite occasional signs that Russia is less than fully comfortable with Assad, it firmly resists making regime change a mandatory condition for ending the civil war. Russia also is a key factor on the Syrian battlefield, launching thousands of airstrikes since late September. Although claims differ sharply on how hard those airstrikes are hurting the Islamic State group and other extremists, the sheer demonstration of military might means the West cannot afford to alienate Russia.

Moscow, in turn, would not want to push disagreements with the West too far; it needs a resolution in Syria, both with regard to retaining its only military base in the Middle East, as well as suppressing the Islamist militants that Moscow fears have their eyes on Russia. In that light, it appears that the British's judge's allegations in the Litvinenko case may have little - if any - blowback. "If US and British political circles remain interested in joint efforts with Russia in the struggle against international terrorism, the Litvinenko case will soon be forgotten," Andrei Kilmov, deputy head of the foreign affairs committee of Russia's upper house of parliament, told the state news agency Tass on Friday.

Even as Prime Minister David Cameron said Britain would toughen its stance with Russia in the wake of the Litvinenko findings, he acknowledged that London needs Moscow. "Do we at some level have to go on having some sort of relationship with them because we need a solution to the Syria crisis? Yes we do - but we do it with clear eyes and a very cold

heart," he said. One analyst cast doubt on that strategy. "That may not be sensible because the UK's influence on what Russia does in Syria is minimal," said Keir Giles, a Russian analyst at Britain's Chatham House institute.

No Retaliation

After the report by Judge Robert Owen came out, Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov said it could "further poison the atmosphere of our bilateral relations". But Russia has not announced any retaliatory measures. "I am sad to say relations have already been frigid for a long time," said Viktor Ivanov, a Putin ally who heads Russia's anti-narcotics agency. Litvinenko's claim of Ivanov's ties to organized crime was mentioned in the report as a possible reason Moscow may have wanted the dissident eliminated.

Russia has another interest in preventing relations with the West from worsening: The conflict in Ukraine. Although fighting there has diminished notably in recent months, the tensions between Ukrainian forces and Russia-backed rebels remain unresolved. In addition, Western sanctions connected to the conflict are still in force, and those are contributing factors in Russia's economic troubles.

Moscow recently has shown heightened interest in bringing about a resolution, appointing influential Putin ally Boris Gryzlov as an envoy to the group trying to implement a solution. Russian officials indicate the strategy for dealing with the Litvinenko allegations will be to hew tightly to denials and hope the controversy will go away. "I want to say that this is not news that is discussed widely in Russia," Deputy Prime Minister Yuri Trutnev told AP on Friday at the international economic forum in Davos, Switzerland. —AP

WORLD CUP LEADER SVINDAL CRASHES OUT OF KITZBUHEL

BERLIN: World Cup leader Aksel Lund Svindal crashed out of the downhill competition in Kitzbuhel yesterday, leaving the daunting Streif course with a bloody nose. The Norwegian pre-race favorite, who had won the men's super G on Friday, was on track to take over the lead from Italian Peter Fill when he landed badly from a jump midway down the course and slid into the protective side netting.

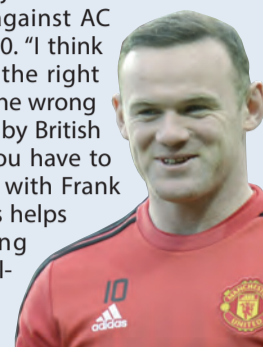


REAL COACH ZIDANE BACKS OUT-OF-SORTS RODRIGUEZ

MADRID: Real Madrid playmaker James Rodriguez is working hard to get back to top form and remains a key member of the team, coach Zinedine Zidane said yesterday. Rodriguez was sidelined by a thigh injury while on duty with Colombia in September and has struggled for form and fitness since his return to action at the end of October.

ROONEY BLAST REMINDS VAN GAAL OF RIJKAARD

LONDON: Manchester United manager Louis van Gaal has praised captain Wayne Rooney for a half-time outburst that reminded him of a pivotal moment from his time with Ajax. Van Gaal revealed that Rooney upbraided his under-performing team-mates at half-time of last week-end's Premier League match at Liverpool before going on to earn his side a 1-0 victory with a 78th-minute winner.



SCOREBOARD

SYDNEY: Scoreboard from the fifth one-day international between Australia and India at the Sydney Cricket Ground yesterday:

Table with 2 columns: Team/Batter, Runs/Wickets. Includes Australia's performance with batsmen like Finch, Warner, and Marsh, and bowlers like Sharma and Dhoni.

India: R. Sharma c Wade b Hastings 99, S. Dhawan c S. Marsh b Hastings 78, V. Kohli c Wade b Hastings 8, M. Pandey not out 104, M.S. Dhoni c Warner b M. Marsh 34, G. Singh not out 0.



SYDNEY: Manish Pandey of India bats during the fourth one-day international cricket match between India and Australia in Sydney yesterday. —AFP

PANDEY HEROIC GIVE INDIA THRILLING ODI WIN

SYDNEY: Manish Pandey scored a brilliant unbeaten 104 as India beat Australia by six wickets in a thrilling one-day international at the Sydney Cricket Ground yesterday. After Indian captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni won the toss and decided to bowl, Australia scored an imposing 330 for seven off their 50 overs thanks to centuries from David Warner (122) and Mitchell Marsh (102 not out).

who scored a century in the fourth ODI in Canberra on Wednesday, was particularly punishing, blasting his way to a rapid-fire half century and taking the Indian total past 100. He brought up his 50 from just 42 balls but on 78 he tried to hit John Hastings over midwicket and was brilliantly caught in the deep by Shaun Marsh.

edge to Wade to fall one run short of an 11th ODI century. Dhoni struggled initially and Australia looked like winning until the Indian captain began to find his touch, his big six off Mitchell Marsh in the final over getting his side close enough to take the victory.

game." Earlier, the Australians cruised to one more big total on yet another lifeless wicket in a series where the lowest score was India's 295 in Melbourne last Sunday.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at stumps on the second day in the fourth and final Test between South Africa and England on Saturday in Centurion, South Africa.

Scoreboard table for South Africa 1st innings and England 1st innings, listing batsmen, bowlers, and runs/wickets.

PANTHERS BLANK BLACKHAWKS 4-0

SUNRISE: Roberto Luongo stopped 27 shots for his fourth shutout of the season, Aaron Ekblad scored in his first game back from a concussion and the Florida Panthers beat the Chicago Blackhawks 4-0 on Friday night to stop a four-game losing streak.

part to several inches of wet snow that began falling in the afternoon.

RED WINGS 3, SABRES 0

All-Star rookie Dylan Larkin had a goal and an assist and Petr Mrazek stopped 19 shots to lead Detroit to a 3-0 victory over Buffalo.

ISLANDERS 5, SENATORS 2

Travis Hamonic and John Tavares each had a goal and an assist in the third period and New York beat Ottawa. Hamonic beat Andrew Hammond with a slap shot at 2:58 of the third to give New York a 3-2 lead and Tavares slipped a backhand past Hammond at 7:03 for some insurance.

COOK LEADS ENGLAND REPLY

CENTURION: England captain Alastair Cook made his first half-century of the series to keep his team in contention on the second day of the fourth and final Test against South Africa at SuperSport Park yesterday.

innings and joined debutant Stephen Cook in making his first Test hundred. England once again paid the price for dropped catches. After both Cook and Hashim Amla were dropped on the way to centuries on the first day, De Kock was put down by Ben Stokes at gully off James Anderson when he was on 28, having added only three runs to his overnight score.

England lost Alex Hales early, when he sliced a drive against Kagiso Rabada to Dane Piedt at point after making 15. Nick Compton helped Cook add 56 for the second wicket before he fell victim to a ball from Rabada which shot through low and trapped him leg before wicket for 19.

Despite the blemishes it was an impressive innings by De Kock, who hit 17 fours and two sixes. He was particularly severe on Ali, hitting 45 runs off the 28 balls he faced from the off-spinner, including both his sixes and six fours. It was a disappointing effort by England who would have hoped to wrap up the innings quickly after taking two wickets early in the day for the addition of only seven runs to the overnight total of 329 for five.

AVALANCHE 2, BLUE 1, OT

Semyon Varlamov made 33 saves and then stopped all three attempts in the shootout, and Colorado beat St Louis. Nathan Mackinnon scored in the final minute of regulation to rally the Avalanche, and then Gabriel Landeskog scored the only goal in the shootout.

RANGERS 4, HURRICANES 1

JT Miller scored twice in the second period and Henrik Lundqvist made 30 saves to lead New York to a 4-1 victory over Carolina. Ryan McDonagh scored to stretch his scoring streak to four games, and Keith Yandle also had a goal for New York.

NHL Results/Standings

NHL Standings table showing teams like Detroit, Buffalo, NY Rangers, Carolina, NY Islanders, Ottawa, Florida, Chicago, Colorado, St. Louis, Tampa Bay, Boston, Montreal, Toronto, Buffalo, Washington, NY Rangers, NY Islanders, New Jersey, Pittsburgh, Carolina, Philadelphia, Columbus, Los Angeles, San Jose, Vancouver, Arizona, Anaheim, Calgary, Edmonton, Florida.



MELBOURNE: Australia's Nick Kyrgios hits a return against Czech Republic's Tomas Berdych during their men's singles match on day five of the 2016 Australian Open tennis tournament. — AFP

MUSIC STOPS FOR POLARIZING KYRGIOS

MELBOURNE: Flashy Australian youngster Nick Kyrgios says he let a lot of people down and expected more from himself after his polarising exit from the Australian Open. The hyperactive Kyrgios crashed and burned in Friday's third round of his home Grand Slam to ice-cool Czech Tomas Berdych, ending another promising yet unfulfilled campaign. Kyrgios argued with the chair umpire about music coming from the stands inside Rod Laver Arena and was easily distracted by interactions with the crowd, slamming the match as a "circus".

Meanwhile Berdych, a two-time semi-finalist,

was too calm and focused for the show-boating 20-year-old, winning 6-3, 6-4, 1-6, 6-4 in the rowdy night match. Kyrgios, a magnet for controversy in his career so far, said he was disappointed to miss out on his big opportunity to repeat his quarter-final appearance last year. "I'm so disappointed, like I put so much work in, and I just feel like I let a lot of people down," he told reporters. "I was expecting a bit more out of myself. I was expecting like another real deep run. I put a lot of work in. It's pretty heartbreaking."

Kyrgios has a reputation for his on-court behavior and last year he was handed a 28-

day suspended sentence, which expires on February 24, for making a sexual reference to Stan Wawrinka's girlfriend. He was hit with a US\$3,000 fine for an audible obscenity in his first round win over Pablo Carreno Busta, and turned up for his match against Pablo Cuevas wearing the wrong shorts, which he had to change mid-match. As he left the court after his match with Berdych, Kyrgios shook the hand of the chair umpire and was overheard saying: "You are a terrible referee."

'I should have won'

As online debate raged about his antics,

Kyrgios said he had learned from his experience of playing Berdych, the world number six and an established top-10 player. "It was tough. I knew I would have to play some of my best tennis to win. I knew I wasn't the favorite, but I definitely felt like I should have won," he said. "I just put a lot of pressure on myself. It's a good experience as well. I know what I have to do now to get better." Kyrgios, ranked 30th in the world, said Berdych's ability to play the big points was a lesson he had to absorb.

"I thought he just steadied the ship in the fourth set. The third set, I got an early break, kept momentum, the crowd started getting

into it," Kyrgios said. "That's why he's a top player, he steadies the ship, he gets back to it and takes his time, starts serving at a high level again and starts making clutch shots at crucial times."

"I guess I have to get fitter and stronger to beat guys like that." Kyrgios, who upset then world number one Rafael Nadal on the way to making the quarter-finals at his first Wimbledon in 2014, said he was content not to have a coach. "I haven't really thought too much about it. I'm not really looking. I am but I'm not. I think I'm pretty content at the moment," he said.—AFP



MELBOURNE: China's Zhang Shuai serves during her women's singles match against Varvara Lepchenko of the US on day six of the 2016 Australian Open tennis tournament in Melbourne yesterday. —AFP

ZHANG KEEPS CHINA ALIVE

MELBOURNE: Qualifier Zhang Shuai thinks she can become China's second grand slam winner after easing into the last 16 of the Australian Open with an emphatic 6-1 6-3 victory over American Varvara Lepchenko yesterday. With China's first grand slam champion Li Na having retired and her fellow trailblazer Zheng Jie looking set to follow, expectations of success were low in the world's most populous nation coming into 2016.

Zhang, who had never won a grand slam match in 14 attempts before Tuesday, continued to confound that pessimism when she extended her remarkable run at Margaret Court Arena yesterday. Picking up where she left off in her stunning upset of world number two Simona Halep in her opener and the two-set victory over France's Alize Cornet in round two, she dominated Lepchenko to win the first set in less than half an hour. Another crunching

forehand winner saw Zhang break the Uzbekistan-born world number 51 early in the second set and before too long she was serving for the match at 5-2.

Perhaps overawed by the position she found herself in, the 27-year-old Chinese was broken herself but she stormed back in the following game to seal victory on her second match point when an overwhelmed Lepchenko netted. "I just wanted to show the best of Zhang Shuai in this match," she told reporters. "I tried to treat this like it was the last match of my life. I think I did a great job." Zhang will next face another American in Madison Keys, a semi-finalist last year, in her seventh match at Melbourne Park over the last couple of weeks for a place in the quarter-finals. Asked whether she could conceivably win the tournament on Sunday week, Zhang did not demur. "Before, no," she said. "After today, yes." — Reuters

MEDICAL DRAMA ROCKS IVANOVIC AND MURRAY

THIRD SEED MUGURUZA DUMPED OUT OF TOURNAMENT

MELBOURNE: The Australian Open tennis championships were rocked late yesterday when Andy Murray's father-in-law Nigel Sears collapsed during a match at Rod Laver Arena, overshadowing the world number two's advance to the fourth round. Sears, the coach of former French Open champion Ana Ivanovic, collapsed while watching the Serb's third-round clash against Madison Keys, prompting medical staff to rush to the 58-year-old's aid. Adding to the surreal atmosphere at Melbourne Park, Briton Murray was oblivious to the unfolding drama as he battled Portugal's Joao Sousa in the neighboring Margaret Court Arena.

Play was suspended for an hour at Rod Laver Arena, as Sears received treatment before being fitted with breathing apparatus and carried from the stadium on a stretcher. He was taken to hospital for further treatment and was being examined by a cardiologist, organizers said. A teary-eyed Ivanovic was eventually led back to centre court to continue her match against Keys and although the Serb fought hard she fell 4-6 6-4 6-4. "Obviously it was a tough match," Ivanovic said in a statement after declining post-match media commitments.

"I really wanted to win and have a chance to come back... Obviously a little bit disappointed," Murray, whose wife Kim Sears is due to give birth to their first child next month, completed a 6-2 3-6 6-2 6-2 win over 32nd seed Sousa and was led straight from the court by an official rather than conduct the usual courtside interview. In an unnerving coincidence, Ivanovic's second round match was also suspended after a spectator fell down the stairs at the same show court on Thursday. Murray also skipped the post-match media conference and the Scot's only comment was confined to his match. "It was tricky. I didn't feel great," he said in a statement. "It was good to get through that one."

Medical emergency

The medical emergency overshadowed the action on day six which saw Spanish third seed Garbine Muguruza dumped out of the tournament and Victoria Azarenka given a huge boost in her bid to win a third title at Melbourne Park. The 2014 champion Stan Wawrinka also reached the last 16, staying on track for a blockbuster semi-final against Murray. Muguruza, rated one of the few women capable of threatening champion Serena Williams, slumped out at the hands of unseeded Czech Barbora Strycova, her 6-3 6-2 loss punching a hole in the draw. With Romanian world number two Simona Halep sent packing in the opening round, seventh seed Angelique Kerber remains the top woman in the draw's lower half.

But the path to a dream final against Williams seems laid out for 14th seed Azarenka. A succession of injuries over the past two years and a bout of depression have slowed the Belarusian, who clinched back-to-back titles at Melbourne Park in 2012-13. But her 6-1 6-1 humiliation of Japanese qualifier Naomi Osaka was her eighth win in succession and further evidence the sleeping giant has awakened. "I had a lot of changes and emotions from last year that I still didn't know how to handle," the 26-year-old told reporters. "It changed my life... Starting to be happy and organized and disciplined off the court, it changed my life on the court, definitely."

Wawrinka advances

Following Roger Federer's 300th victory in



MELBOURNE: Nigel Sears (center) coach of Serbia's Ana Ivanovic is assisted after suffering a medical emergency on Rod Laver Arena. — AFP

grand slams on day five and Maria Sharapova's 600th on tour, Wawrinka notched his 400th career win with a triumph over Czech Lukas Rosol 6-2 6-3 7-6(3). The Swiss fourth seed has been battling a cold at Melbourne Park but his game was in rude health as he smashed 18 aces and 45 winners in the late afternoon sunshine at Rod Laver Arena. "As long as I'm feeling good on the court, that's the most important thing," a raspy-voiced Wawrinka said. The 30-year-old Swiss must next weather the serving storm of Canadian dark horse Milos Raonic, who despatched Serb Viktor Troicki 6-2 6-3 6-4 at the Margaret Court Arena. A quarter-finalist last year,

13th seed Raonic dedicated his win to victims of a school shooting in the remote Canadian town of La Loche, where four people were killed and a number injured on Friday.

"Stuff like this doesn't happen much back home," he told reporters. "I'm sure not just in that small community but throughout Canada it was a lot of people that were sort of heartbroken over it." With a number of high seeds falling by the wayside, doors opened for lesser lights to shine. Among them, Australia-born Johanna Konta defeated Czech Denisa Allertova 6-2 6-2 to become the first British woman into the last 16 at Melbourne Park in nearly 30 years. —Reuters

EMOTIONAL RAONIC MOURNS CANADA SHOOTING VICTIMS

MELBOURNE: An emotional Milos Raonic dedicated his Australian Open win to the victims of a high school shooting in Canada as he paid tribute to his adopted homeland yesterday. Montenegro-born Raonic, 25, was close to tears after his 6-2, 6-3, 6-4 third-round win over Serbia's Viktor Troicki, as he mourned the tragedy in a remote community that left four dead. "I want to take a moment and give thoughts to that community, the families, the students and the school affected and we wish you all the best," he told the crowd. "Today's victory was for that community and a quick recovery. All of Canada, and I'm sure the world, is behind you," Raonic said, before quickly departing the court.

Later, Raonic explained that the emotions caused by the rare Canadian school shooting had fired him to play with huge intensity. "Maybe to me today's match really sort of mattered heavily, and I would do everything I can to find a way to win," he told reporters. "But at the end of the day, to be in that situation—there is five (four) people that will never go back to school again. That's just far bigger than whatever thing I could have

done on court today. It's especially difficult, when it's such a small community and it's a tragedy that's from within a certain group of people, most likely."

He added: "Canada has been phenomenal to myself, my brother, my sister, their kids, my parents. I'm here because I moved to Canada and because my parents took me there (from Montenegro) in '94." The Canadian power-server, seeded 13, overwhelmed Troicki with his only trouble coming in the final set, where he fought back from an early break. Raonic, coached by former world number one Carlos Moya, has not dropped a set going into the last 16 but he now faces a far stiffer test in the shape of 2014 winner Stan Wawrinka, the reigning French Open champion. "He's played solid through what I have seen of his first three matches. I have it within myself to be able to find the solution," Raonic said.

"The question is will I step up and do it? Hopefully I'm able to put the pieces together." The Canadian rolled through the opening two sets for the loss of five games but struck some resistance early in the final set when he was broken in the second game. —AFP



MALAGA: Barcelona's Turkish midfielder Arda Turan (left) vies with Malaga's Argentinean defender Marcos Alberto Angelieri during the Spanish league football match Malaga CF vs FC Barcelona yesterday. — AFP

BARCELONA BACK ON TOP AFTER MESSI STUNNER

MADRID: Lionel Messi scored a spectacular winner as Barcelona moved to the top of La Liga with a hard-fought 2-1 win at Malaga yesterday. The European champions were handed the perfect start when Munir El Haddadi tapped home the opener after just 64 seconds, but were far from their best and Malaga deservedly levelled through Juanpi either minutes before the break. Messi had been struggling with a slight hamstring strain in the past week, but the five-time World Player of the Year made the difference once more as he volleyed home his 20th goal of the season to move Barca a point clear of Atletico Madrid in top spot.

Atletico and Real Madrid - who now trail Barca by five points - are both in action on Sunday when they face Sevilla and Real Betis respectively. Barcelona were without the injured Neymar and suspended Gerard Pique, but did have the luxury of welcoming back Messi and Luis Suarez after they missed the 2-1 win Copa del Rey win at Athletic Bilbao in midweek. And Suarez made a telling impact after just a minute as he wriggled clear inside the area and although his low shot was kept out by Carlos Kamani, the ball fell invitingly for El Haddadi to tap home his fourth goal in three games. Despite a great start, though, Barca were completely outplayed by Malaga in the first-half and

were only saved by some wasteful play by the hosts in the final third.

Charles headed just wide before Chory Castro's effort was turned onto the post by Claudio Bravo. Thomas Vermaelen was standing in for Pique, but had to be bailed out by a brilliant saving challenge from his central defensive partner Javier Mascherano as his slip allowed Charles to bear down on goal before the Argentine intercepted with a last-ditch challenge. Malaga finally got on level terms as Barca again gave the ball away needlessly inside their own half and Charles teed up Juanpi, whose effort deflected in off Mascherano.

However, Barca could still have been ahead at the break as Kameni made a fine low save to deny El Haddadi his second and Miguel Torres produced a brilliant block to prevent Messi rolling home the rebound into an empty net. Barca boss Luis Enrique replaced the poor Vermaelen with Jeremy Mathieu at the break and the visitors were at least more solid if not spectacular after the break. One moment of Messi inspiration was enough to seal a vital three points, though, as he acrobatically met Adriano's cross on the volley six minutes into the second period. Bravo had to make another smart save to deny Ignacio Camacho, but Barca held out to register a sixth successive win in all competitions.—AFP

Scottish Premiership table

GLASGOW: Scottish Premiership table after yesterday's matches (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):

Celtic	23	17	4	2	63	19	55	Dundee	23	7	8	8	35	39	29
Aberdeen	23	15	4	4	38	22	49	Partick	22	6	7	9	21	28	25
Hearts	22	11	7	4	42	24	40	Motherwell	22	7	4	11	24	36	25
Ross County	24	10	3	11	40	37	33	Hamilton	23	6	6	11	29	45	24
St Johnstone	22	9	5	8	36	34	32	Kilmarnock	24	6	6	12	27	47	24
Inverness CT	23	7	8	8	30	32	29	Dundee Utd	23	3	4	16	24	46	13

SCOTTISH PREMIER LEAGUE ROUNDUP

CELTIC RESTORE 6-POINT ADVANTAGE AT THE TOP

MACKAY-STEVEN'S DOUBLE LIFTS CELTIC

GLASGOW: Gary Mackay-Steven grabbed a double as Celtic restored their six-point advantage at the top of the Scottish Premiership with a 3-1 defeat of St Johnstone at Parkhead. Aberdeen's 1-0 win over Dundee on Friday night had temporarily reduced the gap but the Hoops showed no signs of any pressure as Mackay-Steven grabbed his first goal of the season to open the scoring in the ninth minute. Steven MacLean scored a surprise equalizer for St Johnstone, without a goal since December 5, three minutes later, but Stuart Armstrong restored Celtic's advantage with a superb volley in the 43rd minute.

Mackay-Steven slotted home his second of the match in the 55th minute to seal the win which means Celtic will hold a six-point lead over Aberdeen ahead of their top of the table clash on February 3. Celtic had made two changes from the 8-1 thrashing of Hamilton with Stefan Johansen replacing the injured Tom Rogic while Kieran Tierney was favoured ahead of Emilio Izaguirre. The goals had poured in for Celtic on Tuesday night and the signs looked ominous for St Johnstone when Mackay-Steven fired Celtic in front. Tom Scobbie took the sting out of a Leigh Griffiths strike but the ball fell to Mackay-Steven in the box and he took a touch before drilling a shot past Alan Mannus.

However, St Johnstone grabbed a surprise equalizer in the 12th minute. Rangers target Michael O'Halloran's pace caused the Celtic defense problems and

his cross from the by-line picked out MacLean who tapped the ball past Craig Gordon from a couple of yards out. Nir Bitton, scorer of a spectacular strike on Tuesday, then stung the palms of Mannus with a vicious long-range shot before the keeper had to stretch to keep out a shot on the turn from Callum McGregor.

However, Mannus could do nothing to keep out Armstrong's volley just before the break. Mackay-Steven fed Lustig down the left wing and his cut-back from the left was met by Armstrong who fired an unstoppable volley into the net from 12 yards out. Celtic made it 3-1 in the 55th minute through Mackay-Steven. With St Johnstone appealing for a foul on captain Brian Easton, Johansen raced forward and threaded a pass to the Celtic winger who controlled the ball before sending an angled shot beyond Mannus.

The Hoops pushed forward in search of a fourth with McGregor firing over before Mannus saved efforts from Griffiths and Armstrong. St Johnstone came close to reducing the deficit on the hour mark but Celtic keeper Gordon made a point-blank save to deny Liam Craig after O'Halloran used his pace to get behind the Celtic defense again and pick the St Johnstone substitute out in the six-yard box. Elsewhere, Dundee United showed they have the stomach for a relegation battle as the basement club thrashed second bottom Kilmarnock 5-1 to reduce the gap at the bottom to 11 points.—AFP

GERMAN LEAGUE ROUNDUP

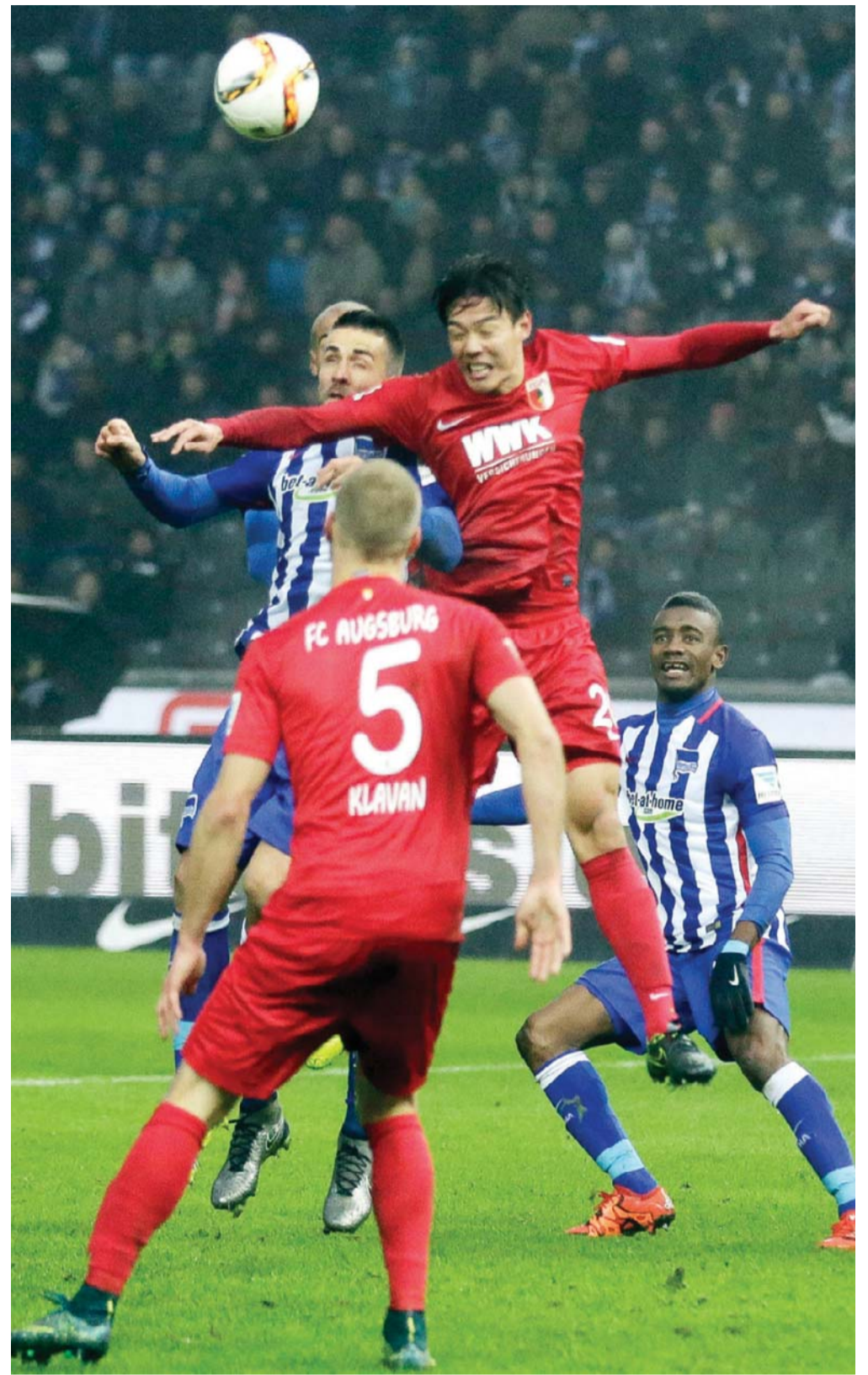
HERTHA MISS CHANCE TO CLOSE DORTMUND'S GAP

BERLIN: Hertha Berlin missed their chance to close the gap behind Borussia Dortmund in the Bundesliga table yesterday as their goalless draw at home to Augsburg saw them stay third. Hertha failed to take their chances in an error-strewn clash at Berlin's Olympic Stadium in wintry conditions against mid-table Augsburg as forwards Vedad Ibisevic and Ivory Coast striker Salomon Kalou squandered six chances between them. With leaders Bayern Munich having opened a 11-point lead at the top of the table with a 2-1 win at Hamburg on Friday thanks to Robert Lewandowski's two goals, second-placed Dortmund are under pressure to close the gap at resurgent Borussia Moenchengladbach, who are fourth.

Dortmund routed Gladbach 4-0 at the start of the season, but the visitors have climbed from bottom of the table to fourth under new coach Andre Schubert and have lost just once in their last 12 league games. At the other end of the table, veteran Portugal striker Hugo Almeida marked his debut for relegation-threatened Hanover 96 with a goal. But he was unable to prevent their 2-1 defeat at home to Darmstadt as Sandro Wagner scored both of the visitors' goals. The defeat left Hanover bottom as ex-Bremen coach Thomas Schaaf took charge of his first game since replacing Michael Frontzeck over the winter break while Darmstadt are 12th.

Stuttgart pulled themselves away from the relegation places with a 3-1 win at Cologne to move up to 14th as Jurgen Kramny picked up his second straight win having been given the head coach role full-time. Stuttgart finished 2015 with a shock win over Wolfsburg and backed it up by bouncing back despite Anthony Modeste converting an early penalty for Cologne, who were wearing specially-designed shirts to celebrate the carnival season in the Rhineland city. Stuttgart, who gave a debut to Germany defender Kevin Grosskreutz after a brief, unhappy spell in Istanbul with Galatasaray, roared back with goals from Daniel Didavi, Timo Werner and Christian Gentner.

Bayer Leverkusen stay fifth after their 1-1 draw at Hoffenheim as Jiljan Hamad's goal for the hosts was cancelled out by Leverkusen captain Omer Toprak's late strike to rescue a point for the visitors as the hosts climbed off the bottom. Ingolstadt, who are in their first season in Germany's top flight, earned a 1-0 win at home to Mainz through a Moritz Hartmann penalty to go tenth in the table. Champions League side Wolfsburg, who have drawn Ghent in the last 16, are at Eintracht Frankfurt today, while Schalke are at home in the evening against strugglers Werder Bremen.—AFP



BERLIN: Berlin's Vedad Ibisevic (left) and Augsburg's Hong Jeong-ho head for the ball during the German Bundesliga soccer match between Hertha BSC and FC Augsburg at the Olympic stadium yesterday. — AP

JUVENTUS COACH PLAYS DOWN CHELSEA LINKS

MILAN: Juventus coach Massimiliano Allegri has played down reports he could become Chelsea's next full-time manager, following the sacking of Jose Mourinho earlier this season. Allegri, who steered Juve to a league and Cup double last season, as well as the Champions League final, was linked to the struggling Premier League giants in tabloid reports yesterday. The Sun newspaper said Chelsea have already made contact with the Juve coach and his representatives and that he is keen to join.

Speaking to the media a day ahead of his side's Serie A clash at home to Roma, Allegri said: "My thoughts are on the championship, the Italian Cup and the Champions League. I have a contract with the club until 2017 and I feel good here." Asked what it felt like to be linked to the Chelsea job currently held by caretaker coach Guus Hiddink, he said: "It's feels normal. When you coach a team like Juventus, that's the way it is. "But I'm fine here and it's only normal that my focus is on what I have to do here."

Allegri, however, is known to be curious about a move to the Premier League and he has been learning English in recent years. Despite being considered an unpopular choice when he was appointed successor to Antonio Conte ahead of last season, the 48-year-old soon won over his detractors. In his first season in charge Allegri took a different approach to Conte, whose main focus during a successful three-year tenure was on record-setting championship wins and making progress in the Champions League. Under Allegri, Juve have spread their efforts over the league and Cup, as well as in Europe, leading to the club's first league and Cup double in 20 years last season.

While Conte failed to get Juve past the quarter-final stages in Europe, Allegri ended the club's 12-year wait to appear in the Champions League final when they ousted Real Madrid in the semi-finals. Juve were outclassed 3-1 by Barcelona in the title encounter, but the fans were won over. Juve had a disastrous start to their title defense this season but have since secured 10 consecutive wins to sit just two points behind leaders Napoli ahead of the weekend matches.—AFP



Juventus' coach Massimiliano Allegri

EMBATTLED ROMA CAN STUN JUVE, SAYS SALAH

MILAN: Egyptian winger Mohamed Salah believes Roma can relaunch their wilting title campaign and upset the formbook by beating Juventus today. Salah has fond memories of playing against the Italian champions having hit a brace for Fiorentina in a Cup semi-final win last year before moving to the capital. And despite Roma looking for their first win in four league games the 23-year-old, who has hit five league goals in 13 appearances for the Giallorossi so far, believes Roma will come out on top. "I think we'll win 2-1," Salah told La Stampa newspaper.

"Juventus are a really strong side, but so are we. It's our duty to aim for the best result." Beating Juventus in their current form looks a tall order, even without Roma's troubles. Juventus have consigned their poor start to the campaign to distant memory with a run of 10 consecutive league wins that has moved the champions up to second place, just two points behind leaders Napoli.

Roma are battling to adapt to the tactical changes introduced by Luciano Spalletti, who has returned for a second spell at the club after replacing sacked Frenchman Rudi Garcia 10 days ago. They have drawn their last three games, including a week ago when still winless basement side Verona grabbed a point at the Stadio Olimpico, and slipped to fifth at nine points behind Napoli. Midfielder Radja Nainggolan is among the players to have switched position, Spalletti moving the Belgian international to a more advanced role as he imposes

his own style of play on the team.

Focus on defense

Whether Roma can settle in time for Sunday remains to be seen. Nainggolan admitted Spalletti's changes have been a challenge and hinted Roma might be heading to Turin looking to limit the damage rather than aiming to win. "We have a new playing style and I hope it will lead to some changes-we want to have our say in this league," Nainggolan told www.asroma.it "Spalletti is very clear about the kind of game he wants to see and we're working hard to do that as best as we can." He added: "It's not easy to catch onto his ideas straight away, but we are trying to do it as best as we can. Right now, we're focusing a lot on our defensive game and counting on individual moves up front for our goals."

Juve coach Massimiliano Allegri, reported to have caught the eye of Chelsea, refused to dismiss Roma's title hopes but believes he has a stronger squad, meaning more options to come off the bench and turn a game if needed. One such example is on-loan Chelsea forward Juan Cuadrado. "Roma are one of five candidates for the league title, they're still in contention and tomorrow they'll have their best team out on the pitch," Allegri said yesterday. "I have players who can change the outcome of the match in the last half hour, including Cuadrado; he has come on a lot and has qualities that can be helpful to me, but I have to make choices."—AFP

DEBUTANT AUSTIN PUNISHES DESPERATE MAN UNITED



MANCHESTER: Debutant Charlie Austin's late goal earned Southampton a 1-0 victory at Manchester United yesterday that put the pressure back on beaten manager Louis van Gaal. Austin joined Southampton for £4 million (\$5.7 million, 5.2 million euros) from Queens Park Rangers last week and made a spectacular debut as a substitute at Old Trafford. The striker, a prolific scorer for QPR, Burnley and Swindon Town, had been on the pitch for only seven minutes when he powered home a header from James Ward-Prowse's 87th-minute free-kick. His goal handed United a fifth defeat in 10 games, leaving them five points off the top four, and despite a five-match unbeaten run before this, Van Gaal's side have won just three of their last 13 games.

That record, and the bland style of football that has contributed to it, is doing nothing for Van Gaal's job security and while the Dutchman has been unhappy with speculation about his position, it will only intensify after this latest dismal defeat. United have failed to score at home in seven matches this season and their chances of finishing in the top four to secure Champions League football next season are diminishing fast. Having gone 17 years without an away win over United, Southampton won at Old Trafford for the second season in a row. United's first-half showing was as bad as anything they have served up in a dreary campaign, with the home supporters showing their displeasure before the break.

It took just 35 minutes for the first boos and chants of 'Attack!' to be heard after another aimless ball from the back dropped harmlessly into the arms of Fraser Forster. The Southampton goalkeeper had been a virtual spectator as United's promising start faded away, along with their seemingly fragile confi-

dence. Looking to score for the fifth successive game for the first time since 2010, Wayne Rooney tried his luck with a couple of efforts, but they never looked likely to bring him a goal. Wideman Jesse Lingard, whose focus was more on defending than supporting United's attacks, saw a tame shot go wide from a rare foray forward.

Januzaj return

Indeed, it was Southampton who had the best chance to take the lead in the first half. Nine minutes before half-time Dusan Tadic released Sadio Mane with a perfect pass that the forward failed to turn into a serious effort on goal with just David de Gea to beat. The introduction of Juan Mata at half-time in place of Marouane Fellaini lifted the crowd and United's tempo as they finally started to stretch the Southampton defense. Mata and Rooney combined to almost find a way through, but the Saints remained dangerous on the break and it took a brave defensive header from Matteo Darmian to prevent Shane Long from reaching Mane's cross. Darmian was injured in the incident and went off, to be replaced by Paddy McNair. It was a further source of concern for Van Gaal, who has already indicated his desire to try and sign another full-back after losing Ashley Young, Marcos Rojo, Luke Shaw and Antonio Valencia to injury.

McNair replaced Darmian in what was virtually a five-man United defense, and which was almost undone from successive corners as Long and Victor Wanyama both headed wide. United did not heed that warning, though, as they continued to look vulnerable from set-pieces and three minutes from the end of normal time they were sunk. Austin is a penalty-area predator and the 26-year-old cleverly found space to beat De Gea with a perfectly directed header from eight yards out. De Gea prevented a second goal as he saved from Oriol Romeu, but United could not make the most of that reprieve. Adnan Januzaj, back as a substitute following his unhappy loan spell at Borussia Dortmund, shot just wide in stoppage time, but there was to be no late equaliser to keep the heat off Van Gaal.—AFP



SUNDERLAND: Sunderland's Fabio Borini (right) vies for the ball with Bournemouth's Adam Smith during the English Premier League soccer match between Sunderland and Bournemouth yesterday.—AP

A GOAL NOT ENOUGH FOR STRUGGLING SUNDERLAND



SUNDERLAND: Second-bottom Sunderland squandered a chance to close in on Premier League safety as Patrick van Aanholt's strike earned them a 1-1 draw at home to Bournemouth yesterday. The Dutch left-back struck in first-half injury time after January signing Benik Afobe had put Bournemouth ahead with a 13th-minute header that embarrassed recalled Sunderland goalkeeper Vito Mannone. Van Aanholt's goal inched Sunderland to within three points of safety, but with games against

Manchester City, Liverpool and Manchester United to follow, it was a missed opportunity for Sam Allardyce's side.

Eddie Howe's Bournemouth, beaten only once in six league games on the road, remain 15th, four points clear of third-bottom Newcastle United. Jordan Pickford, 21, had kept goal for Sunderland in their two previous games, but Mannone returned to the starting XI against Bournemouth and was at fault for the first goal. Afobe met Junior Stanislas's bouncing cross from the right with a diving header and although he made decent contact, Mannone got a strong hand to the ball and should have kept it out.

Bournemouth looked to build on their early momentum, with Stanislas unable to turn the ball in after Mannone missed a cross from Marc Pugh, Andrew Surman shooting just wide and Mannone parrying from Stanislas and Afobe. But Sunderland belatedly gained a foothold and after Artur Boruc had saved a header from John

O'Shea and a deflected Fabio Borini shot, they equalized in first-half stoppage time. Borini, returning to the side in place of Danny Graham, picked out Van Aanholt's run from left-back with a pass between centre-back and full-back and the Dutchman rifled home his second goal in two games.

It was a goal that will have completely changed the tenor of the half-time team-talks and Sunderland were a different team after the interval. Former Bournemouth striker Jermain Defoe almost caught Boruc out with a dipping shot that sailed inches wide, while Billy Jones headed straight at Boruc from Adam Johnson's right-wing cross. Yann M'Vila also tested Boruc, but the game's momentum tilted again in the latter stages. Matt Ritchie saw a deflected shot trickle narrowly wide and then created a glorious chance for substitute Lewis Grabban, who somehow contrived to shoot wide from five yards.—AFP



MANCHESTER: Southampton's English striker Charlie Austin (2nd left) heads the ball to score the opening goal during the English Premier League football match between Manchester United and Southampton yesterday.—AFP

SPURS SHATTER PALACE



LONDON: Dele Alli produced a contender for goal of the season as Tottenham cemented their position in the Premier League's top four with a 3-1 win against Crystal Palace yesterday. Alli has emerged one of the brightest young stars in the top-flight this season and the teenage midfielder's meteoric rise gathered pace at Selhurst Park with a moment of magic that put Tottenham on course for a crucial victory. The 19-year-old's sixth club goal of the season was a breathtaking combination of sublime skill and lethal finishing.

And with England manager Roy Hodgson watching from the stands, Alli's stunning strike provided a compelling case for his inclusion in the Euro 2016 squad after he scored on his debut against France last year. More importantly for Mauricio Pochettino's side, they left south London having consolidated fourth place in the race to qualify for the Champions League, while also remaining only five points behind leaders Leicester. Jan Vertonghen's first half own goal had put Palace ahead, but Harry Kane equalized after the interval with his 12th goal in his last 14 league matches and 16th of the season in all competitions.

Alli put Tottenham ahead in the closing stages before Nacer Chadli netted from long-range to give the visitors their fifth win from their last seven league games. After an impressive first half of the season, Palace's momentum has come to a crashing halt during a run of six league games without a win and now a fourth successive defeat. Palace goalkeeper Wayne Hennessey endured heavy criticism for

some costly recent errors, but his confidence seemed unshaken when he reacted sharply to tip over Kieran Trippier's miscued cross. The Eagles, without a goal in their previous five matches, gratefully accepted a gift from Tottenham in the 30th minute.

Thunderous

Palace winger Wilfried Zaha found space from a cross and when Vertonghen tried to clear, the Belgian defender only managed to poke the ball into his own net at the near post. Stung by allowing Palace's first league goal for 482 minutes, Tottenham almost bagged an immediate equalizer when Toby Alderweireld's angled shot drifted wide before a thunderous Danny Rose volley produced a good stop from Hennessey.

The much-maligned Hennessey made a pair of good saves to deny Kane early in the second half, but the England international wasn't going to be denied for much longer. In the 63rd minute, Tottenham's pressure finally paid off when substitute Chadli clipped a cross towards Kane and he powered a header past Hennessey from close-range. Palace responded well and Hugo Lloris kept Tottenham on level terms with a diving one-handed save to push away Zaha's curling effort.

Adding to Tottenham's fraying nerves, Vertonghen limped off with what looked like a knee injury in the closing stages. Alan Pardew's side had the momentum and they nearly had the lead when Scott Dann headed against the bar before the ball fell to Mile Jedinak, whose shot also rattled the woodwork. But Tottenham steadied themselves to snatch the points thanks to Alli's gem. With just six minutes left, the teenager received possession with his back to goal and took a delicate touch to flick the ball over his head before turning sharply to drive a low strike past Hennessey from 25 yards. Not to be outdone, Chadli produced a superb goal from 30 yards deep into stoppage-time to put the seal on the visitors' blistering finish.—AFP

BASEMENT CLUB ASTON VILLA BATTLE FOR BAGGIES' POINT



WEST BROMWICH: Aston Villa's modest recovery continued with a goalless draw away to Midlands rivals West Bromwich Albion yesterday. The point extended Villa's unbeaten run to five matches across all competitions, but they remained bottom of the Premier League, six points adrift of second-bottom Sunderland. Villa were unhappy at being denied a first-half penalty when Jordan Ayew was brought down by Jonas Olsson. For the fourth time this season the

Baggies failed to register an attempt on target. Not even forward Saido Berahino, the match-winner in the reverse fixture, could rouse the Baggies in what may prove to be his final league game for the club if he makes a January transfer window move.

Goalkeeper Ben Foster made his first Premier League start since March following a knee injury and he made an important first-half save to deny Ayew. Later, Ayew was somewhat less than convinced he deserved a penalty, despite Olsson's poor challenge. With the match heading towards a stalemate, both managers made changes, with Baggies boss Tony Pulis calling Berahino off the bench and Villa's Remi Garde bringing on Rudy Gestede with 26 minutes left. Gestede's afternoon lasted just 17 minutes because of a hamstring strain as Garde's wait for a first away win in English football continued.—AFP

IGHALO LIFTS WATFORD TO 2-1 NEWCASTLE WIN



LONDON: Second half goals from Odion Ighalo and Craig Cathcart got Watford back to winning ways with a 2-1 success at home to injury-hit Newcastle yesterday. Ighalo claimed his seventh goal in seven league games at Vicarage Road just after the break with the Nigerian striker setting up Northern Ireland defender Cathcart for the second ten minutes later. Magpies' defender Jamaal Lascelles reduced the deficit with his 71st-minute header following a Jonjo Shelvey cross.

But the hosts held on to end their four-game losing streak and complete an unprecedented top-flight double against Newcastle. It lifted Quique Sanchez Flores's side to their first win in six league games to sit tenth with 32 points, while Newcastle are stuck in the relegation zone on 21 points. Manager Steve McClaren had to scramble together a makeshift defense as Newcastle struggled with injuries. Lascelles was brought in with Senegalese international midfielder Henri Saivet handed his full debut,

and Rolando Aarons, operating as a left wing-back, making his first league start of the season.

New Watford attacking midfielder Nordin Amrabat, who signed from Malaga this week, started on the bench, making his debut late in the game. Aarons, 20, had the first chance of the game, but his half volley went just wide of Heurelho Gomes's left post. There were few chances for either side in the first half with Cathcart failing to open the scoring after six minutes when he picked out a Ben Watson cross only to head wide. Rob Elliot kept out a Troy Deeney shot after 15 minutes, with the Newcastle goalie also clearing an Etienne Capoue goal-bound effort a minute later.

But it was after the break that the match came to life, and within the first minute Capoue sent the ball over the Newcastle defense for Ighalo to beat the offside trap with only Elliot in his way, before firing into an empty net for his 14th goal this season. Watford took control with Ighalo, 26, setting up Cathcart for the second on 58 minutes. Newcastle substitute Ayoze Perez then came on and looked set to score, but his effort from a Moussa Sissoko cross went high and wide. But Lascelles headed home Shelvey's corner with Newcastle pressing for the equaliser, but Watford held on to claim their third victory over the Magpies this season following an FA Cup success earlier this month.—AFP

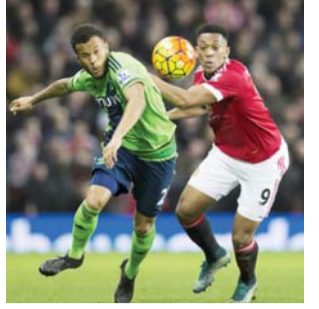
Live		Matches on TV	
		(Local Timings)	
ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE			
Everton v Swansea City	16:30	beIN SPORTS	
Arsenal v Chelsea	19:00	beIN SPORTS	
SPANISH LEAGUE			
Athletic de Bilbao v Eibar	14:00	beIN SPORTS	
Atletico v Sevilla	18:00	beIN SPORTS	
Deportivo v Valencia	20:15	beIN SPORTS	
Real Betis v Real Madrid	22:30	beIN SPORTS	
ITALIAN LEAGUE			
Fiorentina v Torino	14:30	beIN SPORTS	
Lazio v Chievo Verona	17:00	beIN SPORTS	
Hellas Verona v Genoa	17:00	beIN SPORTS	
Sampdoria v SSC Napoli	17:00	beIN SPORTS	
Citta v Udinese Calcio	17:00	beIN SPORTS	
Sassuolo Calcio v Bologna	17:00	beIN SPORTS	
Inter v Carpi	17:00	beIN SPORTS	
Juventus v AS Roma	22:45	beIN SPORTS	
GERMAN LEAGUE			
Eintracht v Wolfsburg	17:30	beIN SPORTS	
Schalke v Werder Bremen	19:30	beIN SPORTS	
FRENCH LEAGUE			
AS Monaco v Toulouse	16:00	beIN SPORTS	
Reims v Saint Etienne	19:00	beIN SPORTS	
Lyonnais v Marseille	23:00	beIN SPORTS	

Sports

Warriors welcome Kerr with win, Cavs say goodbye to Blat



Austin punishes desperate Man United 1-0



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BARCELONA BACK ON TOP AFTER MESSI'S STUNNER Page 18



LEICESTER: Leicester's Danny Simpson (left) and Stoke's Mame Biram Diouf battle for the ball during the English Premier League soccer match between Leicester City and Stoke City at the King Power Stadium yesterday. — AP

VARDY STRIKES AS LEICESTER GO TOP AGAIN



LEICESTER: Jamie Vardy rediscovered his Midas touch to extend Leicester City's fairytale season as they regained top spot in the Premier League with a 3-0 win at home to Stoke yesterday. The England striker had not scored for seven matches during which Claudio Ranieri's surprise package had managed only one win and had crashed out of the FA Cup. But Vardy slid home his 16th goal of the season from a tight angle to complete a

miserable afternoon for Stoke City, who lost skipper Ryan Shawcross to injury. Danny Drinkwater, one of the unsung heroes of Leicester's remarkable success story, had opened the scoring three minutes before the break with his first goal of the season. Drinkwater then turned provider with the 66th minute pass which unlocked the Stoke defense and allowed Vardy to round Jack Butland and apply the finishing touch. To crown a morale-boosting victory for Ranieri's men, substitute Leonardo Ulloa stabbed home a third in the closing stages after a flash of brilliance from Riyad Mahrez. While Leicester can carry on dreaming of the title and possible Champions League football from their perch on top of the Premier League, Stoke were left to reflect on a miserable afternoon in which a recurrence of a back injury for Shawcross was a major concern.

After a fairly uneventful opening to the game, it sprung to life with chances at both ends in quick succession, although it was Leicester who were closer to breaking the deadlock. Within seconds of Jon Walters having a scent of an opportunity at one end, after latching onto Erik Pieters' pass, Vardy had an instinctive shot on the turn following Marc Albrighton's cross. Though Stoke were able to scramble that away for a corner, Christian Fuchs' subsequent ball into the box was met with a scissor kick from Mahrez which flashed past the post. Danny Simpson's sense of awareness led to him producing a vital clearance when Mame Diouf was rose at the far post in anticipation of meeting Xherdan Shaqiri's cross with his head. Stoke were dealt a blow on the half hour when

Shawcross finally had to concede that his back problem picked a up a few minutes earlier wasn't going to allow him to continue. But it did not appear to have an unsettling effect as Marc Wilson dropped into his place, although Shinji Okazaki fired a 20-yard drive over the bar at the end of a Leicester counter attack. However, the deadlock was broken three minutes before the break when Philipp Wollscheid could only half clear a corner and Drinkwater's low drive was deflected past Butland by Wilson. Stoke were thankful for Ibrahim Afellay's determination when he got back to make a crucial block to prevent Okazaki capitalizing on Mahrez's burst forward and pass to the frontman. They then went close to making the most of that let-off by carving out a good opportunity as Glen Johnson's cross picked out Joselu, but fortunately for Leicester, his close range header was

directed straight at Kasper Schmeichel who was able to save quite comfortably. Leicester introduced a pair of fresh legs when Ulloa replaced the injured Okazaki and the substitute made his mark immediately with a determined run which took him past three Stoke defenders before he fired his low shot wide of the far post. But the King Power Stadium erupted moments later when Drinkwater struck a pass into the path of Vardy and he outpaced the unfortunate Wilson before waltzing around England teammate Butland and instinctively slipping his low shot into an empty net. Though Stoke rarely threatened to hit back in the closing stages of the game, Leicester put the seal on their emphatic win when Mahrez weaved his way into the box and managed to guide the ball to Ulloa, who gleefully accepted the close-range chance. — AFP

LALLANA DELIVERS LIVERPOOL



NORWICH: Adam Lallana scored a 95th-minute winner as Liverpool came from behind to beat Norwich City 5-4 in an extraordinary ding-dong Premier League battle at Carrow Road yesterday. Everton man Steven Naismith helped Norwich take a 3-1 lead and although they fell 4-3 down, Sebastien Bassong slammed in a 91st-minute equalizer, only for Lallana to have the final say in a frantic finale. Naismith was making his debut after his £8.5 million (\$12.1 million, 11 million euros) move from Everton and his 41st-minute goal put Norwich 2-1 up after Dieumerci Mbokani's back-heel had cancelled out Roberto Firmino's opener. Wes Hoolahan's 54th-minute penalty, after Alberto Moreno had fouled Naismith, made it 3-1, but goals from Firmino, Jordan Henderson and James Milner put Liverpool ahead before the stoppage-time drama unfolded. Naismith was one of four new signings in Norwich's

match-day squad, with Ivo Pinto, signed from Dinamo Zagreb, also making his debut at right-back, while Timm Klose and Matt Jarvis were on the bench. Norwich's new defenders have been bought to try and shore up the leakiest defence in the top flight, but that went to pot in the 18th minute as Liverpool went ahead. Jordan Ibe's performance in Liverpool's 3-0 FA Cup win over Exeter in mid-week was enough to get the nod ahead of Lallana and lead the attack in partnership with Firmino. The duo combined neatly after skilful work from Moreno, before Miner slipped Firmino through to beat goalkeeper Declan Rudd with a low shot off the far post. Norwich were determined to meet fire with fire, keeping up with their pressing game, and it bore fruit in the 29th minute. Liverpool failed to clear their lines and when the ball fell to Mbokani, who had his back to goal, he cleverly defied the close marking of Mamadou Sakho to back-heel past Simon Mignolet from six yards. The visitors' defensive shortcomings were exposed again 12 minutes later when Hoolahan picked out the angled run of Naismith, who arrowed a low shot across Mignolet and inside the left-hand post. Moreno's moment of madness came eight minutes into the second half when he slid in on Naismith near the byline on the Norwich right. He got away with it, but then inexplicably had another go at

Naismith from behind and conceded the penalty. Hoolahan beat Mignolet from the spot, going straight down the middle, to net his third goal of the season. Norwich's third goal forced visiting manager Jurgen Klopp's hand and Liverpool pushed further up the pitch in response. They were rewarded a minute later when Nathaniel Clyne found space down the right flank and crossed for Firmino to flick on to captain Henderson, whose finish was emphatic. Liverpool drew level with another sweeping move in the 63rd minute, which left Norwich exposed at the back. Henderson's cross from the left found Firmino, who drew Rudd from his line before knocking the ball over him and into the net for his fourth goal in three league games. Norwich's propensity to harm themselves continued as skipper Russell Martin gifted the ball to Milner with a needless back-pass from near the halfway line. Milner ran through unchallenged and took a step to his right before slotting past him to put Liverpool ahead. The Canaries thought they had snatched a point when Bassong thumped a low drive in from 20 yards in time added on. But four minutes later Lallana pounced on a loose ball as Norwich's back line failed to clear, driving a left-foot volley into the ground and into the net to send Klopp gambolling down the touchline. — AFP



NORWICH: Norwich City's Congolese striker Dieumerci Mbokani vies with Liverpool's French defender Mamadou Sakho (left) during the English Premier League football match between Norwich City and Liverpool yesterday. — AFP

AGUERO'S DOUBLE RESCUES VITAL POINT FOR CITY TITLE PUSH



MANCHESTER: Sergio Aguero scored twice to answer an Enner Valencia double for West Ham United and earn Manchester City a crucial point in their push to regain the Premier League title yesterday. Not for the first time City were thankful to their Argentine luminary who twice struck when the 2014 champions found themselves behind to the excellent home side in a vibrant contest. The Hammers' livewire Ecuadorian Valencia had put them ahead after 53 seconds with a sharp shot but City responded within eight minutes, Aguero equalizing from the penalty spot after he had been fouled by Carl Jenkinson. West Ham, inspired by the dazzling creativity of Dimitri Payet, took a second-half lead through a mixture of opportunism from Valencia and shocking defending by Nicolas Otamendi who dozed as the Ecuadorian nipped in to latch on to a long throw. City, though, secured a point when, nine minutes from time, a loose ball bobbed to Aguero who coolly converted his 12th league goal of the season. West Ham almost clinched the points at the last gasp when Cheikhou Kouyate headed against the bar. — Reuters



CAREER RESOLUTIONS YOU NEED TO MAKE IN 2016



DAVOS: (From L) Journalist Martin Wolf, International Monetary Fund (IMF) Managing Director Christine Lagarde, British Finance Minister George Osborne, Indian Finance Minister Arun Jaitley, Governor of the Bank of Japan Haruhiko Kuroda and Ivory Coast-born French Credit Suisse CEO Tidjane Thiam attend a session of the World Economic Forum annual meeting yesterday in Davos. — AFP

CHINA'S SLOWDOWN NORMAL: LAGARDE

IMF CHIEF SEEKS MORE ON CHINESE CURRENCY MOVES

DAVOS: IMF chief Christine Lagarde yesterday said the slowdown in China would not bring catastrophe for the global economy and that the jolts hitting financial markets were "very normal".

Lagarde spoke on the last day of the World Economic Forum in the Swiss ski resort of Davos where news this week of decreasing growth in China, the world's second biggest economy, spooked attendees from the global financial elite. But Lagarde told a panel: "We are not seeing a hard landing... We are seeing an evolution, a big transition which is going to be bumpy."

"We have to get used to it and it's a very normal and proper way to actually move towards a more sustainable and a more quality growth we all hope," she said. The Chinese government announced this week that its economy grew by 6.9 percent in 2015, the slowest rate in a quarter century.

Worries of a weak Chinese economy had already sown fears across global markets with share prices plummeting since January 1, also affected by low oil prices as a supply glut destabilizes fragile energy-producing countries. "What on earth is going on is simply the worst start of any year on the record on financial markets ever, it's simple," said French banker Tidjane Thiam, the CEO of Credit Suisse.

"The market is very worried about China of

course. They fear we will fall into a global recession," he said. British finance minister George Osborne, who also faced questions about Britain potentially voting to leave the European Union, said China had overshadowed proceedings at Davos.

"The world has not been very good over previous centuries at accommodating rising powers and it has often led to unhappy outcomes," Osborne said bleakly. "I think it is massively in our interest that we bring China into the multilateral institutions of the world," he said.

Currency jitters

Financial markets need more clarity on how Chinese authorities are managing their currency, particularly the relationship of the yuan to the US dollar, Lagarde said. Sharp swings in the yuan have contributed, along with a dramatic fall in the price of oil, to global market volatility since the beginning of 2016.

Bank of Japan Governor Haruhiko Kuroda, speaking on the same panel at the WEF in Davos, said he believed China should use capital controls to stabilize its currency while keeping domestic monetary policy loose.

Asked whether she would back capital controls by China for a period, Lagarde avoided a direct reply but said: "Certainly a massive use of reserves

would not be a particularly good idea ... Some of it was already used."

She said that the market needed "clarity and certainty" about China's exchange rate basket "in particular with reference to the dollar, which has always been the reference."

"That would be the right move to make," she added. Kuroda said China was right to keep monetary policy accommodative to help cushion the country's transition from an export-led industrial economy to a demand-driven consumer economy without excessive depreciation of the yuan.

"This is my personal view and may not be shared by Chinese authorities, but in this kind of contradictory situation, capital control could be useful to manage exchange rate as well as domestic monetary policy in a consistent, appropriate way."

He said Beijing was struggling to avoid either an excessive depreciation or an excessive appreciation of its currency. Chinese economic data signalling slowing growth in the world's second-largest economy have sent investors into a panic globally in the first three weeks of 2016, with oil prices also plunging as a result of oversupply in the market.

Credit Suisse CEO Tidjane Thiam told the Davos panel that many people in the markets did not necessarily believe China's official growth figure of 6.9

percent for 2015 and feared the Chinese economy was facing a "hard landing." "We believe China will have a soft landing, not a hard landing. A lot in people in the market believe demand in China is decreasing. We don't agree," he said.

Part of the market slide was due to a massive distressed sales of assets by sovereign wealth funds and asset managers prompted by falling oil prices, Thiam added.

Both Lagarde and Kuroda suggested investors could trust China's official growth data.

The Chinese central bank has been generous with liquidity, pumping a net 315 billion yuan (\$48 billion) into the banking system ahead of the Lunar New Year holiday in early February.

It was the biggest weekly injection since January 2014 and analysts suspected it was larger than that warranted to avoid any hint of a cash crunch during the long holiday.

According to sources, Zhang Xiaohui, an assistant governor of the central bank, said it would not rush to cut the amount of cash banks must hold in reserves, as doing so could send a strong signal on policy easing. Yi Gang, a vice governor of the central bank, also said it would keep the yuan basically stable against a basket of currencies.

Italian Economy Minister Pier Carlo Padoa-Schioppa told Reuters the IMF board's decision to include China's

yuan in the basket of major currencies used to calculate the Special Drawing Right in which the Fund lends to members was "an additional positive constraint" on China's management of its currency. Lagarde herself was also an issue at Davos, as she quietly campaigned to win backing for a second mandate as IMF managing director. With her term coming to an end in July, the IMF formally began accepting nominations on Thursday for who will guide the global crisis lender for the next five years.

The biggest powers governing the Washington-based Fund, including Britain Germany and France, all gave their support to Lagarde this week.

In her first term, she was deeply involved in the decision to add the Chinese yuan to the IMF's basket of reserve currencies, a highly symbolic move appreciated by Beijing.

Her plans to run again nonetheless face a potential hurdle: she could stand trial in France over her role in a banking scandal that predates her arrival at the IMF. In December, judges placed her under formal investigation in the long-running affair of former Adidas boss Bernard Tapie, who received a large state payout for his dispute with a state bank during her time as finance minister. Lagarde has said she will fight the trial order, and the IMF executive board at the time reiterated its confidence in her. — Agencies

IRAN SET TO BE HOOKED UP TO GLOBAL BANKS IN WEEKS

LONDON: Iran is set to re-engage with the banking world within weeks as international lenders link up with their Iranian counterparts using global transaction network SWIFT, Iran's Middle East Bank and a senior central bank official told Reuters on Friday.

A nuclear deal between world powers and Iran led to the removal of the curbs on Tehran's banking, insurance and shipping sectors last weekend, as well as restrictions on oil exports.

But for Iran to resume business with the global banking world - for the first time since 2012 - its banks need to be linked to overseas lenders on SWIFT. The system, the Society for the Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunications, is used to transmit payments and letters of credit.

"We have sent almost 40 SWIFTs to different banks around the world and we have requested that now that the sanctions are lifted, we would like to exchange documents and whether they will consider a correspondent banking relationship," said Parviz Aghili, chief executive and managing director of Tehran-based Middle East Bank. "Some of them have come back and have asked for various questions, for documents they need." "My feeling is it is going to take a couple of weeks or so before we start to see proper re-engagement. It will be slowly, slowly," he said in an interview.

Aghili said other Iranian banks were in the same situation regarding SWIFT as his company, which is listed on the Tehran Stock Exchange and has total assets of around \$1 bil-

lion.

A senior official with Iran's central bank also told Reuters the transaction links would soon be restored. "Really, it is a matter of just a few weeks, less than a month. Because all of our banks, whether private or state-owned banks, have taken the necessary bureaucratic steps, regarding rejoining the SWIFT system," the official said on Friday.

SWIFT did not respond to a request for comment on the status of communication between Iranian and international banks on its system.

Aghili added: "SWIFT has been turned on - it has always been on. The main issue has been we did not have proper correspondent banking relationships with so many banks around the world and because of sanctions, our SWIFTs remained unanswered."

Middle East Bank, which is smaller than state-owned players such as Bank Mellat, Bank Mellat and Bank Saderat, is owned by investors including small and medium-sized Iranian firms.

'IRAN VERY ATTRACTIVE'

While international banks are expected to link up with their Iranian counterparts via SWIFT, Iran will also be looking to encourage foreign institutions to expand involvement in the country's financial system. But for many foreign banks, there are concerns about being caught up in ongoing US sanctions.

Many international sanctions relating to Iran's nuclear program were lifted but most

involving US measures remain in place. Non-US banks may trade with Iran without fear of punishment in the United States but US banks may not do so, directly or indirectly.

Washington's sanctions prevent US nationals, banks and insurers from trading with Iran and also prohibit any trades with Iran in US dollars from being processed via the US financial system. This is a significant complication given the dollar's role as the world's main business currency.

European banks are also cautious - with some, including Deutsche Bank, remembering past fines from US regulators for breaking sanctions, though Commerzbank has said it is reviewing its policy of not doing business in Iran.

The Iranian central bank official said banks from European countries including Germany, France, Britain and Italy, had been in talks to open branches after the lifting of sanctions.

"God willing, soon we will witness that too. Iran is a very attractive market for business and they know that," the official said. By contrast, Aghili said he expected bigger banks to wait at least six to 12 months before they would look at doing serious business in the country.

"The smaller banks who do not have that involvement in the US market will be prepared to work with Iranian banks," Aghili said. "But even these smaller banks expect proper anti-money laundering checks and they have to check it and they will also require counter-parties to check it." — Reuters

IRAN, CHINA AGREE \$600BN TRADE DEAL AFTER SANCTIONS

DUBAI: Iran and China agreed to expand bilateral ties and increase trade to \$600 billion in the next 10 years, President Hassan Rouhani said yesterday during a visit to Tehran by Chinese President Xi Jinping.

Xi is the second leader of a UN Security Council member to visit Tehran after the nuclear deal Iran struck with world powers last year. Russian President Vladimir Putin visited Tehran in November.

Iran emerged from years of economic isolation this month when the United Nations' nuclear watchdog ruled it had curbed its nuclear program, clearing the way for the lifting of UN, US, and European Union sanctions.

"Iran and China have agreed to increase trade to \$600 billion in the next 10 years," Rouhani said at a news conference with Xi broadcast live on state television.

"Iran and China have agreed on forming strategic relations (as) reflected in a 25-year comprehensive document," he said. Iran and China signed 17 accords yesterday, including on cooperation in nuclear energy and a revival of the ancient Silk Road trade route, known in China as One Belt, One Road.

"China is still heavily dependent on Iran for its energy imports and Russia needs Iran in terms of its new security architecture vision for the Middle East," said Ellie Geranmayeh, policy fellow at the European Council on Foreign Relations.

"Iran plays quite an integral role for both China and Russia's interests within the region, much more than it does for the Europeans," Geranmayeh said.

NEW MARKETS

Xi was quoted as saying by China's Xinhua news agency: "The China-Iran friendship ... has stood the test of the vicissitudes of the international landscape."

The Chinese state-backed Global Times newspaper said in an editorial on Saturday that China hoped to improve ties with Iran as part of its sweeping plan to rebuild trade links with Europe and Asia and carve out new markets for its goods. "China is of course considering its self interest in strengthening cooperation with Iran, especially at a time when China is in the midst of expending efforts to push forward the One Belt, One Road initiative, Iran is an important fulcrum," the paper said.

Rouhani said the countries had also agreed to cooperate on "terrorism and extremism in Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan and Yemen". China signalled its support for Yemen's government, which is fighting an Iran-allied militia, during Xi's visit to Saudi Arabia, Iran's rival for influence in the region, this week.

Iran has called on China to join the fight against the Islamic State militant group and play a more active role in the region. Tehran is widely credited with convincing Russia to start its military intervention in Syria and join the fight against Islamic State.

"Although China and Russia backed UN sanctions against Iran on its nuclear program, they were also heavily pushing for special waivers to continue trading with Iran," Geranmayeh said.

"Iran had a relationship both politically and economically with China and Russia for the last ten years in ways that it hasn't had with Europe. So it's quite natural to see it opening up first to these countries."

The Chinese president was to meet Iran's most powerful figure, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, later in the day. — Reuters

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- One Economy class ticket Kuwait - Bahrain - Kuwait

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

- The competition is open to individuals of all ages.
 - The submitted photos should be taken by the participant.
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 - The winners will be chosen by a panel of judges.
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KUWAIT: Ahmad Al-Mutawa, Chairman & CEO of Abdulaziz Al-Ali Al-Mutawa Group of Companies, Kenny Kim, Deputy GM at KIA HQ for the ME & Africa, a delegation from the embassy of the Republic of Korea to Kuwait, business partners & members of the media, attend the unveiling of KIA's all-new 2016 Optima at a breathtaking event at Marina Mall. —Photos by Joseph Shagra

FASCINATING PERFECTION: ALL-NEW 2016 KIA OPTIMA UNVEILED AT MARINA MALL

GABR: KIA #3 AUTO BRAND IN KUWAIT DESPITE ECONOMIC CHALLENGES

KUWAIT: The evolution of KIA's best-selling model continued on Wednesday, Jan 20 with the unveiling of the All-New 2016 Optima at a breathtaking event at Marina Mall's main dome area in the presence of Ahmad Al-Mutawa, Chairman & CEO of Abdulaziz Al-Ali Al-Mutawa Group of Companies, Kenny Kim, Deputy GM at KIA HQ for the ME & Africa, a delegation from the embassy of the Republic of Korea to Kuwait, business partners & members of the media.

Organized under the slogan "Fascinating Perfection" by National Agencies Group (NAG), a subsidiary of Abdulaziz Al-Ali Al-Mutawa Group of Companies and authorized distributor of KIA Motors in Kuwait, the launch event highlighted KIA's impressive local and international achievements before revealing the award-winning 2016 Optima sedan to an excited audience.

Named 2016 International Car of the Year by Road & Travel Magazine, the All-New Optima features a stunning modern design, an impressive array of high-tech features, excellent performance and increased spaciousness to provide occupants with an elegant yet sporty riding experience. Moreover, the Optima underscores KIA's status as a global and local automotive leader.

"KIA now ranks 3rd in Kuwait despite economic challenges which are exerting heavy pressure on the automotive market" explained Omar Gabr, Brand Manager at KIA Motors Kuwait. "This continued success can be attributed to KIA's award-winning innovation as seen in the All-New 2016 Optima in addition to NAG's efforts & continuously upgraded services which reflect KIA's status in Kuwait Market."

Also speaking on the Optima's success story was Mohannad Al-Mutawa, General Sales Manager of KIA Motors Kuwait, who gave a short presentation on the model's evolution since its inception in the year 2000, highlighting the many advancements of the All-New model along with explaining the importance of the midsize sedan segment to the Kuwaiti automotive market.

Instantly recognizable European design

Building on the award-winning design of the previous-generation Optima, KIA designers in Germany and the United States retained the identity of the vehicle while making a confident move forward to keep the car modern and fresh. The design was inspired by sweeping contemporary surfaces and modern architecture, leading to a sophisticated and dynamic sedan that is instantly recognizable.

Attention to detail and features real stitching along the dashboard and doors along with tasteful metallic accents. At the same time, the interior has been simplified with a cleaner, more unified design than the previous generation. Improvements have also been made to enhance seat comfort where occupants will enjoy reduced vibrations, higher-quality seat materials and ventilated front seats.

For added convenience, the 2016 Optima offers a height-adjustable front passenger

er audio system and the option to upgrade to a KIA-first available Harman/Kardon QuantumLogic Premium Surround Sound Audio System, which includes 10 speakers, Clari-Fi(tm) technology and an upgraded 630-watt digital amplifier. KIA was one of the first automakers to incorporate Clari-Fi technology into its audio systems with the debut of the 2016 Sorento, and Optima is the first-ever KIA sedan to feature QuantumLogic Premium Surround Sound technology.

Also available on every Optima is a rear-

ditions, will bring the vehicle to a complete stop to potentially avoid a collision or reduce damage - makes the task of driving easier and safer. Also available for the first time on any KIA vehicle are Bi-Xenon HID headlights with Dynamic Bending Lamps (DBL) and intuitive High Beam Assist (HBA), which recognizes oncoming traffic and automatically switches the lights to low beam until the opposing vehicle has passed.

The 2016 Optima features a uniquely engi-



The All-New Optima's exterior is also wider, longer and sits lower than its predecessor, ensuring better aerodynamics which translates into more torque for less horsepower.

seat, a feature normally found only in premium vehicles.

Convenience, technology, smart performance and safety

Cutting-edge technology has become a cornerstone of the Optima experience, and the new generation promises to impress with incredible features. The All-New Optima comes with a smartphone wireless charger, standard six-speak-

er camera display with the option to upgrade to a 360-degree Surround-View Monitor. Available driver-aid technology, including Advanced Smart Cruise Control (ASCC), Blind Spot Detection (BSD) with Lane Change Assist, Rear Cross Traffic Alert (RCTA), Rear Parking Assist System (RPAS), Front Collision Warning System (FCWS), Lane Departure Warning System (LDWS) and Autonomous Emergency Braking (AEB) - which, under appropriate con-

ditions, will bring the vehicle to a complete stop to potentially avoid a collision or reduce damage - makes the task of driving easier and safer. Also available for the first time on any KIA vehicle are Bi-Xenon HID headlights with Dynamic Bending Lamps (DBL) and intuitive High Beam Assist (HBA), which recognizes oncoming traffic and automatically switches the lights to low beam until the opposing vehicle has passed.

The vehicle is available in Kuwait in 2 engine sizes:
* 2.0L MPI, 4-Cylinder, 157 HP
* 2.4L MPI, 4-Cylinder, 178 HP



BATTLEGROUND COLORADO ENTERS 2016 WITH ABORTION DEBATES

DENVER: Colorado Republicans could be forgiven for thinking that several years of fiery political contests over abortion and reproductive rights, which helped Democrats win several elections in this socially liberal swing state, were behind them.

Then, last year a pregnant woman close to giving birth was gruesomely

attacked with a knife, and a few months later an anti-abortion zealot opened fire at a Planned Parenthood clinic in Colorado Springs, killing three. Think those cases won't affect the 2016 races? Think again.

Abortion and reproductive rights are never far from the nerve in this battleground state, where party affiliation is

roughly even between Democrats and Republicans and statewide contests often come down to the votes of suburban women who belong to neither party. That key demographic generally favors moderate candidates who back conservative spending but also abortion rights.

Dog-whistle issue

With a US Senate seat and control of the US House delegation on the line in Colorado, plus the prospect of Hillary Clinton becoming the first major party female presidential nominee, gender politics could easily make the difference.

"It is a bit of a dog-whistle issue for a narrow minority, but it is one that does have political power," said Gregorinah Hartman of NARAL Pro-Choice Colorado. "We're expecting to see more and not less in 2016." Battle lines have already been drawn in Colorado's hottest contests.

In the US Senate race, Tim Neville, a Republican state senator from Littleton, kicked off his campaign against Democratic incumbent Sen. Michael Bennet by talking about abortion politics. "When an organization like Planned Parenthood ignores the law, kills the unborn, sells their body parts for profit, and we have both parties that can't even come together to end this tragedy, we have an issue with leadership," Neville told supporters, referencing videos taken by anti-abortion activists they said showed Planned Parenthood personnel negotiating the sale of fetal organs.

Bennet likely won't mind if the debate stays on Planned Parenthood. The state's senior senator won his last contest in large part because of reproductive rights. Bennet faced a conservative Tea Party favorite in 2010, one who appeared to be winning in polls until Democrats pounded him for supporting ballot measures to ban abortion by defining fertilized embryos as people, a concept described as "personhood."

Bennet's victory ensured that Democrats for the next five years would try tying Republicans to the "personhood" movement. The focus on reproductive rights grew so intense that during the 2014 Senate campaign, reporters and Republicans derisively dubbed former Sen. Mark Udall "Mark Uterus." Udall was defeated for a second term by Republican Cory Gardner, who once supported a "personhood" measure but convincingly told the public he'd changed his mind.

The Udall defeat was seen by many as the last time Colorado Democrats would focus so heavily on reproductive rights. But events have dictated otherwise. In addition to the Planned Parenthood shootings, motivated apparently by the confessed gunman's opposition to abortion, Colorado is preparing to try a woman accused of cutting an unborn baby out of a nearly eight-months-pregnant Longmont woman last year. The baby did not survive. The accused attacker goes on trial this spring in a case Republicans are saying highlights the state's inadequate

penalties for killing unborn babies.

Women's reproductive rights are playing out in a pitched congressional contest, too. Democrats are trying to oust a suburban Republican, Rep. Mike Coffman, who joined Republican colleagues last year and voted to defund Planned Parenthood. The contest will likely determine which party controls Colorado's US House delegation, where the GOP currently has a 4-3 edge.

Reproductive rights

Democratic contender Morgan Carroll, who is challenging Coffman, called his Planned Parenthood vote "appalling." She has received the backing of Emily's List, a national political group focused on electing Democratic women who support abortion rights. Glamour Magazine recently described the Coffman-Carroll race one that "women everywhere should also have their eye on."

Inspired by the attack on the pregnant woman and the Planned Parenthood shootings, the Colorado Legislature this year is going to offer plenty of opportunities for candidates to score political points on women's reproductive rights. Lawmakers will debate an outright ban on abortion, along with a GOP plan to make killing a fetus eligible for a homicide charge. Democrats, meanwhile, will be defending a plan by the Democratic administration to use tax money to increase teenage access to long-acting reversible contraception such as intrauterine devices. —AP



COLORADO: In this Friday, March 23, 2012 file photo, supporters from both sides of the abortion issue share the sidewalk next to the Planned Parenthood clinic in West Glenwood. —AP

BRAINS VS BLIZZARDS: HARVARD STUDENTS TAKE ON SNOWFALL

SUPERHEATED ICICLE CUTTER, FREEZE-RESISTANT DOORMAT

BOSTON: Winter is bearing down anew, and Harvard University students have been engineering new ways to deal with it. Eighteen juniors representing several engineering disciplines in Professor David Mooney's problem-solving and design class spent the fall semester inventing a robotic remote-control rooftop snowblower, a superheated icicle cutter and a freeze-resistant doormat.

The projects grew out of meetings with the university's Facilities Maintenance Operations

department, which is responsible for clearing snow from the 5,000-acre campus and was particularly challenged last winter when the Boston area got more than 9 feet of snow. Harvard shut down several times, the first time campus closed since the infamous Blizzard of '78.

"Don't get me wrong, FMO did an impressive job last winter," electrical engineering major Peyton Fine said. "But we wanted to somehow improve their operations. We wanted to make it easier to get around campus safely and keep

workers safe." A major problem is clearing snow off Harvard's many old and flat-roofed buildings. The main Cambridge/Boston campus has about 500 buildings.

The students retrofitted a commercial snowblower that can be controlled using a modified video game control pad and can be operated remotely, even from inside a nice, warm office. It eliminates the need for workers to spend time on slippery rooftops where they risk falling.

Clearing icicles

Another potential hazard for workers is clearing icicles off eaves. The students' research found that about 150 people a year are killed in the US trying to clear snow and icicles off rooftops. For that problem, the students came up with a device resembling a roof rake, with a long handle topped with a Y-shaped head that holds a superheated wire that can quickly slice through the thickest of icicles while the operator stands on firm ground.

The students also developed a durable freeze-resistant hydrogel mat to keep doorways and steps ice free. The class was one of the most practical junior bioengineering major Cassie Lowell has taken. "It's a unique class in the sense is that we're given a lot of freedom," she said. "It was a really hands-on, real-world experience."

The students and Mooney stress that all their inventions are prototypes and won't be deployed on campus this winter. But some of the students plan to keep working on them, with the goal of one day making them commercially available. Fine said he'd love to walk into a hardware store in the future and see the items for sale. "Just like someone has a leaf blower in their garage, we'd love to see someone have an icicle cutter in the garage one day," he said. —AP



CAMBRIDGE: In this December 2015 photo provided by Harvard University, junior Cesar Maeda explains a robotic snow blower to a group of officials at Harvard. —AP



VIRGINIA: Cars make their way down Electric Road in southwest Roanoke County past Tanglewood Mall.

DINOSAUR FOSSILS FOUND IN W INDIA

AHMEDABAD: A geologist said yesterday his team has discovered what it believes are dinosaur fossils in the western Indian state of Gujarat that could be millions of years old. The team, of 10 mainly German and Indian archaeologists and researchers, dug up the fossils during excavations in Gujarat's marshy coastal district of Kutch, Gaurav Chauhan said.

"We have found three portions of hip bones of (a) dinosaur," Chauhan, a geologist from Gujarat's Kutch University and a member of the excavation team said. "We have been working on this site since (the) last 10 days or so," he said.

Chauhan said carbon-dating tests would need to be carried out to try to determine

the age of the bones, while more examinations were needed to identify the type. Gujarat, sometimes dubbed India's Jurassic Park, is home to one of the world's largest collections of dinosaur remains. In 2003, a National Geographic team discovered a new dinosaur species in Gujarat after examining fossils found scattered along the Narmada River.

The dinosaur was named "Rajasaurus Narmadensis" or the regal reptile from Narmada, which was a 30-foot-long, carnivorous and stocky animal, with an unusual head crest. And a large dinosaur egg hatchery has been discovered in the town of Balasinor, some 90 kilometers south of the state's main city of Ahmedabad. —AFP

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DICKSON HOUSE: CULTURAL CENTER FOR GENERATIONS TO COME



Dickson House is named after the British High Commissioner Lieutenant Colonel Harold Dickson who moved into the house the same year he was appointed as British Political Agent to Kuwait in 1929. The house was built in the early 19th century; it belonged to a Kuwait merchant called Mohammad bin Ali Al-Asfour. After Dickson's death in 1959, his wife, Dame Violet (locally known as Om Soud) remained a tenant in the house until 1990. After she died, the house has been under the care of Kuwait's National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters. It was converted into a museum, and was opened in January 23, 2001, to become a cultural center that tells the story of a British officer who was smitten by the Kuwaiti culture and customs. —KUNA



Lord Mayor of London Lord Mount Evans and the British Ambassador to Kuwait Matthew Lodge were recently received at the White Palace by Dr Suad Mohammed Al-Sabah, as well as the Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs and Acting Minister of Electricity and Water Sheikh Mohammad Al-Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, and Sheikh Mubarak Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah.



PRAVASAANDHRA TDP PAYS TRIBUTES TO NTR

Pravasaandhra Telugu Desam Kuwait members and Telugu people living in Kuwait from the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana paid rich tributes with blood donations to the late legendary actor, TDP founder and Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh Nandamuri Taraka Rama Rao (NTR).

On the occasion of NTR's 19th death anniversary (vardhanti), Pravasaandhra Telugu Desam Kuwait organized a blood donation program at Jabriya central blood bank.

Pravasaandhra Telugu Desam President Mulakala Subbarayudu Naidu and Jyothi

Mulakala, Vice Presidents Koduru Venkat, Peram Ramana and others garlanded photos of NTR and made speeches praising his services to Telugu states. Mulakala fondly recalled some of the memories of the legendary actor and leader on the occasion. Among those present were Korapati Ramachandra Naidu, Sudarsan Naidu, K Venkatesh Naidu, B P Naidu, Laxmipathi Naidu, Paleti Prasad, Mulakala Ravi, Jyothi Mulakala, Narayanamma, Venu, K Rajayya K Tripal, K Bhaskar, G Sivayya, G Subbaraudu, G Damu, A Shaker, A Pratap, Y Ramesh, Y Siva, K Babu, G Raghavlu, B Durgayya, T Sudhir, M Ravi and others.





— Photos by Joseph Shagra

INCREDIBLE INDIA FESTIVAL AT LULU HYPERMARKET

Lulu Hypermarket, the lifestyle shopping destination of choice for discerning shoppers,

launched their captivating 'Incredible India' festival at the Al-Rai branch on Thursday, 21 January.

The Indian Ambassador to Kuwait Sunil Jain inaugurated the festival in the presence of LuLu management, staff and a large gathering of shoppers and well-wishers. Various Indian cultural programs, including decorations from different Indian states, added entertainment to the opening event.

The 10-day festival, which runs from 20 to 30 January, allows shoppers to enjoy many of the popular food products and other items from India. In addition to a variety of Indian food items, a special section of the festival is dedicated to freshly-prepared Indian dishes and sweets. Along with branded garments, exquisitely designed sarees, churidars, kurthas and footwear by Indian craftsmen are on offer during the festival.

The festival is an ideal opportunity for citizens and other expatriates in Kuwait to get a taste of Indian food and various other products. The wide range and large selection of products on display, as well as the expansive shopping space, makes shopping at LuLu a very comfortable experience. The festival also allows shoppers to find value in their regular purchase of fresh fruits, vegetables, groceries and other household products.

LuLu Hypermarkets offers an ultra-modern shopping ambience along with a selection of high-quality products at very affordable prices. The Incredible India festival is part of LuLu Hypermarket's initiative to continuously bring the best of the world to their customers, by providing the right products in the right place at the right time.



Anna Tamer, the wife of the Turkish Ambassador to Kuwait hosted a tea party recently in which participants bid farewell to Rzyeva Sevinj, the wife of the outgoing Ambassador of Azerbaijan to Kuwait.

— Photos by Joseph Shagra

Morissette's Instagram helps give a new sense of self



The 41-year-old singer has only recently unveiled her deep interest in psychology and spirituality, and is currently working on a book that is half memoir and half "reflections, insights, regrets, and just straight-up teaching". She also regularly keeps her fans updated with her progress in life through her blog and Instagram feeds, and admits that these methods of sharing have proved eye-opening for her. She told Vogue magazine: "I've always had a little of a blind spot around how I am perceived. But there's uniformity now. This may be a crass way of understanding it, but there's something about even looking at my own Instagram, looking at my blog, where I'm getting a sense of self that I never had." Alanis is most well known for songs such as 'Ironic' and her album 'Jagged Little Pill'. But she admits that her songwriting process meant she dissociated herself from her other addictions - such as being a workaholic. She explained: "The art expressed catharsis. I was embodying it every day onstage, sweating it out. "You know these songs were being written without me cognitively knowing how they were being written. It was very visceral, somatic. Art is just a storm. I've been dissociated for so long, and a workaholic and a few other addictions in there." Now a mother to five-year-old son Ever, Alanis' priorities in life have changed. Speaking about her start in the entertainment industry, she admits she never really fitted in among her peers. She said: "All due respect to the geniuses that were around me, I felt like a bit of an outsider. I tried really hard to fit in and belong and have BFFs that were famous. It could have had something to do with the time period. It wasn't 2016; it was the '90s and early 2000s. It was a different time for women in music. I would awkwardly phone different celebrities to see if we could be friends. And a lot of times I would be met with: "Why are you calling me?" I guess people don't call people just to become friends with them.



Cannon reportedly 'shocked' by Mariah Carey's engagement

The singer's Australian beau popped the question on Thursday, despite the pair having dated for less than 12 months. Nick, who was married to Mariah from 2008 to 2014, is said to be slightly taken aback by the news considering the speed of their whirlwind romance. A source said: "While Nick certainly supports Mariah and James' decision to get married, he's a little shocked. Surely, it was in the back of his mind that the mother of his children could tie the knot again. "And now that it's happened, he's a little taken back by it. It always stings when your ex moves on in a major way like marrying another man." Despite Nick's feelings, he is said to be adjusting quickly to the idea, mostly because he knows it would also be beneficial for his and Mariah's twins Moroccan and Monroe. The source added to

HollywoodLife.com: "Nick's adjusting. He knows James and knows that he's a good man and he's good with the twins." James is said to have proposed in Mariah's hometown, with a stunning 35 carat diamond ring. A source told E! News: "They fell head over heels in love with one another. It's crazy how perfect they are together, they both know it and couldn't be happier. "As soon as their friendship turned romantic, they have wanted to spend every moment together. They have a connection that is unparalleled; it's been a very beautiful experience for them both. If you spend even five minutes with them, you can't help but believe in true love. "They are just very cute together, they like doing sweet things for one another. They want to make each other happy."

Michael Buble has welcomed son Elias into the world



The 40-year-old singer and his 28-year-old wife Luisana Lopilato are already parents to two-year-old Noah, and announced their new arrival on Twitter on Friday. Alongside a picture of him and Luisana with their little boy, Michael wrote: "And then there were four. Introducing Noah's little brother Elias." In the snap, both Michael and Luisana are seen beaming for the camera, while little Elias curls up to his mother. Lingerie model Luisana previously revealed that during this pregnancy, she has been craving fried eggs and peanut butter sandwiches, and wakes up at all hours of the night desperate to satisfy her cravings. She shared with HELLO! magazine: "Unlike with Noah, I'm craving things like hamburgers, hot dogs, fried eggs, sweets. I try to eat healthily, but then I wake up at three in the morning wanting a peanut butter sandwich." Luisana also revealed her love for black pudding has returned with her second pregnancy. Asked if Michael makes the sandwiches for her, she said: "Yes. He's great. I also want to eat black pudding all the time. I felt that way giving birth, I couldn't stand it."

Faris' identity changed when she had son



The 39-year-old actress welcomed the little boy with husband Chris Pratt in August 2012, and says she was entirely unprepared for just how much becoming a mother would change her life. She said: "Everything that everyone says [about having a baby] is true. People really need to pound the information into you because it is a tidal wave change into your life. "Especially as a woman, your identity changes. You are now a mom, sort of the most important job in the world, and the pressure and the guilt and all the things that are sort of wrapped up in that, I don't think anyone can prepare you for." Jack is getting used to a certain type of lifestyle, considering both his parents are successful actors. But Anna admits she and Chris are unsure whether or not they should continue to raise Jack in Hollywood. She explained to the Huffington Post: "We want Jack to have as normal of a childhood or at least a similar childhood as we had. The other day I was picking him up from his pre-school and there was some paparazzi-that doesn't happen very often, when Chris is around and in town it's different-but Jack waved at them and said, 'Cheese!' Anna also spoke about just how incredible she finds it to see Chris and their son, adding: "It's so amazing to see that moment that Chris comes home from work and Jack is like, 'Daddy!'"



KOURTNEY says Scott Disick will always be her family

The 36-year-old split from Scott last July after nine years together. The pair are parents to three children - Mason, six, Penelope, three and one-year-old Reign - and Kourtney insisted she will never cut Scott entirely out of her life. She told Ellen DeGeneres in a clip from an interview to air tomorrow: "We're totally getting along, we have three beautiful kids together. He's family, he'll always be." Kourtney and Scott sparked claims they could have reunited as they have been seen looking close on several occasions recently. But the reality television star told Ellen that she is most definitely single. She said: "Well, we're not together, I feel like every day is different." Kourtney looked incredible for the interview in a gold sparkling shirt suit, which showed off her slim figure and long legs. She had earlier admitted she was feeling nervous about her interview on the show, but later posted a picture on her Instagram suggesting her fears were a thing of the past. She captioned the shot: "She Instagram herself like I'm an idiotic hag alert." Kourtney ended her relationship with troubled Scott after the 32-year-old was spotted getting cozy with another woman in St Tropez last year.

Cuoco is 'so happy' she's a single lady



The 'Big Bang Theory' actress split from her tennis player husband Ryan Sweeting in September 2015 after less than two years of marriage. But as she rebuilds her life following the marriage breakdown, the 30-year-old star's sister Briana said she is coping extremely well. Her sister Briana said: "Kaley's never been better. She's good. She's so happy. She only cries twice a day now". Having a close sibling has been helpful for Kaley, with Briana admitting her sister has turned to her for support as she comes to terms with the split. She added to Entertainment Tonight: "Everyone goes through hard times and as long as you're there for that person and they know you're going to be there without judgment and you can be just a good sounding board, that's all you can do for someone." Kaley's in no rush to find a new boyfriend, but Briana has already thought about the kind of man she'd like to see her sister with. She continued: "She has a really great sense of humor and being a woman that saying a lot! So someone who makes her laugh and makes her feel comfortable and confident in what she's made for herself in her life." But the most important thing, Briana added, is that he's "not a jerk!"

Kristin Cavallari was 'really shaken up' after her car crash

The former 'The Hills' star was rushed to hospital after her car was struck by another vehicle while she was driving in Chicago. It's been a difficult few months for the 29-year-old, whose brother Michael was found dead in Utah last December, and mother-of-three Kristin is said to be incredibly rattled by the latest incident in her life. A source said: "After everything that has happened lately, the accident really shook her up. She's just thankful that she didn't get hurt." Kristin is believed to "doing fine" after the crash, and will be discharged from hospital shortly, the source told People.com. Her husband, sports star Jay Cutler, showed up at the hospital to be with his wife shortly after the crash. None of Kristin's three children were

present at the time of the incident. Kristin has been keeping a low profile since the passing of her brother, who had been missing for a fortnight before his body was discovered. Following the tragic loss, Kristin said she was seeking solace in her children, and her newborn daughter Saylor.

She wrote on Instagram: "My little angel, Saylor. She has been my light throughout this whole thing and has given me so much strength. Thank you baby girl for coming when I did." Kristin and Jay - who also have sons Camden, three, and Jaxon, 17 months, together - welcomed Saylor in November.



Bieber to work out on private 'gym bus'

The 'Sorry' hitmaker is set to embark on his mammoth run of shows on March 9, 2016, in Seattle, and will be on the road to at least November. Justin doesn't want to get out of shape whilst moving around and so will travel with his own portable exercise centre which he can use any time he wants. Revealing details of his mobile gym, he said: "I will be touring on a bus. It's a different vibe, I don't mind it. I have a studio bus and a workout bus, it's just a big gym." The benefit of having a gym bus is that if Justin wants to take a break from his fitness regime he can, but is safe in the knowledge he can pick it back up at any time. However, the 21-year-old singer doesn't plan on pushing himself to hard working

out because he finds going on tour "more lenient" as he can pretty much "party and sleep" his way through it. Speaking on the 'Kyle and Jackie O Show' on Australian radio station KIIS FM, he said: "On tour it's more lenient, I can bring friends [on tour] and party and sleep all day. It's better." And the 21-year-old skating fanatic will also have a half pipe with him in case he gets the urge to jump on his skateboard. He added: "I'm bringing a half pipe on tour." Justin was also asked if his tour rider was leaked what the most bizarre thing on it would be. He replied: "I like Ritz crackers with peanut butter."



Angie says late ex-husband David Bowie 'staged passing well'

The 66-year-old former model was shocked to hear David - who she was married to from 1970 to 1980 - had died of cancer earlier this month because she expected him to outlive her, and while she wasn't on speaking terms with the 'Starman' hitmaker before his passing she has no regrets about it. Speaking about being informed David had died aged 69 while she was competing on UK reality TV show 'Celebrity Big Brother', she said: "It was fine except I couldn't believe it. I thought I would die first. I don't think anyone knew [he'd been unwell]. In fact let me take this opportunity to say I think ... he staged his passing rather well. "Our rancor with each other almost kept us going and I realized I wasn't angry anymore and I thought, 'Oh my God.' [I have] no regrets whatsoever. He was obnoxious when he was obnoxious and that's it. But I realised the possibility that I would never hear from him again." Angie and David had son Zowie Bowie, 44 - who is now known as Duncan Jones - together but she hasn't spoken to him for 30 years and admitted she "doubts" he will get in contact with her again. She explained: "I had Zowie for David ... I said to him, 'I will never fight you for custody.' David and his father were this close. "What kind of a person would I be if I used my son as a weapon in my tool belt when we got divorced? Is that not disgusting behavior?" When asked if that was an act of generosity rather than selfishness, she replied: "Yes it was." Angie admits it "hurts" being estranged from her son but she would rather try to "close the door" and move on with her life than dwell on their divided relationship. Speaking on chat show 'Loose Women', she said: "Last time I saw him he was 13 or 14. It wasn't a tricky age, he was busy working, studying, doing what children do, what I did at 13 and 14. "Yeah I'm sorry I don't really have much else to say about it. That's how I feel about it and it hurts me and when something hurts me I put it in something in the back of



my head and I close the door. "You can ask me till you're blue in the face and I will say, 'Yeah whatever.'" When asked if David's death will change anything between Angie and her son, she replied: "No, I don't think so." Earlier this week, Angie quit 'Celebrity Big Brother' prematurely after falling ill, just over a week after hearing about David's passing, and she insists she became unwell because she eventually processed the news that he had passed away. Speaking about collapsing on her bed on the show, she said: "I got sick because of it [his death]."

Perry doesn't recall much of 'Friends' because he was 'a little out of it'

The 46-year-old actor - who has previously suffered from drug and alcohol addictions admits his memory of portraying Chandler Bing in the popular sitcom is a little hazy from series three to six in the late 1990s. When asked about his least favorite 'Friends' episode, he said: "I don't remember three years of it, so none of those. "I was a little out of it at the time ... Somewhere between seasons three and six." Matthew's 'Friends' co-stars Jennifer Aniston (Rachel Green), Courtney Cox (Monica Geller), Lisa Kudrow (Phoebe Buffay), David Schwimmer (Ross Geller) and Matt LeBlanc (Joey Tribbiani) are set to reunite on 'Must See TV: A Tribute to James Burrows'. While Matthew recently revealed he has been too busy rehearsing for his London play 'The End of Longing' to record the segment, he wouldn't be surprised if the group got together to film a 'Friends' reunion episode at some point in the future. Speaking on Chris Evans' BBC Radio 2 show, he added: "I don't know what the price would be but I think the actors would actually be open to it, I do. I think we would be open to doing something, some kind of TV special. I don't know about a movie. "It's kind of tough because we've ended on such a high note that we don't want to ruin it, so we'd want to be really careful. Sometimes when you do a reunion it's terrible, and it sort of ruins the memory of the good show that you've done before. "We've talked about it a little bit over dinner, we like to get together for dinner and we have a good time together. "It's a really good group, there isn't a jerk in the group and that really saved us for ten years."



Carmen Electra wants an 'intelligent' man

The 43-year-old model and actress would be happy to date a man out of the spotlight but is more worried about his brains than how he looks. She said: "If they don't trust me, it's hard. It makes work hard. They have to be incredibly smart, intelligent, brains is everything. Looks aren't really a priority for me. I like artists, a sense of humor. "But I have a tendency to get bored. I like very intelligent men because they're interesting; it's sexy to me. Someone that's open to play and have fun not someone that's so serious." And whilst she'd love to have a special man in her life, Carmen is trying to strike up a "balance" between her work life and her home life. Speaking on The Lowdown with Diana Madison, she added: "I just keep myself really busy and throw myself into work. I'm trying to have more balance in my life because I'm either one hundred percent work or one hundred percent relationship. "I love doing this and I'm a workaholic sometimes and other times, I like to chill and relax. It's about finding that balance. I'm getting there."



Joshua Jackson pitched his ideas for a 'Dawson's Creek' reunion

The 37-year-old actor starred as Pacey Witter in the TV series, which aired its final episode in 2003, but has got an idea for producers if the show was ever to be resurrected. When asked if there was a possibility of a reunion, he told The Insider: "Well, that depends, [our show creator] Kevin Williamson would have to ask. People always forget that Michelle Williams' Jen character was killed off, so they really need to figure out a way around that. "I guess she could come back as a ghost, or they could do it like Dallas did and have someone wake up and find her alive in the shower 20 years later. That could work!" Meanwhile, Katie Holmes is less hopeful for a reunion of the popular teen drama. She shared previously: "[Dawson's Creek] was such a special time in all of our lives [but] some things are better when it stays the way it was. I would love to get together with everybody, [but] I'm not sure a reunion would be as fulfilling as what we all want it to be. "I'm game for anything. I don't really regret anything that I've done. I've learned from everything, and everything sort of leads you to the next place. I just keep going."



Tomlinson very happy to have become a father

The 24-year-old singer and his ex-girlfriend Briana Jungwirth welcomed the couple's first child into the world in Los Angeles this week and the One Direction star has taken to his Twitter account yesterday to confirm the news with fans and share his delight in having a "healthy and pretty amazing" baby boy. Louis wrote: "I'm pleased to say my baby son was born yesterday :) He is healthy and pretty amazing :) I'm very happy! (sic)" Just minutes after his first tweet the excited new dad posted the lyrics to Boney M's 1976 popular hit 'Daddy Cool' and wrote: "Daddy Daddy cool" and soon after, followed it up with a string of smiley emojis. The newborn's name or pictures of the little tot have yet to be shared. But messages of congratulations have started to flood in for Louis and 23-year-old Briana. The singer's band-mate Harry Styles wrote on Twitter today: "Flowers all round." And the social networking site went into meltdown on Friday after the arrival was first reported, when within a matter of minutes, #WelcomeBabyTomlinson was trending and fans worldwide offered their congratulations to the One Direction star. The news broke when a One Direction fan account wrote that Briana's grandmother had confirmed the news, and had also revealed the baby was a boy.



Katie Price regrets taking an overdose when she split from her boyfriend



The 37-year-old star dated the former Another Level singer from 1998 to 2000 and when their relationship ended she "stupidly" tried to win him back by taking pills and calling him up for "attention". Katie admits at the time she was young and foolish and before their break-up she had wrongly convinced herself that Dane had a developed a huge crush on Victoria when they worked together on August 2000 single 'Out Of Your Mind' even though Victoria was married to soccer superstar David Beckham. Thankfully, Katie didn't do herself any permanent damage when she took the overdose but realizes it was a crazy thing to do. During her appearance on daytime chat show 'Loose Women' today (22.01.16), she said: "Lots of people try and do things make their exes jealous. But at the end of the day they've seen what you're really like, so if you try and look different or go with their mates if they don't want to know you they don't want to know you. "When I was younger stupidly enough, I wanted my ex Dane Bowers back and stupidly I took an overdose to get him back - you do these things for attention. It is a massive thing, it does not work, but I was young and naive, if anyone was speaking to me just do not do it. "He worked with Victoria Beckham and I thought something was going on, I thought I was obsessed with her. It ended up being her friend so my paranoia was right." Katie - who now has five children and is married to third husband Kieran Hayler - regrets the whole episode and can only explain her actions on the fact she was so "heartbroken" to lose Dane, who she was convinced was the "love of her life" at the time. — AP



That Dragon, Cancer

Love, loss and faith in a time of cancer

By Aakash Bakaya

That Dragon, Cancer by Independent Studio 'Numinous Games' is a point and click, narrative-driven game where you control a nameless and bodiless entity. Created by husband and wife team Ryan and Amy Green along with a few friends, TDC chronicles the last few weeks of their son Joel's long fight with terminal cancer. For a short two hours play session, you are a witness and an eardrop to both the husband and wife's struggles with their faith, their future and with each other as they come to terms with the inevitability of their 4-year-old son's demise.

There are no controls except clicking the mouse to move except for a single platforming section and unlike other point and click games - there are no branching paths and barely any player choice except deciding where to look. So what makes this much of a videogame? In truth, it doesn't make it much of a traditional videogame but for a medium that is little over 30 years old, who defines what is traditional and what isn't?

'Gone Home' is the only other game TDC can be compared to in terms of mechanics - while in terms of powerful, emotional storytelling - 'Brothers: A Tale of Two Sons' would be an apt comparison. However none of those games deal with the real world experiences of raising a child with cancer. Cancer is a disease that has touched and changed countless lives in its terrible history. Whether or not we have experienced this disease first-hand, there is no adult on earth who isn't aware of its implications. TDC recreates those experiences from a parent's point of view



and gives you an almost uncomfortable insight into their thoughts.

The first thing you witness when you press start is baby Joel feeding a duck in a park while his dad talks to his elder siblings about Joel's condition. The child has no facial features and is only a humanly-shaped 3D polygon of sorts. This is an art style that is followed throughout the game - even the adults, the few you do meet, only have a haircut and facial hair for distinguishable features. This may seem jarring at first but the crystal clear voice work and immersive sound design immediately engulfs you into this simple but beautifully designed world. The vibrant surroundings filled with color and ambient sounds somehow make the polygon characters better looking than they actually are.

The game is broken down into a dozen chapters which chronically follow Joel starting with his final days of chemotherapy. These chapters are interconnected to several dreamlike sequences. Some of these sequences are purely narrative in nature while four are different types of mini-games. One mini-game in particular is a platformer (think Super Mario) called 'Joel the Brave Knight'. This platformer should have been the only one kept as the narration and built up fits perfectly into the rest of the story. It develops from an imaginative bedtime tale the parents are telling the other siblings of Joel, a brave knight who must defeat the evil dragon cancer. The mini-game alters itself and makes the kids ask harder to answer questions and the payoff at the end is highly thought-provoking.

This is only one example of the game's unique presentation and stellar writing, and does a superb job of engrossing the player into this highly emotional scenario. The husband's dialogue is confused, scared and frustrated, while the wife's steadfast, unyielding faith can look like either fear or hope depending on your own views on faith. Few pieces of art - be they movies or music - deal with the subject of faith in such a balanced and thought-provoking manner. It is one of the pillars of the narrative and is handled with respect and doubt equally. The last two chapters of the game symbolically revolve around this topic and the epilogue left me a teary mess. It is the first and only interaction you as a player have with the character and I'm not ashamed to say I cried for a faceless, barely animated 3D object.

Sudden moments of heart-aching reality like these act as TDC's greatest strengths. One chapter

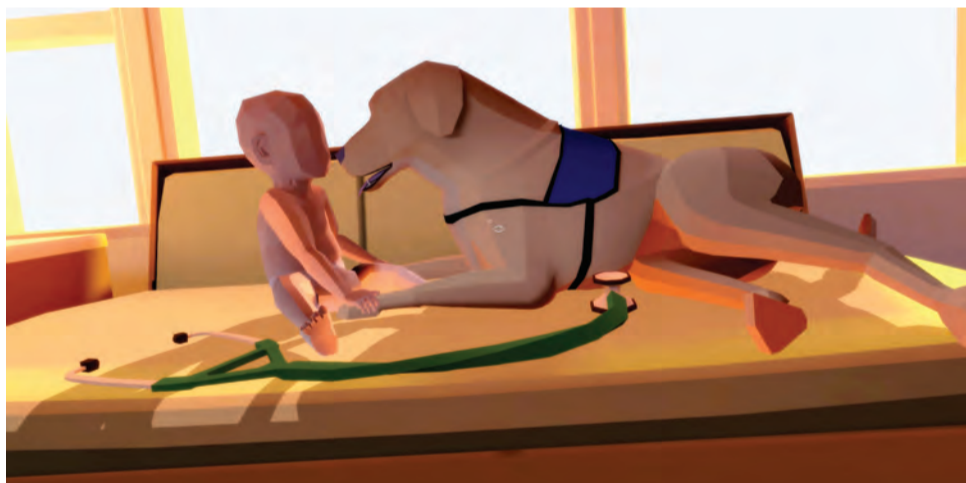


titled 'Sorry, it's not good news' is everything you expect it to be. But when the game suddenly allows you to go inside the mind of the doctor and his assistant who are assigned to tell the parents their child is going to die, you can't help but feel for these characters.

You don't have to make that step though and its one of the most note-worthy details about the entire experience. The game gives you a choice. You have the choice to enter the thoughts of the parents, the doctors, do both or do nothing and witness it purely from a bystander viewpoint. This unique player choice appears again when you are in a hospital room with the mother and Joel. The room and the hallway outside are filled with cards and each of these 50 plus cards is filled with short messages from

real-life cancer survivors and patients. You can go through some of them, all of them or you can simply walk out the door at the end of the corridor. Your choice in both scenarios has no impact on the game but you may end up learning a few things about yourself from the way you handle these sections.

Ultimately this is what TDC boils down to. Irrespective of what genre of game you are playing, the experience is dictated by the players themselves and even though the game will end the same way for everybody - its lessons on loss, faith and love will all affect whoever is playing it in wholly different ways. Like many great artworks, 'That Dragon, Cancer' will leave an imprint in your mind that might profoundly change your entire outlook of the world and the humanity we all share.



Sundance festival embraces virtual reality

A real-life homicide, a woman who wakes up after being frozen for 30 years and a close encounter with a whale - these are some of the virtual reality films creating a buzz at this year's Sundance Film Festival.

The lineup of no less than 30 immersive experiences showcased in the festival's New Frontier program reflects an increasing willingness by filmmakers to experiment with technology that offers a new form of story-telling.

"It's pretty amazing," said John Cooper, director of the Sundance festival. "We're still at a nascent stage-five min-

run about five minutes on average, is "Defrost," which follows a woman who suffered a massive stroke and wakes up after being frozen for nearly 30 years. The viewer, equipped with a headset, experiences the film from the woman's perspective as she reunites with her much older family.

"Waves of Grace" follows Ebola survivor Deontee Davis as she helps others in Liberia affected by the disease, while "theBlu: Encounter" offers a close encounter with a whale. "Virtual reality immerses you into a really different experience you've never really had

on a hike, or skiing."

Covering eyes and ears

One unusual virtual reality set-up at Sundance - "In the Eyes of the Animal" - allows viewers equipped with a globe-shaped headset decorated with moss and plants to experience a forest landscape through the eyes of different animals, including a frog and a dragonfly. The visuals create the illusion of soaring high above the trees or hovering along the forest floor.

"By covering your eyes and your ears and simulating reality, you can take someone out of their body and put them in someone else's body, and see the world from a different sensory perspective," said Barnaby Steel, of the London-based design studio Marshmallow Laser Feast that created the experience. "So what does the world look like from a bat's perspective or a different insect?" he added. "We're interested in what is reality like beyond our senses."

But while everyone agrees that virtual reality technology is gaining traction as more and more people and companies explore the medium, developers say it will take some time before it is ready for consumers or becomes part of the movie experience. The hardware - which typically consists of goggles that can be bulky and uncomfortable to wear - will need to evolve and become more accessible, they say.

Another challenge will be to make it appealing to older audiences. "We're all in this new ground, this new medium, trying to figure out how it works," Rowell said. "But in the long run, I think people will embrace it... and it will grow. "Now you have headsets but later on it will probably be just glasses." — AFP



View of the Egyptian Theatre during Sundance Film Festival, in Park City, Utah. — AFP

utes long, that kind of stuff-but you can really see how it's going to grow in people's imaginations. "I can see coming home and saying I just need 10 minutes of VR before anybody talks to me."

Among the standout shorts, which

before," said Jake Rowell, the director of "theBlu: Encounter," which was made in three months. "It takes you back to your eight-year-old self in a lot of ways. "Usually people leave with it being a memory, they experience it like going

Academy vows to double women, minority members by 2020

The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences on Friday promised sweeping reforms designed to help diversify its membership in the face of a major controversy over the second straight year of all-white Oscar acting nominations. The Academy's board said it was taking "historic action" to double the number of women and minority members by 2020 and launch a global effort to "recruit qualified new members who represent greater diversity."

"These new measures regarding governance and voting will have an immediate impact and begin the process of significantly changing our membership composition," said Academy president Cheryl Boone Isaacs. The changes were approved in a unanimous vote by the Academy's board of governors on Thursday, following days of criticism that for a second year in a row, all 20 actors nominated for Oscars were white.

Acclaimed director Spike Lee, who won an Oscar last year honoring his lifetime achievements, wrote an open letter to the Academy decrying the "lily white" nominations. Mega-star Will Smith - one of the black actors seen as having been passed over for a nomination this year - and his wife Jada Pinkett Smith followed Lee in announcing that they too would stay away from the ceremony on February 28.

On Friday, British actress Charlotte Rampling - nominated for best actress for "45 Years" - waded into the row by saying Lee had been "racist to whites" in his criticism. "You can never know for sure, but maybe black actors did not deserve to be in the final selection," Rampling told Europe 1 radio, speaking in French. The

Academy announced that beginning later this year - not affecting votes for the 2016 Oscars - each new member's voting status will last 10 years, and be renewed if they have been active in movies during that time. Members will get lifetime voting rights after three 10-year terms, or if they win or are nominated for an Academy Award. The same standards will apply retroactively to current members.

Those who do not qualify for active status will not be able to vote. To increase diversity on the board of governors immediately, the Academy said it would establish three new governor seats that will be nominated by the president for three-year terms and confirmed by the board. It will also involve new members on decisions about membership and gov-

ernance, giving them a chance to become more active in decision-making and to help spot and nurture future leaders.

'Good step'

The announcement was quickly welcomed by Ava DuVernay, director of civil rights movie "Selma," which was nominated for best picture last year - but not for best director or actor. "One good step in a long, complicated journey for people of color + women artists," she wrote on Twitter.

Tom O'Neil, founder of awards prediction site goldderby.com, told AFP it was a "dramatic first step" but urged caution on the numbers. The Academy currently has 6,261 voting members, all of whom work in the film industry. — AFP



John Krasinski, left, and Academy President Cheryl Boone Isaacs announce the Academy Awards nominations for best performance by an actor in a leading role at the 88th Academy Awards nomination ceremony in Beverly Hills. — AP

Trousers go baggy as men's fashion gets supersized



The world is about to go all baggy. As stock markets tumble and economists talk of more tightening of belts, fashion has gone supersized, with Paris catwalks overflowing Wednesday with outsized overcoats and baggy trousers.

If the first day of the menswear catwalks shows is anything to go by, men will be flapping around in too-long trousers and enormous ankle-length coats when the new autumn-winter designs hit the shops in six months' time. Most of the models in Off-White's show looked as if they had borrowed their big brother's clothes or were auditioning for a remake of the video of British ska band Madness' 1980 hit "Baggy Trousers".

Badass sleep suits

American designer Virgil Abloh, fashion guru to the rapper Kanye West, went for long flowing greatcoats and bomber jackets with hands lost inside long sleeves, and a series of huge overcoats that could double as man-sized badass baby sleep suits.

And former Dior darling Raf Simons, who left for his own label in October, took the supersize trend to still greater extremes with humongous hoodies and jumpers large enough to shelter a small family and their pets.

Even the usually restrained Parisian label Lemaire was in on the new look, mixing its classic restrained collection with boxy coats that go below knee and long baggy pants that are likely to fray on the pavement behind you.

Newcomers AVOC tried to give their look a snarling street wise twist. Their skinhead models played at being gang members, insulting the audience who were forced to stand — "Fils de pute!" (sons of whores) — in between shouting out the brand's name.

Hippy dippy

In the face of such brazen bad manners Valentino was all

perfect lines and grooming. But mid-show its design duo Maria Grazia Chiuri and Pierpaolo Piccioli suddenly went all hippy with ponchos and rancher sheepskin jackets before going south of the border with black tailored suits with white stitching that channelled both the Mexican Day of the Dead and Cockney pearly kings.

The joyous highlight of the day, however, was the Belgian Walter Van Beirendonck's riotously inventive show "Woest", which means furious in his native Flemish. With felt scarves with cuddly toys at one end and Kalashnikov rifle or chainsaw shapes at the other, van Beirendonck was clearly inspired by the terror attacks and migrant crisis shaking Europe.

Papa Smurf

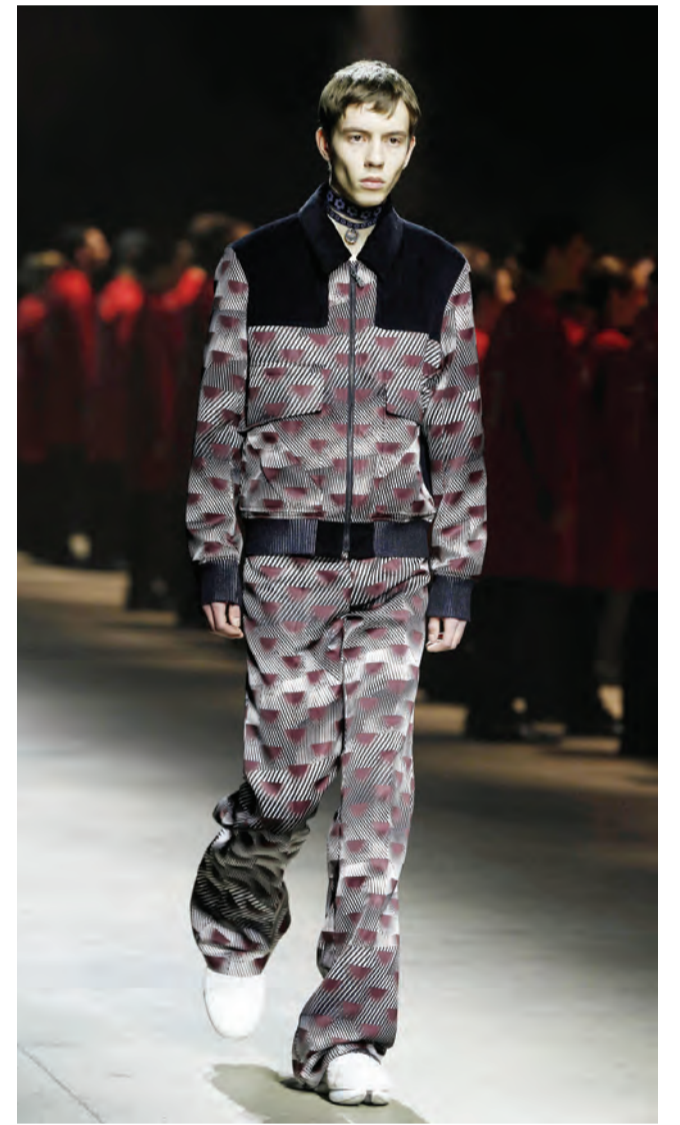
Looking like a cross between Papa Smurf and a pirate with his full grey beard, orange bobble hat and pearl earrings, the designer told AFP the scarves were "like dolls. We wanted to create kind of puppets. We feel today like we are puppets and other people are pulling the strings. It is a mixture of very sweet things and very aggressive things which is what the world is like now."

"What has happened in the last year has been really depressing," he added. "Everyone has the feeling the world is really fucked up and that things are out of control. The migrants, the attacks and the crime... It's tough."

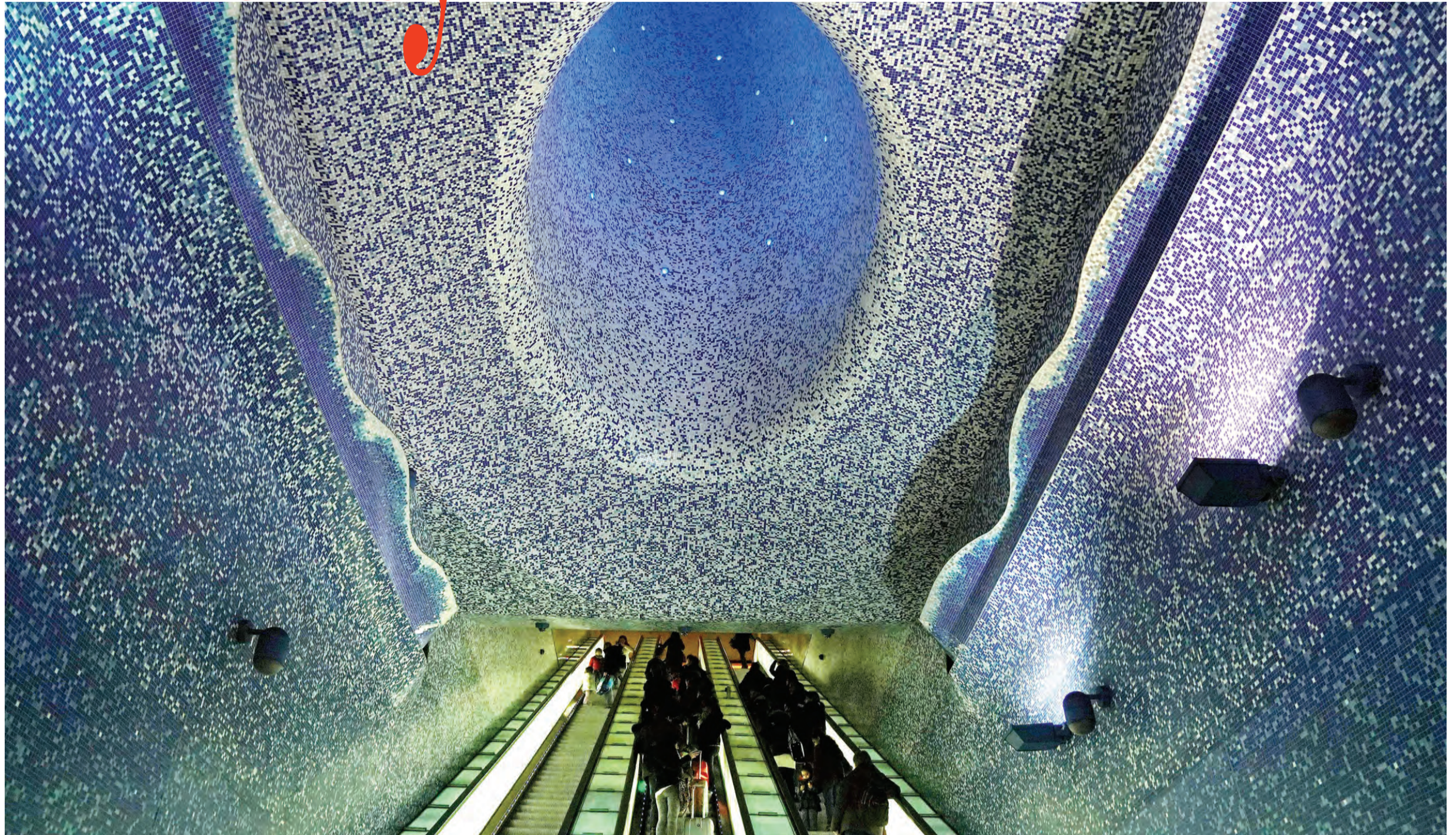
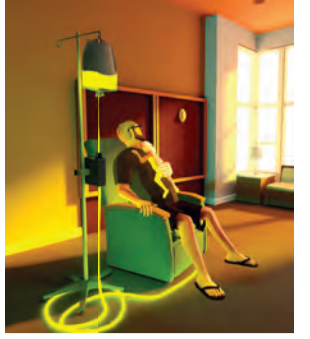
Stop to terror

Using bold primary colors and some eye catching mixes of ethnic, Amerindian and leopard skin motifs, van Beirendonck also went big and baggy but opted for shorter flared trousers, the better to show off his multi-colored high-heeled Oxford shoes. Emblazoned across the chest of one see-through sweater was the message "Stop terrorizing our world." "Even the hardest things in life I try to transfer into the most colorful fabrics," he said. "I don't want to create doom." — AFP

PARIS
Fashion Week



Models present the creations of Kenzo during the men's Fashion Week for the 2016-2017 Fall/Winter collection in Paris. — AFP photos



A picture shows the ceiling of the Toledo metro station on January 10, 2016 in Naples. — AFP

Death just a pretty face for Brazilian tattoo fans

In their quest for beauty, Brazilian tattoo fans are turning to the most unlikely of pretty faces: The death skull. At Rio Tattoo Week 2016, billed as Latin America's biggest piercing and tattoo convention, the image of death stared from arms, legs, necks, and most other body parts, not to mention T-shirts and posters.

Plenty of other designs featured at the three-day bash. Disney cartoon characters, Viking warriors, Japanese geishas, roses, vines, and entire gardens were on show at the Rio convention center. Even old-fashioned Popeye anchors. But inky death in various guises—grinning, grimacing, winking—was inescapable.

"It has become the fashion," said Priscila Virla, 32, co-owner of Lady Luck, a tattoo studio which caters especially to women and which had one of the 250 convention stands. "The skull is one of those things that has really caught on, especially here in Rio de Janeiro."

Some of the depictions of death carried in tattoo catalogues showed skulls horribly disfigured, screaming or dripping in blood. But despite initial appearances, this attachment to skull images has surprisingly wholesome roots. "For Brazilians the skull represents equality," said Binho Fernandes, whose Thug Nine clothing and accessories line is big on all things skull-related. "People tattoo skulls because the skull unites us all."

Nelio Cadar, whose Radac studio uses a highly stylized skull as its logo and who also sports a big skull tattoo on his right arm, echoed that thought. "We take the beautiful side of the symbol. It's less about death than equality," he said. "Whether you have a lot of money or no money, whether you are Catholic or some other religion—when we all die we all have a skull."

Mexican takeaway

The skull obsession originates from Mexico's cultish Day of the Dead celebrations, tattoo experts at the convention said. There,



A man getting a tattoo

the Aztec god of death was transformed by popular culture into a dark folk saint called Santa Muerte favored today by "criminals and the police," said Federico Ruiz, an artist who'd come to Rio from Mexico City to sell his works.

Artistically related to Santa Muerte is another Mexican skeleton woman, Catrina, now a major inspiration for tattoo aficionados internationally, although with an especially lively following in Brazil. "It's something Brazil took as its own," Cadar said. "We've made it cool."

A detailed skull tattoo covering a good portion of the arm costs about 1,200 reais (\$293), a hefty sum in recession-hit Brazil. But there is no shortage of clients. Appetite for tattoos is so great in Rio that vendors quizzed by AFP seemed to agree that they remain protected

for now against the country's economic crisis. The potentially gloomy aspect of being emblazoned with a death symbol doesn't deter much either.

"Once you have a certain amount of tattoos you stop caring so much about what they mean," said Lorena Lima, 21, who bore a large Catrina tattoo—this one with fierce eyes and a stitched-up mouth—on her right arm. "You just have them because they're beautiful," she added, winking as an artist worked on tattoo number 10, a woman with a serpent's tongue.

Anyway, skulls don't even have to be scary, pointed out Virla at the women-friendly studio. "See?" she said, pulling up a trouser leg to reveal a small skull with a playful red and white polka-dot hair bow. "It all depends on your perspective." — AFP



A man called "Zombiepunk" shows his eye tattooed during the Tattoo Week international tattoo and piercing meeting in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. — AP photos



A man shows a tattoo on his head.

