

270 fake
companies
busted in
7 months

5



Frontrunner
Trump to skip
Republican
debate

9



The Real
Fouz: The
Roaccutane
effect!

35



Murray,
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20



150 FILLS
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40 PAGES

ASSEMBLY SUSPENDS FEE HIKE IN PRIVATE SCHOOLS

APPEALS COURT SETS FEB 17 FOR TRIAL OF 'ABDALY CELL'



Min 05°

Max 12°

High Tide

01:44 & 15:14

Low Tide

08:53 & 20:59

ONLY 5%?

conspiracy theories



By Badrya Darwish

badrya_d@kuwaittimes.net

Everyone in Kuwait is suffering from high school fees - Kuwaiti or expat. So the best business in my opinion is to open schools. It can compete with oil as oil prices have plunged to \$20. I'm sure you can make more money out of students.

Where are the good old days when the tuition fee I paid for my son at an English school was KD 2,000 for his senior year. Now my grandson who is seven years old is paying nearly KD 5,000 for second grade. Another friend of mine is paying more than KD 5,000 for her two daughters, one in KG and one in elementary in a British school.

This was before the invasion - I don't like to mention the invasion, but let's face it, it's a reality and a demarcation of time and events in Kuwait. Also, many major things have deteriorated since that black day. Before the invasion, 99 percent of Kuwaitis were in public schools. Only expats went to private schools as they had been banned from public schools since the 1980s.

The situation changed drastically after the liberation and more of our kids started joining the expats in private schools because the quality of public education collapsed. Just like Kuwait Airways, our blue bird. Two major services in Kuwait collapsed after liberation and till now, 25 years later, have not reversed course.

Back to schools. If I'm paying for a child of five years KD 5,000 in tuition, how much do you expect my salary to be? And it's only education I'm talking about. Leave alone food, housing, petrol, car, health, clothing, etc. etc. Where is the government? Why are we even bothering with public schools? Close them and give us the money used for the budget for the Ministry of Education so we can pay the private school tuition fees for our children. And then when it was discussed in parliament, I hoped for serious action from our honorable gentlemen, the defenders of the nation. And what did they come out with?

Actually why are we even talking about an increase of 5 or 10 or even 1 percent? We should be talking about decreasing the fees. Why are we paying so much? And why are we disputing increases when we should be demanding reduction in fees? The fees are already unfairly and unjustly high for Kuwaitis, so imagine for expats who earn much less and get no subsidies for anything!

If you say that there is a high demand and a free market, then ease the licenses for schools, provide the land and let new schools be opened. Actually, children should not be without schooling and most advanced nations of the world provide education free to all children regardless of their nationality or status in the country. When we fled to London during the invasion, my children, who are Kuwaitis, immediately joined the schools in the UK and were enrolled like any other children without any fees or questions.

Shame on us for turning education into a business.

EUROFIGHTER DEAL SIGNING ON JAN 31

ROME: Italian defense group Finmeccanica will finally sign a long-awaited contract to sell 28 Eurofighter jets to Kuwait on Jan 31, a source close to the matter said yesterday. Finmeccanica had originally expected to complete the deal in November, but that target was put back at least twice due to problems over pilot training and specialized personnel. The deal is worth up to €4 billion to Finmeccanica, sources close to the matter have told Reuters. The contract will be signed in Kuwait, the source said. — Reuters



KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah attend opening of the Kuwait National Heritage Festival yesterday. — Amiri Diwan photo (See Page 2)

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The National Assembly yesterday approved a recommendation stipulating that all fee increases by private schools, including foreign schools, must be suspended immediately until a parliamentary committee reviews the issue with the minister of education. The recommendation was passed following strong criticism by MPs against a number of private foreign schools that unilaterally raised their fees before obtaining a permit from the ministry.

Education Minister Bader Al-Essa said the government accepts the recommendation, which means it will be implemented, and as a result all such increases have to be stopped temporarily. The minister also said that the ministry had formed a committee to study the issue of fees in private schools and the committee agreed that foreign schools can increase their fees by up to five percent. But Essa insisted that this was only a committee recommendation and the ministry has not taken any decision on the issue. He said that due to low salaries, teachers were leaving private schools here for the United Arab Emirates, adding that the services at some Arab private schools are appalling.

The discussion on the issue began after several MPs demanded a debate on private school fees in the country. MP Khalil Abul said that owners of some private schools have no respect for the ministry and its decisions and the minister's reply is not sufficient.

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FRENCH MINISTER QUILTS OVER NATIONALITY ROW

PAGE

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END OF AN ERA? APPLE IPHONE SALES FALLING

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US RACE DISCOMFORTS US MUSLIMS



CEDAR RAPIDS, Iowa: The Mother Mosque of America, the oldest mosque in the United States, is seen on Jan 24, 2016. — AFP

CEDAR RAPIDS: The imam of Cedar Rapids, Iowa has long considered explaining Islam his mission. But when Republicans start ruminating over jihad and US presidential hopeful Donald Trump, Hassan Selim would rather turn to prayer. "You come to a point where you get sick of explaining yourself," the 28-year-old cleric said in his small office in the city's Islamic Center, a large, modest structure built in 1971 and featuring a blue-roofed minaret.

Imam Selim was born in Egypt, where he studied at the prestigious Al-Azhar University before arriving in Iowa in 2012 to become the spiritual leader of one of America's oldest Muslim communities. But instead of promoting his religion's virtues, he has found himself on the defensive in this heartland state, which on Monday kicks off the voting in America's months-long presidential nominations process. "I want to practice my religion," he told AFP. "I want to go to the people and explain what Islam is, not what Islam is not, because that's what we

do all the time."

The center was bustling with children for Sunday school. Nine classes of Arabic, Quran and Islamic studies were taking place simultaneously. Some of the youths were born into families who arrived here generations ago. Others are recent immigrants from Afghanistan, Morocco, Pakistan, South Africa and Syria. Since last month's deadly attacks in San Bernardino, California, news cameras have become commonplace here.

The imam is gracious in hosting the media, as well as students, neighbors and public officials, with whom he maintains excellent relations. But the pressure has worn on him. When Trump, the brash billionaire atop the Republican candidate heap, proposed a ban on Muslims entering the United States, Imam Selim took it as a slap in the face. The imam is American by marriage. His two daughters were born in the United States, and he said he wants them to grow up "feeling comfortable in their skin".

Continued on Page 13

JAZEERA AMERICA CLOSURE MARKS A QUIETER QATAR

DOHA: When Qatar announced the closure of Al Jazeera America this month, the decision by its new ruler marked a more cautious approach to public diplomacy by the tiny Gulf state after years of cultivating a high-profile international role. Departing from a crowded US media market after a foray costing perhaps \$2 billion is also consistent with a retreat from confrontation with Gulf Arab neighbours over Qatar's promotion of Islamists in the 2011 Arab uprisings.

While the gas-exporting nation is still determined to remain a power broker in the Middle East turmoil, its use of Al Jazeera as a megaphone in support of that goal appears to be on the wane under the young emir, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, former Qatari officials and Arab commentators say. The days of unstinting Qatari financial support for the trailblazing channel, whose reporting of the 2011 Arab Spring uprisings won it millions of viewers and brought resentment from Arab governments at its airing of dissident views, appear over, media analysts and commentators say.

Al Jazeera America was launched in 2013, an ambitious bid by Qatar to infiltrate the US media market, but the channel was plagued by low ratings, wavering between 20,000 and 40,000 viewers in prime time. The channel also struggled to shake off a perception, held by some Americans, that its corporate parent, Al Jazeera, was anti-American and a source of propaganda, a view articulated in 2004 by then-President George W Bush.

Continued on Page 13



NEW YORK: In this Aug 20, 2013 file photo, Al Jazeera America editorial newsroom staff prepare for their first broadcast. — AP

News

in brief

Hash smuggling busted

KUWAIT: Narcotics detectives busted a shipment of 260 kg of hashish smuggled from Iran yesterday. Three suspects - one Kuwaiti and two Iranians - were arrested.

MERS kills UAE man

ABU DHABI: The MERS coronavirus has killed a man in the United Arab Emirates, the Abu Dhabi health authority said yesterday. The 73-year-old was confirmed to be infected with Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) earlier this month and also infected a woman who has since recovered, the authority said in a statement carried by WAM state news agency. In June 2014, UAE authorities said MERS had killed 10 people and infected 68 others in the seven-member federation since March 2013.

Iran warns US warship

DUBAI: Iran's navy warned a US warship yesterday to leave waters near the Strait of Hormuz where the Iranians were testing submarines, destroyers and missile launchers, news agencies reported. The commander of Iran's fleet, Rear-Admiral Habibollah Sayyari, told Tasnim news agency the US ship was trying to collect information in the Sea of Oman - an area close to the Strait, a vital oil and gas shipping route - and said it left quickly after the alert. "The maneuver aims to show Iranian forces' strength both in ensuring security on the seas and in defending the country's sea borders in Hormuz Strait, Sea of Oman and north of the Indian Ocean," Sayyari was quoted as saying by state news agency IRNA.



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah attend the Kuwait National Heritage Festival. — Amiri Diwan photos



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah is presented a portrait at the event.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah attend the Kuwait National Heritage Festival.

AMIR, CROWN PRINCE OPEN NATIONAL HERITAGE FESTIVAL

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah accompanied by His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah attended the Kuwait National Heritage Festival at Al-Salmi area yesterday.

The Amiri convoy arrived at the festival and was received by Deputy Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs and President of Sheikh Sabah Village Higher Committee Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah, Amiri Diwan Advisor and Supervisor of the Village Mohammad Dhaif Allah Sharar, and President of the Amiri Administrative and Financial Affairs and Deputy President of the Higher Committee Abdulaziz Saud Isehaq. Children from the village gave a performance, followed by poetic activities. The Amiri convoy then toured GCC and Arab wards at the festivals, including a visit to the handicraft heritage youth

center, vintage cars museum, and various heritage sight scenes. The ceremony was also attended by National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanim, senior sheikhs, His Highness Sheikh Nasser Mohammad Al-Sabah, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Mubarak Al-Sabah, First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, GCC Secretary General Abdul Latif bin Rashid Al-Zayani, and President of Arab Parliament Ahmad Al-Jarwan.

Rich heritage
Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Sheikh Salman Sabah Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah said meanwhile that His Highness the Amir's of the Gulf Popular Heritage Festival and the Sabah Al-Ahmad Heritage Village embodies the

state's keenness on the copious, genuine and rich heritage and culture of Kuwait and the Gulf region.

The distinguished GCC participation in the Village, embodied in heritage museums, reaffirms the depth of the "brotherly" ties among the bloc's leaders and peoples. Sheikh Salman said. The Village has undergone major development, as several facilities, services and contests, both heritage and for amusement, were introduced.

The Village, with its museums, markets and other attractions, strengthens the Kuwaiti and Gulf people's linkage to their genuine heritage, inherited from fathers and forefather, which reinforces "values of belonging and loyalty," he said.

For Sheikh Salman, the participation of state institutions, especially the Ministry of Information and Ministry of State for Youth Affairs and National



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah interacts with a falconer attending the festival.

Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL), conveys "an obvious message" of their keenness on maintaining national heritage. He also offered deep thanks to His Highness the Amir for his "unlimited support to culture and heritage in our dear nation, which is celebrating being chosen Capital of the Islamic Culture 2016.

History enriched
Meanwhile, Zayani underlined the momentousness of the Sabah Al-Ahmad Heritage Village for consolidating the Gulf popular heritage. The Gulf popular heritage has enriched the history and the

present of the GCC states, Zayani told KUNA on the sidelines of the opening of the village.

He stressed the role of the Sabah Al-Ahmad Village for consolidating the Gulf identity among all peoples of the bloc. This distinguished event reflects the resemblance of the inherited customs and traditions, as well as demonstrating the strong linkage, among the six members of the GCC through history, he noted. Zayani appreciated efforts by the organizer committee of the event and the high-level arrangements for the opening of the Village. The GCC Secretary General arrived in Kuwait on Tuesday. — KUNA



Young falconers attend the festival.

AMIR TOURS INTERIOR MINISTRY'S SALMI CAMP



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah tour the Interior Ministry's camp at Al-Salmi. — Amiri Diwan photos



(From left) His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem are pictured at the camp.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah is welcomed by Interior Ministry's Undersecretary Suleiman Al-Fahad.



(From left) His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Mubarak Al-Sabah, His Highness Sheikh Nasser Mohammad Al-Sabah and Sheikh Faisal Al-Saud Al-Sabah are seen in attendance.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, accompanied by His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, toured the Interior Ministry's camp at Al-Salmi area yesterday.

Upon arrival, His Highness the

Amir was received by Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Sabah, Interior Ministry's Undersecretary Suleiman Fahad Al-Fahad, and several other senior officials.

Later, Sheikh Mohammad host-

ed a luncheon in honor of His Highness the Amir, which was attended by National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem, senior sheikhs, His Highness Sheikh Nasser Mohammad Al-Sabah, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Mubarak Al-Sabah, First

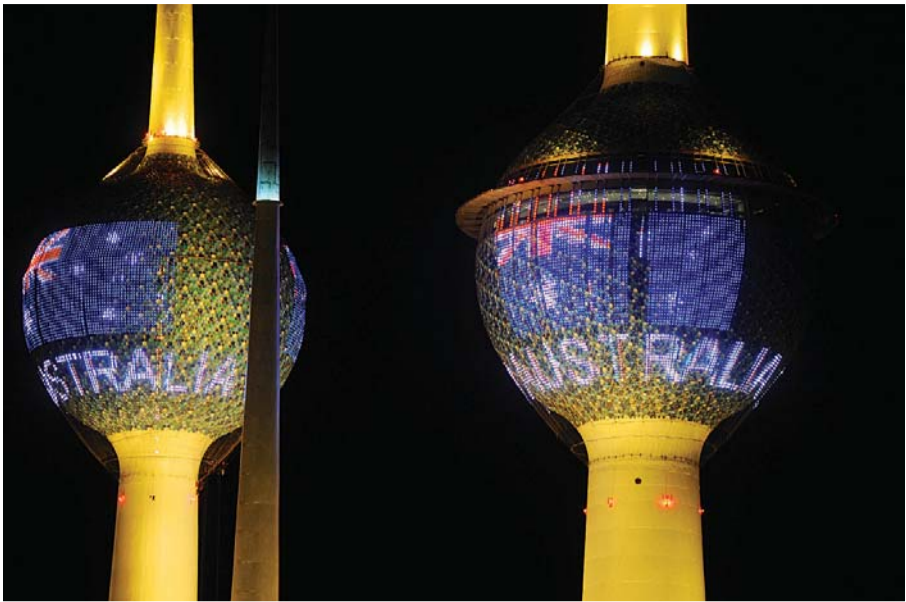
Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Amiri Diwan Affairs Deputy Minister Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah, and Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah. — KUNA



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah waves as Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Sabah looks on.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and top state officials are seen during the tour.



KUWAIT: Kuwait Towers were decorated Tuesday night with colored lights depicting Australia's flag, marking its National Day. The gesture signals the close bonds between the two friendly countries, and Kuwait's appreciation for the nation stand on its side during the Iraqi Invasion. —KUNA

TUNISIAN-KUWAITI RELATIONS ON TRACK: PRESIDENT ESSEBSI

KUWAIT: Tunisian-Kuwaiti relations have witnessed much progress on numerous levels over a very long time, said Tunisian President Beji Caid Essebsi yesterday. At a meeting with local media, he valued the "deep and historic" cooperation between Kuwait and Tunisia especially in the field of tourism, among other areas of mutual interest.

Tunisian revolution

He hoped that further bilateral cooperation would help in efforts to revive the Tunisian economy to its former self, noting that his country was ready to make the necessary reforms to attract Kuwaiti investments and foreign direct investments as well. The Tunisian president further hoped that the Arab region would achieve prosperity, stability, and security as it is currently undergoing momentous changes.

On events in his country, he said the Tunisian revolution came about to improve the socio-economic picture of the nation which was racked with perennial problems such as unemployment and poverty, adding that the nation still suffered from them at this juncture. He said Tunisia was fighting terrorism vis-a-vis the instability in Libya which had become a magnet for terrorist groups as they left Syria to Libya following coalition strikes against them.

With regard to Saudi-Iranian tensions, the Tunisian president said his country stood shoulder-to-shoulder with Saudi Arabia, noting that what befell the Saudi Arabian embassy and consulate in Iran ran against diplomatic and international norms. He denied that Tunisia received a request from the regime of Bashar Al-Assad to have an embassy of Syria in Tunisia, stressing that the Syrian crisis required a decisive solution. —KUNA



KUWAIT: Tunisian President Beji Caid Essebsi is seen at the meeting with local media. —KUNA

ALGHANIM INDUSTRIES SPONSORS KU FINANCE CLUB'S TRIP TO LONDON

KUWAIT: Alghanim Industries, one of the region's largest private companies, was a gold sponsor of Kuwait University's (KU) Finance Club trip to London. The week-long trip, which took place on January 12, 2016 and ended on 20 January 2016, included visits to companies and institutions such as the London Stock Exchange, Kuwait Investment Office, BBC Headquarters, Bank of England, and the School of Economics and Finance at Queen Mary University. Students will receive certificates from these establishments for onsite workshops.

Tom Hatton, Senior Director of Human Resources at Alghanim Industries, commented on the company's sponsorship, saying: "It was a pleasure to have sponsored Kuwait University's Finance Club Trip to London. At Alghanim Industries, we highly regard talent and talent development, and we are happy that this trip is offering the Finance Club students an opportunity to expand their horizons by being exposed to global business institutions, as an extracurricular activity that took place during the winter break session. We are committed to supporting education, especially of high potential individuals, and we are always interested in reaching out to them and exposing them to the available business opportunities in Alghanim Industries."

Hand in hand

Kuwait University student Sarrah AlHumaidhi who was on the trip, said: "On this trip, education and entertainment went hand in hand. We learned a lot about

the practical application of our conceptual classroom knowledge. It was a memorable experience shared with great company and filled with enticing activities. We thank Alghanim Industries for making all this possible and we are looking forward to even more successful partnerships with the company in the future."

Alghanim Industries is committed to empowering youth through education, with particular interest in acquiring talented graduates from both international and local universities. The company has supported KU student clubs in the past, but this is the first international travel sponsorship for students. This further builds on Alghanim Industries' key pillars, which are giving back to the community by empowering underprivileged people, encouraging entrepreneurship, and supporting education both inside and outside of the classroom. Part of Alghanim Industries' educational initiatives were the sponsorships of the NUKS-USA annual conference in San Diego, the Nuqat conference in Kuwait, the NEST project to raise awareness and support education for underprivileged children in Mumbai, and the continuous support of the INJAZ Kuwait organization.

Alghanim Industries looks forward to a long and prosperous year working with other student clubs at Kuwait University. This trip was an ideal approach to give the Finance Club an educationally and culturally enriching start to the New Year. Alghanim Industries is proud to have sponsored Kuwait University's Finance Club trip to London and looks forward to future cooperation with the university.



KU Finance Club students are pictured in front of KIO in London.

GCC COUNTRIES IMPORTANT AVIATION HUB: AUSTRALIAN TOURISM MINISTER

MINISTER COLBECK TALKS EDUCATION, TOURISM, MIDEAST SITUATION

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: Australian senator and Minister of Tourism and International Education Richard Colbeck was on a short visit to Kuwait yesterday, where he met local and high-level officials including members of the business communities here. Before heading to Saudi Arabia, Colbeck spoke to Kuwait Times in an exclusive interview. Some excerpts:

KT: What's on the agenda of your visit to Kuwait?

Colbeck: I had a cordial meeting with the minister of education in Kuwait; he briefed me about education here. I also visited Box Hill College and the Australian College of Kuwait. We also visited the Dasman Institute for Diabetes and witnessed some of their activities. It was a quick visit but I grasped some of the issues they have here, in a warm and welcoming setting. I also had some meetings with the business community in Kuwait - really a very productive visit. From here I'll be in Saudi Arabia for a two-day visit.

KT: As minister of tourism, what are your plans for the Middle East?

Colbeck: We are going to continue to engage in this region. The Middle East region and GCC countries in particular are important aviation hubs. We have seen these changes in global aviation and we have noticed the traffic coming from this region in and out of Australia. We have seen the changes because some of the airliners from this region have become very prominent in Australia. Tourism is booming and so we are maintaining contacts with them, with their people and the governments and companies related to the tourism industry. Business is very much on the radar of our government back home. More than 70,000 people visited from this region last year and about 4,000 of them were Kuwaitis. We would like to increase the number, especially with the products we are offering. Your summer here is quite hot, so we offer cooler weather in Australia during that period.

KT: How large is the Arab population in Australia? Can you give a picture of their professions and businesses?

Colbeck: We have about half a million Arabs in Australia. One of our great stories of immigrants in Australia is of many Arabs who went there first to seek education, then they found the place beautiful and stayed there. Now many of them are engaged in businesses, and we have many success stories of students. I've met some of them here in Kuwait. I was very delighted to meet a student who went to Australia with no knowledge English, he studied English and got the qualification for a four-year degree. Now he's very successful - he studied in Australia for six years.

He's still very young and energetic and now he is a very good advertisement for Australia and making an impact on many people in Kuwait; he's just one of many success stories. The strength of our education system is one strength our country is proud of, and there are many to be proud of. We are a very welcoming and friendly nation - we welcome everyone in our diverse, multicultural and safe environment.

KT: Arabs or Muslims are the usual targets of discrimination or blame-games when it comes to terrorism activities (throughout the world). What assurances can you give to Kuwaitis and Arab people visiting your country? Is there any legislation in Canberra protecting Muslims from discrimination?

Colbeck: We have in Australia a very strong anti-discrimination law against any prejudice, especially against members of small minorities and communities. We don't tolerate discrimination against anyone. This is already embodied in Australian culture and it's very effective. We welcome all races regardless of their beliefs and they

have become part of the larger homogenous and harmonious society. They are part of Australia and they are engaged in our system. We have very good legislation and laws and we don't discriminate on the basis of religion. In fact those are the best qualities about Australia and that is why Australia is considered the best place for education and holidays.

KT: How does Australia see the situation in the Middle East with regards to issues of IS, Syria, Iraq plus the latest Saudi and Iran diplomatic break-up?

Colbeck: Fundamentally speaking, what we want to see is stability in any part of the world. Regional stability, especially in the Middle East, is very important to everyone. It affects everybody, so we think that our efforts and what we do to share and maintain law and order is necessary. At the moment we are engaged in the fight against ISIL, our troops are in the region as part of the coalition against ISIL. We are second in terms of providing them with personnel and equipment. We have surveillance aircraft and we have troops on the ground, and we are providing advice to Iraqis. We are engaged because what we hope for is stability and peace in the region - it's important

recommend negotiations with GCC countries when it comes to free trade agreements with negotiated agreements with China, Japan and Korea, and recently we completed negotiations with the Trans Pacific Partnership. We are still keen to develop trading relationship with other nations - we were very encouraged to hear over the weekend that negotiations between China and GCC are also recommended, so we continue to develop the links.

KT: In the education sector, you have here Box Hill College and Australian College. How will these two educational institutions boost the prospect of education in both countries? What is new and what's in store in the next five years in this sector?

Colbeck: We are very happy that we have an educational presence in this part of the world. We have Box Hill College and Australian College. I think it's a great start, and the physical presence here of these institutions helps. While we know that Kuwaitis are enjoying their time in Australia, but one of the elements is proximity in engaging students, deciding where they may go to further their education. There are a lot of great opportunities in this region; there is a



KUWAIT: Australian senator and Minister of Tourism and International Education Richard Colbeck. —Photo by Joseph Shagra

to everyone.

With regards to Syria, what we want is a complete resolution to the problem they are in. We are encouraged by the fact that there seem to have been high-level engagements with some countries like United States and Russia and others, so there seems to be some movement and development. Yet it reminds us that we are in a very difficult situation and we want to see a resolution as soon as possible. With regards to Iran and Saudi Arabia, the most important thing from the Australian perspective is to see stability in the region. We hope that these particular differences can be resolved as quickly as possible.

KT: What are the prospects for Australia's economy?

Colbeck: Australia's economy has registered 25 years of uninterrupted growth, with an annual growth rate of about 2.5 percent. In a global scene, it is an uncertain time, so we keep our economic settings in the right balance to ensure we maintain the growth rate. We are in the best and reasonable position compared to other economic players globally.

KT: To include the Middle East in the picture, what is Australia's economic goal here?

Colbeck: Middle East is an important trading partner in various areas. We are very keen to

strong demand of high-quality education and Australia can provide this.

We have no formal arrangements or signed agreements with Kuwait in terms of education, but we know they have a strong scholarship system and that they encourage their students to go abroad and pursue their studies. It provides a good platform for students - our job now is to work out on how we best engage with the education system here to take advantage of the settings in place.

Currently, we have about 1,500 students from Kuwait. I was the first minister to be appointed by the prime minister to focus on international education. He had noticed changes and the sector is growing rapidly, and so I am here to help and develop mechanisms that can be of help to the Australian education sector in the future.

KT: Your message to the Australian community in Kuwait.

Colbeck: It's a fantastic time to be here in Kuwait. I also met some Australians. We obviously want to continue developing our relationship, especially with Kuwait and GCC. Try the opportunities here to do business and be a part of the global business community. Seize the opportunities that exist. Thank you for the hospitality Kuwait!

VIRTUAL WORLD EXPANDS AT EXPENSE OF ACTUAL DAILY CHORES IN KUWAIT

KUWAIT: Some 70 percent of modern information technology users in Kuwait are hooked for more than five hours a day to telecom devices, thus sacrificing long hours of their daily real living for the "unreal world," according to Kuwaiti experts.

The virtual world started to emerge late last century and rapidly developed early this century, "penetrating our actual world in the last two decades," information expert Bassam Al-Shemmeri, told Kuwait News Agency (KUNA), explaining how this realm of presumed reality is increasingly overwhelming peoples' real daily life and conventional styles of living in many countries, including Kuwait.

Shemmeri, along with his fellow Ahmad Safar, has conducted a field study, polling a sample of 506 social media users; on the occasion of Al-Qurain Cultural Festival. The sample, equally divided between men and women, comprises people of various ages.

Up to 72 percent of the modern telecom tools, in Kuwait, excessively use the internet on a daily basis, Shemmeri's study concluded. This segment of the society gets immersed in the virtual world up to five hours daily, using two-to-four applications fixed on their devices, Shemmeri said.

Proportion of setting up the chatting program, WhatsApp, reaches as high as 90 percent, followed by Snapchat, 40 percent, then Instagram, 38 percent, followed by Twitter, 25 percent. Quarter of the polled individuals, particularly productive persons whose age ranges between 31 and 40, use social media means by a proportion of more than 50 percent per day, the Kuwaiti expert's study revealed.

Moreover, the study has proven anew that rumors spread like fire via the virtual world and that fabricated reports have snowballed by 65 percent in the country. Shemmeri also said that 54 persons, 30 to 40 percent of the chosen sample, had encountered lies, deception and racism while interacting with others in the unreal world.

The study sounds the alarm bell as to the users' well-being, for it shows that the health of 69 percent have been negatively affected, mentioning eye problems, neck ache and insomnia. Social life of 34 percent has been undermined.

Social issues dominate topics of conversations and chatting on the social media; followed by cultural affairs, then politics and religious issues,

serious consideration of this study for sake of realizing some "balance between our real and unreal lives."

He affirmed that the social communication program WhatsApp lures the majority of the online means' users, and called for mapping out "policies" in government departments and schools "to ensure productivity of the employees



Shemmeri said, noting the study in this respect has proven that these devices "have been soundly applied in our society." Ideal usage on record can be seen with initiatives' launch, studies and information swap, he said asserting the positive benefits of this entity that has facilitated interaction among peoples. Safar, who directly supervised selection of the polled people, urged for

and students," warning that the addition to these tools weaken personnel or students' focus.

Safar called for health guidelines for the society, namely parents, children and youth, of the illicit health hazards caused by the devices. He also urged for guiding the people to use them for useful purposes, such as information and ideas' exchange and marketing projects. —KUNA

KUWAITI FARMER GROWS SECOND CROP OF RARE VEGETABLES

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti farmer Yousef Al-Kraibani, who was the first to plant black tomatoes in Kuwait last year, has now grown the second crop of these rare tomatoes in addition to many other new fruits and vegetables. "I recently harvested the plants of the cold season. It included the second crop of black tomatoes that was more successful this year as I have more experience and discovered the secrets of planting it. I produced these black tomatoes by mating wild blue tomatoes with regular red ones. It's a natural organic production and was first produced by Oregon University in the US," he told Kuwait Times.

There are other new types of produce this year. "In addition to the green and purple cauliflowers that I planted earlier and yellow and purple carrots, I expanded to more plants. So I harvested colored Swiss chard, green and purple kale, which is popular in the States and not yet well-known in Kuwait, and white strawberries, all for the first time. But I only got a small quantity of white strawberries, and I intend to produce more in the future," added Kraibani.

He is now readying summer crops. "The most popular summer crop is melons. These fruits need higher temperatures, so I will start planting now to have it ready by summer. I will be planting yellow, orange and white melons - the white ones are very rare, and have only one kind. I will also plant various kinds of clear melons such as the long Korean one and the green Mexican one. For the first time, I will also plant red okra and strange kinds of cucumbers such as the lemon cucumber that is round, or the small cucumber the size of a berry," he enthused.

Kraibani has more plans. "I'm planning to market my products and expand my production for export to GCC markets. My farm produces during the whole year, as I grow regular crops in addition to rare ones. I'm also participating in the Agriculture Middle East Festival 'AGRAME' in Dubai, which is an international championship," he explained.



Kuwaiti farmer Yousef Al-Kraibani



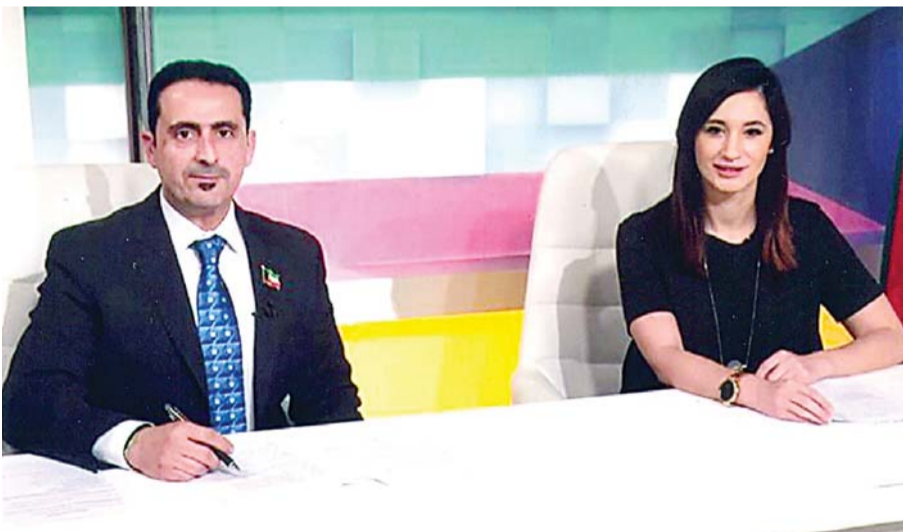
HALA FEBRUARY BOOSTS SHOPPING, BUSINESS IN KUWAIT: OFFICIAL

KUWAIT: The festival kicking off the shopping bonanza in February each year energizes business in the country and promotes tourism, said chairman of the organizing committee for Hala February festival Walid Al-Sagubi at a press conference yesterday.



The festival coincides with the 10th anniversary of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's assumption of power, the 25th anniversary since Liberation Day, and the 55th anniversary of the National Day, he said.

The festival will start January 29 with a seaside parade on Arabian Gulf street where onlookers can see an air show and a marine show besides a float parade in which floats will be sponsored by different government agencies and ministries as well as private sector entities. There will be musical presentations on stage and sports activities including a marathon to be held on this annual much-looked-forward-to occasion. The 17th edition of the festival will run until February 24. —KUNA



KUWAIT: Kuwait Television: Channel 2 (KTV 2) broadcasted a live show on Monday with Adeeb Shuhaiber and Badria Saleh to mark the 10th anniversary of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah's assumption of power, and to mark the commencement of National and Liberation Days' celebrations with a flag-hoisting ceremony at Bayan palace.

INTERIOR MINISTER, SAUDI TOURISM OFFICIAL DISCUSS TOURISTIC COOPERATION



KUWAIT: Interior Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Sabah meets with Presidential Advisor of the Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities Abdullah bin Mohammad Al-Sheikh. —KUNA



Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah meets with Hungarian counterpart Laslo Sabo.

KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Sabah met with a Saudi tourism official yesterday to discuss ways to enhance cooperation in the tourism sector between Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.

In a press statement, the Ministry of

Interior said that Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled's meeting with the Presidential Advisor of the Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities Abdullah bin Mohammad Al-Sheikh, reviewed long-standing ties between both nations.

Meanwhile, means of enhancing bilateral

ties were the focus of talks held between Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah and Hungarian counterpart Laslo Sabo who is leading a visiting delegation. The talks addressed regional and international issues of common concern. The meeting was attended by Assistant Foreign Minister

for European Affairs. Ambassador Walid Ali Al-Khubizi, and Assistant Foreign Minister for the Affairs of the Deputy Foreign Minister's Office Ambassador Ayham Abdullatif Al-Omar, Kuwait's ambassador to Hungary Muhammad Burahmah and the Hungarian envoy in Kuwait. —KUNA

In my view

THE SYRIAN CRISIS

By Labeed Abdal

local@kuwaittimes.net



The UN's bid to hold a third meeting, its call to the Syrian government and members of opposition to nominate representatives to attend it and admitting that it has no final lists of the names of those due to attend the political debate to be held in Geneva, requires that potential candidates attending the meeting should exert utmost efforts to focus on the true disagreement not only between the government and the opposition, but also amongst major countries with Security Council membership who wish to keep their foot wedged in one of the most important corners of the Middle East.

More efforts must be exerted to reach an agreement on the inter-Syrian talks to be held under the supervision of major countries and neighboring ones that have already suffered financial and material damages, especially since the conflict imposed itself on the international arena when millions flocked out into land and seas to save themselves and their loved ones from imminent threats.

The UN's approval in December to hold a meeting to end the war in Syria will always remain linked to various calculations related to international justice and the need to not shed more blood of the people who have been displaced, killed or drowned. Image of those people should remain in the eyes and minds of both sides.

Both sides have to note that hundreds of thousands of Syrians still suffer under siege and are deprived of food and medical care, which make the conflict even worse, especially with the presence of major players and bloodthirsty people who are only keen on killing more people to ensure their own survival.

The UN's humanitarian organizations have expressed concern over the fate of around 200,000 people, mainly women and children, who are facing death in a country that had been abducted by groups of terrorists and misled and hired killers, which has led to the death of over 250,000 Syrians and displacement of over 4.6 million others since 2011. Such a situation truly calls for more international decisiveness to stop the bloodshed.

In my view

THE HONEST AND STRONG

By Dr Khalid Ahmad Al-Saleh

Do you agree with me, dear reader, that we live in a partisan country? I hope no one denies this, as all indicators confirm the existence of political groupings in Kuwait that are different in their principles, ideologies and connections. These are parties, yes this is the real understanding of parties, that should receive legal legitimacy and get organized by the state and work in the open as the case is in all democratic countries. If they are not legalized, they will work in the dark and be run in secret, as the case is with us.

Parties are life's necessity, because they represent harmonization of class, as well as the capitalistic regimes' belief in them. Parties are also a stage in the class growth as Marxism expresses it. Even in the Islamic policy that is considered in the middle between the two contradictions - capitalism and communism - the Almighty Creator approved the class principle as a living necessity and made differences among people not linked with a deserved status. "It is we who have appointed among their livelihood in the life of this world and have raised some of them above others in degrees (of rank), that they may make use of one another for service. But the mercy of your Lord is better than whatever they accumulate." - Holy Quran

So, any attempt to jump over the formation of parties is really a political shortcoming that leads, as the case with us, to the growth of secret groups who are not supervised. Harmful alliances may be forged and not discovered until it is too late, and the entire society may pay the price for this. Today, for example, we have by-elections where various political groups are fighting for one seat, and the Kuwaiti voter does not know who they are and what their programs are. All what we see and hear is media pressure to make someone succeed and raise him, and expose another and bring him down.

Success will be on the side of the one who has a group that allocates much money in order to storm social media and media of all types. Or whom the government stands with all it has from social influence tools and supporters able to influence. The one who will win is not necessarily what the people want, and he may not be the most honest, good and strong. The one who will win is the result of unknown powers competing, and this is the secret of the Kuwaiti street apprehension.

Once again, we reiterate that the Kuwaiti citizen has limited influence in the election process, and the only solution is in announcing parties, and push them to the front under the eyes of the people and under the law, and only then the democratic process will begin in Kuwait. Only then the Kuwaiti people will have the freedom of choosing the strong and trustworthy.



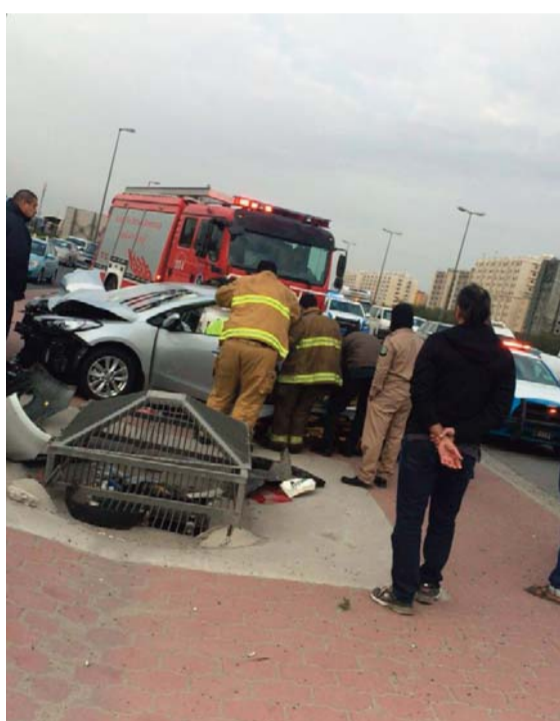
NO INJURIES IN HOTEL FIRE

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: A room inside Salmiya hotel caught fire yesterday, prompting firefighters to respond. The fire, which was on the third floor, was brought under control quickly. No injuries were reported, as nearly 70 persons were successfully evacuated. Separately, Jahra firefighters tackled a blaze that was reported at a Taima house yesterday. Firemen cut the power current and evacuated the house, then successfully extinguished the blaze. One resident of the house suffered smoke inhalation and was treated by paramedics.

Motorist freed

Firefighters freed a man who was trapped in his wrecked vehicle following an accident. Jahra Fire Station men headed to the scene in response to an emergency call reporting the crash. They used special equipment to cut the car open and free the man, who was unconscious. Paramedics then transported the driver to the nearest medical facility. In a separate incident, Farwaniya firemen helped rescue a number of people who were involved in an accident on Sixth Ring Road near Dhajeej area. Three vehicles were involved in the crash. The injured people were handed to paramedics. Also yesterday, firefighters freed a child's finger which was stuck in a bicycle's chain.



KUWAIT RANKS POORLY IN CORRUPTION INDEX

By Sarah Ahmed

KUWAIT: Public sector corruption in Kuwait worsened significantly in the last year according to Transparency International. In its annual Corruption Perceptions Index published yesterday, the global corruption watchdog, ranked Kuwait 55 out of 167 countries, dropping it six places from last year's spot at 49.

Among the Gulf Cooperation Council states, Kuwait came in second last after Oman (60). Qatar leapfrogged up a remarkable 49 spots from a ranking of 71 in 2015 to be ranked 22 in this year's report. The United Arab Emirates followed closely behind, ranked 23 this year compared with a poor 70 in last year's report. Saudi Arabia (48) and Bahrain (50) both maintained similar rankings to last year.

In the lengthy report, Transparency International warned that emerging economies are struggling to shake off graft. From Latin America to Asia to Africa and the Middle East, corruption remains rampant. Overall, two-thirds of the countries measured by Transparency scored below the 50-point mark out of a top score of 100. The Middle East overall continues to be a flashpoint for corruption and a potential byproduct, instability.

"Once again, 3 of the bottom 10 countries are from the Middle East and North Africa region - Iraq, Libya and Sudan. The ongoing devastating conflicts in these and other countries inevitably mean that any efforts to strengthen institutions and the state have taken a back seat. Yet security will only succeed long-term if governments make a genuine break with cronyism

and build trust with citizens," says Ghada Zughayar, Director for Middle East and North Africa.

Nordic countries - Denmark, Finland and Sweden - topped the chart with their clean public sectors as in previous years, while strife - torn or repressive states-Afghanistan, North Korea and Somalia-brought up the rear.

Transparency International, which uses data from institutions including the World Bank, the African Development Bank and business school IMD to compile the perceptions of the scale of public sector corruption, urged the public to prod their governments to carry out much needed reforms.

"The scale of the issue is huge," the report notes. "Sixty-eight per cent of countries worldwide have a serious corruption problem. Half of the G20 are among them."

270 FAKE COMPANIES EXPOSED IN SEVEN MONTHS: MINISTER

By Meshaal Al-Enezi and A Saleh

KUWAIT: The Public Authority for Manpower's inspection teams recently traced 60 more fake companies, which takes the total number of fake companies exposed in seven months to 270, Minister of Social Affairs and Labor and Minister of State for Planning and Development Hind Al-Subaih announced yesterday.

These inspection campaigns are within efforts exerted to track violating companies and regulate the labor market to limit the number of 'loose' laborers in violation of residency laws that pose a threat to the Kuwaiti society, Subaih stressed.

The manpower authority has clear instructions to invite expat workers registered with these companies to check with it or with the Ministry of Interior to legalize their stay in Kuwait after these companies' files were suspended, the minister said. The companies will not be allowed to operate unless they legalize their labor status within two months after suspension. The names of violating companies would be published in order to notify and encourage laborers registered with them to check with relevant authorities, Subaih further indicated.



Hind Al-Subaih

Interior's security approval, in both Arabic and English, to the applications with the original contracts. The committee also postponed discussing two topics about expanding northern and eastern borders of Wafra farms by 150 m, which had been already approved by the municipality. On the other hand, the committee approved a request made by Kuwait Gulf Oil Company to license allocating special routes for power cables with various voltages through Wafra. The committee also approved allocating special routes for Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) pipelines at Khairan power plant.

Hawally committee

Meanwhile, the Hawally committee at the Municipal Council approved a request made by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor to allocate a location to build a cooking gas distribution outlet in block 2 in Shuhada and postponed a request to report on the co-ops union's request to rent some floors in the union's building in Hawally. Committee chairman Yousif Al-

Ghareeb added that the committee also returned to the municipality a request to build a municipality court in collaboration with the justice ministry.

Workers' accommodations

The Ahmadi committee at the Municipal Council postponed discussing three requests by Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC) to license the construction of temporary laborer accommodations at Umm Al-Haiman to host 60 laborers working on executing the biofuel project at Mina Abdullah and Mina Ahmadi. The postponement was made until receiving the Ministry of

Prosecutors retired

Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Sabah issued a number of ministerial decisions referring 156 public prosecutors working at the investigation department to retirement effective on March 31, 2016. Major General Fahd Al-Doussari, the investigation department's director has accordingly been notified, well-informed sources said.

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INTEGRATING STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS IN EDUCATION - PART IV

By Dr Zainab Al-Hasawi

Developing the strategy of vocational development for school directors in terms of integration in mainstream schools in Kuwait, we have to review the elements of achieving success of this strategy in particular and of any educational one in general. A strategy is a way of solving certain problems, diagnosing them, setting policies and putting them into practice through proper measures.

Some of the elements taken into consideration when setting this strategy include comprehensive review of educational issues as a whole, considering related factors and adopting the partnership and participation concept to achieve coherence so that directors can be fully convinced with their roles, which enhances their vocational satisfaction that will be reflected on all staff and learners as well as make school environments attractive to everyone. This strategy should be built on intellect, organization, management, execution, meditation and determining all tracks to be followed.

In addition, the strategy should go through several phases including operations and activities with the aim of building the general structure of strategies suggested for developing integration school directors.

The first phase includes the following:

- Analysis by studying foreign and other countries' experiences in terms of vocational development programs for integration school directors and identifying the most important international and local changes affecting school operation.

- Determining the human and financial resources needed to utilize them in a most integrated way to achieve the goals.

The Second Phase:

- Setting a vision for the strategy proposed to achieve vocational development for integration school directors of "outstanding increase in caring for and developing integration school directors to face local, regional and international competition", and rephrasing it in a way that expresses the establishment's philosophy and determines its sought future.

The Third Phase

- Setting strategic goals, and this is the basic rule that must be clear, defined and objective.

The Fourth Phase:

- Setting integration school directors' vocational development programs and projects in addition to determining the funds needed.

The Fifth Phase:

- Scheduling the execution of school directors' vocational development programs according to priorities and quality standards.

The Sixth Phase:

- Work follow-up, assessment and briefing officials seeking participation, consultancy and discussing their vision about the strategy and approving it.

Finally:

- Launching media awareness campaign to promote the integration culture and its impact on society.

- Exploring the gap between actual vocational development of integration school directors in Kuwait and international standards.

- Involving everybody in integration programs to do extra tasks.

— Translated by Kuwait Times



MEW TO LAY OFF 34% OF EXPATS

KUWAIT: The power plants' operation and maintenance sector at the Ministry of Electricity and Water (MEW) has already started cutting expenses and reducing the number of expat technicians, Assistant Undersecretary for Power Plants' Operation and Maintenance Fuad Al-Oun said. Oun explained that the sector would reduce 34 percent of the total number of laborers working in operation and maintenance. He also noted that the decision was made after Kuwaiti workers scored high in performance assessment reports for 2015 where 81 percent of them received 'excellent' reports and 13 percent received 'very good' ones. "This shows that national workers are now reliable enough to run the sector efficiently without the need to increase the number of expats," Oun stressed, noting that the decision would help save around KD 3 million from the budget of one tender alone and that further millions would be saved when the same is applied to other tenders. — Al-Rai

RATIONALIZATION HALTS PAYROLL ALTERNATIVE

KUWAIT: Well-informed government sources said that there was a recommendation to suspend the payroll strategic alternative for the time being as it would increase the salaries of some employees at various public establishments to give them equal salaries to those their peers get in other sectors. The sources justified the possible suspension to the drop in oil prices. "This leaves no room for major budget adjustments that would increase the salaries of a considerable number of public sector employees," explained the sources.

Further, the sources added that an NBK report had shown that the payroll strategic alternative would cost around KD 350 million in the first year, which is about 4.5 percent of the total public sector payroll cost of KD 7.85 billion. "The project needs a great deal of amendments to match the current economic situation," stressed the sources, noting that various state bodies and establishments were currently conducting the largest rationalization campaign in history during which some government establishments had cut expenses by 30-40 percent. — Al-Anbaa

60% BELIEVE KD 4,000 DOWRY REASONABLE

KUWAIT: A new scientific study said around 60 percent of male members of the Kuwaiti society confirmed their commitment not to pay more than KD 4,000 as dowry. They see this amount as suitable, but is not accepted by women. Both genders agreed that dowry should not exceed KD 10,000. The study revealed that single men form a percentage that exceeds that of women, as one third of Kuwaiti families, or 31 percent, have one or more unmarried males aged over 30, while the females form a fifth at 19 percent. — Al-Qabas

JUVENILES MISDEMEANORS UP 140%

KUWAIT: The yearly statistics issued by the statistics department of the Justice Ministry revealed that the number of cases received by the public prosecution during October was 750, as felonies made the largest share at 48.5 percent (364 cases) while press misdemeanors were the least at 0.8 percent (6 cases).

The statistics showed that violating funds of others made the largest number of cases at 147, followed by drugs, liquor and murder (25 cases), while other cases numbered 47, defamation (17 cases) and banks (one case only). The statistics showed a drop in the total number of cases received by the public prosecution in Oct 2015 compared with their number in Oct 2014 by 2 percent in most cases. Business misdemeanors dropped by 40.5 percent, as there were 42 cases in 2014, while there were only 25 cases in 2015, followed by drug addiction at 31.6 percent, of which there were 76 cases in 2014 and 52 cases in 2015.

Juvenile misdemeanors saw the biggest increase of 139.5 percent, as there were 68 cases in 2014, while 206 cases were registered in 2015. Murder cases increased in 2015, as there were 19 cases in 2014, which is a 31.6 percent increase. — Al-Qabas

Crime

Report

Curious boys find skeleton

KUWAIT: A challenge between three teenagers to take a picture in an abandoned building in Khaitan revealed the remains of a corpse, which the coroner determined belongs to a man who died six months ago. A police source said that a Farwaniya patrol noticed the three juveniles running in a hysterical state while screaming, so they stopped them and asked them what was wrong, and they told police that there was a skeleton in the building. Concerned authorities are investigating.

Body found in burned car

A fire in a car behind the university project in Abdullah Al-Mubarak area revealed a charred corpse inside, and the coroner concluded that it belonged to a girl who was about 18. The car is owned by a Pakistani who left the country two months ago. Police received a call about the fire, so police and criminal evidence went to the scene, and when the fire was put out, and the charred body was discovered. Detectives are investigating.

'Kidnap' charges

Police received a call from a citizen saying she was kidnapped in the Kabd desert, and gave them her location. Policemen rushed to the area, and as soon as she saw them, she said she was kidnapped by the man she was with. Policemen noticed she was in an abnormal condition. The man said that the woman drank too much and a minor dispute occurred between the two, then she called police and made the accusation. Both were taken to the police station for further action.

Restaurant closed

An indecent act by a Saudi and a Filipina led to the closure of a Kuwait City restaurant. The indecent act was discovered by the municipality's emergency team during a campaign on cafes and restaurants to follow the warnings given lately. Orders were given according to the law to close the restaurant. The campaign aims at removing cabins in such places.

Roof collapse

Worshippers in a Salwa mosque were terrified when part of the mosque's roof collapsed during dawn prayers. An eyewitness said that while worshippers were standing during the first rakaah of Fajr prayers, they were scared by the sound of the cave-in, prompting the imam to hasten the prayer and leave quickly, as no injuries were reported.

Search for swindler

A Ghanaian national accused a compatriot of swindling KD 850 from him after promising to renew his residency. The expat told Fintas police he agreed with his compatriot to help him renew his residency and asked him for the money, but nothing was done and the man disappeared. Detectives are investigating. — Al-Rai

CTC EXTENDS MUTLAA PROJECT BIDDING

KUWAIT: Well-informed sources at the public authority for housing welfare disclosed that the Central Tenders Committee (CTC) has extended the bidding deadline for the project of constructing, executing and maintaining the main road and infrastructure services at the Mutlaa residential city project until the beginning of March 2016 instead of Feb 7.

The sources added that bidding was extended for three weeks upon requests made by some companies that needed more time to study the tender documents. "This deferral will not alter or affect the authority's commitment to the plan set to execute the city," explained the sources, noting that six international companies that had already been qualified for the project had asked for more time to study the tender documents. — Al-Rai

Photo

of the day



KUWAIT: Clouds as they appeared in the sky on Tuesday, January 26, 2016. Kuwait is currently experiencing a cold wave that is expected to last until the end of the month, with temperatures dropping to as low as 0 C degrees in open areas. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Trump pulls out of final GOP debate

ITALY’S GAY RIGHTS DEBATE PROMPTS RETHINK OF FAMILY

EMERGING GIANTS PLAGUED BY CORRUPTION

BRAZIL AND MALAYSIA MAJOR CAUSE FOR CONCERN

BERLIN: The world’s “up and coming economies” are struggling to shake off corruption, an anti-graft watchdog warned yesterday, citing massive scandals in Brazil and Malaysia as cause for concern. In its “Corruption Perceptions Index 2015”, Transparency International (TI) said the Latin American country showed the biggest decline in its ranking of 168 countries, slumping seven notches to 76th position over a kick-backs scandal engulfing state oil giant Petrobras.

On the other side of the globe, graft allegations surrounding Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak also laid bare corruption dogging the Asian state, it noted. Overall, two-thirds of the countries measured by TI scored below the 50-point mark out of a top score of 100.

Nordic countries-Denmark, Finland and Sweden-topped the chart with their clean public sectors as in previous years, while strife-torn or repressive states-Afghanistan, North Korea and Somalia-brought up the rear. Emerging giants, in particular, showed a worrisome picture in the index used widely used as a gauge of the level of corruption by governments, legal systems, political parties and bureaucracies.

“All the BRICS are challenged, the countries that are the really up and coming in the world economy, they all score below 50 in our index,” Robin Hodess, TI group director for research, told AFP, referring to Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. South Africa took 61st place with 44 points. Brazil and India were tied at 76th place, with scores of just 38, while China fared slightly worse, at 83th place with 37 points. Russia only came in at 119th position, managing just 29 points.

Hodess noted that the Petrobras case has had a “tremendous impact... in the real uncov-

ering of the way that the political networks and businesses have been covering up decades of corruption in the country”. “Things are starting to change, but this has been the scandal that brought Brazil into a difficult situation in terms of public sector perception of corruption.”

The Latin American giant has been reeling over revelations that executives at Petrobras colluded with politicians and other businessmen to siphon off millions from the company through bribes and rigged contracts. A massive probe dubbed “Operation Car Wash” has netted dozens of prominent figures, including high-ranking Congress members and executives at Petrobras and major construction firms.

President Dilma Rousseff herself has been investigated but so far emerged unscathed, although she was Petrobras chairwoman through much of the period when the corruption was at the centre of the embezzlement scheme.

‘Not enough political will’

Meanwhile, hours ahead of the release of TI’s latest index, Malaysia’s top prosecutor cleared Prime Minister Najib of corruption, putting a spotlight on graft strangling the country’s public sector. In the long-running case that has gripped the nation, the attorney-general on Tuesday said some \$681 million (628 million Euros) that Najib received in his bank account were a personal donation from the Saudi royal family.

Najib has for months denied accusations that the payment was siphoned from a now struggling state-owned company he launched. Samantha Grant, TI’s Southeast Asia coordinator, said the verdict left key questions answered, including “why this



MOSCOW: Transparency International Russia Chief Elena Panfilova (left) speaks to the media as Anton Pominov, head of research at Transparency International Russia, sits next to her during a news conference. — AFP

donation was made”. “I think this case really highlights that kind of problem and the fact that while some measures have been taken, really getting to the bottom of the problem, and really working at the roots of corruption in Malaysia hasn’t really been given enough political will and honest attention,” she said.

Transparency International urged the public to prod their governments to carry out much needed reforms to end the scourge of corruption. “Overall we think it’s very important that not only the government comes in with the reforms we are looking for-the policy changes, and enforcing them, but that these countries pay attention to people, to the efforts of people on the ground,” said Hodess.

She cited the example of Guatemala, where protests pushed president Otto Perez to stand down last year over graft allegations. “The people can really make a big difference in drawing attention of elites to corruption issues, and we think in the long term it would make a big impact if people are part of the solution to corruption,” added Hodess. — AFP

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QATAR ANNOUNCES MAJOR GOVERNMENT RESHUFFLE

DOHA: Qatar announced a major reshuffle of its cabinet yesterday and merged several government departments, state media announced, as the energy-rich emirate deals with the financial fallout from lower oil prices. Key positions such as the top jobs in the labor and foreign ministries changed in a move seen as consolidating the power of Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, who was announcing his first major reshuffle since taking power in 2013.

Combining ministries was also seen as significant in a Gulf state spooked by falling oil prices and which has warned it will run its first budget deficit in 15 years during 2016. Seven ministerial changes were announced by the official Qatar News Agency. Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani, a member of the royal family, replaced Khalid al-Attiyah as foreign minister, the QNA said. The 35-year-old is a senior official who was previously in charge of international cooperation in the foreign ministry.

Attiyah, whose father was the founder of Qatar's armed forces, was appointed minister of state for defense. The emir himself holds the post of defense minister. And Issa bin Saad Al-Naimi Juffali was awarded the new position of minister for administrative development and labor and social affairs. He replaces labor minister Abdullah bin Saleh Al-Khulaifi at one of the country's most high-profile cabinet posts because of international criticism of Doha's record on migrant workers' rights.

As notable as the announcement of new faces was the fact that several departments would be merged, which some see as a cost-cutting measure. Among the newly combined ministries is not only administrative development and labor, but also the departments of culture and sports, transport and communications, and municipality and the environment. Previously, these were separate departments.

"No doubt this has to do with reducing spend-

ing and preventing sagging," Jamal Abdullah, Head of Gulf Studies at Al-Jazeera Centre, told AFP. "Especially as a number of ministries intersect tasks and responsibilities, such as communications and transportation, municipal and environment." Qatar has already forecast a budget deficit of more than \$12 billion in 2016 — and that could increase as it was calculated at an oil price of \$48 per barrel. The current price is around \$32.

In addition, the emir warned last December of "wasteful spending, overstaffing and a lack of accountability" across Qatar. Abdullah also noted that the changes would help "pump young blood into the Qatar decision-making machine", especially the appointment of a new, relatively young foreign minister. One post which remained the same was that of prime minister, which has been held by Sheikh Abdullah bin Nasser bin Khalifa Al-Thani since 2013. Also, one woman was named in the reshuffle-Hanan Al-Kuwari, who becomes the new minister of health. — AFP



DOHA: This file photo taken on December 9, 2014 shows Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani looking on during the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) summit. — AFP

SYRIAN OPPOSITION SETS NEW CONDITIONS FOR PEACE TALKS

EXPECTATIONS ARE LOW FOR ANY BREAKTHROUGHS

BEIRUT: One of the main Syrian opposition blocs said yesterday that it was unlikely to attend Geneva peace talks this week unless progress is made toward lifting sieges in the country and other conditions are met, adding that it was awaiting clarifications from the UN envoy. The announcement cast further uncertainty on peace talks scheduled to begin in two days.

Expectations are already low for any breakthroughs during talks that UN envoy Staffan de Mistura has described as the start of a drawn-out process of consultation between various parties to the conflict, rather than actual peace negotiations. Khaled Nasser, a member of the Syrian National Coalition - one of the main opposition groups in the bloc - said yesterday that he believed negotiations with limited ambitions would "waste time."

"Friday was never going to be the start of negotiations," said Nasser. "De Mistura said it is for consultations and discussions.... We don't want to waste time with consultations and discussions." Still, the group was meeting in Riyadh for a second day yesterday to make a final decision. The talks are intended to start a political process to end the conflict that began in 2011 as a largely peaceful uprising against Syrian President Bashar Assad but escalated into an all-out war after a harsh state crackdown. The plan calls for cease-fires in parallel to the talks, a new constitution and elections in a year and a half.

In a sign of the complexity of the task, de Mistura said the delegations in Geneva would initially be sitting in separate rooms and he would shuttle between them. Tensions have also flared over who would be invited to the talks, and the opposition has demanded confidence-building measures from the government on humanitarian issues.

In a statement released at the end of day-long meetings in Saudi Arabia late Tuesday, the opposition coalition known as the Higher Negotiating Committee referred to the "necessity of realizing genuine improvements on the ground before starting in the negotiating process." The Saudi-backed committee is headed by Riyadh Hijab, a former prime minister who defected to the opposition in 2012. It represents a bloc that includes the Syrian National Coalition and many of the major rebel factions fighting in Syria.

Russia trying to dictate

The bloc outlined its conditions for participating in the talks in a letter to UN chief Ban Ki-moon. While the group left open the possibility of its eventual participation, it said it awaits a reply from him on its conditions. The opposi-



MOSCOW: In this Friday, Aug 14, 2015 file photo, Syrian National Coalition President Khaled Khoja attends a news conference. — AP

tion has also accused Russia, a key backer of the Syrian government, of trying to "dictate" who from the opposition would participate.

Moscow has insisted on the participation of the main Syrian Kurdish group - the Democratic Union Party, or PYD - which plays an important role in fighting the Islamic State group and is an essential part of any political settlement in Syria. Turkey, a major backer of the rebels, sees the PYD and its YPG militia as branches of the Kurdistan Workers' Party, known as the PKK, which has waged a long insurgency against Ankara. Turkey has threatened to withdraw its support for the talks if the PYD is represented.

French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius told France-Culture radio yesterday that the PYD was not invited. "The PYD group, the Kurdish group, was causing the most problems, and Mr. de Mistura told me he had not sent them an invitation letter," Fabius said. Saleh Muslim, the co-president of the PYD, was in the Swiss city of Lausanne yesterday. Kurdish officials said he was invited by the Swiss government to serve as an adviser to the talks.

Another veteran opposition figure, Haitham Manna, who was also in Lausanne, suggested he would boycott the talks unless the PYD was invited. "The Syrian (opposition) delegation must be represented very strongly to enable it to defend the Syrian people's interest," he told the Associated Press yesterday. "If they accept to give us this possibility for a delegation that is Syrian - not Russian, not Saudi, not Turkish, not Qatari - then we are ready to do our best," said Manna, who heads the Syrian Democratic Council, an opposition group that includes the PYD.

Fabius said the Riyadh-backed Higher Negotiating Committee should be the primary negotiator for the rebels. The Riyadh bloc is a broad coalition that includes several armed Islamic groups, such as the powerful Jaish Al-Islam, which the Russian and Syrian governments consider a terrorist group. It does not, however, include the Islamic State group or the Nusra Front, two militant factions that control large areas of Syria and are not participating in peace talks. — AP

TUNISIA PM DEFENDS GOVT POLICIES IN FACE OF UNREST

TUNIS: Tunisian Prime Minister Habib Essid defended his government yesterday before parliament, faced with unemployment and poverty at the root of the worst social unrest since the 2011 revolution. "We have tried, as far as possible, to improve the situation," he told a special parliamentary session on last week's protests that led to clashes with security forces in which dozens of people were injured, mostly in the disadvantaged centre of Tunisia. "We could make people quieter down by telling them, 'We are going to create 1,000 jobs' ... but we want to tell the people the truth," he said. "We've started to find solutions. We don't have solutions for everybody but we do have some solutions," the prime minister said, without giving specifics.

"The responsibility (to find solutions) lies not only with the government," said Essid, urging opposition parties and civil society to join forces with his administration to address people's demands. A nationwide nighttime curfew was imposed Friday after the protests, which started in the central town of Kasserine where an unemployed man died of electrocution during a January

16 protest over the lack of economic prospects in the region. The unrest, the worst since the revolution five years ago that ousted longtime dictator Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, spread to several other towns and to Tunis where shops were burned and looted in one suburb. While Tunisia is considered a rare success story of the 2011 regional uprisings known as the Arab Spring, the authorities have failed to resolve the problems of social exclusion and regional inequalities.

Apart from the economic damage wrought by political instability in post-Ben Ali Tunisia, two jihadist attacks last year targeting foreigners killed 60 people, battering Tunisia's vital tourism industry. The recent social unrest echoes the public anger that erupted after the death of young fruit seller Mohammed Bouazizi in the central town of Sidi Bouzid in December 2011. Bouazizi set himself on fire in protest at unemployment and police harassment, sparking the uprising that toppled Ben Ali-whose rule was tainted by graft accusations-and inspiring the Arab Spring revolts. — AFP

THIRD OF WORLD POPULATION LIVES IN COUNTRIES WITHOUT FREEDOMS

NEW YORK: More than a third of the world's population, or 2.6 billion people, live in nations and territories gripped by repression, corruption and human rights abuses, with the worst being Syria, Tibet and Somalia, an advocacy group said yesterday.

The year 2015 - shaped by mass migration, crackdowns on dissent, xenophobia and terror attacks - marked the 10th straight year of decline in global freedom, according to an annual report by the Washington-based Freedom House. Worldwide, 86 nations and territories were designated free based on their political rights and civil liberties, 50 were deemed not free, and 59 were partly free, it said.

The bulk of those deemed unfree were in the Middle East and North Africa, where 85 percent of the population lives with repression; sub-Saharan Africa where 20 regimes earned the not free ranking; and Eurasia, where no country was listed as free.

The report singled out the United States - while free - as slipping, citing "a disturbing increase in the role of private money in election campaigns," legislative gridlock, a lack of openness in government, racial discrimination and a dysfunctional criminal justice system. Freedom declined in 72 countries in 2015, the most since the 10-year slide began.

There were gains in 43 countries, with upward trends in Burkina Faso, Myanmar, Nigeria and Sri Lanka, which all held elections. The slowdown in the Chinese economy and lower commodity prices took a toll, said Arch Puddington, vice president for research at Freedom House and co-author of the report.

"In many countries with authoritarian governments, the drop in revenues from falling commodity prices led dictators to redouble political repression at home and lash out at perceived foreign enemies," Puddington said in a statement. "Democratic countries came under strain from terrorist attacks and unprecedented numbers of refugees - problems emanating from regional conflicts such as the Syrian civil war."

Notable for the year was a lack of progress for women, the report said. Citing Saudi Arabian women participating in elections and an end to adultery as a crime in South Korea, it said: "The very limited steps that were hailed as victories... demonstrated just how low the bar has gotten in evaluating progress toward gender equality." Rounding out the dozen nations and territories with the worst scores were North Korea, Uzbekistan, Eritrea, Turkmenistan, Western Sahara, Sudan, Central African Republic, Equatorial Guinea and Saudi Arabia. — Reuters

ISRAEL RELEASES NAZI PLEA LETTER ON HOLOCAUST DAY

JERUSALEM: Israel made public yesterday a decades-old handwritten plea from Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann for clemency for his role in the Holocaust, dated just two days before he was executed. In the request, written after he was brought to Israel in 1960, then tried, convicted and sentenced to death, Eichmann says the Israeli court overstated his role in organizing the logistics of Hitler's "Final Solution" which involved the extermination of six million Jews.

President Reuven Rivlin presented the previously unreleased letter, which was written to then president Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, at a ceremony to mark International Holocaust Remembrance Day. "There is a need to draw a line between the leaders responsible and the people like me forced to serve as mere instruments in the hands of the leaders," the presidency quoted Eichmann's letter as saying.

"I was not a responsible leader, and as such do not feel myself guilty," the German wrote. "I am not able to recognize the court's ruling as just, and I ask, Your Honor Mr President, to exercise your right to grant pardons, and order that the death penalty not be carried out." The letter was signed and dated: "Adolf Eichmann Jerusalem, May 29, 1962." He was hanged around midnight on May 31.

Eichmann, one of the main organ-

izers of the Holocaust, escaped from a prisoner-of-war camp after World War II and fled to Argentina in 1950, where he lived under a pseudonym until he was snatched by Mossad agents in Buenos Aires in May 1960 and smuggled to Israel. The ability of the security services to bring him to justice was a source of pride for the Jewish state, and Rivlin referred to the trial as a momentous moment in Israel's history.

"In the first years after the Holocaust, the people in Israel were busy rebuilding and founding an independent state," he said. "The renewed Israeli society was not in the mindset to or able to remember. The Eichmann trial broke the dam of silence. The ability of the young Jewish state to capture the Nazi murderer afforded a basic sense of security to the survivors of the Holocaust." Dismissing Eichmann's claims to be just a bureaucrat, Rivlin said: "The people who suffered from Eichmann's weakness were not given a moment of grace."

Remaining Nazis

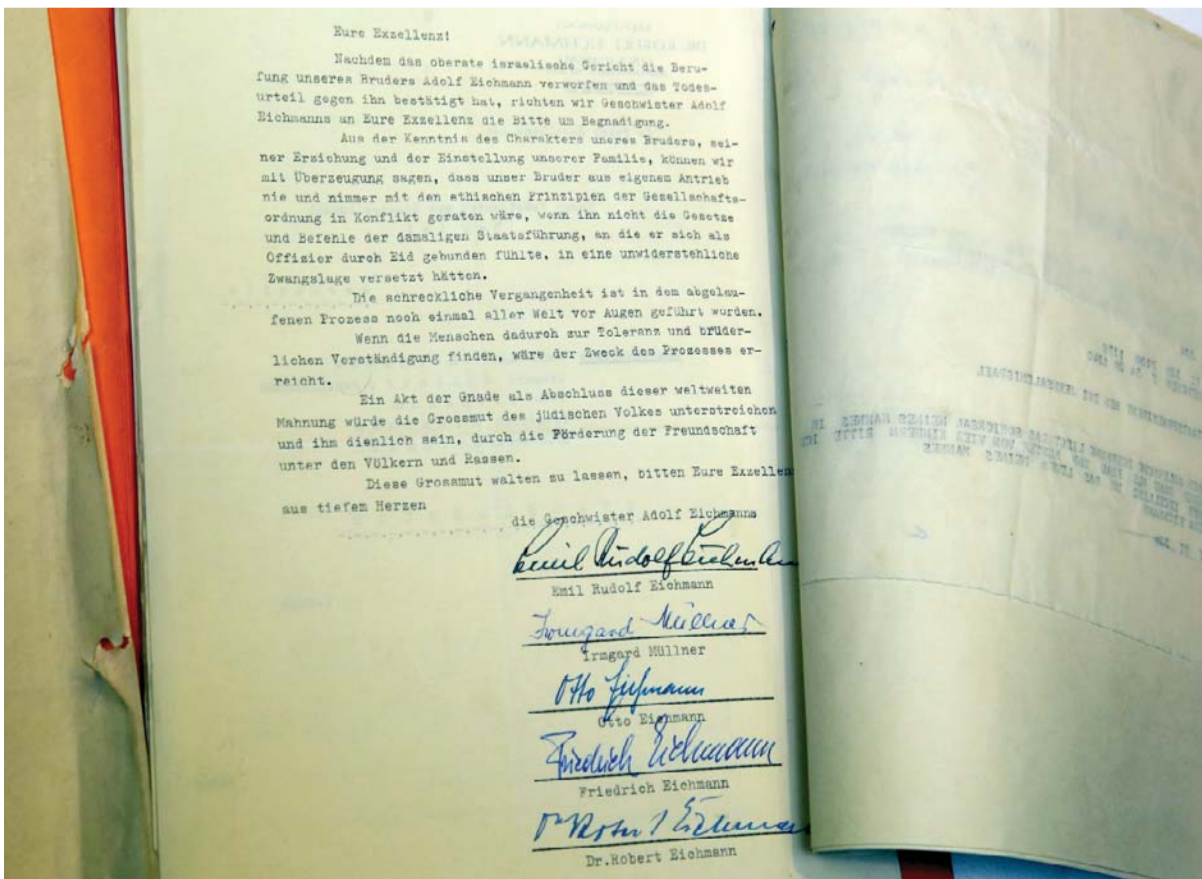
Israel and its allies have continued to use their resources across the globe to pursue those responsible for carrying out the Holocaust, even though the majority of perpetrators are now close to death. On Tuesday, the Simon Wiesenthal Center-named after a

famous Nazi hunter produced a list of 10 alleged Nazis who could be prosecuted in 2016.

Of the 10, four have trial dates already slated in Germany this year. Among them is Helma Kissner, who served as a radio operator in the Auschwitz death camp for four months in July 1944. Efraim Zuroff, Jerusalem director of the centre, said they would continue to chase every remaining perpetrator as "we owe it to the victims."

"The passage of time in no way diminishes the guilt of the killers. Old age should not afford protection to people that committed such heinous crimes," he said. "The trials send a powerful message about the significance of the Holocaust." As the number of World War II Nazis alive diminishes, Zuroff said they are also seeking to focus on historical accuracy-with strands of different societies in Europe keen to play down their role in the killings.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, in a statement on Tuesday, warned that anti-Semitism was again growing in Europe. "Even respected Western opinion leaders have become afflicted with hatred for the Jewish people and the Jewish state," Netanyahu said, without giving names. "The obsession with the Jewish fixation on the Jewish state-defies any other rational explanation."



JERUSALEM: A picture taken on January 27, 2016 shows a document from the archives of Israeli President's Office Legal Department which is part of the file of Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann which is presented to the public during a ceremony marking 55 years since Eichmann's trial at the occasion of the International Holocaust Remembrance Day at the presidential compound. — AFP

Other documents presented at yesterday's commemoration, in the presence of Holocaust survivors, included requests for clemency from Eichmann's wife Vera and his five brothers, along with Ben-Zvi's letter to

his justice minister rejecting the appeals. Also in the collection, recently digitized by the presidential archives, are a transcript of Eichmann's defense counsel's Supreme Court appeal, the handwritten opinion of

justice minister Dov Yosef, and a note by prosecutor Gideon Hausner for his opening address. Israel marks its own Holocaust remembrance day, which this year will be held on May 4-5. — AFP

OBAMA TAKES ON PRISON REFORM

WASHINGTON: With a ban on solitary confinement for juveniles in federal prisons, Barack Obama is pushing to reform an overcrowded and expensive correctional system in a country that locks up more people per capita than any other nation.

In an op-ed piece published in Tuesday editions of The Washington Post, the US president—who issued the ban via executive order—confirmed he wanted to “rethink” the fate of some 100,000 prisoners who spend 23 of every 24 hours locked in a tiny cell. He also announced executive actions barring corrections officials from dumping prisoners responsible for “low-level infractions” in solitary,

where inmates are cut off from almost all human contact. Obama’s reforms are expected to affect about 10,000 inmates. He said he hoped they serve as a model for US states to rethink their rules about a practice which many say has devastating psychological effects. “Solitary is profoundly mentally destructive, especially when administered to children and young adults,” Fordham Law School professor John Pfaff said.

Obama cited the “heartbreaking” case of New Yorker Kalief Browder, who spent nearly two years in solitary confinement at the city’s huge, violent Rikers Island jail complex as a teenager. He was released without ever

going on trial. His alleged crime? He stole a backpack. Browder, unable to recover, committed suicide when he was just 22.

‘Second chances’

Solitary confinement “is not going to make us safer,” Obama said last year, as he started looking at prison reform. “The social science shows that an environment like that is often more likely to make inmates more alienated, more hostile, potentially more violent.” This is why Obama is also seeking to cut the number of people incarcerated, curb the use of solitary confinement for the overall prison population and end mandatory minimum sentences.

Stressing that America is a nation of “redemption” and “second chances,” he limited to 60 days the first solitary confinement period for a first-time offender. In addition to the huge financial burden it places on US taxpayers, the prison system also has an enormous population of some 2.2 million detainees. That accounts for about a quarter of the world’s prison population.

The cells are filled with drug addicts and the mentally ill, who have almost no chances of returning to society if they spend time in solitary confinement. For those detainees, Obama hopes to offer alternatives to solitary.

‘Common humanity’

But unveiling these plans just months before a presidential election, as Republicans seeking the White House have lashed out at Obama’s weakness, is also a gamble for the president. In large part, they go against the tide of what a large part of the American population believes about crime and punishment—mainly, that keeping people in prison longer, and sometimes in isolation, reduces crime rates. Most Americans — 56 percent, according to a 2013 YouGov poll—say that solitary confinement, a practice in place for two centuries in the US, is an appropriate punishment in some circumstances. — AFP

TRUMP PULLS OUT OF FINAL GOP DEBATE

OBAMA TO HOST SANDERS IN OVAL OFFICE

MARSHALLTOWN, Iowa: Donald Trump declared he would boycott the last Republican debate before the Iowa caucuses, leading Texas Sen Ted Cruz to challenge him to a one-on-one debate. Adding intrigue to the Democratic race, the White House said President Barack Obama would host liberal Vermont Sen Bernie Sanders for an Oval Office meeting.

The dual developments on Tuesday created



IOWA CITY: Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump speaks during a campaign event at the University of Iowa. — AFP

new ripples of uncertainty six days before voting in the presidential race begins. Both parties were bracing for close contests in Iowa that will determine which of their two leading candidates will carry the momentum from a victory into the New Hampshire primary the following week and beyond.

The Iowa voting will be the first test of whether political newcomer Trump’s unorthodox campaign can get the thousands of enthusiastic supporters who show up at rallies to turn out when it matters. Cruz is believed to have assembled a strong get-out-the-vote operation. Sanders is counting on enthusiastic younger voters to boost turnout to offset the organizational strength of his chief rival, former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

‘Playing games’

Trump raised the prospect of skipping the debate as he blasted Fox News Channel for “playing games” and including anchor Megyn Kelly as a debate moderator. Trump’s campaign later said he definitely will not participate. The race among Democrats was no more settled, with Sanders and Hillary Clinton locked in a close contest in Iowa and details about their debate plans unclear. But the

Twitter followers whether he should debate. The network, in a sarcastically worded statement, said it had learned from a “secret back channel” that the leaders of Iran and Russia planned to treat Trump unfairly if elected.

“A nefarious source tells us that Trump has his own secret plan to replace the Cabinet with his Twitter followers to see if he should even go to those meetings,” read the statement from a Fox News Channel representative. Trump’s declaration was an unexpected, if not unpredictable, twist in the final days of the Iowa campaign. The real estate mogul had threatened repeatedly to boycott debates before, only to ultimately acquiesce.

Public fight

By picking a fight publicly, Trump assured that even if he goes through with his plan not to show up Thursday, his absence will be the center of attention. Cruz, appearing at an evening rally, offered to face Trump “mano a mano” anytime. He said Trump was scared of Kelly, telling supporters that skipping the debate was like refusing a job interview. “If someone did that, didn’t show up at the interview, you know what you’d say? You’re fired,” Cruz said, riffing on Trump’s famous rejoinder from his reality TV show “The Apprentice.” — AP

There was drama on the Democratic side as well. As Sanders left Iowa and Minnesota for his meeting with Obama on Wednesday, it was being watched for signs of the president’s leanings. He’s sought to avoid showing favoritism, and White House spokesman Josh Earnest said the meeting would be informal, with “no formal agenda.”

Just a day earlier, Clinton had been soaking in presidential praise. In a Politico interview, Obama called her “wicked smart” and immensely qualified to run the country, in his most extensive comments to date on the race. Obama has met with Clinton, his former secretary of state and 2008 primary opponent, periodically. Unlike the Sanders meeting, the White House typically hasn’t disclosed those sessions in advance. — AP

fireworks Tuesday were on the Republican side.

Trump said he would hold his own event in Iowa during the debate to raise money for wounded veterans. The billionaire businessman dismissed Kelly as a “third-rate reporter” who is bad at her job and had been “toying” with him - reprising a squabble that erupted after a debate Kelly co-hosted last year.

Kelly shot back on her nightly show, arguing that Trump is used to getting his way but can’t control the media. She said her network and CEO Roger Ailes had made it clear to Trump for months that they wouldn’t change their moderator line-up. “I’ll be there,” Kelly said. “The debate will go on with or without Mr Trump.”

Trump’s pullout came after Fox News Channel tweaked the Republican front-runner for asking his

1 DEAD IN OREGON SHOOTOUT AS FBI ARRESTS SIEGE LEADER

BURNS: One person was killed and several others arrested in the US state of Oregon in a Tuesday shootout between police and anti-government gunmen that had been occupying a federal wildlife refuge. The FBI said that Ammon Bundy, the rancher who led the January 2 occupation in the northwestern state, was among five people arrested when federal agents and state troopers stopped vehicles carrying the activists on a remote ice-covered highway.

Bundy, 40, faces a federal felony charge

stopped on the highway while traveling in two vehicles, CNN reported.

Details of the incident remain unclear, but apparently two men—including Bundy’s 43-year-old brother Ryan—disobeyed orders and resisted arrest, resulting in shots fired, The Oregonian said. The Bundy brothers are the sons of Cliven Bundy, 69, a racist, vitriolic anti-government activist who in 2014 engaged in an armed standoff with federal authorities over unpaid cattle grazing fees at his

has a population of 3,000. On Tuesday state police arrested a 45 year-old man from Arizona, and the FBI arrested a 50 year-old man from Ohio “without incident,” both connected to the standoff.

Another militant leader, 32 year-old Jon Ritzheimer, surrendered to police in the southwestern state of Arizona on the conspiracy charge, US media reported. It was not immediately clear if the string of arrests would end the standoff. Malheur Refuge occupier Jason Patrick told The Oregonian that the site quiet, but added cryptically that “we’re all standing here ready to defend our peaceful resolution.”

Local radio reports said that neighbors were being urged to leave the area around the refuge. Last week some 30 people, including women and children, were at the site, but it was unclear how many were present yesterday. Oregon Governor Kate Brown urged calm in a late Tuesday statement.

“The situation in Harney County continues to be the subject of a federal investigation that is in progress,” she said. “I ask for patience as officials continue pursuit of a swift and peaceful resolution.” The gunmen originally took over the Malheur federal reserve in protest over the jailing of two local ranchers, Dwight Hammond and his son Steven, who were convicted of arson.

Their demands soon grew to include calls for the government to turn over area federal land to local ranchers. In Oregon, nearly 53 percent of the land is federally owned. The Hammonds however distanced themselves from the movement and voluntarily began their scheduled prison sentences after the occupation began. Several members of the local community, notably the Oregon Cattlemen’s Association, had condemned the takeover of the reserve, while expressing sympathy for the Hammonds. On January 11, the protesters destroyed fencing surrounding the reserve. Ammon Bundy has said they were acting at the request of a rancher who wanted to graze his cattle on the property. — AFP



BURNS: This file photo taken on January 6, 2016 shows Ammon Bundy making his way from the entrance of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge Headquarters. — AFP

“of conspiracy to impede officers of the United States from discharging their official duties through the use of force, intimidation, or threats,” the FBI said in a statement.

During the arrest operation “there were shots fired,” the statement read. Authorities did not immediately identify the dead person, who The Oregonian newspaper said was group spokesman Robert “LaVoy” Finicum. The FBI said another person “suffered non-life threatening injuries” and was rushed to a local hospital before being arrested. The group was

Nevada ranch.

Cliven Bundy confirmed LaVoy Finicum’s death on his Facebook page, saying that he “was shot and murdered in Cold blood today in Burns Oregon” (sic) by the FBI and state police. The FBI has scheduled a 1830 GMT press conference to give details on the arrests.

Governor urges calm

The rural site the protesters took over, the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge, is located some 30 miles (48 kilometers) away from the nearest town—Burns, which



MINNESOTA: Democratic presidential candidate, Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt, waves to supporters during a campaign rally at the St Paul River Centre. — AP

HILLARY CLINTON FEARS REPEAT OF 2008 LOSS

CEDAR FALLS: When Bernie Sanders rolled into Decorah, nearly 2,300 people were waiting for him. Chants of “Feel the Bern” filled the spirited hall from a crowd roughly equivalent to a quarter of the town’s population. “If we have the kind of turnout that I hope we can,” Sanders told the rally, “then we’re going to win here in Iowa.” Two days later, on Tuesday, Hillary Clinton received a far less raucous greeting in the same northeastern Iowa college town. A largely elderly crowd of 450 listened quietly, clapping politely at her applause lines.

Next Monday, Iowa residents will gather in schools, churches and even private homes to choose among the Republican and Democratic candidates battling to be their party’s 2016 presidential nominee - the first in a series of state-by-state contests to choose delegates to each party’s presidential nominating convention.

It’s all beginning to resemble a bad flashback for Clinton, the second-time Democratic presidential candidate who once again finds herself barnstorming through the frozen stretches of Iowa with a diminished lead in the polls and an

underdog rival on the rise. Then-Sen. Barack Obama upset Clinton in Iowa, jump-starting his successful campaign for the nomination.

‘None of this is easy’

“If you go to caucus on Monday night and stand up for me there, I will work my heart out for you as your president,” Clinton said, urging her supporters to turn out for the Iowa gatherings in schools, churches and even private homes that open voting in the 2016 presidential campaign. “The stakes in this election are so high.” “None of this is easy,” said Clinton, talking about President Barack Obama’s work on health care but also alluding to the sweeping political changes being promised by Sanders. “This is really hard, slow, painful political work to get through the thicket of objections, of special interests and powerful forces.” Her final days in Iowa are a sprint through Iowa’s biggest cities and - more notably - small towns - as Clinton tries to stave off Sanders’ effort to turn his late boost of enthusiasm into a strong showing at the caucuses. — AP

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FRENCH JUSTICE MINISTER QUILTS DUE TO ‘TERRORIST’ NATIONALITY ROW

PARIS: French Justice Minister Christiane Taubira quit yesterday in protest over the government's efforts to strip convicted French-born terrorists of their citizenship if they have a second nationality. Taubira, popular among the ruling Socialists of President Francois Hollande but a target of criticism from right-wing politicians, tweeted: "Sometimes to resist means staying, sometimes resisting means leaving." The outspoken 63-year-old, who is from French Guiana, became France's most senior black politician when she was named to the justice ministry post in 2012. Jean-Jacques Urvoas, the president of the parliamentary committee in charge of reviewing legislation, was named as her successor. Taubira has often been at the centre of controversy, whether as the victim of racial slurs or for pushing through a same-sex marriage bill despite fierce opposition from conservatives. Her latest battle brought her into conflict with President Francois Hollande and Prime Minister Manuel Valls over their proposals to strip dual-national convicted terrorists of their French passports.

Take up arms

Hollande called for the measure to be written into the constitution in the aftermath of the November

terrorist attacks in Paris which left 130 people dead. It is part of a string of reforms meant to boost security as hundreds of French citizens-many of them dual nationals-take up arms alongside the Islamic State group in Iraq and Syria, and in the case of the Paris attackers, return to wreak devastation in France. "Removing French nationality from those who blindly kill other French in the name of an ideology of terror is a strong symbolic act against those who have excluded themselves from the national community," Valls said after the measure was announced. But many in the Socialist party see the proposal as an act of ideological treason that discriminates against a section of the population.

Just a day before the reforms were presented, Taubira announced the measure would be dropped, only to be overruled at the last minute by Hollande. The reforms also aim to inscribe the right to declare a state of emergency in the constitution, including powers to raid homes and place people under house arrest without judicial oversight. Valls presented the revised article of the constitution to parliament yesterday, ahead of a debate scheduled to start in early February. In naming Urvoas to replace Taubira, the presidency said in a statement he would "carry out... the constitutional reform".

Some more French than others?

One of the main criticisms of the nationality clause is that it will drive a wedge between those who are only French, and those who hold a second nationality. Under French law, naturalized citizens may already be stripped of their nationality. But if the latest reform passes, France would become "the first democracy in the world" to enshrine in its constitution the principle of unequal treatment of dual nationals, political scientist Patrick Weil told AFP.

Valls said Wednesday that the phrase "dual citizen" would not feature in the constitution or related laws to avoid discrimination. He said this solution would avoid the "stigmatization" of those holding two passports. To avoid French citizens with no other passport being stripped of their nationality Valls said France would ratify a 1954 United Nations convention forbidding the creation of stateless persons.

Valls said the measure would concern those convicted of serious crimes such as "criminal conspiracy, financing terrorism or individual terrorist undertaking." While left wing politicians paid tribute to Taubira, those on the right reveled in her resignation. Far-right National Front leader Marine Le Pen said Taubira's resignation was "good news for France". — AFP



PARIS: Lassana Bathily - the employee of the Hyper Cacher Jewish supermarket in Paris who helped shoppers hide in a cold storage room from an Islamist gunman who attacked the store on January 9, 2015, poses with his book "Je ne suis pas un héros" (I Am Not A Hero). — AFP



ROME: In this Saturday, Jan23, 2016 file photo, activists demonstrate in favor of rights for gay couples. — AFP

ITALY'S GAY RIGHTS DISCUSSION PROMPTS RETHINK OF FAMILY

OPPONENTS FEAR THE SO-CALLED 'STEPCHILD ADOPTION'

ROME: In Italy, family is considered so sacred that marriage is lauded in the Constitution. But what kind of family? That has become a bitterly divisive question in a nation where the Vatican packs considerable political weight and where gays have grown impatient as other traditionally Catholic European countries have either allowed same-sex couples to marry or legally recognized their civil unions.

Today, Italy's Senate will plunge into a debate on proposed legislation to grant legal recognition to "civil unions," including those of homosexual couples, without equating the partnerships to marriage. The coalition government of Premier Matteo Renzi is pushing for the legislation, which includes the right of inheritance, to receive the pension of his or her deceased partner, or to make medical decisions about a partner in hospital. But one provision of the bill, to permit gays to adopt the biological children of their partner, has generated animosity even within Renzi's coalition.

Opponents fear the so-called "stepchild adoption" will encourage male couples to turn to surrogate mothers abroad. Surrogacy is banned in Italy, as well as in many other European countries. Headlines warning of a surge in "rented uterus" have

abounded lately in Italian Catholic publications, as well as in more conservative lay newspapers.

Intentionally or not, Pope Francis has waded into the debate. Last week, in an annual address to the Vatican tribunal that grants marriage annulments, the pontiff declared: "There can't be any confusion between the family intended by God and every other kind of union." And the head of the politically influential Italian Bishops Conference defended Catholics' having their say in the debate. Laity must "inscribe divine law into earthly life," Cardinal Angelo Bagnasco said.

According to Vatican teaching, homosexual relations are sinful and marriage can only be between a man and a woman. Pro-Vatican elements among Renzi's Democrats are among those insisting the adoption provision be jettisoned, and the premier has told lawmakers "to vote according to your conscience." While politicians squabble over what rights gay couples should have, Italian courts increasingly have been approving the adoption by gays of their partner's biological children on a case-by-case basis.

'This law is needed'

"This law is needed. Period," Renzi told an Italian radio station recently, as

political debate grew more acrimonious. Besides the faith factor, the proposed bill has prompted a rethink of what constitutes family in a country where people rely on relatives or spouses when the state falls short. Grandparents care for children because public daycare spots are scarce; hospital staff often assume Italians will bring hot meals to their relatives' bedside.

"Culturally, family is the ballast to Italian identity," said Lisa Colletta, a professor of gender studies at The American University of Rome. In her apartment in Rome, Martina Castagnole wakes in the middle of the night to care for 7-month-old Gabriele, and during the day plays with him, exactly like the boy's biological mother, her partner, Giulia Filibeck, does.

"But in everyday life, I have no rights. I can't take my son from school, I can't travel with him abroad. If the baby is in the hospital, I cannot be involved" in his care, Castagnole said. She said neighbors, or people whom the couple run into in the supermarket, accept the baby, which was conceived with sperm from a donor in England.

"It's ever more frequent that people we meet, doctors, others, treat us and talk to us like we are both parents," Castagnole said. "Society is more advanced than the law," she added,

while lawmakers "have pressures on them, political, cultural, from the church." Opponents of the proposed legislation fear gay civil unions will pave the way for gay marriage. They have promised to draw 1 million people to Rome's ancient Circus Maximus field on Saturday to loudly lodge their objections to "stepchild adoption."

"We uphold the position of the Catholic church on marriage, a millennia-old institution," said a rally organizer, Paolo Maria Floris. He stressed that organizers support "individual" rights for gay couples such as inheritance. "But the rights of children come first; they need to have a mother and a father." Next weekend's rally comes in contrast to rallies in nearly 100 cities nationwide last Saturday, when homosexuals and other backers of the legislation sounded alarm clocks at the same hour to signal that the time has come to give rights to same-sex couples.

In a curious twist, some backers of the bill hail from the conservative fold of former Premier Silvio Berlusconi, whose fiancée is an outspoken advocate for gay rights. The bill's path will likely be a long one. Opponents have tacked on several thousand amendments in a bid to slow down the process, and it is not known when lawmakers will vote on the proposal. — AP

AL-QAEDA AFFILIATE CLAIMS SWISS WOMAN'S KIDNAP IN NEW VIDEO

NOUAKCHOTT: Al-Qaeda's North Africa affiliate has claimed the kidnapping of a Swiss woman in Mali's Timbuktu in a video seen by AFP yesterday, as Switzerland demanded her unconditional release. Beatrice Stockly, who was previously abducted by Islamists in northern Mali in 2012, was taken for the second time on January 7 by armed men who stormed her home in the country's fabled city.

The eight-minute video includes triumphant montages of jihadists brandishing weapons and a masked English-speaker who claims responsibility for the abduction on behalf of Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). "Beatrice Stockly is a Swiss nun who declared war against Islam in her attempt to Christianise Muslims," the speaker said.

Stockly has previously been identified as a missionary and social worker in her 40s who had lived in Timbuktu for years. With at least three other fighters dimly lit in the background, the speaker said AQIM carried out the abduction and listed conditions for Stockly's release. They include the release of a number of AQIM fighters jailed in Mali and one of their leaders, Abu Tourab, detained at the International Criminal Court at The Hague.

Abu Ahmad Tourab is the nom de guerre of Ahmad Al-Faki Al-Mahdi, who is accused of ordering the destruction of historical monuments in Timbuktu in 2012. Tourab, who was a leader of the Al-Qaeda-linked Malian group Ansar Dine, is the first jihadist to appear before the war crimes court.

Stockly appears at the end of the video dressed in a black hijab. She identifies herself and the date as Tuesday, January 19, 2016. A Swiss foreign ministry spokesman said that Bern was "aware of the video in question," and called for the hostage's unconditional release. The foreign ministry has previously said that it discouraged Stockly from further travel to Timbuktu following her first kidnapping.

lowing her first kidnapping.

The security situation in northern Mali has not stabilized since a loose coalition of Islamists and Tuareg rebels overran the region in 2012. Jihadist fighters were largely chased from the area in 2013 by a French-led military intervention, but entire swathes of the area remain beyond the reach of both the Malian army and foreign troops.

Prepared to be patient

The speaker in the video said AQIM had developed an expertise in dealing with Western hostages and was prepared to be "patient" while waiting for its demands to be met. Stockly's capture is believed to be the first in northern Mali since the kidnapping and murder of two French journalists late November 2013 in Kidal. But an elderly Australian doctor and his wife were seized by jihadists in a remote town in neighboring Burkina Faso on the night of January 15-16.

That abduction, also reportedly carried out by fighters from AQIM, coincided with a jihadist assault on an upmarket hotel in Burkina Faso's capital Ouagadougou that left at least 30 people dead and raised fears of a widening Islamist threat in the region. When Stockly was first abducted she was said to be the last Westerner living in Timbuktu, which she refused to leave when it fell to Ansar Dine.

Two weeks after her capture, Special Forces from Burkina Faso swept into rebel-held northern Mali aboard a helicopter and whisked her to safety in a pre-arranged handover. At the time around two dozen hostages were seized in the Sahel region, most of them held by AQIM and another Islamist group, the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO). Almost all were subsequently released. Aside from Stockly and the Australian couple, three other hostages remain in captivity, a South African and a Swede seized in 2011, a Romanian snatched in 2015. — AFP



This video grab made on January 27, 2016 from a video received by Private Mauritanian news agency Al-Akhbar from the Al-Qaeda-linked Emirate of the Sahara group shows Swiss woman Beatrice Stockly speaking while abducted in an unknown location. — AFP

BELGIUM UPHOLDS JAIL TERMS FOR ISLAMIST GROUP LEADERS

BRUSSELS: An appeals court in Belgium's northern port city of Antwerp upheld yesterday a 12-year jail term and fine of 30,000 Euros (\$33,000) for the leader of an Islamist group that sent jihadists to Syria. Fouad Belkacem, 33, the chief of the Sharia4Belgium group who is serving his sentence in Belgium, was convicted in Antwerp in February last year of radicalizing, recruiting and dispatching young men to wage holy war.

The appeals court in Antwerp also upheld jail terms of 12 years and fines of 30,000 Euros for two other Sharia4Belgium leaders, Said M'nari and Houssein Elouassaki, the Belga news agency reported. The court also confirmed a jail term of four years and a fine of 15,000 Euros for Mohamed El Youssofi, a member of the group.

It was not immediately clear if the three others were among the 37 who were tried in their absence. Sharia4Belgium rose to prominence in 2010 after a protest against a proposed ban on wearing the full-face Islamic burqa in public. It found fertile ground for recruitment in Antwerp, Belgium's second biggest city, which has a large

Muslim community, mainly from Turkey and Morocco, as well as one of Europe's biggest Jewish Orthodox communities.

Belkacem, a hardline ideologue known for his virulent street sermons and online videos, was the leading figure in persuading young Belgians to fight holy war in Syria. He had already been convicted in 2012 for incitement of hate against non-Muslims, and was portrayed by the others on trial as the spiritual leader of the group.

The main members of the Sharia4Belgium group were arrested during a police dragnet in April 2013. Forty-six members of the group originally faced charges of belonging to a terrorist organization, but only eight were actually present during the five-month trial that ended February 11, with one deemed medically unfit to stand trial. The rest were believed to be either still in Syria, or dead. The 37 were sentenced in their absence to between five years and 15 years in jail. Belgium is the European country that has produced the most jihadist fighters relative to its population size, with some 500 believed to have gone to fight in the Middle East. — AFP

SUDAN NEEDS ARMS EMBARGO; LEADERS KILLING CIVILIANS: UN

UNITED NATIONS: The United Nations Security Council should place an arms embargo on South Sudan, while the oil-rich country's President Salva Kiir and a rebel leader qualify to be sanctioned over atrocities in a two-year civil war, UN sanctions monitors said in an annual report. The confidential report by a UN panel that monitors the conflict in South Sudan for the Security Council stated that Kiir and rebel leader Riek Machar are still completely in charge of their forces and are therefore directly to blame for killing civilians and other actions that warrant sanctions. A copy of the report was seen by Reuters on Monday.

The 15-member Security Council has long-threatened to impose an arms embargo, but veto power Russia, backed by council member Angola, has been reluctant to support such an action. Russia's U.N. Ambassador Vitaly Churkin said on Monday he was concerned that an arms embargo would be one-sided because it would be easier to enforce on the government.

The panel asked the council to black-

list "high-level decision makers responsible for the actions and policies that threaten the peace, security and stability of the country." The names of the individuals the panel recommend for sanctions in the form of an international travel ban and asset freeze were not included in the body of the report. But a diplomat familiar with the contents told Reuters that a highly confidential annex calls for black-listing both Kiir and Machar.

A political dispute between Kiir and Machar, who was once Kiir's deputy, sparked the civil war. But it has widened and reopened ethnic fault lines between Kiir's Dinka and Machar's Nuer people. More than 10,000 people have been killed. The panel wrote that "there is clear and convincing evidence that most of the acts of violence committed during the war, including the targeting of civilians ... have been directed by or undertaken with the knowledge of senior individuals at the highest levels of the government and within the opposition."

However, they said the government appears to have been responsible for a

larger share of the bloodshed in the country in 2015. "While civilians have been and continue to be targeted by both sides, including because of their tribal affiliation, the panel has determined that, in contrast to 2014, the government has been responsible for the vast majority of human rights violations committed in South Sudan (since March 2015)," the UN's panel coordinator, Payton Knopf, told the Security Council sanctions committee on Jan. 14, according to prepared remarks circulated to council members.

Intimidated and threatened

The South Sudan mission to the United Nations in New York was not immediately available to comment on the report. UN peacekeepers in South Sudan are also "regularly attacked, harassed, detained, intimidated and threatened," the monitors said in the report. The conflict in South Sudan, whose 2011 secession from Sudan had long enjoyed the support of the United States, has torn apart the world's

youngest country. The UN panel reported that some 2.3 million people have been displaced since war broke out in December 2013, while some 3.9 million face severe food shortages. The UN report described how Kiir's government bought at least four Mi-24 attack helicopters in 2014 from a private Ukrainian company at a cost of nearly \$43 million. "They have been vital in providing an important advantage in military operations, have facilitated the expansion of the war and have emboldened those in the government who are seeking a military solution to the conflict at the expense of the peace process," according to the report. Knopf told the council that Machar's rebels were trying to "acquire shoulder-fired anti-aircraft missiles to counter the threat of attack helicopters, specifically citing the need to continue and indeed escalate the fighting." Both sides signed a peace deal in August but have consistently broken a ceasefire, while human rights violations have "continued unabated and with full impunity," the panel wrote. — Reuters



NAYPYITAW: Clad in ethnic Chin and Myanmar traditional attire, newly-elected members of parliament from Myanmar opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy party gather as they visit Lower House of parliament. — AP

SUU KYI'S NOVICE MPs LEARN ROPES IN OUTGOING MYANMAR PARLIAMENT

YANGON: Hundreds of newly-elected Myanmar MPs from Aung San Suu Kyi's party took lessons in lawmaking from the outgoing army-dominated parliament yesterday, days before taking their seats in the most democratic legislature for decades.

A landslide victory for Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) in November polls will give the politicians their first taste of power when the new parliament convenes on February 1, a historical turning point for a nation long stifled by military rule.

The new MPs include democracy activists from all walks of life and dozens of former political prisoners, but few have any background in lawmaking. The country was ruled by an oppressive military junta for nearly 50 years, from 1962-2011. "We are now trying to learn from the old MPs because we have no experience," said Naing Ngan Kyaw, a new lower house MP from the central mining town of Mogoke. He was one of around 350 new legislators who attended parliament sessions in the capital Naypyidaw to watch veteran lawmakers in action. "It is in the interest of our country," he said.

Major reforms

Most MPs currently in parliament are from the military-affiliated ruling party, part of a quasi-civilian administration that replaced outright junta rule in 2011 and initiated a series of major political and economic reforms. As a key part of those changes Suu

Kyi and some 40 fellow NLD MPs entered parliament for the first time in 2012, forming a minority opposition.

But the tables turned dramatically last year, when the party swept nearly 80 percent of elected seats in the parliament. Many remain gripped by uncertainty over the transfer of power since Suu Kyi's choice for president has yet to be revealed. She is barred from the role by the junta-drafted constitution and has pledged to rule "above" the next leader—a move she would have to balance against a desire to maintain harmonious relations with the still-powerful army.

As the outgoing parliament's final day on Friday comes closer there has been a final flurry of negotiations and political maneuvers. Suu Kyi met army chief Min Aung Hlaing on Monday and a day later President Thein Sein made a shock proposal to extend the powers of the military-controlled home affairs ministry by giving it control over immigration. The move would need parliament's approval.

Suu Kyi's administration will face major challenges such as high levels of poverty, an economy struggling to take flight despite droves of international investors, ongoing civil wars and desperately overburdened infrastructure and bureaucracy. It was not just the new NLD lawmakers who attended yesterday's sessions. Some new unelected military MPs, who are allocated a quarter of parliament seats under a constitutional provision, were also present. — AFP

OUTRAGE AND NEW QUESTIONS AFTER MALAYSIA PM CLEARED IN SCANDAL

DECISION GREETED WITH SKEPTICISM AND OUTRAGE

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia's official explanation of the \$681 million that ended up in Prime Minister Najib Razak's personal bank account—it was an entirely proper gift from friends—has triggered derision and fresh questions in a country already well-used to allegations of graft.

On Tuesday, Malaysia's Najib-appointed attorney-general cleared the premier of wrongdoing in a scandal that has gripped the nation, declaring that the money was a "personal donation" from the Saudi royal family. The announcement capped months of evasion by Najib on the source of the money and apparently laid to rest any threat of prosecution by Malaysian authorities.

But Malaysia's opposition, anti-graft activists and social media users pounced on the perceived implausibility of the unexplained Saudi largesse and alleged a government whitewash. The Saudis themselves have not helped the situation, with The Wall Street Journal quoting a Saudi official saying the kingdom's government had no knowledge of the donation, adding such a royal gift would be "unprecedented".

Senior opposition figure Lim Kit Siang called the episode a "high-water mark" in Malaysia's well-documented history of government corruption and impunity. "I cannot think of another case in the nation's history where the attorney-general's decision... has been greeted with more skepticism, outrage and scorn," he said.

Shifting explanations

Najib, 62, has struggled to explain the mysterious payment since it was revealed last July. He at first hotly denied it, but his government later acknowledged the payment came from a then-unspecified Middle Eastern donor. The revelation was particularly explosive because Najib already faced allegations that similar amounts were missing from a state-owned company he founded, and reports of lavish spending and possible corruption by his family, all of which are denied.

The government has since detained or threatened whistleblowers, and Najib has purged his leadership of critics, including sacking a previous attorney-general who was investigating the funds. Malaysian social media roiled with derision yesterday. Najib's Facebook page and other sites filled with derogatory comments as parody images circulated, including one of Najib holding up the middle finger



KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia's Prime Minister Najib Razak leaves his office at the Parliament house. — AFP

of one hand while holding a wad of cash in the other.

The paucity of detail in the explanation offered by Attorney-General Mohamed Apandi Ali—who owes his job to Najib—fuelled the sense of outrage. Apandi said the \$681 million came with no strings attached and that \$620 million of it was later returned to the Saudis.

He did not reveal the money's purpose or say what had happened to the remaining \$61 million. Transparency International's Southeast Asia coordinator Samantha Grant said the government must address unanswered questions including, "Where did it go and why was this personal donation made?"

Former premier Mahathir Mohamad, who has repeatedly demanded Najib's resignation over the affair, poked holes in the story in a blog posting, saying that merely receiving the money "is already wrong even though it may not be criminal". US and other foreign regulators have launched investigations into the money flows, but experts see little chance Malaysia will cooperate.

In the clear?

On Tuesday the premier welcomed Apandi's declaration as a chance to "move on". Analysts said lingering suspicion over the case hands an additional weapon to an opposition that has gained ground in recent years. "I don't think the Malaysian public is going to just move on," said Eugene Tan, a legal professor at Singapore Management University, adding that clearing Najib "raises more questions than answers".

But few are willing to predict the downfall of Najib, who must call new elections by 2018. Analysts said he has effectively—if messily—weathered the scandal so far, retains the immense power of a six-decade party incumbency, and has outmaneuvered internal critics to tighten control over the ruling United Malays National Organization (UMNO). "He has really consolidated his power," said Ibrahim Suffian, head of leading polling firm Merdeka Centre. "So I think it will all be up to him unless the economy really turns sour." — AFP



A KIDD class destroyer (right) moves up alongside a supply ship in the waters off Kaohsiung. — AP

TAIWAN BEGINS MILITARY DRILLS AS TENSION RISES

KAOHSIUNG: Taiwan carried out military drills yesterday with naval chiefs assuring residents the island is safe, as concerns grow that tensions will escalate with China after recent presidential elections. The drills were the first since Tsai Ing-wen of the China-sceptic Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) swept to victory in the elections earlier this month. She ousted the ruling Beijing-friendly Kuomintang (KMT), bringing to an end eight years of unprecedented rapprochement with China.

Yesterday, the Taiwanese navy displayed eight warships and fired flares from a missile corvette during an exercise in waters off Tsoying in southern Taiwan, home to the island's naval headquarters. It was the second and final day of the drills which saw a group of elite frogmen land on a beach in motorboats Tuesday on the island of Kinmen—a Taiwan-controlled outpost island near China's southeastern Xiamen city.

A fleet of F-16 fighter jets were also scrambled in another exercise Tuesday at the southern Chiayi airbase. "With the Lunar New Year approaching, our citizens can feel at ease we are able to maintain peace in the Taiwan Strait," Vice Admiral Tsai Hung-tu, head of the navy's political warfare office said.

Military exercises are routinely carried out by Taiwan before the Lunar New Year holidays which fall in February this year. Although Tsai has pledged to maintain the status quo with Beijing, relations are widely expected to cool as the DPP is traditionally a pro-independence party. It does not recognize that Taiwan is part of "one China"—a principle insisted upon by Beijing.

Taiwan is self-ruling after splitting from China in 1949 following a civil war, but has never formally declared independence. Beijing still sees it as part of its territory to be reunified. China's state-controlled CCTV last week released footage it claimed depicted a drill recently carried out by Chinese forces, off the southeast coast of the mainland, near Taiwan. Taiwan's defense ministry dismissed the footage, saying the images were collated from past maneuvers.

A Taiwanese defense ministry official who spoke on condition of anonymity said that the move was part of Beijing's "psychological warfare" against Taiwan. China has 1,500 missiles trained on Taiwan, according to the island's defense ministry. China fired test missiles into the Taiwan Strait in a bid to deter voters in the island's first democratic elections in 1996. — AFP

MUMBAI POLICE TAKES TWITTER BY STORM WITH HUMOROUS TWEETS

MUMBAI: Mumbai's police force was late to Twitter, but it has made up for lost time since joining last month with a series of pun-filled tweets. The term "Mumbai Police" was trending on the social media site in India yesterday after the commissioner's official account posted its latest warning, to mark anti-drugs awareness week. "If you roll, we will weed you out," read the @CPMumbaiPolice tweet, which was quickly re-tweeted more than 1,000 times and won praise from Indian Twitter users. "Mumbai police account is giving Twitter stand-up comedians a good run for their money," posted one user.

Another tweeted: "Ok, Mumbai Police just killed it. The rest of you, go home." The Mumbai police commissioner's account has grown to have at least 22,000 followers since launching alongside the force's other official account, @MumbaiPolice, on December 27. The latter has more than 30,000 followers.

Yesterday's tweet wasn't the first by police in the western Indian city to have caught Indian netizens' imagination with its use of humor to get across a serious message. "Your creepy comments on her photo will get you a long date with us," read a tweet from the commissioner warning against posting inappropriate or offensive comments online.

"Giving out your personal details to strangers may land you in a 'web' of problems," was another post put out to promote their online security campaign. The force's traffic awareness week, also earlier this month, was marked with some puns as well, including a tweet which read: "Helmet or Hell-met. Choose Wisely." Deputy commissioner Dhananjay Kulkarni said that the twin accounts were being run by Indian content marketing and digital media agency Trivone Digital Services. "The tweets are approved by police first," he said. — AFP

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BEIJING: US Secretary of State John Kerry (left) talks with Chinese President Xi Jinping at a meeting. — AP

US AND CHINA CLASH OVER KOREA, SOUTH CHINA SEA

‘OUR DIFFERENCES WILL CONTINUE TO TEST US’

BEIJING: The United States and China sparred yesterday on how to deal with North Korea's latest nuclear weapons test and ease rising tensions over territorial disputes in the South China Sea. After meeting for more than four hours in Beijing in what they both termed “constructive” and “candid” discussions, US Secretary of State John Kerry and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi nonetheless presented sharply opposing positions on the two issues at a news conference.

Kerry acknowledged that “our differences will continue to test us” but stressed that the world benefits when the United States and China are able to work together, including on the Iran nuclear deal and climate change. On North Korea, Kerry said the United States wanted new UN Security Council action that would impose “significant new measures” to punish Pyongyang for its latest test earlier this month and boost pressure on it to return to disarmament talks.

Bringing Korea to the table

“There’s been a lot of talk about North Korea through these past years. Now we believe is the time for action that can bring North Korea back to the table,” Kerry said. Wang said China agreed on the need for a new resolution, but suggested that Beijing would not support new sanctions. “Sanctions are not an end in themselves,” he said.

“The new resolution should not provoke new tension in the situation, still less destabilize the Korean peninsula,” Wang said. China is North Korea’s most important ally, chief trading partner and

a key source of economic assistance. While it condemned the latest test, Beijing has balked at imposing harsh sanctions that could destabilize the hard-line communist regime.

Kerry noted that sanctions had brought Iran to the nuclear negotiating table. “With all due respect,” he said. “More significant and impactful sanctions were put in place against Iran, which did not have a nuclear weapon than against North Korea, which does.” “All nations, particularly those who seek a global leadership role, or have a global leadership role, have a responsibility to deal with this threat,” he said, referring to China.

Kerry said the sides agreed both on the need for a strong new resolution on North Korea, but also to accelerate talks on what that would entail. “It’s good to agree on the goal. But it’s not enough to agree on the goal, we believe we need to agree on the meaningful steps necessary to get to the achievement of the goal to the negotiations that result in denuclearization,” Kerry said.

‘Clear cut’

For his part, Wang also took umbrage at US complaints that China is not doing as much as it can with the leverage it has on North Korea to stop the destabilizing behavior. He noted that China’s position has been consistent in opposing North Korea’s nuclear weapons program and supporting a diplomatic resolution to the matter. “For many years China has been working hard to implement these,” he said. “We have delivered on our obligation.”

Wang said China’s position is “clear

cut” and “responsible.” “Our position will not be swayed by specific events or the temporary mood of the moment,” he said. “We reject all groundless speculation or distortion of China’s position.” Kerry, though, pressed ahead, saying that China is North Korea’s main link to the outside world, and that it could do more to limit cross-border transactions that benefit North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and his government.

Kim Jong Un’s actions in testing the latest device was “reckless and dangerous,” Kerry said, vowing that the US would take whatever steps it needed to protect itself and its allies. Kerry, who after meeting with Wang was set to see State Councillor Yang Jiechi and President Xi Jinping, also called on China to halt land reclamation and construction of airstrips in disputed areas of the South China Sea, steps that have alarmed its smaller neighbors.

“I stressed the importance of finding common ground among the claimants and avoiding the destabilizing cycle of mistrust or escalation,” Kerry said. Wang, though denied that China has been doing anything other than protecting its territorial sovereignty. And, he rejected accusations from the United States and others that China was not interested in peaceful resolutions to the disputes or militarizing the areas. “We cannot accept the allegation that China’s words are not being matched by actions.”

Kerry arrived in China from stops in Laos and Cambodia, where he called on the two members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations to present a united front in dealing with increasing

Chinese assertiveness over the South China Sea claims. His visits to Vientiane and Phnom Penh come ahead of a summit with the leaders of all 10 ASEAN nations that President Barack Obama will host next month in California.

US warnings

China, which claims sovereignty of much of the territory in the South China Sea, rejects claims from countries like the Philippines and Vietnam and has bristled at US warnings that its activities threaten the freedom of navigation in some of the world’s busiest commercial shipping lanes. Taiwan, Malaysia and Brunei also have overlapping claims in the strategically vital sea, through which around \$5 trillion in world trade passes each year.

The US says it takes no position on the claims but says developments in the South China Sea are a national security interest. It has urged that the disputes be settled peacefully and that a binding code of conduct be established for the area.

Tensions have been especially high since Beijing transformed seven disputed reefs into islands, where it is now constructing runways and facilities that rival claimants say can be used militarily. China has said it built the islands primarily to foster safe civilian sea travel and fishing. In response, the US sent a guided-missile destroyer close to one of the Chinese-built islands, called Subi Reef, in October in a challenge to Beijing’s territorial claims, sparking warnings from China. US officials vowed to continue maneuvers to protect freedom of navigation and overflight. — AP

JAPAN’S EMPEROR AKIHITO VISITS PHILIPPINE’S WWII GRAVEYARD

MANILA: Japanese Emperor Akihito bowed his head in sorrow during a somber ceremony at the Philippines’ biggest war cemetery yesterday, but also enjoyed banter about cars, fashion and food on the first full day of a historic visit.

Akihito, 82, and his wife, Empress Michiko, are in the Philippines to celebrate 60 years of diplomatic ties, while also honoring those who died during Japan’s brutal occupation of the Philippines. Akihito’s visit is the first by a Japanese emperor to the Philippines and comes as the two countries fortify economic and defense ties, partly to counter China’s increasingly assertive actions in disputed regional waters.

The official events of his five-day trip began yesterday morning with a red-carpet welcome ceremony at the presidential palace hosted by President Benigno Aquino. In the afternoon, he visited the sprawling Libingan ng mga Bayani (Heroes’ Cemetery) in Manila, which was built in 1947 to honor Filipino soldiers who died during World War II.

The Philippines endured brutal Japanese occupation during the war, which saw tens of thousands of soldiers die marching to Japanese concentration camps. An estimated 100,000 people also died during the month-long campaign to liberate Manila in 1945, which saw aerial bombings and gunfire flatten the city.

Promoting peace

Akihito has made honoring Japanese and non-Japanese who died in World War II a touchstone of his near three-decade reign-known as Heisei, or “achieving peace”—and now in its twilight. Akihito has also previously journeyed to other Pacific battle sites where Japanese troops and civilians made desperate last stands in the name of his father, Hirohito.

The other key symbolic event on Akihito’s agenda in the Philippines will be a visit on Friday to a shrine for Japanese casualties of the war in Caliraya, a lake resort village about three hours’ drive south of Manila.

Before leaving Tokyo on Tuesday, Akihito said a main focus of his trip was to honor the war dead. “In the Philippines, many lives of

Filipinos, Americans and Japanese were lost during the war,” Akihito said. He specifically referred to the Manila independence battle in his remarks. “We’d like to conduct our visit by always keeping this in mind,” said Akihito.

Akihito’s remorse over the war helps to improve Japan’s international image, counterbalancing his government’s more nationalist bent, according to Manila-based political analyst Richard Javad Heydarian.

“The emperor will serve as the apologetic, sincere face of Japan... it will balance out his government’s controversial, pugnacious and seemingly revisionist statements,” he said. Conservative Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe angered China and South Korea when he marked the 70th anniversary of Japan’s surrender last year by saying that future generations should not apologise for the war.

Trusted friends

But the Philippines now views Japan, its biggest source of development aid and foreign investment, as a trusted ally. Highlighting the warmth of the relationship, Akihito and Aquino enjoyed a wide-ranging, 20-minute chat inside the presidential palace after the welcoming ceremony yesterday.

The conversation jumped from Japanese fashion brand Uniqlo that is popular in the Philippines to Akihito’s previous visit as a prince in 1962 when he went to a fog-shrouded volcano close to Manila, according to their aides. They also discussed hot sales of Japanese cars in the Philippines, and the rice industries that are so important to both nations. Outside the palace, though, about 200 people rallied to demand justice for women who were forced into sexual slavery by occupying Japanese soldiers in World War II.

“To the emperor of Japan, talk to your leader about Filipina grandmothers who are fighting for their rights,” one of seven former sex slaves at the protest, Narcisca Claveria, 85, said over a megaphone. Known as “comfort women,” they have long demanded a formal apology from Tokyo, compensation and inclusion of the atrocities in Japanese history books. — AFP



MANILA: Japan’s Emperor Akihito (center) and Empress Michiko lay a wreath at the monument to Philippine national hero Jose Rizal. — AFP



KANOYA: Mitsubishi’s legendary Zero fighter flies during its test flight at an air station. — AP

RESTORED ZERO FIGHTER RIDES THE SKY ONCE AGAIN IN JAPAN

TOKYO: More than 70 years after striking fear into the hearts of Allied pilots, a restored Zero fighter took to the skies in southern Japan yesterday. Japan’s most famous World War II fighter aircraft was developed by Mitsubishi Heavy Industries and was noted for its technological advancement.

The legendary planes took part in the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor while “kamikaze” suicide pilots crashed them into US ships in the later stages of the war. The restored plane took off from a Japanese military base on the island of Kyushu for two short flights, the Nikkan Sports newspaper reported. The aircraft, painted dark green with

round bright red “circle of the sun” symbols on its body and wings, was airborne for six minutes and 16 minutes, respectively, the report said.

The plane was found in 1970 in Papua New Guinea—the scene of fierce fighting during World War II—and restored, ending up in the United States before being brought to Japan in parts in 2014, the report said. Other restored fighters have been flown over the country, but the Chunichi Shimbun daily reported that the flight Wednesday marked the first time since the end of the war that a Japanese-owned Zero took to the skies in Japan. — AFP

VIETNAM RE-ELECTS COMMUNIST LEADER

HANOI: Vietnam’s top communist leader Nguyen Phu Trong was re-elected yesterday in a victory for the party’s old guard which some fear could slow crucial economic reforms in the fast-growing country. Factional fighting overshadowed a week of closed-door talks at the five-yearly Communist Party Congress. But Trong, 72, retained his position while his rival-reformist Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung was pushed from power.

Dung remains prime minister but will step down later this year when the National Assembly convenes to appoint a replacement. This is expected to be Nguyen Xuan Phuc, currently a deputy prime minister, state media said. “Delegates to the first meeting of the party’s central committee congratulated Comrade Nguyen Phu Trong who was elected general secretary,” the official Vietnam News Agency reported.

Trong, 72, seen as more of a conservative apparatchik and closer to China than Dung, has been party chief since 2011 and will stay on following a compromise deal which analysts say is a move back towards more consensus-based decision-making. Dung, 66, a two-term prime minister and political heavyweight, is credited with pushing a pro-business agenda and talking tough to China over a festering maritime dispute.

He had been tipped to ascend to the party leader position but in the end he lost out in internal elections. He was

not selected for the 180-member central committee, which in effect ends his official political career. The charismatic Dung was a rare “political celebrity” amid the communist country’s faceless collective leadership, Jonathan London, a Vietnam expert at City University of Hong Kong said, adding that this style alienated other cadres.

‘Go slow approach’

Although both his reformist credentials and achievements in office were debatable, he was unquestion-

ably “someone who had a vision,” said London, adding that his exit marked a return to a more moderated style of governance. “The (Communist) Party has been around for 85 years and always been steered by committee—in this context, the ‘go slow’ approach makes sense,” he added.

Trong’s ascent—which owes as much to Dung’s divisiveness as to his own popularity—is unlikely to mark a dramatic change of course on key issues such as a dispute with Beijing over parts of the South China Sea and participation



HANOI: Newly re-elected Vietnam Communist Party Secretary General Nguyen Phu Trong (center) is greeted by Politburo members Dinh The Huyen (left), Tran Dai Quang (2nd left), Nguyen Xuan Phuc (2nd right) and Nguyen Thi Kim Ngan (right) at the end of the first meeting of the new VCP’s 200-member Central Committee. — AFP

in a series of trade deals, including the US-led Trans Pacific Partnership. The entire politburo—which was also elected yesterday with 19 members—is committed to economic reforms and the change in leadership is more “a question of style,” economist Bui Kien Thanh said.

“I don’t see the machine going backwards... no one is completely indispensable,” he said, referring to fears that Dung’s exit would stall economic reforms and integration of Vietnam into the global economy. Dung himself was hardly “a superstar reformer” and his successor will undoubtedly continue key economic reforms so most foreign investors are not concerned, said Tony Foster, a lawyer with Freshfields.

“The stability in the system is extraordinary, and from a foreign investors’ point of view a big positive,” he added. Dung’s 40-year-old son Nguyen Thanh Nghi was elected to the central committee, alongside other politicians seen as his allies, including the Transport Minister Dinh La Thang and Foreign Minister Pham Binh Minh.

Some observers had expressed concern that Trong could end up sidelining competent officials in favour of the party faithful. But one senior state employee played down the problem and said personnel changes were to be expected. “When you’re part of the system your survival depends on being flexible. It’s the most important thing,” she said on condition of anonymity. — AFP

RIGHTS GROUPS RAP TREATMENT OF INDONESIAN SECT MEMBERS

JAKARTA: Indonesia has relocated more than 1,500 members of a controversial sect from their village “for their own safety,” an official said yesterday, but rights groups described their treatment as religious persecution.

Members of the mysterious Light of Nusantara Movement—or Gafatar—have been moved from a remote communal farm in Indonesia’s half of Borneo island after a mob attack. They are now in the country’s main island of Java undergoing “rehabilitation” instruction sessions on Islam and civic duties.

Meanwhile, followers of a separate minority group face ejection from their community unless they convert to mainstream Islam,

according to Human Rights Watch. Indonesia, the world’s most populous Muslim-majority nation, is seen as largely tolerant and pluralist. But a number of high-profile attacks against minority groups in recent years has marred this image.

The controversy surrounding Gafatar, a group accused of luring followers from across Indonesia to practice a deviant blend of the Muslim faith, has captivated national attention despite its tiny following in a country of 250 million. Last week an angry mob torched their village base in Kalimantan, displacing roughly 500 families—more than 1,500 people. They were evacuated by government authorities first to temporary shelters then

back to Indonesia’s main island of Java, some by warship.

‘For their own safety’

A spokesman for President Joko Widodo said the decision was made “for their own safety” and several government departments had been instructed to handle the crisis. “We must protect our citizens regardless of their identity. They are also Indonesian citizens,” spokesman Johan Budi said.

Gafatar insists that it does not practice deviant Islam. The country’s top clerical body, the Indonesia Ulema Council (MUI), is expected to rule next month on whether its beliefs are heretical. Anyone charged with heresy

under Indonesian law can face five years in prison, said Human Rights Watch researcher Andreas Harsono. Police have said they are investigating any criminal links to the Gafatar movement.

The evacuees in Java have begun what officials are calling “rehabilitation” sessions on religion and civic duty, some run by the MUI. The classes are expected to last five days and include special instruction for women and children and those deemed “ideologues” within the Gafatar movement, said Central Java MUI chairman Ahmad Daroqi. “We are teaching them to come back and be one of us again. We hope after the programme these people can return to their community,”

he said. Several local rights groups, including the Jakarta Legal Aid Institute and the Setara Institute, have criticised the treatment of Gafatar. “It is religious persecution,” Harsono said. “This re-education programme is simply an abuse of human rights.”

Meanwhile a community of Ahmadi—a minority Muslim sect—living in Indonesia’s west has allegedly been ordered to convert to mainstream Sunni Islam or face expulsion, Human Rights Watch said. The New York-based rights group says the local government is conspiring with religious groups to harass and “unlawfully expel” the small cluster of Ahmadi families from Bangka island off Sumatra. — AFP



Angry farmers block a roundabout yesterday in Chateaulin, western France. Farmers used their tractors to snarl traffic across the region, demanding urgent government action in the face of plunging prices. — AFP

JAZEERA AMERICA CLOSURE MARKS A QUIETER...

Continued from Page 1

Sheikh Tamim, who succeeded his father Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani in 2013, prefers a different role for Qatar and more conventional forms of "soft power" like trade and investment, diplomats say.

As a result of this, support for the entire Al Jazeera operation, which includes Al Jazeera English and Al Jazeera Arabic, Doha-based but editorially separate entities, is in question, they say. "The era of throwing money at Jazeera is ending," said Hafez Al-Mirazi, a former Washington bureau chief at Al Jazeera Arabic who directs the Kamal Adham Center for Television and Digital Journalism at Cairo's American University.

"Al Jazeera fulfilled its mission: making Qatar a household name, influencing politics, at one point it was a powerful tool of foreign policy but all of that is over now," he said, adding that current low oil prices had given the Qatari leadership an excuse to end "the extravagance of Jazeera which has lost credibility in parts of the Arab world." "It no longer represents both sides of the argument in the Arab world," said Mirazi.

The channel cheered on Doha's bank-rolling of the Arab Spring revolts, particularly a mass uprising in Egypt, but now faces aggressive competition in its home region, and suspicion from many governments over air time given to Islamist groups in Syria, Libya and elsewhere. Al Jazeera's spectacular growth took place under Sheikh Hamad who, unlike other Gulf Arab leaders, backed Middle East protest movements and played mediator in a host of wars. Expanding into America was conceived under Sheikh Hamad.

Under Sheikh Tamim, Qatar has toned down its foreign policy. Since taking over in 2013, the Arab world's youngest head of state has adopted more conciliatory and inward-looking policies, analysts and diplomats say. "Sheikh Tamim wants Qatar to remain relevant on the world stage, but he wants to do that without squandering money or angering neighbours ... he doesn't want to be sucked into conflicts in the region," said a former Qatari diplomat, who declined to be named. "The new approach is less noisy, it's more cautious."

Founded in 1996 as part of Qatari efforts to turn economic power into political influence, Al Jazeera offered free-wheeling, uncensored debate rarely seen on Arab televisions. Its talk-shows hosted guests who challenged the wisdom of Arab rulers and adopted the role of supporter of the dispossessed. Reporters broke with a widespread taboo of the Arab news media by interviewing Israeli officials.

Funded by Qatar's royal family, Wadah Khanfar, a Palestinian journalist who was director general of the

network between 2006-2011, helped turn the Arab satellite channel into a world network with millions of viewers and more than 20 channels broadcasting in languages including Arabic, English and Swahili. With Al Jazeera's expansion came unprecedented influence in the Arab world, but also new enemies. "The more successful Al Jazeera became, the higher the stakes became," said William Youmans, a professor at the School of Media and Public Affairs at George Washington University. "Qatar started paying a political price for the channel. Its popularity incurred new pressures and costs."

In the last decade Al Jazeera's bureaux have been bombed, raided, and shuttered and its reporters imprisoned and killed. Critics of Al Jazeera accused the network of aggressively covering unrest in Syria and Libya, while skirting over protests in Bahrain, Qatar's small neighbor in the Arab Gulf, which Qatar's ruling elite has an interest in seeing remain stable. In 2014, Al Jazeera said it provided objective coverage of all opposition groups. Mostefa Souag, the network's acting director general, told Reuters that the channel is under pressure from authorities in several places because "it is the most transparent, balanced and unbiased of all Arab channels".

The channel now faces stiff competition from media outlets that have emulated its assertive style of news reporting including U.S.-funded Al Hurra, Sky News Arabia and Al Arabiya, a rival Saudi-owned channel, which reflects the more conservative view of Qatar's neighbors now in the ascendant in the region. Qatar is trying its hand at media diversification. Last year the Gulf state opened a London-based news channel, Al Araby Al-Jadeed, with links to Azmi Bishara, a Palestinian who advises Sheikh Tamim and runs a think-tank in Qatar. Khanfar, the former Al Jazeera director, runs the Arabic version of the American online news aggregator, Huffington Post.

Some at the channel suspect that Qatar's commitment to Al Jazeera, along with its influence, may be waning. According to two employees at Al Jazeera Arabic and a senior journalist at Al Jazeera English, plans to cut staff scheduled for September 2015 are expected to happen over the summer. "We were told three months ago that we were going to face significant cuts, but there was some kind of intervention from the top that stopped them happening," said the Al Jazeera English journalist. "I think we will see cuts though. Al Jazeera America was a huge drain on resources and honestly we don't even know what commitment there is anymore (to other parts of Al Jazeera). There is this feeling that Jazeera has done what it was supposed to do." — Reuters

ASSEMBLY SUSPENDS FEE HIKE IN PRIVATE...

Continued from Page 1

He said that the Assembly must pass a law to regulate the affairs of private schools. MP Saleh Ashour said people send their children to private schools because of the low standard of public education, adding that some private foreign schools are expected to raise their annual fees to as much as KD 6,500. MP Roudhan Al-Roudhan said it is clear that owners of private schools have a strong influence in the education ministry and called on the educational committee to prepare a new law on private education.

MP Abdullah Al-Turaiji said many private schools pay minimal rent to the government for leasing their buildings or are granted government land, but still they hike their fees. MP Hamdan Al-Azemi said the education ministry is too weak in dealing with private schools because there is no law to govern the issue.

The Assembly also discussed a report on the huge payments being given to teachers at the Public Authority for

Applied Education and Training for working extra hours. Some MPs praised the teachers and said they deserve the payments they get, but the head of the budgets committee MP Adnan Abdulsamad said the payments are highly exaggerated and sometimes more than their salaries.

In another development, the court of appeals yesterday set Feb 17 for the first hearing in the trial of 23 Kuwaitis accused of spying for Iran and Lebanese Shiite militia Hezbollah, plotting attacks against Kuwait and possessing huge quantities of arms and explosives. The case also involves two more Kuwaitis and one Iranian who were tried in absentia by the lower court and their case will not be taken up by the appeals court until they appear.

The criminal court earlier this month sentenced a Kuwaiti and an Iranian to death, one person to life in jail, 15 others for 15 years in jail each, one person to a 10-year sentence and three for five years in jail. The remaining four defendants were acquitted.

US RACE DISCOMFORTS US MUSLIMS

Continued from Page 1

He shows letters of support that he has received at the mosque. But for the first time, he now feels under watch when entering a restaurant.

The first Arabs arrived in Iowa in the 1880s, from what is now Syria and Lebanon, as Christian and Muslim farmers and peddlers. In 1934, the community became the first in the nation to erect a mosque, although some places used for worship had existed earlier. The "Mother mosque" still stands - a small wooden white building, without a minaret, a crescent on the green dome - in a residential area of Cedar Rapids.

Since 1971, the faithful have prayed in the larger Islamic Center, but the original mosque still serves as a kind of cultural and historical base, under the leadership of Imam Taha Tawil. A photograph of the original building's inauguration shows about 100 men, women and children dressed to the nines. "All of them were immigrants," explained Imam Taha. It was the Great Depression, and whether they were Greek, Polish or Syrian, "everyone was worried about how to survive," the imam added.

The Muslim experience in America is different than Europe. "In Europe there is a civil rights problem, there is ghetto, less services for the people there, and they classify the citizens," Imam Taha added. "But in America, we don't feel we are second category citizens." A Palestinian, the imam arrived in Iowa in 1983, and

remains proud of what the mosque has become. He recalled recently finding 25 bikers outside. Unsure of what they wanted, he invited them in. "They went back with a different understanding, saying, 'Oh we didn't know your faith, that you believe in Jesus,'" Imam Taha said. He has even invited Trump, who recently campaigned in the area, to visit.

People always hesitate when they first meet Brittanie Shah. She is white, born in Indiana to a Baptist family, and has worn the hijab since her conversion. She has had few problems with others in her community, but recently noticed a shift: "They say, 'I'm sorry for what's going on, or 'It must be really tough,' as if I'm in mourning."

In the presence of her two children, the elementary school teacher now mutes the television when campaign commercials or programming address the issue of Muslim extremists. Her son "has never heard radical or militant put with Islam" in the same sentence, she said. Shah, who volunteers at the Islamic Center, said she knows why Trump's anti-Muslim rhetoric resonates: Ignorance and lack of education. She takes her own family as an example.

Shah will be supporting Democrat Hillary Clinton, whom she saw Sunday at a rally, but said she would appreciate more candidates in the race who share her values. "But I can't find that when I'm watching these ads," she said. "And this election has been the worst, because it's all Muslim, Muslim, Muslim." — AFP

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Focus

US STUDENT ARREST RENEWS SCRUTINY OF N KOREA TOURS

By Eric Talmadge

An American university student's arrest in North Korea has rekindled questions about whether a small but steady trickle of US tourists who go to the country are unwittingly offering themselves up as valuable pawns in a political game with Pyongyang that can have serious repercussions for officials back in Washington who have to bail them out when things go wrong. US tourism to North Korea is legal and virtually all Americans who make the journey return home without incident.

But the detention of Otto Warmbier, a 21-year-old University of Virginia economics major who had chosen to spend his New Year's vacation in North Korea, comes at a particularly difficult - or opportune, depending on how you choose to interpret it - time. Just days after he was arrested, the North conducted what it said was its first H-bomb test. As Warmbier sits in detention, the United Nations Security Council is mulling a new round of what are expected to be heavy sanctions in response to that test.

According to Warmbier's tour agent, Young Pioneer Tours, he was almost on his plane home when officials pulled him aside, took him into a special room at the Pyongyang airport and placed him under arrest for allegedly committing an as-yet-undisclosed hostile act against the state. He is still under lock-and-key, possibly in the relative comfort of the Yanggakdo, a tourist hotel where his group had stayed that has previously been used to keep detainees until they are deported or more formal legal measures are taken. The North says he is under investigation and acted with the "tacit connivance of the US government and under its manipulation". That is an ominous detail for the North to offer. Initial announcements by Pyongyang rarely say much about the actual crime and linking it to the US government in their first statement to the world through the state-run media is highly uncommon. Though not a tourist, one more American, missionary Kim Dong Chul, believed to be a naturalized citizen of Korean descent, is reportedly in North Korean custody along with a Canadian-Korean missionary who is serving a life sentence.

"We can't comment on Mr Warmbier's case at this time as we don't feel it would be in his interests, but every arrest that has occurred has, to our knowledge, been with context," Troy Collings, one of the directors of Young Pioneer Tours, said in an email yesterday. Without more information on the charges, it's impossible to gauge Pyongyang's motives for throwing the book at Warmbier or speculate about how difficult his release might be.

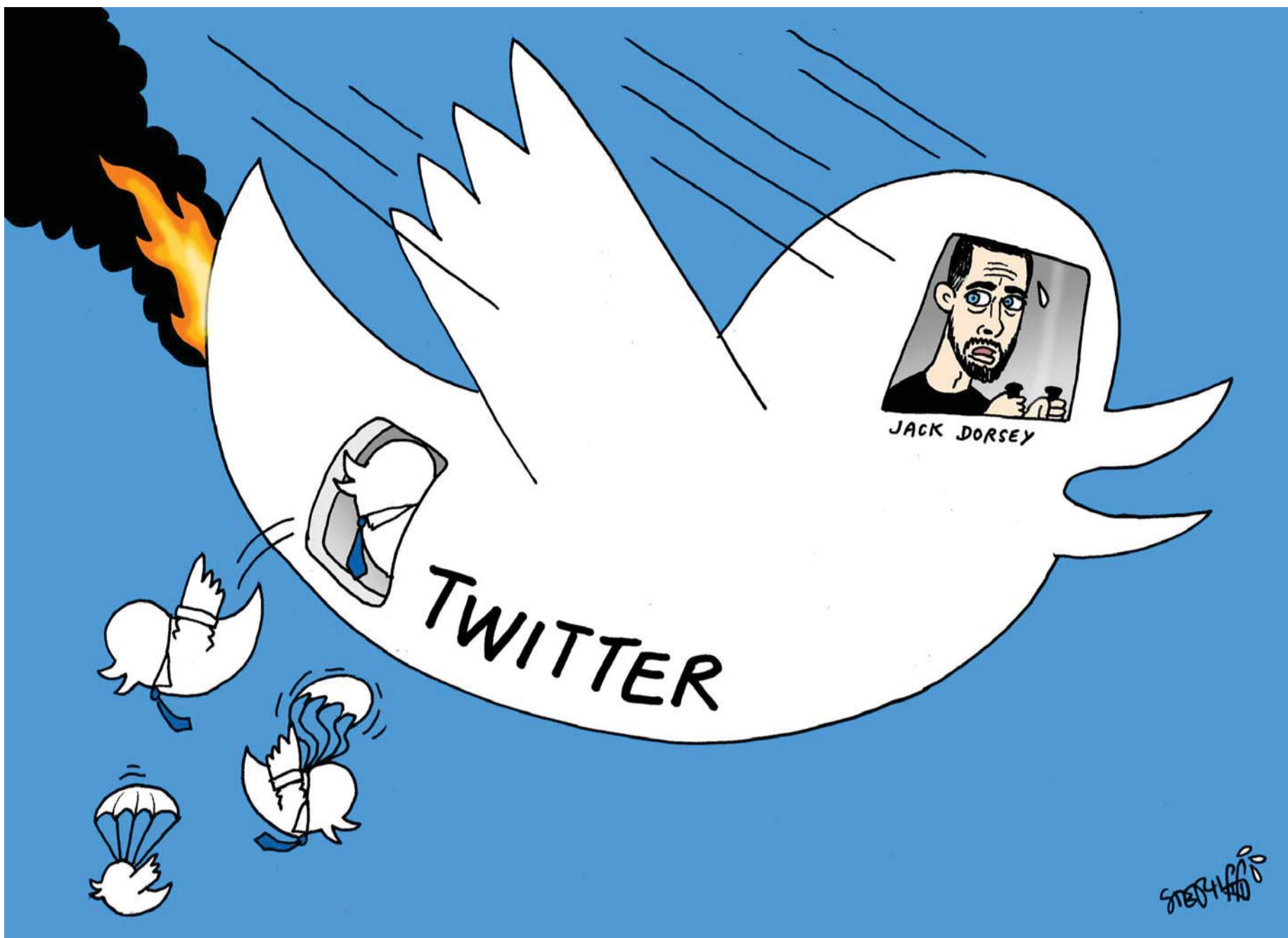
Despite the headlines and attention they garner, especially compared with problems involving Chinese visitors, who are far more numerous but rarely if ever jailed, actual arrests of US tourists in North Korea are extremely rare. And while the North might be lowering the bar for cases it chooses to pursue, arrests are by no means random - virtually all have come after violations of well-known North Korean regulations on how tourists must conduct themselves.

Political

But the real problems kick in over what happens next. That's when things tend to get political. North Korea and the United States are still technically at war and have no diplomatic relations. So gaining a hapless American's freedom can and often does require a senior US official or well-known statesman to fly to Pyongyang, hat in hand, to personally bail the detainee out. That's great for Pyongyang, where it's portrayed as a magnanimous humanitarian act and US capitulation. For Washington, it's an unwanted distraction and forced detour from its efforts to isolate the North by refusing to deal with it in any kind of substantive bilateral negotiation. Without banning it outright, the US State Department has long warned against travel to North Korea. But, post nuclear test, the US is now reportedly seeking a ban on tourism and restrictions to keep the North's flagship airline, Air Koryo, from flying into and out of airports abroad. Most tourists board their flights to Pyongyang from Beijing. As yet, none of the major North Korea travel agencies are canceling upcoming trips. One of the year's biggest tourist draws, the Pyongyang marathon, is just months away. They are, however, concerned about the fall-out from Warmbier's arrest. China-based Young Pioneer stressed in a news release that Warmbier was the first of the 7,000 people it has taken to North Korea over the past eight years to face arrest. Uri Tours, based in New Jersey, told The AP that it has also only had one such case - American Matthew Miller, who ripped up his tourist visa on arrival in what he has said was a deliberate attempt to get arrested.

Beijing-based Koryo Tours, the biggest agent specializing in bringing Westerners to North Korea, was not immediately available for comment. "We serve about 1,000 travelers per year on average to the DPRK," Uri Tours CEO Andrea Lee said in an email from Shanghai, using the acronym for North Korea's official name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. "About 40 percent of our travel clients are American. We have been operating in the country for nearly 15 years, and the only one incident we've had was the case of Matthew Miller." —AP

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SAUDIS BATTLE FOR OIL MARKET SUPREMACY

By Ian Timberlake and Omar Hasan

By abandoning the tight rein it held for decades on the oil market, OPEC heavyweight Saudi Arabia launched a battle for control that sent crude prices plummeting. It has been a painful fight, experts say, but with its vast resources the Gulf kingdom is showing no signs of giving up. The huge drop in oil prices since mid-2014, from more than \$110 a barrel to around \$30, followed a decision by the Saudi-influenced Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries not to cut output as it had in the past to keep prices high.

The move came as traditional suppliers like Saudi Arabia were facing increasing pressure from new market players, in particular US shale producers, and aimed to squeeze them out. It also sought to put pressure on non-OPEC member Russia - the biggest global oil producer - and to force a trimming of output by fellow OPEC member Iran, Riyadh's regional political rival. As the free fall in prices has continued, calls have grown on Riyadh and its Gulf Arab neighbors to reconsider.

With the market awash in crude, even the chairman of state-owned oil giant Saudi Aramco has said prices have reached "irrational" levels. But still Riyadh has given no indication of wavering. "The Saudis are well aware that if they cut production, it will not greatly impact prices because their cut will be replaced by other producers like Iran, Iraq, Russia," said oil expert Jean-Francois Seznec at Georgetown University.

'Protecting Market Share'

"The Saudis want producers to suffer enough to agree to a negotiated cut across the board," Seznec told AFP. Saudi Arabia, the world's second-biggest oil producer and largest exporter, spent tens of billions of dollars in the past two decades to raise its crude production capacity to 12.5 million barrels per day. It became the only producer with spare capacity, allowing it to raise and lower production to influence the market. The kingdom boasts the world's second-largest crude reserves, at 268 billion barrels, and sits on the fifth-largest natural gas deposits, at 300 trillion cubic feet (8.5 trillion cubic meters).

At less than \$10 a barrel, its production cost is also the second cheapest in the world, according to Rystad Energy, a private consultancy. "Saudi Arabia's main goal is achieving stability in the oil market and protecting its market share," Kuwaiti oil expert Kamel Al-Harami said. "The kingdom could not let high-cost producers compete in its own markets," Harami told AFP. Saudi Arabia and its Gulf peers in OPEC also have huge fiscal cushions to cope with low oil prices, accumulated in the years when oil prices were high.

So while Saudi Arabia's oil revenues have plunged, leading to a record \$98 billion budget deficit for 2015, the kingdom can still count on more than \$600 billion in reserves. "There is no wish to cut production when you have costs lower than the others and ultimately you can resist longer than

the others," Patrick Pouyanne, the CEO of French oil giant Total, told AFP during the recent World Economic Forum in Davos.

Producers 'Cannot Bleed Forever'

"We have scale... We have technologies that have allowed us to maintain our low cost," Aramco chairman Khalid Al-Falih said at the Global Competitiveness Forum in Riyadh this week. "That is going to be even sharper in a more low-price environment," he said, adding that the company's investments had not slowed down despite the price fall. In a report on Monday, Jadwa Investment in Riyadh said Saudi Arabia remains the only country with spare production capacity, leaving it "well equipped to hold off any attempts of encroachment on its market share".

So far, Harami said, the battle is not yet won. "Shale oil has proven to be much more resilient than they had initially expected," he said. But a Western diplomat based in Riyadh said the Saudi oil policy reflects a more assertive attitude under the new King Salman, who took power a year ago, and is unlikely to be abandoned. The kingdom will "defend its interests internally and externally" whether that pleases outsiders or not, the diplomat told AFP, speaking on condition of anonymity. And Seznec said he expects the strategy to start yielding results in the near future. "I think sooner rather than later there will be an arrangement with non-OPEC producers, who cannot continue to bleed forever," the analyst said. —AFP

THERE OR NOT, TRUMP DRIVES GOP DEBATE

By Steve Peoples

Once again, Donald Trump steals the show. The billionaire Republican's decision to tangle with Fox News and skip the final presidential debate before Iowa's kickoff caucuses all but ensures that he - and he alone - will dominate the conversation in the closing moments of campaigning in 2016's leadoff state. It's a move that for any other candidate would probably be viewed as un-presidential. But for Trump, it's more likely to serve as fresh evidence that he's successfully redefining the art of presidential politics.

"This takes guts, and is the kind mentality our country needs in order to Make America Great Again," Trump's campaign said. Instead of appearing on the debate stage Thursday night, Trump said he will host an event at the same time to raise money for wounded veterans. The move puts the other seven Republican participants in an awkward position. Attack the party's absentee frontrunner and provide him with even more attention? Or ignore him, and leave voters wondering what they think of the national Republican frontrunner's hardball play just days before the Feb 1 caucus?

"I think, you know, the media's been handled by him," said New Jersey Gov Chris Christie, one of Trump's rivals for the Republican nomination. "Folks have allowed him to do things that no other candidate's ever been allowed to do in American presidential history." Trump's presidential run has been defined by such moments. He's questioned whether Arizona Sen John McCain is worthy of being called a war hero, graphically criticized Fox News anchor Megyn Kelly and unveiled a widely condemned plan to bar Muslims from the United States.

Each led his rivals, political professionals and pundits to predict his undoing. But instead, Trump has maintained his support in the preference polls he loves to tout - a reflection of his ability to capture the feelings of a Republican electorate deeply skeptical of the party's establishment and of the country's news organizations. "I think in some ways, we've got to start pushing back. And I think he's just demonstrating that, pushing against the liberal media," said Yvonne Galusha, 57, a Trump backer

who attended his Tuesday night rally in Iowa City.

For the past several days, Trump had sought Kelly's removal as a moderator of the Thursday night

debate. His back and forth with the network reached a tipping point on Tuesday afternoon, when Fox News mocked Trump with a sarcastic statement that said the leaders of Iran and Russia "both intend to treat Donald Trump unfairly when they meet with him if he becomes president."

His rivals tried to paint his reaction - "Let them have their debate and let's see how they do with the ratings," Trump said - as the latest example of why he's unfit for the White House. If he doesn't want to be there, that's OK with me," Christie told Kelly on her show Tuesday night. "But I'll tell you this: the American people should wonder if you're not willing to show up when everything isn't going your way and exactly the way you want to."

That's an argument yet to dent Trump's standing among his supporters, who view such actions as a reminder of what they like most about him: Trump plays by his own rules, even if that means taking on his party's leadership and his party's favorite television network. "They can't toy with me like they toy with everybody else," Trump said. Republican officials tried to hide their disappointment, if not their concern for the tremendous power Trump wields in the 2016 primary contest.

"Every candidate has the right to decide not to participate in a sanctioned debate," said Steve Duprey, the official in charge of the Republican National Committee's debate efforts. "Time will tell whether this works to his benefit or hurts his campaign." Trump's campaign manager, Corey Lewandowski, said Wednesday that "Mr. Trump doesn't play games. ... He walks away from bad deals." "At the end of the day," he said on MSNBC, "Mr Trump is going to have the last laugh."

Debates have long been considered critical moments for voters and candidates alike, and Fox News was more pointed than the RNC in its response to Trump's decision to sit their event out. "We're not sure how Iowans are going to feel about him walking away from them at the last minute," the network said. —AP



IBRAHIMOVIC GETS \$760,000 PAY BOOST

PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain's star striker Zlatan Ibrahimovic has been handed a 700,000 euros (\$760,000) monthly pay-rise making him by far the highest-paid footballer in France, Le Parisien newspaper reported yesterday. The 34-year-old Swede, who joined the club in 2012 from AC Milan and has scored 127 goals in 156 games since then, now gets 1.5 million euros (\$1.1 million) a month before tax under the performance-based hike agreed late last year. On top, Ibrahimovic can pocket three big bonus payments for winning the Champions league, the French league title and ending the season with the top combined total of goals scored and goal assists. With Paris Saint-Germain currently 21 points clear of second-placed Monaco in the league, the first of those targets is all but certain. Paris go up against Chelsea in the last 16 of the Champion League next month. Le Parisien added, however, that there was no word on whether Ibrahimovic would stay in Paris after his current contract expires at the end of the season. He is on record as saying he has no intention of leaving, claiming he has "a beautiful relationship with PSG." Ibrahimovic will be playing in France during the summer as Sweden contest the Euro 2016 finals. — AFP



PAKISTANI KOHLI FAN FACING JAIL FOR WAVING INDIA FLAG

KARACHI: A Pakistani cricket fan is facing up to a decade in jail after he was charged yesterday for jubilantly waving the flag of longtime foe India when his idol Virat Kohli made a match-winning knock. Police said Umar Daraz, 22, went "against the ideology of Pakistan" when he waved the flag at his house in Okara town in Punjab province Tuesday during the match against Australia in Adelaide. Daraz was celebrating Kohli's amazing knock of 90 not out, which set up India's 37-run win in the first of three Twenty20 internationals against Australia. His conviviality and subsequent arrest came Tuesday, as Pakistan's arch-rival India marked its national Republic Day. Nuclear-armed neighbours Pakistan and India have a long history of animosity dating back to independence from Britain in 1947, and have fought three wars. Regional Police officer Faisal Rana said Daraz was charged under Pakistan's penal code with acting against Pakistan's sovereignty. He could face up to 10 years in prison and a fine. "Daraz initially told us that he is a true Pakistani but likes Kohli and never knew that was a crime," Rana told media. "His act is against our country's sovereignty and is against the ideology of Pakistan." Rana said Daraz's home was also full of Kohli pictures. "He is a diehard fan of Kohli and there were big posters pasted on the walls of his house," the officer said. India stalled cricket matches against Pakistan in the wake of a 2008 militant attack in the commercial hub Mumbai that left 166 people dead and was blamed on extremists based across the border. Last month, India refused to play a planned series with Pakistan after agreeing to stage the matches in the neutral venues of Sri Lanka. — AP

EVERTON'S DEULOFEU EYES CENTRAL ROLE

LONDON: Everton's young Spanish winger Gerard Deulofeu is hoping to add goals to his game by switching to a more central role, similar to that of Cristiano Ronaldo at Real Madrid, with the Premier League club. The 21-year-old has been Everton's creator-in-chief this season, his nine assists putting him behind only Arsenal's Mesut Ozil in the league charts. However, the former Barcelona player has scored just twice in 21 league appearances this campaign. While playing down any comparisons with Ronaldo, the Portuguese three times World Player of the Year who has scored 16 in La Liga so far this season, Deulofeu would like to follow his lead positionally. "Cristiano has a lot to his game—he's good in the air, his shooting is perfect, his left foot perfect. And he's more of a striker than a winger now," the player told British yesterday. "I'm a winger now but in the future I want to play more in the middle. When you're there you have a lot more opportunities to score more. I would like to do like him, though, start wide and go in middle, as a No 10 or 9." Deulofeu insisted he was in no hurry to make the switch and was happy to play wherever manager Roberto Martinez utilised him on the field. "I've not told the manager because Ross Barkley is an out and out No 10 and Rom (Romelu Lukaku) a striker, so now it's difficult," Deulofeu said. — Reuters



Group photo of organizing committee

KUWAIT EXTREME POWERBOAT RUN TO BE HELD IN MARCH

KUWAIT: Organizing Committee of Kuwait Extreme Powerboat Run announced that registration to participate in the run to be held for the second time, as the first country in the Middle East to host this unique event.

Chairman of the organizing committee Yasser Mustafa Khan said work for "Extreme" is going on since hosting the run during last season in order to develop it, as it received great acceptance in Kuwait.

Khan who was speaking in a press conference held on Tuesday that ambition is great to have a large increase in the number of boats participating in the event, as it is expected the number of participants from Gulf countries to increase following the notable success of the championship in the previous season.

Khan said the run will begin on March 10th, and will continue for three days, and there will be workshops for lovers of this sport. Khan said the run will be from the Marina to Kuwait complex and back.

Khan said, the goal behind the run is to attract the youth and draw their attention towards a beneficial sport linked to the forefathers heritage, in addition to touristic promotion of Kuwait and present it with its distinguished civilized image.

He said Kuwait is proud to be the first Gulf country that organizes such event known in the USA and other European countries, to show fans and entertain them with an exciting show of fast boats.

Khan appreciated the sponsors, particularly the Public Authority for Sports (PAS) and Zain



Yasser Mustafa Khan

Communications. He also thanked the Interior Ministry and the Coast Guard, who had an effective participation last year, as well as sea rescue and helicopters. Khan also thanked the media for their coverage and efforts.

Meanwhile, Abdallah Al-Salem, who had the idea of "Powerboat run" initiative said Gulf champions and record number holders wish to be in Kuwait this time especially that the championship left a positive impression after the good organization of last year's event.

Al-Salem promised to have big surprises in the second run, in order to give the run a special status.

PAS representative Mishal Al-Subaie expressed pleasure for having this major event, adding that PAS spares no effort in supporting sports events, especially those that aim at the service of the society.

OOSTHUIZEN SHARES FIRST ROUND LEAD IN QATAR

DOHA: Louis Oosthuizen, who has won four of his previous five season-opening tournaments, posted a first round 65 at the Qatar Masters for a share of the lead yesterday.

Thriving in overcast and blustery conditions, the South African carded a bogey-free round, which included two birdies at his first two holes, after teeing off at the tenth.

The 2010 British Open champion was joined at the top of the leaderboard by Spain's Pablo Larrazabal, who posted four birdies in his first nine holes. Belgium's Nicolas Colsearts, England's Andrew Johnston and Sweden's Bjorn Akeson formed a trio one shot further back.

"I like playing in the desert," the 33-year-old Oosthuizen said. "I always play well around here, and just like the golf course. Like I said, I like the type of shot-making, grainy greens. It brings back a lot of good memories."

His card included back-to-back birdies at the ninth—the longest hole on the course, a 639-yard par 5 — 10th and 11th holes. Despite his self-professed love of windy conditions, Oosthuizen, one of the pre-tournament favourites, admitted that there could be "horrible winds" during the rest of the week.

At the start of 2011 and 2012, Oosthuizen won back-to-back Africa Opens. And in 2013 and 2014 he recorded consecutive wins at the Volvo Golf Champions, all season-opening tournaments.

A "very happy" Larrazabal, who has won a tournament on the European Tour in each of the last two seasons, made a similar start to Oosthuizen, birdying his first two holes also, after teeing

off at the first.

He followed that up with birdies on the sixth and ninth to go out in just 32. Like Oosthuizen, he did not card a bogey all round and missed only one green all day, at the par three 13th.

"I hit it very well tee-to-green," said the 32-year-old. "Seventeen greens in regulation with these conditions is very good. "I put myself in a lot of birdie chances and that was key." It looked like there would be a three-way lead at the top but Akeson bogied his penultimate hole, a four at the par three eighth. Another who threatened the top of the leader board was Englishman Callum Shinkwin.

The 21-year-old, starting at the tenth, went out in just 30, carding six birdies in the first nine. He could not maintain that pace though and took a double bogey at the second and another at the ninth, but remained upbeat afterwards. "I'm pleased," he told reporters. "I played nicely. I holed a few putts, which is a change, so I was happy with that."

It was a big day for the Shinkwin family, with his boxing cousin, Miles, announcing yesterday he will fight for the vacant British light-heavyweight title next month.

Defending champion Branden Grace, seeking to become the first player in the Qatar Masters 17-year history to win back-to-back titles, carded a two under round of 70.

That was the same score as the 2013 champion Sergio Garcia. The first person to win in Qatar, Scotland's Paul Lawrie, fared better with a five under par 67. — AFP

NISSAN AL-BABTAIN SPONSORS SPARK'S MARATHON

KUWAIT: Abdulmohsen Abdulaziz Al Babtain Co., the exclusive agent of Nissan in Kuwait, is proud to have sponsored the first 'SPARK Marathon 2016', which was held on Saturday January 16, 2016 at Marina Mall Crescent Area.

The event was organized by Spark Athletic Centre, and came under the patronage of His Excellency Sheikh Salman Al Humoud Al Sabah, Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs.

The marathon aimed at spreading health awareness across Kuwait, which comes in line with Nissan Al Babtain's Corporate Social Responsibility and Sustainability strategies towards a healthy society.

Attended by many Corporate Representatives, 'SPARK Marathon 2016' witnesses a large number of public attendees and participants.

On the other hand, Nissan Al Babtain continues to help and support talents, sports and health. Al Babtain supports all talents of all ages and provides them with support, as part of its Corporate Social Responsibility to the community and its duty towards Kuwait and its people. Nissan Al Babtain thanked His Excellency Sheikh Salman Al Humoud Al Sabah, Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs for all the support towards spreading awareness towards a healthy tomorrow.



RORY READY TO PUT BEST FOOT FORWARD FOR IRELAND

LONDON: New Ireland captain Rory Best said yesterday he had "big shoes to fill" when he leads the back-to-back Six Nations champions out to start their title defence against Wales in Dublin next month.

Best, who will win his 90th cap on Feb. 7, takes over the captaincy from Paul O'Connell who retired from international rugby after last year's World Cup, a disappointing one for Ireland. Lock forward O'Connell was a talisman for Ireland, as were his predecessors Brian O'Driscoll and Keith Wood. "Every time there is a change you are filling big shoes," Best told reporters at the Six Nations media launch. "It's a big challenge. The one thing that certainly Paul did really well was that he didn't change how he went about things. 'You don't have to reinvent things ... I'll try to lead by example while leaning very heavily on senior players.' Best was given a ringing endorsement by

coach Joe Schmidt who said the hooker was a natural choice to take over from O'Connell. "As coaches all we did was endorse the feeling from the playing group," said the New Zealander. "He is our most capped international and his experience and performances have been first rate. Off the pitch he's a consummate professional."

At the World Cup, the men in green had high hopes of reaching at least the semi-finals for the first time but again bowed out at the quarter-final stage following a crushing 43-20 defeat by Argentina. As well as O'Connell's retirement Schmidt has had to contend with a host of injuries. Ireland will be without the injured trio of Iain Henderson, Tommy Bowe and Peter O'Mahony for the entire tournament, while Mike Ross, Cian Healy and Chris Henry could return from injury for the final three matches. There was better news over

pivotal flyhalf Jonny Sexton, who Schmidt said was fit and had recovered from a head injury suffered while playing for Leinster at the weekend. Sexton has suffered a succession of concussions in his career but Schmidt said his latest knock was not serious. "As far as Jonny's concerned he's keen to be ready to go in 11 days' time. All we can do is go on medical opinion. When they give the all-clear, we trust them." — Reuters

ENGLAND BOSS JONES PUTS EMPHASIS ON HARD GRAFT

LONDON: Forward power rather than 'fancy' rugby holds the key to England's chances of success in the Six Nations Championship, according to new head coach Eddie Jones.

Traditionally, England have been known for the strength of their forwards and Jones, the first foreigner to coach the side, wants to restore that reputation having been appointed after the team's first-round exit at last year's World Cup saw former boss Stuart Lancaster sacked. "The Six Nations is about contest," said Jones, speaking at the tournament launch yesterday.

"It's a contest at the set piece and a contest at the breakdown," the Australian added. "It's never been a tournament known for it's continuity, until the last day of last year when everyone decided to throw the toys out," he said in a reference to a remarkable final round where 27 tries were scored in three

matches, with Ireland winning the tournament on points difference. Jones insisted: "We have a lot of work to do but with the talent we have I'm confident that we can get the fear factor back of having that dominant set piece."

The former Australia and Japan coach knows better than anyone that he will be judged on results, with England having won the Six Nations just once since their World Cup-winning year of 2003.

"When you first get married, you go on honeymoon, but a honeymoon is not like real life" said Jones. "Anyone who is married knows that. Married life is tough. You have to take, you have to give and make compromises. You have to work out a way to make things happen."

"When I stand up in the team room for the first time, everyone is nodding and saying 'yes, yes'. Of course they are. But I know that's not the real situation. I know we'll have our differences."

"We'll work it out and find out a way to make the team successful. It's a nice honeymoon at the moment."

IN-FORM SCOTLAND

Jones, however, was well aware that honeymoon could end with his first match in charge which sees England away to Scotland in Edinburgh on February 6 for the latest edition of rugby union's oldest Test fixture.

Scotland came within minutes of beating eventual finalists Australia at the World Cup before losing in the last eight and Jones said: "It's a Calcutta Cup game. Scotland are the form side of Europe. They're playing at home. We know it will be a tough game up there."

"We're picking a (matchday) 23 to do battle at Murrayfield, in front of 65,000 Scottish people who will be going crazy and that's pressure. We need players with the skills to be able to cope with that." At last year's World Cup in England no European side made it to the semi-finals, with Jones observing: "At the moment the southern hemisphere teams are probably three to five percent better than the northern hemisphere team, but that can be turned around in eight weeks. "You have to look at where the game is going, because if you want to be the top team in the world, you don't want to be playing the sort of rugby everybody is playing 12 months later."

"You want the world to be copying you. We've got an idea of where those gaps are and where we need to go."

Although this will be his first stint as a head coach in the Six Nations, Jones has followed the tournament since his earliest days as a rugby fan. "As a kid I grew up watching the ABC in Australia, which is the equivalent of the BBC, and it was the giants of the game playing the game," he said. "I still have memories of (Wales's) JPR Williams and Phil Bennett, (Scotland's) Colin Deans. They were great players. "It's a tournament full of tradition and emotion. The rivalry between the countries is immense, so to be part of it is a great honour and very humbling." — AFP



PITTSBURGH: Conor Sheary #43 of the Pittsburgh Penguins is taken down in front of the goal against the New Jersey Devils at Consol Energy Center on Tuesday in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. — AFP

FLEURY, PENGUINS TOP DEVILS 2-0 FOR THIRD STRAIGHT WIN

PITTSBURGH: Marc-Andre Fleury stopped 25 shots for his fourth shutout of the season and the surging Pittsburgh Penguins beat the New Jersey Devils 2-0 on Tuesday night for their third straight win. Sidney Crosby got his 17th goal of the year for the Penguins. The two-time MVP has scored in each of Pittsburgh's last seven home games, the longest home scoring streak of his career. Phil Kessel added an insurance goal, and the Penguins have won four of five to draw even with the Devils for eighth place in the Eastern Conference heading into the All-Star break. Cory Schneider made 29 saves for the Devils, who saw their four-game winning streak snapped. New Jersey went 0 for 4 on the power play, managing just one shot on goal during 8 minutes with the man advantage.

PANTHERS 5, MAPLE LEAFS 1

Aleksander Barkov and Vincent Trocheck scored power-play goals and Florida rolled into the All-Star break on another good note by topping Toronto. Reilly Smith and Jussi Jokinen each had a goal and an assist for Florida, which improved to 20-0-1 when scoring at least three times. Roberto Luongo made 22 saves for Florida, which goes into the break atop the Atlantic Division and in second place in the Eastern Conference. Brian Campbell had two assists for the Panthers, who signed Barkov to a six-year contract extension earlier in the day. Nazem Kadri scored for Toronto, which has lost eight of its last nine games. James Reimer stopped 22 shots for the Maple Leafs.

HURRICANES 5, BLACKHAWKS 0

Riley Nash scored twice, Jeff Skinner had a goal and an assist and Carolina routed Chicago in the final game before the All-Star break for each team. Carolina outshot the reigning Stanley Cup champions 16-5 in the first period, taking a 3-0 lead and chasing goalie Corey Crawford. Eddie Lack made 26 saves to improve to 4-1 in his career against the Blackhawks. Crawford, replaced by Scott Darling, made 13 saves. The Hurricanes, 7-2-1 in their last 10 games, completed a season sweep of the Blackhawks, who have lost three of their last four. Chicago has two wins at Carolina since the 1997-98 season.

SABRES 3, SENATORS 2

Standout rookie Jack Eichel scored twice to erase a one-goal deficit and Buffalo came back to beat Ottawa. Eichel tied it 2-2 with 6:12 left in the second period, then got the winner 1:08 into the third to help the Sabres end a three-game slide. Evander Kane had the other goal for Buffalo, which got 34 saves from Robin Lehner in his first win of the season. Erik Karlsson and Bobby Ryan scored for the Senators, and Craig Anderson stopped 19-of-22 shots. Jean-Gabriel Pageau thought he had tied the game in the final moments of the third, but a review showed time had expired.

BLUE JACKETS 5, CANADIENS 2

Brandon Dubinsky and Cam Atkinson each had a goal and an assist to help Columbus beat Montreal and sweep a home-and-home. Boone Jenner, Scott Hartnell and Brandon Saad also scored for the Blue Jackets. Rookie goaltender Joonas Korhiala stopped 28 shots and improved to 4-0-1 in his last five starts. The Blue Jackets also beat Montreal 5-2 on Monday night in Columbus. Devante Smith-Pelly and Alex Galchenyuk scored for Montreal. Ben Scrivens made 21 saves and fell to 0-4 with Montreal. Montreal lost captain Max Pacioretty to injury midway through the second period after he took a slap shot from P.K. Subban to the left side of his face. Pacioretty, the team's leading scorer with 19 goals, did not return in the third.

DUCKS 6, BRUINS 2

Corey Perry scored his 20th goal and added an assist for Anaheim in a win over Boston. Shea Theodore, David Perron and Ryan Kesler also each had a goal and an assist, and Kevin Bieksa and Mike Santorelli also scored for the Ducks. Anaheim

scored four straight goals after falling behind 1-0 in the opening minute and has won five of six. The Ducks take a three-game winning streak into the All-Star break. Frederik Andersen finished with 32 saves for the Ducks. Jonas Gustavsson started in goal for Boston but left after the first period with an undisclosed illness. The Bruins said Gustavsson was taken to Massachusetts General Hospital for observation after allowing two goals on 16 shots. Starter Tuukka Rask took over for Gustavsson at the start of the second period and stopped 19 of 22 shots. Zach Trotman and Zdeno Chara scored for Boston.

JETS 5, COYOTES 2

Rookie Nikolaj Ehlers had a hat trick and Dustin Byfuglien added two goals and an assist to help Winnipeg beat Arizona. Veteran winger Blake Wheeler assisted on all of Ehlers' goals, and Ehlers' first hat trick extended his point streak to four games. Brad Richardson and Anthony Duclair scored for Arizona. Connor Hellebuyck stopped 32 shots for the Jets. Louis Domingue started for Arizona and made 20 saves before being relieved by Anders Lindback for the third period. Lindback stopped all 12 shots he faced.

PREDATORS 2, CANUCKS 1

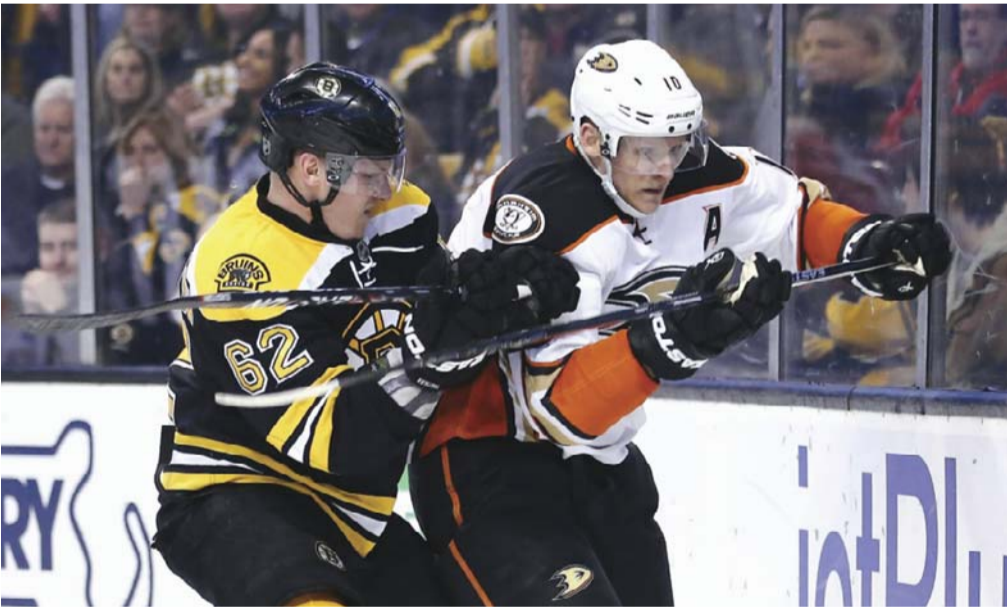
James Neal scored late in the third period to lift

Nashville over Vancouver. Pekka Rinne stopped 28 shots and Craig Smith had the other goal for the Predators, who improved to 3-0 on a four-game Western Conference road swing that concludes Wednesday in Calgary. Brandon Sutter scored for the Canucks, who played their last game before the All-Star break. Vancouver just returned from a 10-day road trip that resulted in a 3-2-1 record. Ryan Miller made 17 saves in his first home start since Dec. 9.

SHARKS 6, AVALANCHE 1

Joe Thornton had two assists to become the 33rd player to reach 1,300 career points, and San Jose extended its point streak to 10 games with a victory over Colorado.

Thornton assisted on goals by Tomas Hertl and Joe Pavelski to reach the milestone and send the Sharks into the All-Star break on their longest point streak since a 10-game run during the 2010-11 season. Melker Karlsson, Joel Ward and Paul Martin also scored for San Jose. Dylan DeMelo added his first career goal in the final minute on the power play, and Martin Jones made 21 saves. Nathan MacKinnon scored for the Avalanche, who had their four-game winning streak snapped. Backup goalie Calvin Pickard, fighting the flu, allowed four goals on 20 shots before being pulled after two periods. — AP



BOSTON: Corey Perry #10 of the Anaheim Ducks and Zach Trotman #62 of the Boston Bruins battle for control of the puck during the second period at TD Garden on Tuesday in Boston, Massachusetts. — AFP

NHL results/standings

Carolina 5, Chicago 0; Montreal 2, Columbus 5; Ottawa 2, Buffalo 3; Florida 5, Toronto 1; Vancouver 1, Nashville 2; San Jose 6, Colorado 1; Winnipeg 5, Arizona 2; Boston 2, Anaheim 6; Pittsburgh 2, New Jersey 0.

Eastern Conference								Western Conference							
Atlantic Division								Pacific Division							
PL	W	L	OT	GF	GA	PTS									
Florida	49	29	15	5	135	108	63	Chicago	53	33	16	4	147	122	70
Detroit	49	25	16	8	122	124	58	Dallas	50	31	14	5	162	133	67
Boston	49	26	18	5	147	131	57	St. Louis	52	28	16	8	129	128	64
Tampa Bay	48	26	18	4	129	117	56	Minnesota	49	23	17	9	121	115	55
Montreal	50	24	22	4	136	134	52	Colorado	51	26	22	3	139	139	55
Ottawa	50	23	21	6	139	155	52	Nashville	49	23	18	8	127	130	54
Buffalo	50	20	26	4	114	136	44	Winnipeg	49	22	24	3	126	140	47
Toronto	47	17	21	9	114	133	43	Central Division							
Metropolitan Division								Los Angeles	48	30	15	3	126	109	63
Washington	46	35	8	3	155	100	73	San Jose	48	26	18	4	142	129	56
NY Rangers	49	27	17	5	142	129	59	Arizona	49	24	20	5	131	146	53
NY Islanders	47	25	16	6	130	118	56	Anaheim	47	22	18	7	101	111	51
Pittsburgh	48	24	17	7	121	120	55	Vancouver	50	20	19	11	122	139	51
New Jersey	50	25	20	5	114	118	55	Calgary	47	21	23	3	125	144	45
Carolina	51	23	20	8	123	135	54	Edmonton	50	19	26	5	122	149	43
Philadelphia	46	20	18	8	105	124	48	Note: Overtime losses (OT) worth 1 pt and not included in loss column (L).							
Columbus	51	19	27	5	133	163	43								



WROCLAW: Hungary's Rudolf Faluvegi vies with Sweden's Jonas Kallman during the Men's 2016 EHF European Handball Championships between Hungary and Sweden in Centennial Hall in Wroclaw yesterday. — AFP

AUSTRALIA WARNS ATHLETES AGAINST ZIKA AT RIO GAMES

SYDNEY: Australia's Olympic athletes were yesterday told to take precautions against Zika-carrying mosquitoes at the Games in Brazil, with officials advising them to consider whether to travel to Rio de Janeiro if pregnant.

A surge in babies suffering from microcephaly, in which children have abnormally small heads, born to women infected with Zika has prompted warnings from Australia and other governments about travelling to affected countries.

In Brazil, Zika virus infections in pregnant women have been linked to 3,893 births of babies with microcephaly compared to an average of about 160 a year, the World Health Organisation has said. The Australian Olympic Committee (AOC) said the health of its team was "paramount".

It warned that females of childbearing age "need to be aware of the specific risks of microcephaly in newborns, should the mother become infected

during pregnancy." "Any team members who are pregnant at the time of the Games need to consider the risks very carefully before deciding whether to proceed with travel to Brazil," it said in a statement.

Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs has advised pregnant women to consider postponing travel to Brazil. The Olympic Games begin on August 5.

The AOC said athletes and officials would be given mosquito repellent, and told to wear long sleeves when they were at risk of bites from the insects such as in areas with stagnant water.

Athletes living in the Games village are to be advised to keep their windows and doors closed and use air conditioning. Other mosquito-borne diseases the sporting body warned against and that are also spread by the Aedes genus of mosquitoes includes dengue fever, yellow fever and Chikungunya. All team members would be vaccinated against yellow fever, the AOC said. — AFP

BAYLISS SAYS ENGLISH BATTLING PLACES UP FOR GRABS

PRETORIA: Coach Trevor Bayliss has said batsmen who impress in the early matches in the English county season could force their way into the team for the home series against Sri Lanka starting in May.

England beat former world number one South Africa 2-1 in a four-test series that ended on Tuesday but their top order batting

remained fragile. Alex Hales is the latest opener to fail to convince as England seek a reliable partner for captain Alastair Cook, while Nick Compton and James Taylor need to produce more consistent performances to cement their places. "We're by no means the finished article. There is some very good talent in the team, but there are a few rough edges to knock off as well

and that will take some time," said Bayliss, an Australian who took charge last year. "I think that is a sign to everyone else in county cricket that, 'If I come out and score runs early in the season, there are possibilities there.' There are four or five rounds of county matches before that first test against Sri Lanka. Those matches will be very important for some of those players," Bayliss

told reporters. The county season starts on Sunday, April 10 and the first test against Sri Lanka is at Headingley in Leeds on May 19.

England finished the series on a low note when South Africa bowled them out for just 101 to clinch a consolation victory by 280 runs. Bayliss called England's success in South Africa a collective effort despite some stunning individ-

ual performances. Those included an unforgettable innings from all-rounder Ben Stokes in Cape Town when he scored the fastest double century by an English batsman in test history. Stuart Broad produced another of his match-winning performances when he took six wickets in the second innings of the third test at the Wanderers. — Reuters

CONTROVERSY OVER SMITH'S T20 LIVE CHAT

SYDNEY: The use of on-field microphones by players in Twenty20 matches came under fire yesterday after star Australian batsman Steve Smith lost his wicket while commenting during a game against India.

Smith was answering questions from broadcaster Channel Nine's commentators while he was in the middle with Aaron Finch as Australia chased down India's 188 runs during Tuesday's match at Adelaide Oval. Shortly after speaking, Smith chipped Ravindra Jadeja and was caught at mid-off by Virat Kohli for 21, with the star Indian batsman making a "chatterbox" hand gesture at the Test captain.

Australia fans slammed Channel Nine on Twitter, blaming the commercial station for distracting Smith, while others said Kohli's gesture was a criticism of live chat during a game. "Whilst we try to bring the viewer into the contest. We can't forget it is a con-

test. Smith wasn't comfortable and Kohli knew it," one Twitter user wrote. Another tweeted: "Kohli's message to Steve Smith was pretty clear there."

This is a cricket game not a television interview. Thanks, Channel 9." T20, a quick-fire, high-octane format, was designed to draw crowds to tournaments amid fears that spectators were tiring of longer formats such as five-day Tests.

Sports writer Robert Craddock said Smith's dismissal raised the question of whether the T20 short-form structure was meant to be a carnival or a contest. "Did it cost Australia the game? Possibly. If it happened in a Test match I would be punching a hole in my keyboard protesting at the farce of it all," he wrote in Brisbane's Courier Mail. "But it was T20 international and like the rest of the world, I am still trying to work out what these games actually mean." — AFP



HONG KONG: Bob Arum (L), promoter to Hong Kong boxer Rex Tso (R), attends a press conference at Def Gym in the Sheung Wan district of Hong Kong yesterday. Veteran boxing promoter Bob Arum believes Filipino legend Manny Pacquiao may reconsider retirement after his final fight against Timothy Bradley, and declared yesterday he would "love" to see a Mayweather-Pacquiao rematch. — AFP

NEVER SAY NEVER! ARUM HINTS AT MAYWEATHER-PACQUIAO REMATCH

HONG KONG: Veteran boxing promoter Bob Arum believes Filipino legend Manny Pacquiao may reconsider retirement after his final fight against Timothy Bradley, and declared Wednesday he would "love" to see a rematch with Floyd Mayweather.

Pacquiao insists he will step away from the ring after the third and final instalment of his rivalry with Bradley in April. The 37-year-old is planning to run for a seat in the Philippines' senate later this year after already serving as a representative in the country's congress.

"I'm so happy to be hanging up my gloves after this fight," Pacquiao told a press conference in Los Angeles a week ago. But Arum thinks that could all still change.

"Once that bell rings for that final round, Manny Pacquiao's going to rethink it and who knows if he decides to return?" he told AFP in Hong Kong. "I've been in this boxing business for 50 years and I know that fighters retire and other than, say, Rocky Marciano, they come back," said the 84-year-old Arum.

"Will it be Manny's last fight? I'm not ready to guarantee that," added Arum, who also hinted at a rematch for the Filipino against Mayweather, who himself retired after their mega-fight in Las Vegas last May.

"I'd love to see a Mayweather-Pacquiao second fight, of course I would," said Arum. "The first fight was by far the most lucrative in the history of boxing. "But Mayweather has to un-retire, Manny has to decide whether or not he's elected to the senate and he'll do the rematch, so we'll have to see. "You know, I'm done predicting what athletes are going to do."

MACAU TO HONG KONG

Bradley's WBO welterweight title will be on the line in the April 9 bout at Las Vegas's MGM Grand, in the third meeting of the two fighters. Top Rank guru Arum was in Hong Kong to announce a three-fight deal to promote local super flyweight and world title prospect Rex Tso.

Arum confirmed that Tso would fight South Korea's Young Gil-Bae in May in Hong Kong for

an Asian regional title. A high-ranked contender would follow in September and, if successful, Tso would get a shot at becoming Hong Kong's first boxing world champion in December against the WBA super flyweight champion, currently Japan's Kohei Kono.

The deal signals the end of Arum's tie-up with the nearby resort city of Macau, where he has promoted eight casino-based shows in the past three years, including two multi-million dollar Pacquiao fights. Macau has been hit hard by China's high-profile corruption crackdown which has kept high rollers from the gaming tables and saw casino revenues in 2015 fall to a five-year low. "We thank Macau for hosting boxing and bringing it on a tremendous basis to this part of the world," said Arum. "But we know there is not the same appetite for events there as in prior years," admitted Arum.

"If you're not going to get that type of support from the casinos in Macau, it is logical to bring the events to where the people are and that's Hong Kong," he added. — AFP



ADELAIDE: Steven Smith (L) and James Faulkner of Australia are pictured during the first Twenty20 cricket international between India and Australia at the Adelaide Oval on Tuesday. — AFP

DAVID WARNER WINS ALLAN BORDER MEDAL

SYDNEY: David Warner was named Australia's Test player of the year yesterday, beating captain Steve Smith for the Allan Border Medal.

Warner won Australian cricket's highest individual prize-judged on performances in Tests and one-dayers over the season-with 240 votes, 21 ahead of Smith and 57 more than Mitchell Starc. The prolific run-scorer totalled 30 votes for Test player of the year, six more than Smith with Starc again in third position (18). "My heart is racing. I honestly thought Smudge (Smith) had a terrific year and he would have taken this out," Warner said. "People said to me I could have been one of the greats of the game but I just sat there and let it go through my ears. You can only control what you control on the field."

Twenty-nine year-old Warner, who last

year was named Test vice-captain, powered his way to his 16th Test century this summer. In a man-of-the-match performance against the West Indies earlier this month he reached 100 off 82 balls to achieve the faster Test century at the Sydney Cricket Ground.

And in the earlier series against New Zealand, he scored 163 and 116 in the first Test in Brisbane, before scoring 253 in the second Test in Perth. Fellow players, the media and umpires vote for their choice of Allan Border Medal winner.

Previous recipients include Ricky Ponting, Glenn McGrath, Steve Waugh, Adam Gilchrist, Shane Watson, Michael Clarke and Smith. All-rounder Glenn Maxwell was named one-day-international player of the year and Adam Voges the domestic player of the year. — AFP



David Warner

CENTURION: Both England and South Africa have work ahead if they are to climb the Test rankings following the series in South Africa won 2-1 by England.

England stayed in fifth place on the rankings, although South African captain AB de Villiers said he believed the tourists could soon be "the team to beat", while South Africa dropped from first to third after their second successive series loss.

England's two wins were convincing but South Africa's 280-run win in the final Test in Centurion left "unanswered questions" in the words of captain Alastair Cook.

The series averages point to the strengths and weaknesses of the England performances. Jonny Bairstow, Ben Stokes and Joe Root scored heavily and averaged over 50 but the only other batsman to average 30 was Nick Compton, whose form fell away after he scored a crucial 85 in the first Test in Durban. Handed the problematical number three role, Compton seemed stung by comments by England coach Trevor Bayliss favouring positive stroke play at the top of the order.

After showing immense patience and discipline in Durban, Compton fell to some loose strokes later in the series and finished with 245 runs at 30.62. If Compton did not make certain of a long-term place, Alex Hales was unconvincing as Cook's opening partner. His only innings of substance was 60 in Cape Town where both teams topped 600 in the first innings. Cook said that while he believed players should be given too many chances rather than too few, he also hoped Hales would do well in the upcoming one-day series in South Africa as well as in county matches before England's next Test series against Sri Lanka in May.

While Bairstow batted well, Cook noted that he had "a huge amount of work to do" on his wicketkeeping, although he drew a comparison with Matt Prior, who started his Test career shakily before becoming one of England's leading wicketkeepers.

Stokes, the man of the series, scored runs at a rapid rate and took 12 wickets to show himself as a genuine Test all-rounder. England batted deep, with Moeen Ali a spin bowling

all-rounder. Stuart Broad was the match-winner in the third Test in Johannesburg. England's bowling was less effective in the final match when the impressive Steven Finn was missing because of injury. But Cook said England had depth in pace bowling, with Chris Jordan not used in the series and Finn and Mark Wood likely to press for places when they had recovered from injuries.

South Africa looked in disarray early in the series, when it seemed they were still suffering a hangover from a 3-0 defeat in India. But they improved and finished the series strongly. De Villiers took over the captaincy from Hashim Amla and made it clear he wanted to put his personal stamp on the job.

RABADA OUTSTANDING

A shake-up in the back-up staff seems likely, with head coach Russell Domingo agreeing with the new captain that a batting coach is a priority. The return to batting form of Amla, who scored 470 runs at an average of 67.14, and the emergence of 20-year-old Kagiso Rabada as an outstanding fast bowler were

highlights for South Africa. Rabada, who might not have played had long-time stalwarts Dale Steyn and Vernon Philander been fit, took 22 wickets at 21.90, including a sensational 13 for 144 in the final Test. The selectors finally opted for an experienced specialist opening batsman in Stephen Cook, 33, and Cook looked the part with a calm century on his debut. He looks set for an extended run in the team to partner the gritty Dean Elgar, who averaged 47.33.

While experienced players such as De Villiers, Faf du Plessis and JP Duminy performed modestly, the diminutive Temba Bavuma stepped confidently into the middle order. He made a thrilling century in Cape Town but batted even more impressively in scoring 78 not out in difficult conditions in the second innings in Centurion.

Quinton de Kock's maiden Test century in Centurion was confirmation of his potential as a wicketkeeper-batsman. Rabada dominated the South African bowling averages. Morne Morkel (15 wickets at 29.73) and Dane Piedt (10 at 45.50) were the only other bowlers to take a significant number of wickets. — AFP

REICHELTO ATTEMPT GARMISCH DESPITE KITZBUEHEL CRASH

BERLIN: Austria's Hannes Reichelt hopes to take part in this weekend's World Cup downhill in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, just a week after injuring his knee in a horror crash in Kitzbuehel.

The 35-year-old suffered bruising and a compression of his left knee in a crash in last Saturday's downhill race on Kitzbuehel's Hahnenkamm course. Both Georg Streiberger (Austria) and Aksel Lund Svindal (Norway) had their season's ended by serious knee injuries suffered in exactly the same spot as Reichelt.

All three crashed out at the Hausberg Kompression turn, within view of an estimated 50,000 spectators packed into Kitzbuehel where collective gasps of shock could be heard.

The downhill course in the Tyrolean resort is widely recognised as the toughest on the World Cup circuit, with racers reaching motorway-coasting speeds in excess of 130km/h wearing only a skin-tight catsuit, back support and helmet. Both

Streiberger and Reichelt, the 2014 winner, had to be evacuated by helicopter off the mountain. Originally hot favourite to win the race Svindal was at first able to walk away, but later underwent surgery. After taking part in Thursday's first training in the Bavarian Alps, Reichelt will decide whether he is fit to take part in Friday's second practice, then Saturday's race down Garmisch's Kandahar course. Reichelt, who is tenth in the World Cup standings behind leader Marcel Hirscher of Austria, put his crash in Kitzbuehel down to poor visibility. "I couldn't see anything," the 2015 Super-G world champion said yesterday. "I came up to the Kompression (where the accident happened) much faster than expected," he said. Reichelt also criticised the race organisers for not stopping the race immediately after his fall. He fell just before Svindal's crash left the Norwegian with ruptured knee ligaments, which will keep him out for at least nine months. — AFP

CAHILL WANTS MOVE TO SAVE ENGLAND CAREER

LONDON: England centre back Gary Cahill is so frustrated by a lack of first-team football at Chelsea that he wants to leave the club in an attempt to safeguard his international place at the European Championship in the summer. The England vice captain has played more than 170 games for the Premier League champions but has made only 12 league appearances this season as Kurt Zouma and John Terry have become the preferred starters.

Cahill fears he might miss out on the Euros this summer if he is still not playing regularly, a source close to the player told Reuters. While it could be too late to make the move before the current transfer window closes on Monday, Cahill is resigned to leaving the champions to ensure regular top-flight football. The highly regarded defender, who cost Chelsea around £7 million (\$10.02 million) when he joined from Bolton Wanderers in January 2012, says he may be at the "crossroads of his career". The 30-year-old made 10 starts at the beginning of the season before Jose Mourinho was sacked after 16 league games. He has played only twice since Guus Hiddink took temporary charge on Dec. 19 — and one of those was in the FA

Cup against third-tier Scunthorpe United.

The source said Cahill—who was appointed England vice-captain in September 2014 — was genuinely concerned about his chances of playing for his country in the European Championships in France if he is not playing regularly for his club.

While Cahill has been in and out of the Chelsea side, he has been a mainstay in England's successful march to the Euros, playing in eight of their qualifiers as they won all 10 to sweep into the finals.

The defender captained his country for the first time in October's European Championship Qualifying victory over Estonia at Wembley.

He won his 40th cap in the 2-0 friendly win over France in November but the emergence of Everton's John Stones—a Chelsea target in the summer—and Manchester United's Chris Smalling means he will have to fight for his place in the Euros. Cahill in May last year became the fastest player in Premier League history to win all five possible major club trophies. It took him a little over three years to clinch winners' medals for the FA Cup, Champions League, Europa League, League Cup and Premier League. — Reuters

GUUS HIDDINK HAS CALMED CHELSEA CRISIS: ZHIRKOV

MOSCOW: Former Chelsea defender Yuri Zhirkov believes Guus Hiddink has calmed the 'psychological' crisis at Stamford Bridge and the Londoners will be battling for the Premier League title again next season.

"I know Hiddink and I have no doubt that once he took over, the atmosphere at Chelsea became so much better and more relaxed than it had been before," Russia international Zhirkov told Reuters in a telephone interview.

Under Hiddink, who replaced the sacked 'Special One' Jose Mourinho as head coach on Dec. 19, the reigning champions remain unbeaten, winning four matches and drawing two in the Premier League.

Chelsea are currently 13th in the 20 team table with 28 points — 19 behind leaders Leicester City. The West Londoners were hovering just one point above the relegation zone when Mourinho left.

"The reason for the recent poor run is psychological," said Zhirkov, who scored one goal in 48 appearances in all competitions for Chelsea.

"A year ago, Chelsea won the championship and this has had a bearing on the next season," added the 32-year-old defender, who played under Hiddink when the Dutchman was Russia coach from 2006 to 2010. "When you win the title, it is also difficult to defend it and to play at the highest level."

The Dynamo Moscow defender, who on Tuesday signed a contract to join Zenit St. Petersburg when he becomes a free agent in July, felt Chelsea were getting stronger and stronger with every week that passed.

A place in next season's Europa League was a possibility, said the Russian, who won the old UEFA Cup with CSKA Moscow in

2005. "However, they possibly could have a break from Europe for one season. I think with Guus, Chelsea will ride out the crisis and next season will be back at the top of the table."

BALANCED SQUADS

Chelsea are still in Champions League contention, facing French champions Paris St Germain for a place in the last eight. "It's 50-50," said Zhirkov of Chelsea's chances. "Both teams have wonderful balanced squads. I will be hoping my former side will win." Zhirkov believes that current captain John Terry and vice-captain Branislav Ivanovic, who recently signed a one-year extension to the end of the 2016/17 season, are the club's natural leaders.

"Both defenders were playing for the club when I was there. They are still key footballers and are able to show leadership qualities during crucial moments of a match," he said.

"I am still in touch with Ivanovic as he knows Russian. I was on holiday recently in Dubai and I bumped into (former Chelsea midfielder) Deco. We had a really good chat and remembered old times," Zhirkov recalled. The Russian had good memories from his time in England and spoke warmly of Chelsea's billionaire owner and compatriot Roman Abramovich.

"He is a really nice and simple person. Abramovich is able to get on well with everyone and he often comes to the training ground and even played table tennis with us," he said.

"Of course it was difficult when I was not playing, but on the whole, I was happy with that period. I won a championship medal—that says it all." — Reuters



MONTPELLIER: Montpellier's new French coach Frederic Hantz (C) attends a training session at Grammont Stadium in the southern French city of Montpellier yesterday. — AFP



PHILADELPHIA: Phoenix Suns' Markieff Morris, right, has his shot blocked by Philadelphia 76ers' Robert Covington, center, and Richaun Holmes during the second half of an NBA basketball game, Tuesday, in Philadelphia. Philadelphia won 113-103. — AP

SMITH, COVINGTON LIFT 76ERS PAST PHOENIX

PHILADELPHIA: Ish Smith had 20 points and nine assists and Robert Covington scored 19 points to lead the Philadelphia 76ers to a 113-103 win over the Phoenix Suns on Tuesday night. Once 1-30 on Dec. 23 and challenging for the worst record in NBA history, the Sixers have since gone 6-9 and might not even end up with the worst record in the league. Nik Stauskas scored 15 points and Nerlens Noel had 14 for the Sixers. Archie Goodwin nearly pulled off an improbable win in the fourth with some late clutch shots that rallied the Suns. Goodwin led the Suns with 26 points. Alex Len had 16 points and 12 rebounds.

RAPTORS 106, WIZARDS 89

All-Star starter Kyle Lowry put up 29 points before leaving with an injury in the final minutes and Toronto downed Washington for its ninth straight win, matching a franchise-best mark. Lowry left and went up the tunnel toward the Raptors locker room with what appeared to be an injured hand with just under four minutes to go in the fourth quarter. He briefly returned before trainers escorted him back under the stands. Jonas Valanciunas had 13 points and 12 rebounds for the Raptors while DeMar DeRozan had 17 points and Terrence Ross added 15 points off the bench. John Wall led the way for the Wizards with 18 points and 14 assists.

THUNDER 128, KNICKS 122, OT

Kevin Durant scored a season-high 44 points and grabbed 14 rebounds, and klahoma City beat New York in overtime. Durant hit the tying jumper with 16.2 seconds left in regulation, then scored seven points in overtime to surpass the 43 points he had against Orlando on Oct. 30, a game that went to two overtimes. One was all the Thunder needed this time, as Durant hit four straight free throws in the final half-minute to finish 16 for 18 from the line. Russell Westbrook finished with 30 points, 10 assists and eight rebounds for the Thunder, who bounced back from a loss to Brooklyn on Sunday to win for the eighth time in nine games. Langston Galloway scored 21 points for the Knicks, who played without injured leading scorer Carmelo Anthony.

CLIPPERS 91, PACERS 89

Chris Paul scored 26 points and J.J. Redick added 19 as Los Angeles held off a late Indiana comeback. The Clippers played without All-Star forward Blake Griffin, who was sent home after breaking his shooting hand in a scuffle with equipment manager Matias Testi. Indiana lost its third straight despite having Paul George finish with 31 points and 11 rebounds. Myles Turner had 16 points. Los Angeles turned the game with a 13-0 run that gave the Clippers an 81-72 lead midway through the fourth quarter. The

Pacers were held scoreless for nearly eight minutes. Indiana got back into the game with a 14-7 run, closed to 91-89 on George's 3-pointer with 28 seconds left and had a chance to tie or win after forcing a turnover with 2.1 seconds to go. But the Pacers didn't get the shot off.

HEAT 102, NETS 98

Dwyane Wade and Chris Bosh each scored 27 points, leading Miami over Brooklyn. Wade also had eight assists and four rebounds. Justise Winslow added 13 points and seven rebounds for the Heat. Andrea Bargnani had 20 points and Joe Johnson had 15 for the Nets. The Heat led 99-96 when Wayne Ellington missed a 3-point shot that would've tied it. Bosh then hit one of two foul shots and the Heat held on.

BUCKS 107, MAGIC 100

Giannis Antetokounmpo dunked eight times and scored 25 points as Milwaukee, with coach Jason Kidd back on the bench, sent Orlando to its seventh straight loss. Kidd missed 17 games after having surgery on his right hip Dec. 21. In his return, he spent a lot of time walking along the sideline as Milwaukee rallied from a 16-point deficit. Jerryd Bayless had a pair of 3-pointers in the final 2:20, including a baseline shot with 13 seconds to go that put Milwaukee ahead 103-99. Khris Middleton, who had 25 points, made a pair of free throws with 7 seconds left for a 105-100 lead. The Bucks have won four of six. Orlando has lost 11 of 12.

TRAIL BLAZERS 112, KINGS 97

C.J. McCollum scored 18 points, Damian Lillard had 15 points and 12 assists and Portland shut down red-hot DeMarcus Cousins in the Trail Blazers win over the Kings. Portland had seven players score in double figures. Gerald Henderson scored 15 points, while Mason Plumlee had 12 points and eight rebounds for the Blazers.

Cousins, who came into Tuesday off 56 and 48-point performances in his past two games, led the Kings with 17 points, but hit only 4 of 21 shots. Cousins also struggled at the free throw line, making 9 of 17. Rajon Rondo had 15 points and 11 assists for the Kings, who lost in double overtime on Monday night.

MAVERICKS 92, LAKERS 90

Dirk Nowitzki hit the tiebreaking jumper with 2.1 seconds to play, and the Mavericks hung on for a victory over the Lakers. Nowitzki scored eight of his 13 points in the fourth quarter as the Mavericks snapped a two-game skid with their 10th consecutive victory over the Lakers. Julius Randle missed a long jumper at the buzzer for the Lakers, who have lost seven straight. Nowitzki nailed his go-ahead shot while falling toward the Lakers' bench, where he got a pat on the back from Kobe Bryant, who sat out to rest his sore right shoulder. J.J. Barea led the Mavericks with 18 points, and Chandler Parsons had 17. Jordan Clarkson scored 18 points for the Lakers, and Randle had 16. — AP

NBA results/standings												
LA Lakers 90, Dallas 92; Brooklyn 98, Miami 102; New York 122, Oklahoma City 128 (OT); Toronto 106, Washington 89; Portland 112, Sacramento 97; Milwaukee 107, Orlando 100; Indiana 89, LA Clippers 91; Philadelphia 113, Phoenix 103.												
Eastern Conference				Western Conference								
Atlantic Division				Northwest Division								
	W	L	PCT	GB	Oklahoma City	34	13	.723	—			
Toronto	30	15	.667	—	Portland	21	26	.447	13			
Boston	25	21	.543	5.5	Utah	19	25	.432	13.5			
New York	22	25	.468	9	Denver	17	28	.378	16			
Brooklyn	12	34	.261	18.5	Minnesota	14	32	.304	19.5			
Philadelphia	7	39	.152	23.5	Pacific Division							
Central Division					Golden State	41	4	.911	—			
Cleveland	31	12	.721	—	LA Clippers	29	16	.644	12			
Chicago	25	19	.568	6.5	Sacramento	20	25	.444	21			
Detroit	24	21	.533	8	Phoenix	14	32	.304	27.5			
Indiana	23	22	.511	9	LA Lakers	9	38	.191	33			
Milwaukee	20	27	.426	13	Southwest Division							
Southeast Division					San Antonio	38	7	.844	—			
Atlanta	27	19	.587	—	Memphis	26	20	.565	12.5			
Miami	25	21	.543	2	Dallas	26	21	.553	13			
Charlotte	22	23	.489	4.5	Houston	25	22	.532	14			
Washington	20	23	.465	5.5	New Orleans	16	28	.364	21.5			
Orlando	20	24	.455	6								

BBC ABANDONS PLANS TO HOLD FIFA PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE

ZURICH: Britain's BBC has abandoned plans to stage a televised debate with the five candidates vying for the presidency of soccer's scandal-plagued governing body FIFA after one declined to take part and others imposed conditions.

The broadcaster had hoped to stage the debate in London in mid-February, two weeks before election in Zurich on Feb. 26, but confirmed in a statement to Reuters that it would no longer go ahead.

It was the second time in three days

that plans to bring the candidates together and publicly discuss their plans for the sport's future had been scuppered. FIFA is in the throes of an unprecedented crisis, with criminal investigations into the sport under way in the United States and Switzerland.

The world body's president Sepp Blatter and European soccer boss Michel Platini, banned for eight years each, are among officials who have been sanctioned by its own ethics committee.

The BBC highlighted a comment on

Twitter by presenter Victoria Derbyshire, who said the decision was made after one candidate had declined to take part. "We've pulled our live head-to-head TV debate w(ith) FIFA Presidential hopefuls. After one declined, some others wanted to, um, move the goalposts," she said.

Five candidates are bidding to replace Blatter: Prince Ali Bin Al-Hussein of Jordan, South African politician and businessman Tokyo Sexwale, UEFA general secretary Gianni Infantino, Sheikh Salman Bin Ibrahim Al-Khalifa of Bahrain

and Frenchman Jerome Champagne.

They could not immediately be reached for comment apart from Champagne, who said he had been told that the debate had been cancelled. Plans for another planned televised debate, due to be held at the European parliament in Brussels on Wednesday and broadcast by U.S. sports network ESPN, collapsed after Prince Ali and Sexwale withdrew at 48 hours' notice.

That left Champagne as the only candidate present. No televised debate has

ever been held in a FIFA presidential election. British broadcasters BBC and Sky made a similar proposal before the vote in May last year but Blatter, who won that election against Prince Ali, turned down the invitation.

The FIFA president is chosen by the 209 national football associations which are affiliated to it, each holding one vote.

Critics say the system leaves the other stakeholders, including supporters, players, clubs and the media, effectively sidelined from the election. — Reuters

UNITED'S MARTIAL CAN BECOME A GREAT STRIKER: BLIND

LONDON: Anthony Martial has all the attributes to become a great striker, his Manchester United team mate Daley Blind has said.

Following his big-money move from French side Monaco in the close season, Martial has scored eight goals in 27 appearances for United. Blind is impressed by the talent of the France international as well as how the 20-year-old has adapted to English football.

"He is a big talent, he is still young and we cannot forget that. But you can see on the training pitch and even in the

matches already how much quality he has," Blind told the club's website (www.manutd.com). "If he is working that hard like he is now, improving and improving each week, then he can become a really great striker. He is very quick of course, he is strong and I think he is really calm in front of the goal.

"He has everything needed to become a great striker. Now he is evolving and performing in the training sessions, working hard on and off the pitch with his languages and personality, he is coming along really well." Louis van Gaal's

men travel to face second tier side Derby County in the fourth round of the FA Cup tomorrow.

Meanwhile, ability to 'smell' situations key to Giroud's form - Koscielny Jan 27 (Reuters) - Olivier Giroud's high work rate and an ability to "smell" situations have been key to the striker's impressive form this season, according to his Arsenal team mate and compatriot Laurent Koscielny. The France international has scored nine times in his last 11 club appearances, including a vital Champions League hat-trick at

Olympiakos Piraeus and a brace against Liverpool in the Premier League.

Giroud, 29, has netted an impressive 18 goals in 32 games in all competition for the Gunners this season and Koscielny stressed the forward gives much more to the team than just those goals. "He's so massive and that's one of the best qualities for a striker. When he can play like this, with one or two touches and staying in the box, which is where we want him, we can score in the air," Koscielny told the club website (www.arsenal.com).

"I think Olivier has a work rate for the team which is very high. He's not just a forward, he's always there (when we have) free-kicks or corners against us.

"You can see now that he smells the situations well - when he needs to shoot quickly, or control the ball, like he did against Liverpool with his second goal."

Arsenal continue their FA Cup defence hosting second tier side Burnley on Saturday and take on Southampton on Tuesday hoping to improve their third position in the Premier League table. — Reuters

LILLE PUNISH BORDEAUX TO MAKE FIRST LEAGUE CUP FINAL

LILLE: Lille eased past an error-strewn Bordeaux 5-1 on Tuesday to secure their first ever appearance in a French League Cup final. Their opponents in the April 23 final at the Stade de France will be the winner of yesterday's semi-final between Paris Saint-Germain and Toulouse.

Three-time winners Bordeaux were the form side going into the last four tie at Lille's Stade Pierre-Mauroy. Willy Sagnol's team arrived unbeaten in 11 matches in all competitions after a late show rescued an unlikely point against Nantes at the weekend.

In contrast Lille had seen their recent resurgence under new coach Frederic Antonetti stutter. They were dumped out of the French Cup by fourth-tier Trelissac and suffered the ignominy of becoming the first team to lose to Troyes in the league this term. But it was Lille who raced into a seventh minute lead when after good work by Florent Balmont on the left Djibril Sidibe crossed to Yassine Benzia who capitalised on a collision between Diego Contento and goalkeeper Jerome Prior to score from six yards.

On 23 minutes, Lille had the ball in the back of the net again only for Sidibe's effort to be ruled offside. Bordeaux drew back level ten minutes later after Lille defender Bakary Soumaoro lost possession, with Clement Chantome arriving quickly on the scene to fire between the legs of Vincent Enyeama.

Bordeaux were without injured first choice keeper goalkeeper Cedric Carrasso,

but back-up stopper Prior performed wonders to deny Rony Lopes's left-footed shot on 36 minutes.

Lille, who had fallen at this stage in 2013 to Saint-Etienne and last season to PSG, wrapped up the tie as half-time approached. First Bordeaux defender Ludovic Lamine Sane inadvertently put them back in front when he lobbed helpless Prior shortly after replacing Andre Biyogo Poko.

Then Soumaoro connected with Renato Civelli's header following a free kick to send Lille heading for the final. Eric Bautheac added the fourth near the hour mark with Soufiane Boufal putting the finishing touches to a memorable night for the hosts in the third minute of injury time.

Antonetti said: "This win is down to team spirit, to generosity, to desire. Football's a team sport and tonight everyone was playing for his teammates."

On Wednesday, PSG continue their quest for a domestic treble when they meet Toulouse for the third time in just eleven days.

Having already knocked Dominique Arribage's men out of the French Cup and beaten them in the league in the last fortnight, PSG will be looking to complete a quick-fire hat-trick of wins in their League Cup semi-final at the Parc des Princes.

Laurent Blanc's side are going for a third successive League Cup success and with the league title all but sealed already, they can afford to focus on the three cup competitions. — AFP



LIVERPOOL: Liverpool's players celebrate after winning the English League Cup semifinal second leg soccer match between Liverpool and Stoke City at Anfield stadium in Liverpool, England, Tuesday. — AP

LIVERPOOL REACH LEAGUE CUP FINAL AFTER PENALTY DRAMA

LONDON: Keeper Simon Mignolet proved the shootout hero as Liverpool reached the League Cup final on penalties after a gripping last-four second leg tie at Anfield ended 1-1 on aggregate on Tuesday.

Mignolet saved twice in the shootout, including a brilliant stop to deny Marc Muniesa in sudden death, which allowed Joe Allen to stroke home the decisive spotkick and send Liverpool to Wembley.

It was a fortunate end to an uncomfortable evening for the hosts, who were under pressure for much of the encounter which ended 1-0 to Stoke City after extra time. Stoke took the lead in first-half stoppage time when Marko Arnautovic swept the ball home from an offside position but the assistant's flag stayed down and the goal was allowed to stand. Liverpool struggled to breakdown a resolute Stoke defence and after neither side could add to the scoring for the remainder of the match, it went to penalties and Allen's effort gave the hosts a 6-5 win in the shootout. It was a thrilling end for Liverpool

manager Juergen Klopp who could not bare to watch as Allen's final penalty hit the net.

"It was great, the atmosphere was special," the German told Sky Sports. "It was a good game for my side against a difficult side to play."

Liverpool will face either Everton or Manchester City in the final on Feb. 28, with Roberto Martinez's side holding a 2-1 lead heading into Wednesday's second leg. For Stoke manager Mark Hughes, there was little consolation to be had other than his side's positive performance. "I thought we merited a win," he said. "We got a win on paper-goodness knows how long it's been since we won here-but the objective was to get to a Wembley final which we didn't."

FRUITLESS VISITS

Having not won at Anfield in any competition since 1959 with 36 fruitless visits in the interim, they were sharp, well-organised and the better team for the majority of Tuesday's tie.

Liverpool, the record eight-times League Cup

winners, struggled to create any chance of note in the first 45 minutes with their forays into Stoke territory frequently ending with a misplaced pass or a timely Stoke tackle. The visitors got their reward for blunting Liverpool's attack with a stoppage-time goal that prompted an angry response from the hosts, with Arnautovic having strayed a metre offside when he stroked home Bojan's cross.

Liverpool's Firmino rattled the outside of the post shortly after the interval, but Stoke continued pile on the pressure with the hosts' defence looking increasingly erratic as the encounter wore on.

Stoke almost took the lead in extra time when substitute Marco van Ginkel bustled through and struck the outside of the post, but the most gripping drama was reserved for the shootout. Former Liverpool striker Peter Crouch had his effort saved by Mignolet and Emre Can struck the post for the hosts before Muniesa's effort was kept out and Allen stroked home to seal the tie. — Reuters

BALOTELLI STRIKES AS MILAN DENT ALESSANDRIA CUP HOPES

MILAN: Mario Balotelli scored his first goal for AC Milan in over four months as the Rossoneri put a dent in third division Alessandria's Italian Cup hopes with a 1-0 win in Turin on Tuesday.

Balotelli only returned to competition two weeks ago having been sidelined with a hernia problem since September. Alessandria borrowed Torino's Olympic Stadium for the first leg of the Cup semi but Angelo Gregucci's men were a pale shadow of the side that had eliminated Palermo, Genoa and Spezia in previous rounds and will be hoping to do better at the San Siro in a week's time.

Balotelli, on loan from Liverpool, started up front alongside Brazilian Luiz Adriano, making his first debut since an aborted move to China last week, and should have put the visitors ahead before his 43rd minute strike from the spot.

Balotelli scuffed a volley on a Mattia De Sciglio cross at the near post early on then was let down by his first touch when clear through the middle.

Milan came close again just after the half hour when Andrea Pioli, who saw a goal chalked off for offside late in the second half, forced Alessandria's keeper Gianmarco Vannucchi to parry with his legs. Balotelli spurned another chance to open his account, springing the offside

trap to run on to Keisuke Honda's perfect ball but despite rounding Vannucchi the striker hit wide.

When Luca Antonelli was brought down by Alessandria captain Santiago Morero as he ran in to the box, the referee pointed to the spot.

Balotelli stepped up to send 20-year-old Vannucchi the wrong way and score his first goal since hitting the opener in a 3-2 win at Udinese on September 22.

Milan dominated the second half but it was far from impressive stuff and coach Sinisa Mihajlovic was openly frustrated on the touchlines. Balotelli did well to snatch possession on the left flank to set up Honda with an inviting cutback but the Japanese midfielder's first-timer came off the head of a defender.

Third-choice Milan 'keeper Cristian Abbiati was forced out to clear the danger as Adriano Mezavilla rose to meet a cross but the hosts rarely threatened.

Balotelli was replaced by M'Baye Niang on 70 minutes but before the Frenchman hit the far post in the closing minutes he was notably offside when Pioli's deflected shot sneaked past Vannucchi at his near post in the closing minutes. Later, league and Cup champions Juventus host Inter Milan in the first leg of the other semi-final. — AFP



Ramires

CHELSEA'S RAMIRES JOINS CHINA'S JIANGSU SUNING

CHELSEA: Brazilian midfielder Ramires has joined Chinese club Jiangsu Suning from Premier League champions Chelsea, becoming the latest high-profile player to make the switch to the cash-rich Super League.

Chelsea did not disclose the fee for the 28-year-old in an announcement on the club website (www.chelseafc.com) yesterday.

The BBC reported, however, that the Chinese side had agreed to pay about 25 million pounds (\$35.8 million) for the midfielder, who has made just seven Premier League starts this season. Ramires joined Chelsea in 2010 from Benfica and scored 34 goals in 251 appearances for the Blues, including his

memorable chipped finish over Victor Valdes in the Champions League semi-final against Barcelona in 2012.

Jiangsu are managed by former Chelsea defender Dan Petrescu and Ramires is the latest established European player to move to China.

AS Roma striker Gervinho completed a move to Hebei China Fortune FC on Tuesday.

Other Premier League names to make the switch include former West Ham United, Newcastle United and Chelsea striker Demba Ba, former Sunderland striker Asamoah Gyan and former Tottenham Hotspur midfielder Paulinho. — Reuters

BRUSSELS: FIFA presidential candidate Jerome Champagne said that as head of soccer's governing body he would seek to move the 2022 Qatar World Cup from November-December to late European spring - a step that would please European associations by averting disruption of their season.

The 57-year-old Frenchman also accused Swiss rival Gianni Infantino, who according to UEFA has the broad support of European nations, of abandoning the region's soccer interests in backing the change in timing of the tournament from traditional mid-year to avoid searing Gulf summer heat. Champagne told Reuters in an interview he did not believe the graft allegations that have pitched FIFA into the worst crisis in its 112-year history meant the organisation itself was corrupt "no matter what some people might like to believe". At the heart of the FIFA crisis is a 2010 decision to award the 2018 and 2022 World Cups to Russia and Qatar. In the weeks and months leading up to the announcement, there were widespread allegations of vote-trading, bribery and corruption, with two FIFA executive committee members suspended even before the voting took place.

Both host nations deny any wrongdoing.

ARAB WORLD AND WORLD SOCCER

While criminal investigations continue into the awarding of the tournaments, FIFA has changed the timing to the European winter for the 2022 tournament. This alters regular season schedules of domestic leagues for possibly two years. A move back to European spring would be hugely popular around the world, not just in Europe. "If I am elected president I will re-open the issue of the dates of the tournament in Qatar because I want to defend not only the European leagues, but football around the world. "I think it is very important to send a signal to the Arab world today, that you are part of us, the football civilisation, especially now."

He said he was appalled by both FIFA and the European body UEFA's agreement to the change



BRUSSELS: FIFA presidential candidate Jerome Champagne takes part in a press conference at the European Parliament in Brussels, yesterday. The five candidates to take over the FIFA presidency from the banned Sepp Blatter stepped up the frantic hunt for votes as the campaign entered the final month. — AFP

in timing. "It was Platini and Infantino's role to defend the interests of European football but they did not do it because Platini had to justify his vote for Qatar."

Former UEFA head Michel Platini and ousted veteran FIFA president Sepp Blatter have both been banned from soccer over a \$2 million payment made to Platini with Blatter's approval in 2011 for work concluded nine years earlier. A total of 41 individuals and entities, including many former FIFA officials, have been charged with corruption-related offences in the United States. The U.S. investigation is far from over and FIFA also faces a parallel Swiss probe. While Champagne wants the World Cup to be held in the Muslim world, he says it should be moved to the United States if any of the allegations of

vote-rigging are proven. "If it has to be reconsidered, we should not vote again but apply the IOC (International Olympic Committee) jurisprudence, give the gold medal to the silver medalist which was the United States in the vote," he said. "Then we go to Asia in 2026." Champagne, himself a former FIFA deputy general secretary, faces opposition from Prince Ali Bin Al Hussein of Jordan, Asian Football Confederation (AFC) President Sheikh Salman Bin Ebrahim Al Khalifa, South African businessman and politician Tokyo Sexwale as well as Infantino.

Champagne said it was now the future that concerned him most. "Of course FIFA is in a very grave situation, but I believe the light will begin to shine through by the end of February," he said. — Reuters

Sports

Kuwait Extreme
Powerboat Run to
be held in March



Champagne
courts support
over Qatar W Cup



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AUSTRALIA WARNS ATHLETES AGAINST ZIKA AT RIO Page 16



MELBOURNE: Canada's Milos Raonic hits a return during his men's singles match against France's Gael Monfils on day ten of the 2016 Australian Open tennis tournament in Melbourne yesterday. — AFP

MURRAY, RAONIC THUNDER INTO LAST FOUR

MELBOURNE: Andy Murray set up an Australian Open semi-final against the much-improved Milos Raonic yesterday when he weathered a fierce attack by David Ferrer on a day of rare success for Britain.

A thunderstorm proved an unlikely ally for Murray when it forced the Rod Laver Arena roof to be closed mid-match, helping him accelerate to a 6-3, 6-7 (5/7), 6-2, 6-3 win in the indoor conditions he enjoys.

Later Raonic, now working under former world number one Carlos Moya, continued his ascent with a 6-3, 3-6, 6-3, 6-4 victory over Gael Monfils to reach the Australian semi-finals for the first time.

Murray is into sixth Australian Open semi-final and 18th overall in the Grand Slams, as he attempts to go one better after

finishing runner-up at four of the last six editions in Melbourne.

But this time, the world number three has British company in the final stages after Johanna Konta downed China's Zhang Shuai to become the first British woman to reach a Grand Slam semi since 1983.

It is the first time that two British singles players-man or woman-have featured in the last four at the same Grand Slam event since John Lloyd and Sue Barker at the 1977 Australian Open.

Adding further lustre to the British day to remember, Murray's brother Jamie reached the men's doubles semi-finals with his Brazilian partner Bruno Soares.

Murray said it was a special time for British tennis, after he also led his country to

Davis Cup glory against Belgium in November-the first time they have won the teams tournament since 1936.

"It's pretty good for us to have people competing in almost all of the competitions. So, yeah, it's been a good Australian Open so far. Hopefully we can keep it going," Murray said.

"It's unlikely that everyone is going to win the events, but to be in this position is great.

"It's really, really good for tennis on the back end of last year with the Davis Cup as well. Extremely positive. Just got to try and capitalise on it."

WEATHERING THE STORM

Ferrer proved a difficult proposition for

Murray, relentlessly slugging it out from the baseline and keeping the Scot working hard in a physically demanding match.

Murray appeared to benefit in the change to the slower court conditions when the roof was closed on Rod Laver Arena in the third set, ahead of an approaching thunderstorm.

"When the roof closed, I was up a break in the third and was feeling good," he said. "That first game after the delay was a very important. I saved a couple of break points, but then actually played a good game.

"So it was nice to get through that game. Then I felt like I started to play better as the match went on."

In the evening match, Raonic proved too good for Monfils as he became the first

Canadian to reach the semi-finals, in what will be only his second appearance in a Grand Slam last four after Wimbledon 2014.

The newly composed and purposeful power-server extended his unbeaten run this year to nine matches, and has not lost at tour level since going down to Rafael Nadal in the third round at Shanghai in October.

The 13th seed also beat French Open champion Stan Wawrinka for the first time in the previous round and he said he hoped to make the most of his opportunity against Murray, against whom his head-to-head record is 3-3.

"It's a great challenge ahead of me. A challenge that I believe I have within myself to find a solution to," said Raonic, 25. — AFP



MELBOURNE: Germany's Angelique Kerber celebrates after victory in her women's singles match against Belarus's Victoria Azarenka on day ten of the 2016 Australian Open tennis tournament in Melbourne yesterday. — AFP

FUMING AZARENKA VOWS TO BOUNCE BACK STRONGER

MELBOURNE: Victoria Azarenka yesterday admitted she was gutted at failing to make the Australian Open semi-finals but said it will quickly be forgotten with her game heading in the right direction. The former world number one was upset by Germany's Angelique Kerber 6-3, 7-5 to deprive the Belarusian of a crack at a third Melbourne Park title. The 14th seed, in sensational early season form before hitting the Kerber roadblock, blamed herself for not taking her chances in a match in which she had many.

"I think I was a little bit too flat today. For me personally, it was a little bit 10 percent not enough of everything," she said. "My footwork didn't have enough. My shots didn't have enough. I felt I did a little bit too many unforced errors in the key moments. "I created a lot of opportunities, but then I was not enough on my opportunities. I didn't take them. I had plenty." She added: "Mentally I didn't commit myself enough today. I didn't push myself into making a difference."

Despite being furious at herself for failing to show the killer instinct, the 26-year-old said it will be forgotten as she continues her return from the injuries and personal issues that have hampered her career over the past two years.

"I should be disappointed. That's fair enough to be disappointed after a match like this. But if it's going to carry on? No. It's going to be forgotten tomorrow," she said. "I have improved so much from last year. Taking this three weeks (in Australia), you know, I have to keep working hard. There are things I still have to improve. It's very simple in my mind. "There is work that has to be done. I'm in the right direction. I just need to keep going that way and work harder, be as professional as I am. "I don't feel that I've done anything wrong in my preparation. It's just today I didn't push myself enough." Azarenka, nicknamed 'Vika', had lost just 11 games in her four matches prior to meeting Kerber and was seen as the main threat to Serena Williams' relentless march to a 22nd Grand Slam crown. But the German is a renowned fighter and made the most of her chances.

Asked what aspects of her game she wanted to work on, Azarenka said: "Everything. "It's as simple as that. I want to be a better player overall. I want to be better physically. I want to play better. I want to be stronger. "Every aspect of my game I have to work on. I have to work on my serve, I have to work on my returns, I have to be able to come in even more. Everything needs to be sharper still. — AP

NO SPLIT LOYALTIES FOR TRI-CITIZEN KONTA

MELBOURNE: With not one, or two but three passports in her possession, Britain's Johanna Konta could have been forgiven for suffering an identity crisis. But the woman who could have shown her allegiance to the country of her birth, Australia, or the country where her parents hailed from, Hungary, was eager to prove that she was no triple agent.

"I'm pretty much the female version of Jason Bourne," Konta said laughing after she reached her maiden grand slam semi-final at the Australian Open with a 6-4 6-1 win over Chinese qualifier Zhang Shuai.

"I am a tri-citizen... but I definitely belong to Great Britain." Like the fictional CIA assassin of the Bourne Identity films, Konta killed the hopes of seven-times grand slam champion Venus Williams and 2015 Melbourne Park semi-finalist Ekaterina Makarova on the way to becoming the first British woman to reach the last four of a major in 33 years.

When Andy Murray joined her in the last four, Britain had two players in the last four of a grand slam for the first time since 1977. But rather than getting carried away with the possibility of becoming the first British woman to lift a grand slam trophy since Virginia Wade at Wimbledon 39 years ago, Konta played down her unexpected run.

"If you live and die with your wins and losses, it's an incredibly tough lifestyle to live," said the 24-year-old, who failed to make the main draw a year ago while ranked 147th in the world.

Looking ahead to her last-four showdown with German seventh seed Angelique Kerber, she added: "I'm going to go out there, really enjoy it and enjoy the battle. "It's very important to take your positivity from things that you have control over. Otherwise you come into the danger of having very highs and lows, which is

not a nice place to be. Middle ground is nice."

Her grounded expectations have served her well over the past six months. She reached the fourth round of last year's US Open, beating Wimbledon runner-up Garbine Muguruza en route, and arrived in Australia ranked 47th in the world. She now wants to show that her parents' decision to relocate from Australia to Britain so that their daughter could chase her tennis dreams was not in vain.

"When I left Australia I started training in Barcelona. I was at the Sanchez Academy. While I was there, my parents felt that at 13, 14 years old they didn't really want to be on the other side of the world," she said.

"And because we are Hungarian...European...passport holders, they decided to base themselves in Britain. It was their sacrifice for me." — Reuters



MELBOURNE: Britain's Johanna Konta serves during her women's singles match against China's Zhang Shuai on day ten of the 2016 Australian Open tennis tournament in Melbourne yesterday. — AFP

TOYOTA RETAINS TOP GLOBAL AUTOMAKER CROWN

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RIYADH: Saudi women shop at a mall in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia is racing to attract more investment and overhaul its economy as low oil prices expose it to urgent domestic challenges. — AP

OIL PRICE PLUNGE THREATENS SHALE REVOLUTION

A MAKE-OR-BREAK YEAR FOR US SHALE PRODUCERS

NEW YORK: Producers of oil and gas from once hard-to-tap shale deposits are now facing the payback of the energy revolution they wrought: Ultra-low prices forcing them out of business. This year is expected to be a make-or-break year for US shale producers, after the 70 percent plunge in crude prices, with many at risk of failure. Dozens of shale drillers sought bankruptcy protection in the last year as low oil prices made their operations uncompetitive and they could not pay debts.

But many are holding on toughly, hoping desperately for a turnaround in the market. It has been a rapid reversal for an industry barely a decade old. While shale and other deep-rock strata have long been known to hold substantial oil and gas deposits, it was only recently that techniques were developed to economically tap this "tight" oil by hydraulic fracturing, or "fracking" the strata to release it.

Encouraged by US policy to cut the country's dependence on imported energy, the fracking revolution led to a stunning increase in US domestic crude oil production. Total US output rose from about 5.6 million barrels a day in 2010 to 9.4 million barrels a day last year. But most of that surge, which made the United States rival Saudi Arabia as a crude producer, came while crude prices held above \$80 a barrel. That made the relatively costly process of tapping shale reserves lucrative. It is different now that crude is close to \$30 a barrel, with estimates that US oil and gas producers as a group are losing about \$2 billion a week.

Bankruptcy wave

With the estimated price for survival at \$50 a barrel, "we expect a sharp jump in bankruptcies at some stage in 2016," said analysts at the VTB Capital in a note. Law firm

Haynes and Boone, specialists in the oil industry, counts more than 40 shale-oil companies having filed for bankruptcy in 2015, with the failures accelerating at the end of the year. Another indicator of the crunch: The number of active drilling rigs in the United States has fallen 60 percent, with the biggest losses in the main fracking zones of Texas, Oklahoma and North Dakota. "Unless the prices come up in spades, the drilling activity is going to continue to get lower probably to mid-year," said James Williams of WTRG Economics.

For the moment, however, overall US oil output has not fallen significantly, in part because operators will produce at a loss to keep servicing their debts while hoping for a price upturn. VTB Capital says lender banks are pushing them to keep the wells running. Analysts at business consultancy AlixPartners say the fracking industry has also

been able to lower its costs and adapt to market changes, allowing some in the industry to survive better. "US shale has the advantage of lower and shorter investment cycles compared with conventional oil, which makes US shale more responsive to oil prices," they said.

And that has, in a way, guaranteed that prices will not bottom out soon. "The market has lost confidence that US shale will decline quickly enough to perform its job this year of beginning the global rebalancing process," said an analysis from French bank Societe Generale. Still, said VTB Capital, "something has got to give soon." Williams says the crude oil price needs to come up to \$50 dollars a barrel to allow most shale producers to keep going. It was below \$32 on Tuesday. "For some, it still would be too expensive to drill at \$50." "Until then, we're going to see a decline in oil production here in the US." — AFP

DUBAI VISITORS UP 7.5%

OVER 14 MILLION VISITED IN 2015

DUBAI: More than 14.2 million people visited Dubai in 2015, up 7.5 percent from the previous year, with Indians, Saudis and Britons topping the list. The rise came despite slowing economic growth in many markets and a strong exchange rate of the Gulf state's dollar-pegged dirham against the euro and other currencies, Dubai Tourism authority said. "2015 was volatile for travel globally, as we have all witnessed a range of disruptive factors, ranging from slackening economic growth in Asian and European markets to currency fluctuations across the world," said Dubai Tourism chief Saeed Almarri in a statement.

The Gulf city-state, one of seven sheikhdoms that make up the United Arab Emirates, attracted more than 13 million visitors in 2014. It aims to attract 20 million visitors annually in five years. Visitors from Gulf countries represented the largest regional group at 3.3 million, up 12.8 percent, with Saudis alone numbering 1.54 million. Turmoil in most of the traditional tourism destinations across the Middle East appears to have helped Dubai capitalize on its reputation as a safe haven for tourists and businesses.

The number of Indian visitors came at the top for the first time after surging by 26 percent to 1.6 million, while Britons rose 11 percent to 1.2 million. "Western Europe remained the second highest regional contributor to visitor volumes, bringing in nearly three million tourists, reflecting a solid 6.1 percent growth in numbers," Dubai Tourism said. Growth in several markets "helped offset negative trends" from Russia and eastern Europe, which saw a 22.5 percent decline in travelers to Dubai. — AFP

GREEK PROTESTS PARALYZE PORTS, STREETS MARKETS

ATHENS: A growing wave of strikes and protests against a planned overhaul of the pension system in Greece has halted services at the country's ports for two days, while popular neighborhood farmers' markets were canceled. Ferry services were canceled by strikes yesterday and today, as more unions and professional associations joined the anti-government protests. Yesterday, farmers continued tractor blockades of highways around the country, while striking street market vendors drew large crowds near Athens where they handed out bags of fruit and vegetables for free.

Euro-zone bailout lenders are pressing Greece's left-wing government to overhaul its pension system, suffering under high unemployment, a fast-aging population and 2012 Greek debt restructuring deal that hurt pension fund investments. Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras launched a vocal defense of the plan on Tuesday, saying that the country had no choice but to reform a pension system which had created chronic deficits and would collapse if left unchanged.

Greeks, many of whom will see contributions jump to about 20 percent of monthly earnings to prop up the new pension system, have responded angrily to the proposed changes, staging a series of rallies and protests across the country in recent weeks. Under the plan, which Greece must adopt for its international lenders to complete their first review of its latest bailout, the country's pension funds would be merged into one together with cutbacks worth 1 percent of gross domestic product a year. "We're striking because our main pension fund, the oldest in Greece, will close," said Lefteris Saridakis, head of a union representing staff on passenger ships. He said the workers planned to step up action when the bill is tabled in parliament next month. Farmers who have been blocking motorways across the country on and off for days in protest at planned to cut tax breaks for farming as well as pensions remained defiant yesterday. In a symbolic protest, they handed out about 50 tons of produce in under an hour in a poor, working-class Athens neighborhood yesterday, where a few hundred

Greeks jostled with another for free bags of potatoes, lettuce and fruit.

Notaries also began a three-day strike yesterday, joining lawyers, engineers, doctors and other self-employed professionals who have taken to the streets against the measures. Without pension reform, Athens cannot conclude the first

review of its compliance to terms of a bailout worth up to 86 billion euros agreed last August, and move on with talks on potential debt relief, which Tsipras sees as a vital prize. Protests against the plan are expected to culminate with a general strike by the country's two biggest unions, representing about 2.5 million workers, on Feb 4.— Agencies



ATHENS: Bystanders wait to be handed bags of oranges during a free distribution of fruit and vegetables as a protest by farmers and vendors over proposed pension reforms, in Athens yesterday. — AP

IRAQ PONDERERS DEAL ON GLOBAL OIL CUTS

ALGERIA, VENEZUELA SUPPORT OUTPUT CUT

BAGHDAD: Iraq is ready to take part in an extraordinary OPEC meeting and even reduce its fast growing output if all OPEC and non-OPEC members agree - a deal which at this stage seems elusive, the country's finance minister said. Hoshiyar Zebari said in an interview Iraq is willing to take part in meetings that Venezuela has called for in order to lift oil prices that have plunged to 12-year lows near \$30 a barrel. The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries said it was considering a request from cash-strapped Venezuela to hold an emergency meeting. Venezuela has also called for a meeting of OPEC and non-OPEC nations in February. "Iraq is a founding member of OPEC, so we will definitely take part, and the idea would be to reduce production actually to impact the oil price," Zebari said.

"Not sure we will say yes to Venezuela because we need to produce more, because of the challenges we have, but if we believe there would be

a consensus, a collective decision then we might go with it." So far, only Algeria and Venezuela have clearly expressed support for a production cut, he said. Fellow OPEC member Saudi Arabia and Russia, a non-OPEC exporter, have not, Zebari added. Venezuela's oil minister will tour OPEC and non-OPEC countries in a bid to win support for joint action, President Nicolas Maduro announced on Tuesday night. The decision to cut production "needs to be a collective one, otherwise it will not work; it doesn't seem there is a consensus, apart from Venezuela, Algeria," Zebari said.

"Other countries, the Saudis or the BRICS people I don't think," he said, referring to the group that comprises oil exporter Russia and major producer Brazil, along with India, China and South Africa. OPEC Secretary-General Abdullah Al-Badri on Monday said other producers should work with the group to tackle swollen global stockpiles, essentially reiterating OPEC's position that it

would consider cutting output only if others pitched in. Moscow, seen as key to any agreement, has so far refused to cooperate. But Leonid Fedun, vice-president of Lukoil, Russia's second-largest oil producer, was quoted as saying on Monday Moscow needed to start working with OPEC.

Oil prices have fallen to around \$30 a barrel from over \$100 two years ago, hurting Iraq's budget at time when the country is fighting the ultra hardline Islamic State group. Iraq depends on crude sales for about 95 percent of its public revenue. Zebari said there are "encouraging signs" that prices could rebound this spring on lower output from higher cost US shale oil producers. He said the reason that many shale oil operators were still in business was that they had sold long-term contracts based on \$70 oil, and these contracts will come to an end in the spring. — Reuters



‘THE FABRIC OF FORD’

DUBAI: Throughout a vehicle's lifetime, it's inevitable that the materials inside a car show signs of wear and tear. Imagine the frequent sitting on car seats, leaning on arm rests, gripping the steering wheel and fiddling with the instruments. So what does Ford do to help make sure all vehicles are up to this challenge? To help guarantee the durability of these fabrics, leathers and plastics, Ford engineers subject every material used inside Ford vehicles to a series of meticulous and unrelenting tests where they are stretched,

scratched, snagged, sniffed and even splashed with the likes of grease, dirt and hot coffee, to see how they will stand up against the test of time. These tests are done to help ensure it takes a lot more than a spilled cup of coffee, the graze of a sharp edge or any accidental scrapes and scuffs to break down these materials. Some of the unusual ordeals Ford materials need to go through include:


The Five-Finger Scratch Test, which is used to scratch samples of different plastics to see how much abuse they

can take. The Soil and Clean ability Test, which splashes different substances on seat fabrics to evaluate how well they can be cleaned afterwards, testing their overall stain resistance. The Resistance to Dye Transfer Test, which rubs materials of different colors (i.e. those dreaded new blue jeans, long-term destroyer of white leather sofas around the world) against the leather used for car seats to see if any stains are left behind.

The Mace Snagging Test, which spins seat fabrics on rotating rollers roughly 600 times while they're repeat-

edly struck by a spikey iron ball to test how strong they are. In addition, a team of examiners smell various samples of materials used inside Ford vehicles and rank them to help the engineers achieve interiors that are free of disturbing odors. The meticulous nature of these tests is a testament to Ford's unwavering commitment to delivering quality vehicles that remain at their peak throughout the long cycle of their lives to customers and going the extra mile to ensure standards of comfort and durability are met.



National Bank of Kuwait Financial Markets Daily Report At 02:00 PM Previous Day								
Global Stock Indices								
Index	Previous Close	Last Price	Change		Daily Performance %	Yearly Performance %		
Dow Jones	15,885.22	16,167.23	282.01	▲	1.78	-7.22		
NASDAQ	4,518.49	4,567.67	49.18	▲	1.09	-8.78		
S&P 500	1,877.08	1,903.63	26.55	▲	1.41	-6.89		
Financial Times	5,911.46	5,879.95	-31.51	▼	-0.53	-5.85		
DAX	9,822.75	9,750.64	-72.11	▼	-0.73	-9.97		
CAC 40	4,356.81	4,328.11	-28.70	▼	-0.66	-6.66		
Swiss	8,314.47	8,249.82	-64.65	▼	-0.78	-6.44		
Nikkei 225	16,708.90	17,163.92	455.02	▲	2.72	-9.82		
Topix	1,360.23	1,400.70	40.47	▲	2.98	-9.47		
Hang Seng	18,860.80	19,052.45	191.65	▲	1.02	-13.06		
Straits Times	2,345.61	2,346.18	0.57	▲	0.02	-11.67		
MENA Stock Indices								
Index	Previous Close	Last Price	Change		Daily Performance %	Yearly Performance %		
Kuwait	4,936.51	4,969.25	32.74	▲	0.66	-13.75		
Saudi Arabia	5,637.31	5,716.60	79.29	▲	1.41	-18.44		
Dubai	2,698.43	2,753.07	54.64	▲	2.02	14.36		
Abu Dhabi	3,800.02	3,827.82	27.80	▲	0.73	-11.78		
Bahrain	1,155.83	1,158.59	2.76	▲	0.24	-4.94		
Qatar	8,748.62	8,979.50	230.88	▲	2.64	-16.12		
Oman	4,934.23	4,953.98	19.75	▲	0.40	-8.73		
Lebanon	1,146.96	1,148.62	1.67	▲	0.15	-1.93		
Jordan	2,135.71	2,139.02	3.31	▲	0.15	-0.03		
Egypt	5,896.56	5,965.17	68.61	▲	1.16	-15.84		
Morocco	8,866.59	8,873.37	6.78	▲	0.08	-0.66		
Tunisia	5,327.76	5,331.48	3.72	▲	0.07	5.66		
Global Currencies Exchange Rate								
Currency	Kuwaiti Dinar	Saudi Riyal	US Dollar	Euro	Sterling Pound	Swiss Franc	Japanese Yen	Australian Dollar
Kuwaiti Dinar		12.2746	3.2846	3.0195	2.2947	3.3355	388.44	4.6656
Saudi Riyal	0.08147		0.2676	0.2460	0.1869	0.2717	31.65	0.3801
US Dollar	0.30445	3.7370		0.9193	0.6986	1.0155	118.26	1.4205
Euro	0.31118	4.0651	1.0878		0.7602	1.1049	178.66	1.5454
Sterling Pound	0.43579	5.3491	1.4314	1.3154		1.4539	169.32	2.0340
Swiss Franc	0.29980	3.6800	0.9847	0.9051	0.6878		116.48	1.3988
Japanese Yen	0.00257	0.0316	0.0085	0.0078	0.0059	0.0086		0.0120
Australian Dollar	0.21433	2.6308	0.7040	0.6471	0.4916	0.7149	83.26	
MENA Currencies Exchange Rate								
Currency	US Dollar	Kuwaiti Dollar	Saudi Riyal	Bahraini Dinar	Qatari Riyal	Omani Riyal	Emirates Dirham	Egyptian Pound
US Dollar		0.30445	3.7370	0.3741	3.6270	0.3832	3.6574	7.7201
Kuwaiti Dinar	3.2846		12.2746	1.2288	11.9133	1.2586	12.0131	25.3573
Saudi Riyal	0.2676	0.08147		0.1001	0.9706	0.1025	0.9787	2.0659
Bahraini Dinar	2.6729	0.81378	9.9888		9.6948	1.0242	9.7760	20.6354
Qatari Riyal	0.2757	0.08394	1.0303	0.1031		0.1056	1.0084	2.1285
Omani Riyal	2.6098	0.79456	9.7529	0.9764	9.4658		9.5451	20.1480
Emirates Dirham	0.2734	0.08324	1.0218	0.1023	0.9917	0.1048		2.1108
Egyptian Pound	0.1295	0.03944	0.4841	0.0485	0.4698	0.0496	0.4738	
Global Interest Rates								
Currency	1-Week	1-Month	3-Month	6-Month		1-Year		
Kuwaiti Dinar	0.00	1.19	1.44	1.63		1.94		
US Dollar	0.39	0.42	0.61	0.86		1.15		
Euro	-0.27	-0.22	-0.17	-0.09		0.01		
Sterling Pound	0.48	0.50	0.58	0.73		1.01		
Swiss Franc	-0.80	-0.78	-0.75	-0.68		-0.61		
Australian Dollar	2.09	2.16	2.06	1.99		1.92		
Canadian Dollar	0.00	0.85	0.85	0.94		0.99		
Global Bond Yields								
Country	2-Year		5-Year		10-Year		30-Year	
United States	0.85		1.44		2.00		2.79	
Europe	-0.47		-0.76		0.42		1.17	
United Kingdom	0.40		1.03		1.69		2.43	
Commodities								
Index	Previous Close	Last Price	Change		Daily Performance %	Yearly Performance %		
Kuwait Oil	23.09	23.14	0.05	▲	0.22	-24.51		
Brent	30.70	30.11	-0.59	▼	-1.92	-22.44		
West Texas	29.66	29.41	-0.25	▼	-0.84	-25.19		
Gold	1120.17	1116.71	-3.46	▼	-0.31	5.26		
Silver	14.50	14.41	-0.09	▼	-0.65	4.48		
Source: National Bank of Kuwait								

EXCHANGE RATES

AL-MUZAINI EXCHANGE CO.

ASIAN COUNTRIES	
Japanese Yen	2.573
Indian Rupees	4.494
Pakistani Rupees	2.896
Sri Lankan Rupees	2.115
Nepali Rupees	2.815
Singapore Dollar	213.530
Hongkong Dollar	38.973
Bangladesh Taka	3.871
Philippine Peso	6.334
Thai Baht	8.469

GCC COUNTRIES	
Saudi Riyal	81.070
Qatari Riyal	83.510
Omani Riyal	789.631
Bahraini Dinar	807.360
UAE Dirham	82.770

ARAB COUNTRIES	
Egyptian Pound - Cash	38.300
Egyptian Pound - Transfer	38.872
Yemen Riyal/for 1000	1.419
Tunisian Dinar	149.170
Jordanian Dinar	428.230
Lebanese Lira/for 1000	2.026
Syrian Lira	2.167
Morocco Dirham	31.005

EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES	
US Dollar Transfer	303.850
Euro	331.500
Sterling Pound	434.050
Canadian dollar	213.080
Turkish lira	100.550
Swiss Franc	301.140
Australian Dollar	213.000
US Dollar Buying	302.650

20 Gram	224.370
10 Gram	115.110
5 Gram	58.400

GOLD	
20 Gram	224.370
10 Gram	115.110
5 Gram	58.400

UAE EXCHANGE CENTRE WLL

CURRENCIES	TELEX TRANSFER PER 1000
Australian Dollar	202.30
Canadian Dollar	218.22
Swiss Franc	304.94
Euro	332.67
US Dollar	304.45
Sterling Pound	437.40
Japanese Yen	2.61
Bangladesh Taka	3.881
Indian Rupee	4.504
Sri Lankan Rupee	2.118
Nepali Rupee	2.813
Pakistani Rupee	2.898
UAE Dirhams	0.08285
Bahraini Dinar	0.8091
Egyptian Pound	0.03878
Jordanian Dinar	0.4330
Omani Riyal	0.7906
Qatari Riyal	0.08394
Saudi Riyal	0.08115

DOLLARCO EXCHANGE CO. LTD

Rate for Transfer	Selling Rate
US Dollar	304.350
Canadian Dollar	217.315
Sterling Pound	436.095
Euro	330.075
Swiss Frank	310.175
Bahrain Dinar	805.175
UAE Dirhams	83.105
Qatari Riyals	84.320

Saudi Riyals	81.840
Jordanian Dinar	428.735
Egyptian Pound	38.757
Sri Lankan Rupees	2.119
Indian Rupees	4.495
Pakistani Rupees	2.897
Bangladesh Taka	3.871
Philippines Peso	6.361
Cyprus pound	579.695
Japanese Yen	3.555
Syrian Pound	2.380
Nepalese Rupees	3.805
Malaysian Ringgit	72.045
Chinese Yuan Renminbi	46.605
Thai Bhat	9.425
Turkish Lira	101.620

BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY

CURRENCY	BUY	SELL
Europe		
British Pound	0.425443	0.434443
Czech Korune	0.004168	0.016168
Danish Krone	0.040063	0.045063
Euro	0.323887	0.331887
Norwegian Krone	0.030599	0.035799
Romanian Leu	0.072597	0.072597
Slovakia	0.090974	0.019074
Swedish Krona	0.031361	0.036361
Swiss Franc	0.293082	0.303282
Turkish Lira	0.095588	0.105

BERLIN MULLS USES FOR GOEBBELS' ABANDONED LOVE NEST

WANDLITZ: History weighs heavily on the German property market, no more so than at a sprawling lakeside villa that once served as a love nest for Nazi Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels. Berlin has been trying to sell the in-theory-prime slab of real estate north of the German capital for 15 years. But rather than a gem that the cash-strapped city, which is scrambling to pay for a record refugee influx, can liquidate, Berlin has admitted it sees the asset as little more than a millstone around its neck.

Berlin Immobilienmanagement GmbH (BIM), the city's wholly owned real estate agency, has in effect given up on the sale and expressed concerns it could fall into "the wrong hands". "I am really afraid that this could become a shrine for Nazis and I don't think we should take that risk," the executive director of the BIM, Birgit Moehring, said. Instead, it hopes to lease the property, whose idyllic setting is nestled in a wood and perched on the small Bogen lake.

The squat, sprawling house was used by the top Nazi as "country retreat" perfect for trysts with a revolving cast of budding actresses and paramours. "It was refuge from the busy city" 40 kilometers to the south, BIM spokesman Christian Breittkreutz said. Berlin itself bought the land complete with a small cabin in 1936 for Goebbels, Hitler's nefariously skilled spin doctor, in honor of his 39th birthday. Goebbels was taken with its secluded setting and subsequently had a much larger villa built on the site bankrolled by UFA, the movie production house he ran with an iron fist. The luxury facilities

included a private cinema and spacious living quarters overlooking the lake.

Attacked by damp cold

Today, the original generous picture windows, rich wood paneling and marble fixtures can still be seen, said Roberto Mueller, who has worked as a guard at the site since 1984. But the house, ravaged by moisture and biting cold in the isolated and abandoned site, has begun to rapidly crumble. The city had repeatedly tried to sell the house in recent years and a last attempt, via a public tender, came up dry in December, Moehring said, confirming that BIM had finally given up. Goebbels and his wife Magda committed suicide in Hitler's bunker as Berlin was overrun by Soviet Army troops in May 1945, after she murdered their six children. Dealing with the Goebbels villa has been all the more complicated because it is on the same slice of land as another vestige of the country's tumultuous past.

In the post-war years, East Germany built a vast complex on the land in the Stalinist style of the early 1950s to house a training centre for the FDJ, the communist party's youth indoctrination organization.

The regime also used it to put up visiting party cadres from "brother states" such as Vietnam, Cuba and Angola. At the time, the neighboring Goebbels villa was converted into a supermarket for FDJ students and a children's nursery, Mueller said. In total, the four main post-war buildings cover some 1,400 square meters of bedrooms,

conference halls, reception and banquet space. Day by day, they are falling apart.

Phantom village

"At present there is no heating, no running water, there is serious damage to the facades, the roofs are falling apart and inside there is a lot to do too," Moehring admits, saying renovation costs would be "considerable". Currently the only viable use for the phantom village has been as a unique, evocative film set, most recently for the adaptation of the international wartime best-seller 'Alone in Berlin' starring Emma Thompson and Brendan Gleeson. "What would really appeal to us would be if someone arrived with an intelligent concept to use this place which is so steeped in history," Moehring said, suggesting a continuing education campus or a hotel as other possible options.

She said BIM had been in touch with potential investors. But a major stumbling block remains the fact that the Goebbels villa is a listed building. Because that prevents any major change to the structure, Moehring would like to see it stripped of its protected status. "I am someone who absolutely defends the importance in this city of always being able to feel the presence of history," she said. "But you also have to ask the question whether it is sensible to maintain certain buildings under the protection a historic monument grants." If it were lifted, Moehring said the best thing might be the most radical measure: razing it to the ground.

Germany has often been confronted with

questions over how to deal with the toxic legacy of sites linked to its bitter 20th century history. Hitler's own "Eagle's Nest" mountain-top lodge now has a restaurant, a cafe and shops selling books with titles such as "Hitler's Mountain" that draws thousands of tourists each year. Many of Germany's ministries pitched up in the Nazis' former official build-

ings when the government moved to Berlin from Bonn in 1999. And the hangars of the former airport Tempelhof, a prime example of the Nazis' architectural gigantism, and the erstwhile headquarters of communist East Germany's feared Stasi secret police are both being used to house tens of thousands of asylum seekers. —AFP



BOGENSEE: This file photo shows the main grounds of the Communist Free German Youth (FDJ-Freie Deutsche Jugend) school complex, built in the 1950s. The plot of land which includes the complex, as well as the villa built for Nazi propaganda chief Joseph Goebbels between 1936-39, is for sale. —AFP

GERMANY TRIMS 2016 GROWTH FORECAST; FOREIGN TRADE DRAGS

BERLIN: Germany has lowered its growth forecast for 2016 in the face of an emerging market slowdown that is dampening exports, leaving domestic demand as the sole pillar of support for Europe's biggest economy this year. Chancellor Angela Merkel's cabinet agreed its annual economic report yesterday in which it expects gross domestic product (GDP) to grow by 1.7 percent, on a par with the 2015 performance, but below a previous forecast of 1.8 percent. The report underlined a fundamental shift in Germany's economy away from a reliance on exports and towards more domestic-driven growth as demand from China and other emerging markets has waned.

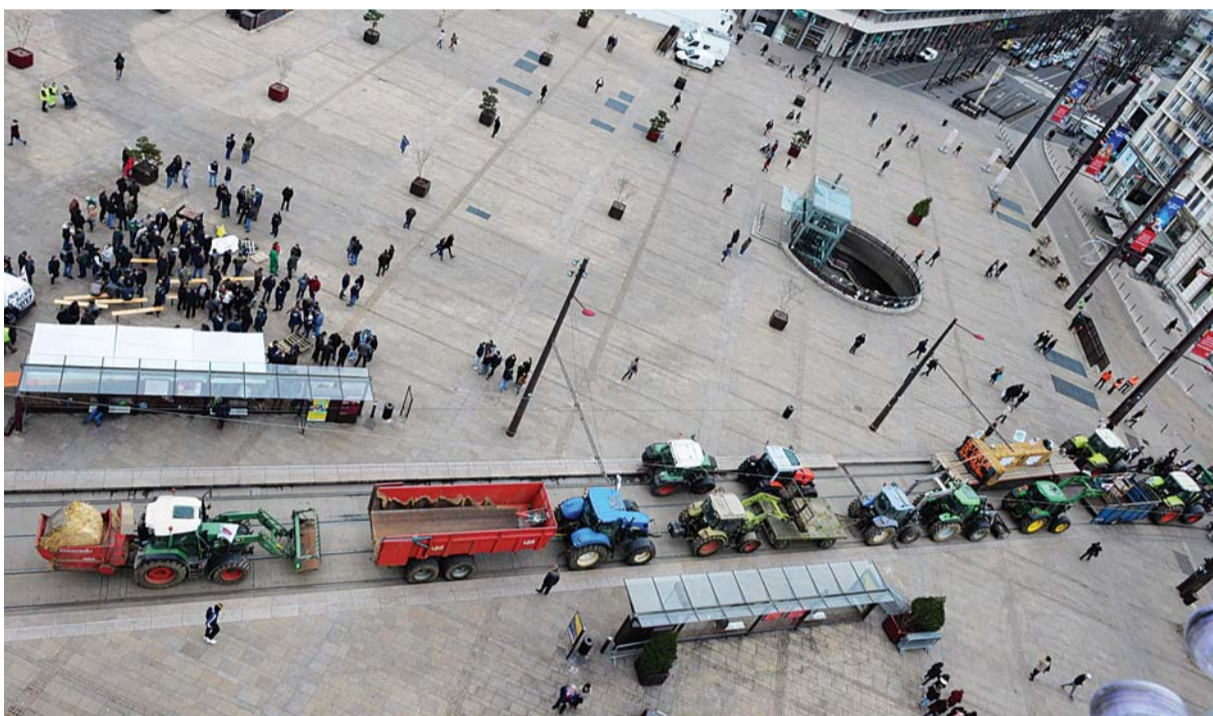
Berlin expects imports to rise at a faster rate than exports throughout 2016, meaning net foreign trade is likely to clip 0.4 percentage points off of economic growth. This is a remarkable development for an economy that for decades has relied mainly on exports to countries around the globe, led by its engineering and auto sectors. The shift leaves domestic demand as the sole propellant of growth this year. The government expects a rise in consumer spending by 1.9 percent and spikes in construction investment by 2.3 percent and of state spending by 3.5 percent.

Rising real wages, rock-bottom interest rates and record-low car fuel costs due to the plunge in oil prices are giving a strong boost to consumer purchasing powers. In addition, the state is spending billions of euros to accommodate and integrate a record influx of more than one million refugees and migrants. "The German economy is in good shape," a cabinet statement said, adding the labor market remained solid and employment was expected to rise further, pushing up the tax take. Berlin reiterated its goal to keep the federal budget balanced for the third consecutive year in 2016 despite the higher state spending on infrastructure and refugees.

Nonetheless, Economy Minister Sigmar Gabriel said he was dissatisfied with the expected growth rate, saying Germany needed to speed up digitization and improve its research and development programs. "In view of the good general conditions such as the low oil price and favorable exchange rate, economic dynamism should really be above present economic growth of 1.7 percent," Gabriel told the Rheinische Post newspaper. He also said Germany should do more to promote electric cars and facilitate private investment, adding that Finance Minister Wolfgang Schauble's cherished goal of a balanced budget should not be seen as a dogma. —Reuters



BERLIN: Handbooks for refugees titled "First information for refugees" are seen on a desk during the inauguration of a new jobs counseling center for migrants and refugees at the former Tempelhof Airport in Berlin yesterday. —AFP



LE MANS: Photo shows tractors blocking the tram rails during a demonstration to protest against falling prices of dairy and meat products in Le Mans, northwestern France. —AFP

FRANCE ROCKED BY MULTIPLE STRIKES

ANGRY FRENCH TAXI DRIVERS BLOCK ROADS

PARIS: Angry French taxi drivers blocked key roads with burning tyres and hundreds of flights were cancelled as air traffic controllers joined civil servants, hospital staff and teachers for a "Black Tuesday" of strikes. At Paris Orly airport, one protester was injured when a shuttle bus forced its way through a blockade, with the driver saying he "panicked". Police arrested the driver. Some 2,100 taxi drivers, furious over upstart competitors such as Uber, blocked the capital's ring road at a key western intersection, lighting fires and throwing smoke bombs.

One Uber driver had his car splattered with eggs and kicked by protesters, an AFP journalist said. "Today our survival is at stake, we are fed up of meetings and negotiations," said Ibrahima Sylla, spokesman of the Taxis de France collective. "Before I'd have 10 to 12 fares per day. Now, it's just five or six," said Rahim Edalat, who has been driving taxis in Paris for 20 years. "It's the worst year I've ever seen," he said. A total of 14 protesters were arrested around the capital for violence and lighting fires, police said. "There is a right to protest... even during a state of emergency," said Prime Minister Manuel Valls, referring to measures imposed after the November attacks in Paris. "But violence is unacceptable."

'A world problem'

Police advised motorists to avoid several areas of the capital, including Porte Maillot in the west of Paris where hundreds of taxi drivers had gathered with some intending to stay. The taxi drivers kept up their action

overnight and were continuing into Wednesday, with routes to Orly and Roissy airports also affected, police said. Adding to the chaos, one in five flights in and out of Paris were cancelled because of a strike by air traffic controllers over pay and conditions, with the action affecting both Orly and Charles de Gaulle airports.

Budget airline Ryanair said it cancelled more than 200 flights, and easyJet cut 35 flights, mostly within France but also affecting Italy, Switzerland and Spain. Air France said it would operate all its long-haul flights and more than 80 percent of its short and medium-haul flights in France and elsewhere in Europe. Last year, France banned Uber's low-cost UberPOP service—which used unlicensed drivers—but the professional version of Uber continues to operate legally, with taxi dispatchers in Paris saying business has shrunk by 20 to 30 percent.

"Uberisation... is not just a Paris problem but a world problem," said Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo, sympathising with regular taxi drivers who "must be able to make a decent living". Uber flouted the UberPOP ban for several months, triggering a spate of violent protests in June. The San Francisco-based company finally shut down the low-cost service in July after two of its French bosses were arrested and charged with "misleading commercial practices (and) complicity in the illegal exercise of the taxi profession".

'Biggest mobilization since 2012'

At the same time, unions had urged some 5.6 million civil servants to down tools in protest over reforms

that have already seen seven billion euros (\$7.6 billion) in austerity cuts. The government said only 10 percent had joined the strike, but the hardline CGT union put the figure at nearly 30 percent, describing the action as "the biggest mobilization" of civil servants since socialist President Francois Hollande came to power in 2012. In Paris, thousands of demonstrators marched with banners reading "Enough of austerity" and "Increase wages, not shareholders" with police putting the figure at 6,000 protesters while unions said turnout was around 15,000.

The strike also affected schools, with the education ministry saying more than 12 percent of primary teachers had joined over demands for higher pay, as well as 22 percent of high school teachers who are protesting against the reform of education for pupils aged between 11 and 15. The striking unions—which led up to 120 demonstrations across France on a day dubbed "Black Tuesday"—said they were protesting over some 150,000 job losses since 2007, and demanded the creation of new positions, particularly in the hospital sector.

Farmers upset over falling prices also blocked roads with tractors in several rural areas and dumped manure outside some tax offices. Their unions are demanding distributors and major food companies pay more for produce and livestock. Protests also took place in other French cities, notably Toulouse, Marseille and Aix-en-Provence in the south and Lille in the north, notably around railway stations and airports. —AFP

News

in brief

Lower revenues and higher provisions hit NBAD's profit

ABU DHABI: National Bank of Abu Dhabi, the United Arab Emirates' largest lender by assets, reported a 24.5 percent drop in fourth-quarter net profit yesterday, hit by higher provisions and lower revenues. The bank, or NBAD, made a net profit of 1.04 billion dirhams (\$282.1 million) in the three months to Dec 31, down from 1.37 billion dirhams in the same period a year earlier. It is almost 70 percent owned by an Abu Dhabi state investment fund. For 2015, the bank said net profit was 5.23 billion dirhams, down 6.2 percent from 2014. The bank was one of three United Arab Emirates' lenders to report fourth quarter earnings on a day of contrasting fortunes. Mashreq, Dubai's third-biggest bank by assets, posted a 13.7 percent fall in net profit, while Dubai Islamic Bank, the United Arab Emirates' largest sharia-compliant lender, posted a 62.8 percent increase in net profit. NBAD's fourth quarter revenues fell to 2.56 billion dirhams versus 2.76 billion dirhams in the prior-year period, while write-downs in the quarter more than doubled to 436 million dirhams compared with 200 million dirhams a year earlier.

Omantel prices a \$130 m via 5-year dual-currency sukuk

DUBAI: Oman Telecommunications Co (Omantel) has priced a \$130 million five-year dual-currency sukuk issue, a document from lead arrangers showed. The sultanate's largest telecommunications firm priced the sukuk issue at a profit rate of 5.3 percent. Omantel received commitments worth \$82.16 million in the dollar tranche and 18.4 million rials (\$47.80 million) in the rial tranche, it showed. The joint placement agents for the dollar tranche were Bank ABC, HSBC, National Bank of Oman and Standard Chartered Bank, while the placement agents for the Omani rial tranche were National Bank of Oman and Standard Chartered, the document showed. The senior unsecured sukuk was open to investors who had a local depository for clearing, two sources with knowledge of the deal said. The transaction will be settled on February 3.

Ericsson Q4 profits, sales surge on growth in China

HELSINKI: Wireless equipment maker Ericsson said yesterday that an improvement in business in China despite the market turmoil there helped its fourth-quarter profit jump nearly 70 percent. Also boosted by patent licensing fees, the world's largest networks provider said sales grew 8 percent in the period to 73.6 billion kronor, with net profit surging to 7 billion kronor (\$820 million). The Swedish company said it was on target to reach its savings goal of 9 billion kronor by 2017, but describing some markets as "challenging." CEO Hans Vestberg hinted new measures might be necessary. "Although company performance improved in the quarter there is still a need for further improvements," he said. "We ... will take all necessary actions to remain competitive across the entire business." Ericsson's share price fell more than 6 percent to 76.70 kronor in early afternoon trading in Stockholm. Sami Sarkamies, chief analyst at Nordea Bank in Helsinki, said the fall in the share price wasn't immediately clear after the "positive" report. "Ericsson's result was good, much as expected, but maybe the hint of further expense cuts caused the stock to drop," he said. "Its shares had recently made sizeable gains before the report so maybe that too was a factor for the drop."

RBS has set aside £2.0 billion for scandals

LONDON: Britain's Royal Bank of Scotland has set aside another £2.0 billion to cover mortgage-backed securities litigation in the United States and compensation for credit insurance mis-selling in Britain, it said yesterday. Fourth-quarter earnings will be reduced by the equivalent of \$2.8 billion or 2.6 billion euros, the state-rescued lender warned in a statement detailing a raft of vast financial provisions. RBS is putting aside £1.5 billion to cover expected legal action on US residential mortgage-backed securities, and an extra £500 million to cover possible compensation for mis-selling payment protection insurance (PPI). The Edinburgh-based company also took an impairment charge of nearly £500 million on the value of its troubled private banking business. The group is meanwhile pumping another £4.2 billion into its pension scheme. In reaction to the news, RBS shares slid 0.96 percent to 258.40 pence in early morning London deals. "I am determined to put the issues of the past behind us and make sure RBS is a stronger, safer bank," said RBS chief executive Ross McEwan in the statement. "We will now continue to move further and faster in 2016 to clean-up the bank and improve our core businesses."

GERMANY BRINGS HOME MORE GOLD

FRANKFURT: The German central bank, or Bundesbank, said yesterday that it brought home last year more of its gold reserves from overseas storage. "The Bundesbank successfully continued its transfers of gold last year," the central bank said in a statement. "In 2015, 210 tons of gold were transferred to Frankfurt from storage locations abroad: Around 110 tons from Paris and just under 100 tons from New York." Germany's gold reserves are the second-biggest in the world after those of the United States and totaled 3,381 tons this month, according to the latest data compiled by the World Gold Council. For decades the Bundesbank's gold holdings

have been kept in the treasuries of other central banks in Paris, London and New York.

According to the German central bank's own data, 1,347.4 tons are stored at the Federal Reserve Bank in New York, 434.7 tons at the Bank of England in London and 196.4 tons at the Banque de France in Paris. There were historical reasons for this. After World War II and the export revival of West Germany's "economic miracle" in the 1950s, the central bank accumulated dollars it swapped for gold at the Federal Reserve. With Germany split between capitalist west and the communist East German state until 1990, storing most of the gold

abroad was a way to keep it out of Soviet reach during the Cold War.

But surging mistrust of the euro during Europe's debt crisis fed a campaign to bring home Germany's gold reserve from New York and London, with some political parties fuelling fears the gold might have been tampered with. Under the Bundesbank's new gold storage plan in 2013, it decided to bring back 674 tons from abroad by 2020 and store half of its gold in its own vaults. As a result of the ongoing transfers, Frankfurt has become the biggest gold storage location, housing 1,402.5 tons. —AFP

STOCKS, DOLLAR STRUGGLE AHEAD OF FED

EUROPE SLIDES DESPITE LATE RECOVERY IN CHINA STOCKS

LONDON: European stocks succumbed to another slide in oil prices yesterday as markets waited cautiously to see what the Federal Reserve's reaction will be to what has been a brutal start to the year for world markets. Asian and particularly Chinese bourses ended stronger than they started but that could not prevent the pan-European FTSEurofirst 300 falling just over 0.7 percent ahead of what

were expected to be similar falls on Wall Street.

There was still some grogginess after gadget giant Apple forecast its first revenue drop in 13 years on Tuesday, but the main pressure was once again from oil which sank back towards \$30 a barrel following its latest attempt at a bounce. Brent was down 2 percent at \$31.12 per barrel with US crude 3.3

percent lower at \$30.40. Currencies followed a now familiar dance, with the dollar down against the yen, although it gained less than usual against oil-linked peers like the rouble.

Bond markets were firmly focused on the Fed's post-meeting statement, due at 1900 GMT. After the rocky start to 2016 Fed followers are now expecting only one more rate hike this year rather than the four Janet Yellen

and her colleagues were suggesting in December. "(Markets are) pretty much treading water ahead of the FOMC (Federal Reserve)," said Societe Generale strategist Alvin Tan. "We are expecting a somewhat more dovish tone considering the turbulence in global markets since the start of the year." US Treasury yields nudged up, with the benchmark 10-year Treasury note yield tip-toeing back above 2 percent as the more interest-rate-sensitive two-year yield hovered at 0.8567 percent.

Yields were also a touch firmer in Germany, but lower in southern Europe as small rises in French consumer and industry confidence and Italian retail sales did little to alter expectations that the European Central Bank is readying to cut its interest rates again. Italian bonds were given an extra boost by an accord between the country and the European Commission to help Italian lenders shed some of their 200 billion euros of bad loans. Monte dei Paschi, the world's oldest bank, saw its shares, which have lost more than half their value since the end of 2015, jump as much as 5 percent. "Now we have this agreement, the risk of an Italian banking crisis has eased," said DZ Bank strategist Daniel Lenz.

Oil spill

There was little in the way of US data on the slate ahead of the Fed later, although there was a slew of fresh company results to digest. No 2 US wireless carrier AT&T was down 2.4 percent in pre-market deals after below estimate

revenues, while TripAdvisor took a 5.5 percent flight south after Goldman Sachs cut its rating on the stock to "sell". Overnight, a late rally in China reversed an early 3 percent drop and helped MSCI's broadest index of Asia-Pacific shares outside Japan finish 0.5 percent higher.

Tokyo's Nikkei closed up 2.7 percent and the Australian dollar rose after one measure of inflation came in slightly above forecasts. Valuations have taken a beating in Asia this year. The benchmark Hong Kong stock market index is now trading at a price-to-earnings multiple of 7.4 times, its lowest since the 2008 crisis, while the China enterprises index is at a multiple of less than 6 times, its cheapest since December 2001. "The Hang Seng China Enterprises index is currently priced for a credit event, which we think is slightly extreme," said Michelle Leung, CEO of Xingtai Capital Management, a hedge fund focused on Chinese consumer stocks.

The retreat in oil prices in Europe also began to weigh on other commodity markets. Copper, which is seen as highly attuned to global growth, sagged to \$4,525 ton by 0704 GMT, after a 2.7 percent gain in the previous session. Traditional safe-haven gold meanwhile hovered near a 12-week high at 1,117 an ounce. "The world's economic condition doesn't seem to give the Fed reason to hike rates soon given the growth risks," said Barnabas Gan, analyst at OCBC Bank in Singapore.



BEIJING: A Chinese investor monitors stock prices on an electronic display in a brokerage house in Beijing yesterday. —AP

OIL FALLS; US INVENTORIES WIPE OUT THE OPTIMISM

LONDON: Oil futures fell yesterday, after a surprise rise in US inventories wiped out the optimism that had built up the day before over the potential for the world's largest exporters to cut output enough to stem a 19-month-long price slide. Another contraction in industrial profits in top commodities consumer China, along with caution before the outcome of the US Federal Reserve's first policy meeting of the year, knocked around \$1 off the price of oil.

Oil prices bounced on Tuesday after senior OPEC and Russian officials stepped up vague talk of possible joint action to eliminate one of the largest surpluses in modern times. Brent crude fell 71 cents to \$31.09 a barrel by 1140 GMT, having risen by some 3 percent on Tuesday. US crude futures fell \$1.09 to \$30.36 a barrel. "We are going to trough several times this spring. It's a terrible situation in the physical market and stocks are just going to pile up more, so we will get these reels down again. We haven't seen the end of that process of being 'deep in the ditch'," SEB analyst Bjarne Schieldrop said. "Medium-term, there will be gradual improvement, but at least this first half of the year will be ugly."

Oil prices have fallen nearly 16 percent so far in January, bringing total losses since

mid-2014, when the decline began, to 77 percent. US crude stocks rose by 11.4 million barrels last week to 496.6 million, the American Petroleum Institute said, topping analyst expectations for an increase of 3.3 million barrels. "The positive sentiment stemmed from strong US corporate earnings and talk of OPEC and Russia considering production cuts. We consider the likelihood of any agreement between these parties as extremely low," ANZ said in a note. "However, rising US crude stockpiles are likely to remain a headwind in the near term."

That said, oil bulls are gradually starting to emerge, with this month's drop below \$30. The options market shows traders are buying up protection against a rise to at least \$40 by the end of the year, and speculators have increased their bullish bets on the price through the futures market. Also, three US shale oil companies have slashed their 2016 capital spending plans more than expected in a bid to survive the \$30-a-barrel oil price. Marco Dunand, the head of Mercuria, one of the world's biggest trading houses, said the market was close to rebalancing. Famed oil bull Andrew Hall, head of Astenberg Commodities, said the market was ripe for a jump. —Reuters

INVESTORS REMAIN CAUTIOUS; GOLD STEADIES BELOW A 12-WEEK PEAK

LONDON: Gold steadied below a 12-week peak yesterday as investors remained cautious ahead of the Federal Reserve's first policy statement of the year, which is expected to give clues on interest rates. While the US central bank is likely to keep key rates unchanged at the conclusion of its two-day meet later in the day, investors are keen to see its latest outlook on global economic headwinds. "A potential further decline in equities and market uncertainty about global growth is a good environment for gold because investors want something defensive," ETF Securities analyst Martin Arnold said.

Spot gold was down 0.1 percent at \$1,118.73 an ounce by 1035 GMT, within sight of Tuesday's peak of \$1,122.90, its strongest since Nov 3. US gold for February delivery was also down 0.1 percent, at \$1,119.10 per ounce. With risk aversion intact as concerns over global growth persist, "I won't be surprised if gold hits \$1,150, even \$1,200 in the first quarter," said Barnabas Gan, analyst at OCBC Bank in Singapore.

After a 10 percent drop in 2015, its third year of losses, gold has so far benefited from turmoil in equity markets and worries about an economic slowdown in China, which contributed to lift prices by nearly 6 percent this month. The dollar fell 0.4 percent versus a basket of currencies, while European equities succumbed to another slide in oil prices. Reflecting rising confidence in gold, holdings of SPDR Gold Trust, the world's largest gold-backed exchange-traded fund, stood at 21.52 million ounces on Tuesday, the highest since Nov 5.

China's net gold imports for December via main conduit Hong Kong surged to the highest in more than two years, data showed on Tuesday, as investors lost faith in collapsing stock markets and a weakening currency. "China has taken advantage of low gold prices and an equity market rout to stock up on gold assets," said Helen Lau, analyst at Argonaut Securities. Lau expects China's gold imports to remain strong due to a seasonal demand surge ahead of the Lunar New Year holiday in February. —Reuters

Daily Kuwait Stock Exchange Report

Wednesday 27 January 2016

Index	Change	Closing	Last Closing	High	Low
Price index	▲ 32.74	4,060.25	4,036.51	4,080.24	4,036.83
Weighted Index	▲ 4.40	337.51	333.11	337.87	333.46
KSX 15	▲ 10.39	788.28	777.89	790.76	779.23



Security	Trades						
	High	Low	Volume	Value (KD)	Trades	Last	Change
MARIN	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	114	— 0.0
IKARUS	69	65	20,000	1,340	3	69	— 0.0
IPG	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	315	— 0.0
NAPESCO	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	600	— 0.0
ENERGYH	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	34.5	— 0.0
GPI	39.0	38.0	1,771,082	67,682	47	38.5	▲ 1.0
ARAR	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	120	— 0.0
Oil & Gas			1,791,082	69,022	50	745.03	▲ 2.19
KFOUC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	212	— 0.0
BPCC	440	440	50,000	22,000	2	440	▲ 10.0
ALKOUT	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	610	— 0.0
ALQURAIN	154	144	450,333	66,759	50	148	▲ 4.0
Basic Materials			506,333	88,759	52	837.63	▲ 14.32

KCEM	360	360	43,906	15,806	4	360	— 0.0
REFRI	305	305	15,000	4,575	1	305	— 0.0
CABLE	325	325	10	3	1	325	▲ 10.0
SHIP	142	136	173	24	6	140	▲ 4.0
PCEM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	990	— 0.0
PAPER	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	380	— 0.0
MRC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	57	— 0.0
ACICO	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	265	— 0.0
GGMC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	490	— 0.0
HCC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	132	— 0.0
KPAK	340	340	160,000	54,400	1	340	▼ -10.0
KBMMC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	250	— 0.0
NICBM	220	220	11	2	1	220	— 0.0
EQUIPMENT	52	51	366,800	18,715	17	51	— 0.0
NCCI	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	99	— 0.0
GYPSU	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	102	— 0.0
SALDOOKH	67	66	60,000	3,969	10	67	▲ 1.0
AGLTY	420	410	149,390	62,455	17	415	▲ 5.0
EDU	202	188	420	85	2	188	▼ -10.0
CLEANING	36.5	34.5	241,000	8,395	10	36.5	▲ 1.0
CITYGROUP	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	380	— 0.0
KGL	37.5	37.5	5,000	188	1	37.5	▲ 0.5
KGPC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	210	— 0.0
HUMANSOFT	820	820	560	459	7	820	▲ 50.0
NAFAIS	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	130	— 0.0
SAFWAN	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	305	— 0.0
GFC	26.0	26.0	1,500	39	1	26.0	— 0.0
MAYADEEN	18.0	17.0	5,661,996	100,508	69	17.5	▲ 0.5
CGC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	780	— 0.0
MITCC	63	58	2,654,284	164,910	72	63	▲ 5.0
UPAC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	590	— 0.0
ALAFCO	190	188	286,264	54,360	11	188	▼ -2.0
MUBARRAD	65	62	1,286,115	81,347	46	63	▲ 1.0
LOGISTICS	50	46.0	139,720	6,930	7	50	▲ 2.0
SCEM	80	80	200,000	16,000	1	80	— 0.0
GCEM	70	70	350	25	1	70	▼ -1.0
QCEM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	68	— 0.0
FCEM	72	71	105,010	7,462	6	72	▲ 4.0
RKWC	100	100	3,800	380	2	100	▲ 4.0
SPEC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	88	— 0.0
Industrials			11,381,309	601,035	294	939.67	▲ 7.25

KSH	210	210	26,000	5,460	1	210	— 0.0
NSH	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	62	— 0.0
PAPCO	108	108	500	54	1	108	▲ 2.0
CATTL	122	122	2,000	244	2	122	▲ 4.0
DANAH	70	67	54,150	3,737	9	69	— 0.0
POULT	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	196	— 0.0
FOOD	1,760	1,760	50,000	88,000	2	1,760	— 0.0
Consumer Goods			132,650	97,495	15	1004.12	▲ 6.17

MHC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	190	— 0
ATC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	920	— 0
YIACO	130	124	50,250	6,233	5	130	▼ -4
Health Care			50,250	6,233	5	919.51	▼ -2.88

KCIN	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	940	— 0
KHOT	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	220	— 0
SULTAN	57	55	1,221,401	69,530	13	57	▼ -1
CABLETV	23.5	23.0	6,000	141	2	23.5	▲ 2
EYAS	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	335	— 0
IFAHR	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	194	— 0
QULAFUEL	104	100	48,818	5,025	20	102	▲ 3
MUNTAZAHAT	89	82	50,900	4,178	6	83	▼ -4
JAZERA	780	760	1,900	1,470	2	780	▼ -10
SOOR	104	104	12,064	1,255	5	104	— 0
FUTUREKID	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	110	— 0
ALNAVADI	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	84	— 0
ALRAI	136	134	360	49	2	136	— 0
ZIMAH	84	81	1,118,904	92,220	66	82	▲ 2
UFIG	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	132	— 0
KOUJIFOOD	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	560	— 0
Mezzan	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	940	— 0
Consumer Services			2,460,347	173,867	116	919.88	▼ -4.21

ZAIN	340	325	1,339,269	448,205	86	335	▲ 10
DOREDOO	1,060	1,060	1,836	1,946	3	1,060	— 0
HITSTELEG	25.0	24.5	331,450	8,170	7	25.0	▲ 1
VIVA	1,000	990	348,376	344,950	179	1,000	▲ 10
Telecommunications			2,020,931	803,270	275	585.62	▲ 7.41

NBK	680	670	1,701,540	1,152,062	65	680	▲ 10
GDK	210	206	110,098	22,980	8	208	▲ 2
CBK	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	510	— 0
ABK	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	345	— 0
ALMUTAHED	445	420	162,701	69,562	14	430	▲ 10
KIB	192	190	258,870	49,417	17	190	— 0
BURG	315	305	538,686	166,316	16	310	▲ 5
KFIN	460	450	5,361,721	2,447,653	140	450	▲ 5
DOUBYAN	395	385	578,132	225,020	31	390	▲ 10
AUB	198	190	1,163,161	226,082	37	198	▲ 10
ITHMR	32.0	30.0	15,437,289	483,748	215	31.5	▲ 2
WARBABANK	162	158	786,534	126,825	91	160	▲ 2
Banks			26,098,732	4,969,665	634	777.04	▲ 15.34

KINS	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	320	— 0.0
GINS	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	750	— 0.0
AINS	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	435	— 0.0
WINS	100	100	20,000	2,000	2	100	— 0.0
KUWAITRE	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	200	— 0.0
FTI	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	56	— 0.0
WCTHAQ	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	31.5	— 0.0
BKIKWT	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	355	— 0.0
Insurance			20,000	2,000	2	1058.50	— 0.00

Security	Trades						
	High	Low	Volume	Value (KD)	Trades	Last	Change
SOKOUK	36.0	34.0	7599983	264,299	190	34.0	▼ -0.5
KRE	43.5	42.0	1,903,368	81,424	40	43.0	▲ 0.5
URC	92	91	56,307	5,139	7	91	▼ -2.0
NRE	85	82	2,457,004	206,037	103	84	▼ -3.0
SRE	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	330	— 0.0
TAM	630	580	15,377	8,969	4	630	▲ 10.0
AREEC	126	126	40,000	5,040	2	126	▼ -10.0
MASGALLEH	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	61	— 0.0
ARABREC	23.5	22.5	757,125	17,399	29	23.5	▲ 0.5
ERESGO	58	55	28,500	1,577	6	55	▼ -1.0
MADANEE	860	830	29,781	25,036	11	860	— 0.0
INJAZAT	84	84	4,700	395	2	84	▲ 5.0
INVESTORS	20.0	19.0	5,519,025	107,075	69	19.5	▲ 1.0
IRC	23.0	22.0	71,260	1,568	5	22.5	▲ 0.5
ALTJARIJA	74	73	259,767	19,108	14	73	— 0.0
SANAM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	41.0	— 0.0
AAYANRE	69	66	16,677	1,111	4	66	▲ 1.0
AQAR	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	80	— 0.0
ALQADRIA	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	18.5	— 0.0
MAZAYA	100	100	783,323	78,332	16	100	— 0.0
ADNC	24.5	22.0	27,532,863	656,529	166	24.5	▲ 2.5
THEMAR	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	75	— 0.0
TIJARA	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	39.5	— 0.0
TAAAMEER	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	18.5	— 0.0
ARKAN	108	108	1,550	167	3	108	▼ -2.0
ARGAN	160	156	74,743	11,840	10	160	▲ 10.0
ABYAAR	23.0	22.5	376,200	8,653	14	22.5	▲ 0.5
MUNSHAAT	49.5	47.5	4,177,636	202,628	135	48.5	▼ -0.5
FIRSTDUBAI	35.5	35.0	184,230	6,506	10	35.5	▲ 0.5
KBT	36.5	34.5	2,372,734	82,025	72	36.0	▲ 1.0
REFAM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	140	— 0.0
MENA	18.0	17.0	343,800	6,042	20	17.5	— 0.0
ALMUDON	28.0	28.0	40,000	1,120	1	28.0	— 0.0
MARAKEZ	23.0	20.0	271,500	5,881	21	23.0	▲ 0.5
REMAL	31.0	30.0	309,590	9,463	8	30.5	— 0.0
MASHAER	95	95	810	77	2	95	▼ -5.0
Royal Estate			55,228,383	1,815,319	964	808.96	▲ 5.67

TOYOTA RETAINS TOP GLOBAL AUTOMAKER CROWN

10.15 MILLION VEHICLES SOLD GLOBALLY IN 2015

TOKYO: Toyota yesterday kept the title of world's biggest automaker for the fourth straight year after saying it sold 10.15 million vehicles globally in 2015, driving past Volkswagen and General Motors. Dented by a pollution-cheating scandal, Volkswagen earlier logged sales of 9.93 million vehicles worldwide, while Chevrolet and Cadillac maker GM moved 9.8 million last year. Toyota shares jumped 3.80 percent to end at 6,881 yen (\$58) in Tokyo on Wednesday, boosted by reports it is in talks with Suzuki over a partnership to build compact cars for emerging markets, including India. Strong North American demand drove Toyota's figures as total sales slipped 0.8 percent from 2014, largely owing to a slowdown in Japan where a weak economy hit demand.

Toyota is also facing sluggish sales in Thailand and Indonesia while a Japanese consumption tax hike planned for next year could spark a rush in buying-and subsequent slowdown as prices go up. The Japanese giant was likely to keep the top automaker crown for at least another year, but a slowdown in top vehicle market China could hurt its numbers, analysts said. "Toyota is benefiting from the strength of the US auto market, and we expect it to continue to grow this year, so the company should keep its crown," said Yoshiaki Kawano, a Tokyo-based analyst at research firm IHS.

"But in China, Toyota lags behind VW or Nissan". In the first half of the year, the German giant, whose other brands include Porsche and Audi, was set to become the world's biggest automaker as it rode momentum in emerging economies. But then it posted its first drop in annual sales for more than a decade, as the company

was hammered by a massive pollution cheating scandal. Volkswagen was side-swiped by stunning revelations in September that it had fitted 11 million vehicles with devices designed to dodge pollution tests. The US government has said it was suing VW for \$20 billion in civil penalties over the scandal.

Quality issues

Toyota broke GM's decades-long reign as the world's top automaker in 2008 but lost it three years later to the US firm, as Japan's 2011 earthquake-tsunami disaster dented production and disrupted the supply chains. However, in 2012 it once again overtook its Detroit rival and has remained on top since. Yesterday, rival Nissan said its global sales hit a calendar-year record 5.42 million units. Including Nissan's French partner Renault, the group's 8.22 million combined sales put it in fourth place globally. South Korea's Hyundai sat in fifth spot with 8.01 million vehicles sold.

Toyota's upbeat announcement comes despite the firm struggling to recover its reputation for safety after the recall of millions of cars around the world for various problems in recent years, including an exploding air bag crisis at supplier Takata. At least 10 deaths globally and scores of injuries have been linked to the faulty airbags fitted in cars made by some of the world's leading auto giants. Toyota, maker of the Camry sedan and Prius hybrid, had stopped building new plants for several years, and turned its focus to quality rather than sales volume. The company is also overhauling its production methods, vowing to slash development costs to try to offset any downturn in the



TOKYO: Customers check vehicles from Japanese auto giant Toyota Motor at the company's showroom in Tokyo yesterday. —AFP

market and squeeze more productivity out of existing plants.

Toyota is pushing further into the fast-growing market for environmentally friendly cars, especially in China where officials are struggling to contain an air pollution crisis. It has also released its first mass-market hydro-

gen fuel-cell car, the Mirai, and redesigned the top-selling Prius. Volkswagen's new chief executive, meanwhile, has said his firm was abandoning its ambition to become the world's biggest carmaker. "For me, this obsession with unit sales and the ambition to constantly reach new records makes no

sense," Matthias Mueller told the weekly WirtschaftsWoche in an interview published in December. "I'm not going to declare sheer size as an end in itself." His predecessor Martin Winterkorn had focused on VW overtaking Toyota as the world's biggest carmaker by 2018. —AFP



PASADENA: A man looks at his iPhone 6 Plus outside the Apple store in Pasadena, California. —AFP

END OF AN ERA?

APPLE WARNS IPHONE SALES TO FALL FOR FIRST TIME

SAN FRANCISCO: Apple raised the specter of the end of a technological era after reporting Tuesday the slowest growth sales ever of its market-leading, life-changing iPhone and warning it expects worse to come. The California technology colossus said it expects to see its first decline in iPhone sales in the current quarter, when it will be compared to three months of blockbuster sales in the same period last year. "We do think that iPhone units will decline in the quarter," Apple chief executive Tim Cook said during an earnings call with analysts.

But Apple, which Tuesday posted record quarterly profit despite the iPhone faltering for the first time since it was launched, remains optimistic about the overall smartphone market. Apple plans to continue investing in smartphones despite economic woes dragging on many countries, and a strong US dollar eating into its revenue, according to Cook. "There are still a lot of people in the world who will buy smartphones and we ought to be able to win over our fair share of those," Cook said.

A billion Apple gadgets

Net income for the quarter ending December 26 was two percent higher than the same period a year earlier at \$18.4 billion, while revenue of \$75.9 billion set another record for the company, also edging up two percent. The results were largely in line with expectations that sales of iPhones-the driver of two-thirds of Apple revenue-had peaked and that the company would need to find new sources of growth.

Apple shares have slid 20 percent since last year on these concerns. In after-market trade Tuesday, the stock was down more than two percent at \$97.35. "Our team delivered Apple's biggest quarter ever, thanks to the world's most innovative products and all-time record sales of iPhone, Apple Watch and Apple TV," Cook said in an earnings release. "The growth of our services business accelerated

during the quarter to produce record results."

Apple reported that, over all, a billion iPhones, iPads, Macintosh computers, iPod touch devices, Apple TV units, and Apple Watch wearable computers had "engaged" with its services in the past three months. In the fiscal quarter Apple sold 74.8 million iPhones-a record, but only fractionally higher than the 74.5 million in the same period

that revenue in China grew to a record \$18.4 billion. Total iPhone sales grew 76 percent in India, according to the company. A big question for Apple is whether it can continue to drive sales growth in a sluggish global economy, amid increasing competition from rival smartphone makers. "This is not Steve Jobs's Apple, which had hit after hit," said independent technology industry analyst Rob Enderle.

That would probably mean a decline from the \$58 billion in the same period of 2015. Apple has been diversifying with new offerings in music and is counting on growth from its Apple Watch and accessories. The company reported sales of "other products"-including the smartwatch and Beats music products-was \$4.35 billion in the past quarter, but did not break down those figures. Services



NEW YORK: An iPhone sits on display inside the Apple store on Fifth Avenue in New York City. —AFP

last year and the slowest growth since the lifestyle-altering handsets were introduced in 2007.

China revenue climbs

Revenue in "Greater China" was up 14 percent for Apple but weaker in the US and Japan. "We remain very bullish on China, and, you know, don't subscribe to the doom and gloom kind of predictions frankly," Cook said. "India is also incredibly exciting." Apple reported

"They are going to have to figure out something else, and you hope it something other than a car because that is going to take a while." Apple has declined to comment on reports that it has a secret automotive team working on an electric car.

Apple's ecosystem

Apple said that it expected revenue in the current quarter to be between \$50 billion and \$53 billion.

accounted for \$6 billion. Sales of iPads saw a 56 percent drop in revenues and 25 percent dip in unit sales as the market for tablet computers cooled. Avi Greengart at the research firm Current Analysis said things did not appear that bad for the world's biggest company by market value. "Pretty great to be Apple," he said in a tweet. "Your main product (iPhone) is flat, most recent hit (iPad) is down 25%, R&D expenses up, yet profits rise." —AFP

WITH CHINA WEAKENING, APPLE TURNING TO INDIA

SAN FRANCISCO: As China sales show signs of cooling, Apple Inc is touting India's appetite for iPhones, betting that rising wages and an expanding middle class will pull consumers away from the cheap alternatives that currently dominate the market. In an earnings call in which the company reported meagre iPhone growth and forecast its first revenue drop in 13 years, the Indian market stood out as a rare bright spot for Apple. Sales of the company's flagship smartphone climbed 76 percent in India from the year-ago quarter, Apple Chief Financial Officer Luca Maestri said.

According to data compiled by Counterpoint Technology Research, Apple sold an estimated 800,000 iPhones in India in the fourth-quarter, its highest ever amount but one that is a fraction of the 28 million smartphones sold during that period.

Growth in India is a tantalizing prospect as Apple grapples with the economic downturn in China, its second largest market. While revenue in Greater China rose 14 percent in the last quarter, Apple is beginning to see a shift in the economy, particularly in Hong Kong, Maestri told Reuters in an interview.

But with nearly 70 percent of smartphones selling for less than \$150 in India, Apple's high-end phones remain out of reach of most consumers. The basic iPhone 6S sells at just under \$700 in India, or nearly half the average annual wage. "In many ways India is very similar to what China was a few years ago, but the middle class here is still very small and it can be two to three years before Apple gets a similar level of success in India," said Counterpoint Technology Research

analyst Tarun Pathak. Apple CEO Tim Cook struck a more optimistic note, saying the company was "increasingly putting more energy" into India, citing a largely youthful population with rising disposable income as more people join the workforce. With faster 4G coverage expanding, Apple has already asked Indian government for a license to set up its own retail stores just as the market seems to be turning in its favor. As in China, Apple products are a coveted status symbol in India, a market that analysts say is likely to overtake the United States next year to become the world's second largest smartphone market. "The love for the iPhone is there," said Carolina Milanesi, chief of research and head of US business at Kantar Worldpanel ComTech, a consumer research firm. —Reuters

'NEUTRAL' OUTLOOK FOR KSA'S MARKET

MARKAZ ECONOMIC REPORT

KUWAIT: Kuwait Financial Centre 'Markaz' recently released its outlook on KSA stock market for the full year of 2016. In this research report, Markaz analyses the performance of KSA stock market in 2015 and provides an outlook for 2016 based on corporate earnings potential, valuation attraction, economic factors and market liquidity. The report stated that the year 2015 was challenging for KSA economy, with the decline in oil prices impacting its economic growth. Standard & Poor's cut KSA sovereign credit rating for long-term foreign and local currency by one notch to 'A-plus/A-1'. The slowdown of Chinese market exerted more pressure on the Tadawul market performance, to the already contracting market due to lower oil prices causing it to decline by c.17% during 2015.

The report pointed out that the majority of the sectors underperformed during 2015, with Media & Publication, Transport, Energy and Utilities and Real Estate being the exceptions. The Saudi construction and cement were the worst hit sectors and they lost 34% and 30% respectively. The decline in banking sector index by 14.9% during 2015 establishes the challenges in the form of liquidity tightening, as a consequence of low oil prices and increased government borrowings that will impact the banking sector. Going forward, the report evaluates the attractiveness of the KSA stock market based on four-factor model.

Valuation: Neutral

On a standalone basis, KSA, with a P/E ratio of 13x appears to trade at elevated valuation levels, given that MSCI emerging markets constituents UAE and Qatar were trading at a lower premium. On P/B basis, KSA market is the second expensive among all GCC nations after Qatar. Dividend yield for KSA stands at 4.2%.

Corporate Earnings: Negative

The continued expected lower oil price in 2016 is expected to exert further pressure on corporate earnings. Lower credit off take and increasing cost of funds due to liquidity squeeze is expected to impact the bank earnings. The large petrochemical segment of KSA is expected to contract due to lower price realization of its products, resulting in almost 15% decline in earnings for companies operating in the commodities segment in 2016 compared to 2015. The lower anticipated

growth rate is likely to translate into flat growth rate for real estate sector and result in contraction of the construction related sectors.

Economy: Neutral

Saudi Arabia's GDP is projected to grow at 3.4% in 2015, a drop from previous year growth of 3.5%. The GDP growth is expected to slow down to 2.2% in 2016. Non-hydrocarbon sector growth is expected to be the slowest at 3.8% during 2016 and this is the least growth level in the last five years. The current account deficit is estimated to increase to 4.7% of GDP in 2016 and fiscal deficit during 2016 is expected to reduce compared to 2015 levels. The inflation in KSA is expected to be at 2.3% in 2016 by IMF.

Market Liquidity: Positive

Aggregate value traded of equities in KSA reached a value of USD 461.6bn in 2015. This represents a 15% lower value from the value traded registered in 2014. The drop in value traded can be attributed to lean trading triggered by the negative investor sentiment due to lower oil prices. However, this is expected to marginally increase to 93% of market cap during 2016. The trading activity on Tadawul is dominated by the retail investors with the institutional investors contributing only 9% of trading volume on Tadawul exchange. However, with the relaxation of rules with regards to foreign investment in Tadawul, this institutional investment can be expected to grow. The stock market turnover ratio for KSA has been consistently high compared to the other GCC markets. The KSA market liquidity is expected to remain high during 2016 as well.

Concluding Remarks

Based on the four force analysis, the 2016 outlook for KSA is "Neutral". Due to its strong reserves and low levels of debt, KSA will manage to weather low oil price era without significant troubles. However, this would certainly slow the economic engines to a certain extent which will be reflected in the corporate earning during 2016. The low investor confidence will reflect in the valuation of the stocks. However, KSA will continue to be a highly liquid market in the region and participation of Qualified Foreign Institutional Investors (QFIIs) will complement the existing liquidity status of the market.

NORWAY'S OIL WEALTH AN ENVIABLE NEST EGG IN HARD TIMES

OSLO: When times get tough, it never hurts to have 700 billion euros stashed away like Norway does in the world's biggest sovereign wealth fund to cushion the blow of plunging oil prices. Oslo has prudently tucked away most of its oil money since the 1990s in order to be able to finance its generous welfare state indefinitely. Invested in stocks, bonds and real estate, the fund is now worth around 6.96 trillion kroner (734 billion euros, \$794 billion), equivalent to around six annual budgets or more than 137,000 euros for each of the country's 5.2 million inhabitants.

"We sold a lot of oil when the prices were high and saved a lot of the money we received," explained Ragnar Torvik, eco-

nomics professor at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology in Trondheim. "As a result, the Norwegian economy is well-equipped to withstand a drop in the oil price seeing as the latter has little impact on public finances," he added.

But it is strictly forbidden to touch the riches in what Norwegians call both the "oil fund" and the "pension fund" with governments only allowed to tap the returns, estimated at around 4.0 percent, and not the capital. The sums at the authorities' disposal swell as the fund continues to grow, fuelled by new oil revenues and the return on investment. And it has even grown so fast the current rightwing government only intends to use 2.8 percent of its nest egg for 2016.

'Not a crisis fund'

"It's not a crisis fund. It's a fund that is supposed to bring a regular contribution to the state budget," explained Handelsbanken economist Knut Anton Mork. "This input... today finances about one-eighth of all public spending in Norway. It's a lot but it's independent of the oil price because it's the financial return that is behind that," he said. The oil price has fallen from more than \$110 a barrel in the summer of 2014 to around \$30 today, but the only financial impact for Norway is that the fund's growth curve has slowed. "It's important because it determines the size that the fund will end up being. We thought it would continue to grow for a long time but if the oil price remains low for a long time, that won't be the case," Mork said.

While public finances have not been affected by the low oil price, it's a different story entirely for the real economy: oil investments have declined, growth is sluggish, and the unemployment rate, at 4.6 percent, is higher than it has been in more than a decade-even though it remains the envy of many countries. Since the start of 2014, almost 30,000 jobs have been cut in the oil sector, including at oil and gas giant Statoil. Stavanger, until recently Norway's thriving oil capital, is in the doldrums. To kick-start business, the government has presented an expansionary budget and the central bank has slashed its key rate in half. Partly compensating for the decline in oil income, the Norwegian krone has weakened considerably, boosting competitiveness in other sectors.

Black gold's hold

"As a whole, the Norwegian economy is not in crisis," Finance Minister Siv Jensen said on Monday. "But it's a crisis for the regions, the sectors, the companies and the families affected by the long-term structural transformation of the economy," she said. Aware that its oil and gas reserves are on the decline and that the deposits that remain are often expensive-even too expensive to exploit, the country has for several years said it intends to break its dependence on black gold. As it hopes to convert its economy into one based on renewable energies, new technologies and fish farming, the drop in the oil price has only sped up thoughts in this direction. —AFP

ZIMBABWEAN FARMERS FEAR THE WORST AS CATTLE, CROPS SUCCUMB TO DROUGHT ABOUT 14 MILLION PEOPLE FACING HUNGER

MAFOMOTI: In the dusty village of Mafomoti, southern Zimbabwe, farmers have already lost cattle and crops in the severest drought to hit the nation in a quarter of a century. But the worst may be yet to come. Midway through the farming season, the fields around the village are normally green at this time of the year but now they lie barren. Local people, who should be looking forward to the harvest in late March, are instead awaiting its failure and wondering how to make do with meagre supplies of food aid. "It will not take us far so we will have to eat sparingly," said Jesta Kugarira, 65. Apart from a few showers in mid-January, it hasn't rained in Mafomoti since September and her maize, millet and sorghum crops have been destroyed.

Kugarira, who has 12 children and grandchildren aged between three and 24, said her family is surviving on one meal a day. She has just six kg (13 pounds) of cereal, two kg of beans and some vegetable oil that she has received from the United Nations World Food Program (WFP) to keep them fed for a month. The drought is likely to damage harvests across southern Africa and about 14 million people are at risk, the WFP says. But whereas neighboring South Africa is wealthy enough to tackle the problem of food shortages, the impact is looking particularly serious for Zimbabwe where 70 percent of the population still survives on farming.

Zimbabwe's economy has been struggling for five years to recover from a catastrophic recession that was marked by billion percent hyperinflation and widespread food shortages. Strained relations between President Robert Mugabe and aid donors such as the European Union have complicated matters. Agriculture is critical to Zimbabwe's economy, generating 30 percent of export earnings and contributing 19 percent to GDP. But a report by the government and international aid agencies last year said 16 percent of Zimbabwe's population - which numbers 13 million - required food up to March 2016.

Prized possessions

In drought stricken areas, emaciated cows root around the bare earth trying to find something to eat. Some livestock are too weak to stand while birds flock around the carcass of a dead donkey. Around Mafomoti, 500 km south of the capital Harare, 375 families have received aid which is expected to feed a total of 2,784 people. Villagers said they were being forced to sell their surviving cattle, prized possessions in rural Zimbabwe which families usually keep to fund future family expenses such as educating the next generation. "Livestock was our bank because people expected to sell and raise money for school fees, but they are all dying and there are no pastures. If you look around you, it's just barren," said Luxon

Mabvongwe, a 50-year-old father of 11.

Whereas food prices usually rise in times of drought, the opposite is true of livestock in Zimbabwe at the moment. With animal feed so scarce, farmers are selling cows for as little as \$50 compared with at least \$400 they would get in better times. Harare plans to import up to 700,000 tons of maize and has secured a \$200 million loan to import grain. The EU has urged Mugabe's government to declare a food emergency, allowing international donors to raise money quickly to provide more food aid. Vice President Emmerson Mnangagwa has said only that Harare is already providing food imports but is open to assistance.

Relations between Brussels and Harare remain fraught. The EU, which imposed sanctions in 2002 over electoral fraud and human rights abuses, has renewed measures including a travel ban and asset freeze on Mugabe and his wife until next month. Some villagers in Mafomoti are considering trekking the 100 km to the South African border to look for food. However, the continent's top maize producer is suffering from the same drought and could reap its smallest maize crop in a decade this year, a Reuters poll showed. Josaphat Ngwenya, the local chief, said the long-term consequences of the drought went well beyond food shortages. "Most households will collapse and many children will fail to go to school," said Ngwenya.—Reuters



ABK 'ONE TAP TOUCH ID' NOW LIVE FOR MOBILE BANKING APPLICATION 'MOBILE BANKING MADE SIMPLER'

KUWAIT: As part of ABK's strategy to make banking 'simpler' for customers, the Bank yesterday announced the latest upgrade to its Mobile Banking Application; the One Tap Touch ID Sign-in, which offers a higher level of security, speed and convenience to customers when using the ABK Mobile Banking Application. The new feature is now live and available to customers signing in with iPhones 5s and later editions. The Touch ID security system makes it easy for users to access their devices with the touch of a finger. It is an optional replacement to the passcode, and is a much safer and more reliable method for keeping banking secure, since no two fingerprints are the same.

Commenting on this latest development, Hassan Abouzeid - AGM Retail Banking at ABK said: "The One Tap Touch ID Sign-In authentication technique is the first of a series of planned upgrades to ABK's mobile

and online banking services. It offers customers a more convenient and secure way to log into their accounts when using the ABK Mobile Application and managing their finances digitally. The ABK Mobile Banking application can be downloaded from the app store. We would like to encourage all our clients to download the app and enjoy a simpler online banking experience."

ABK continuously aims to meet its customers' changing needs while keeping up with the latest technology developments, and provide them with simple banking solutions to ensure an easier and more productive experience, when managing their finances conventionally or digitally. For more information on Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait please visit www.eahli.com or contact an ABK representative via 'Ahli Chat' or by contacting a customer service agent via 'AhlanAhli' at 1899899.



TAKAFUL PARTNERS WITH TAKAUD TO PROVIDE SHARIA-COMPLIANT INVESTMENT SOLUTIONS

MANAMA: TAKAUD, the specialist savings, investments and pensions provider for the MENA region, and Takaful International, Bahrain's pioneering Islamic insurance company, are partnering to provide Takaful's individual and corporate life insurance clients with innovative Sharia-compliant investment solutions. The new partnership will enable Takaful to provide customers of its unit-linked savings policies with the opportunity to invest the savings portion of their policy in Sharia-compliant growth, balanced or prudent investment strategies. In support of the agreement, TAKAUD will provide a complete range of services, along with tools enabling customers to identify their investment profiles. TAKAUD will also provide marketing assistance and training for Takaful agents and others who will be presenting these new investment strategies to customers.

The Memorandum of Understanding was signed by TAKAUD's CEO Luc M&Etilivier and Takaful's CEO Younis J Al Sayed, at a ceremony held recently at Takaful's Manama offices. M&Etilivier said, "TAKAUD is pleased to provide innovative Sharia-compliant investment solutions for the region's leading provider of Islamic insurance. TAKAUD's experts have created a range of investment options that respond to the needs of clients requiring growth-oriented, prudent or balanced investments. This brings innovative investment solutions together with pro-

gressive Islamic insurance products for the benefit of corporations and individuals in Bahrain and the wider region."

On signing the agreement, Al Sayed remarked that, "Takaful is a leader in providing Islamic financial products in Bahrain and the wider GCC and MENA regions. It is appropriate that we partner with a regional savings- and

investment-specialist provider to offer our clients the highest level of expertise in investment solutions. We are pleased to expand our Sharia-compliant offerings while giving our clients opportunities for better value investments. Our organizations are moving forward in tandem to provide product innovations for our clients."



CHINA MEDIA ACCUSES SOROS OF 'DECLARING WAR' ON YUAN

BEIJING: Chinese state media stepped up a salvo of biting commentaries yesterday against George Soros and other currency traders as the yuan comes under pressure, with the billionaire investor accused of "declaring war" on the unit. At the annual World Economic Forum in Davos last week Soros told Bloomberg TV that the world's second-largest economy-where growth has already slowed to a 25-year low according to official figures-was heading for more troubles.

"A hard landing is practically unavoidable," he said. Soros-whose enormous trades are still blamed in some countries for contributing to the Asian financial crisis of 1997 - pointed to deflation and excessive debt as reasons for China's slowdown. The normally stable yuan, whose value is closely controlled by Beijing, has come under pressure in recent weeks and months in overseas markets and from capital outflows, and authorities have spent hundreds of billions of dollars to defend it. China's official Xinhua news agency

yesterday said that Soros had predicted economic troubles for China "several times in the past". "Either the short-sellers haven't done their homework or... they are intentionally trying to create panic to snap profits," it said.

An English-language op-ed in the nationalistic Global Times newspaper blamed "Westerners" for not "accepting responsibility for the mess" in the world economy. The comments came after the overseas edition of the People's Daily, the official mouthpiece of the Communist party, published a front-page

article Tuesday titled "Declaring war on China's currency? Ha ha" that was widely shared on Chinese social media. Soros "publicly 'declared war' on China", the paper said, citing the 85-year-old as saying that he had taken positions against Asian currencies. But some readers questioned whether the official rhetoric could fuel Chinese investors' fears.

"They say a lot of loud slogans, but do official media even know that Chinese investors are in hell?" said one poster on China's Twitter-like Weibo. "I'm afraid that Chinese

investors will die in a stampede before Soros even shows his hand." In the 1990s Soros led speculators in bets against the Bank of England, which unsuccessfully sought to defend the pound's exchange rate peg. "The Chinese left it too long" to change their growth model from dependence on exports to a consumer-led one, Soros said, even though Beijing had "greater latitude" than others to manage such a transition because of its currency reserves, which stand at over \$3 trillion. —AFP



UAE RETAILER LULU AMONG 'TOP 25 FASTEST GROWING'

KUWAIT: The Deloitte released their 19th annual edition of Global Powers of Retailing. It identifies the 250 largest retailers around the world based on publicly available data for fiscal 2014 (encompassing companies' fiscal years ended through June 2015) and analyzes their performance based on geographic region, primary product sector, e-commerce activity and other factors. Walmart topped the list with revenue of \$485 billion in 2014, followed by Costco Wholesale Corporation and The Kroger Co., both from the US. However, UK retailer Tesco which announced its worst ever results last year in UK's biggest retail loss was pushed to 5th position.

Middle East retail major, Lulu Group is ranked as the 25th fastest growing retailer in the world and ranked 165th in the Top 250 Global Powers of Retailing while another Middle East retailer, Al Futtaim group(Carrefour) was ranked at 172nd position. Lulu which currently operates 121 hypermarkets and supermarkets across the MENA and Indian recorded an annual retail sales turnover of US\$ 5.8 billion last year, according to the report published by the National Retail Federation. Based on the robust results, LULU has been on an aggressive expansion drive announcing large investments in Egypt, Bahrain, Saudi, India, Indonesia and Malaysia to the

tune of almost US\$ 1.7 billion.

Deloitte said in its report that most emerging markets suffered as capital outflows put downward pressure on currencies. This led central banks to raise interest rates, thereby dampening growth. During this period Brazil and Russia fell into recession, but India's economy accelerated, helped by lower energy prices and an easing of monetary policy. IT also says that that despite tough economic conditions, revenues for the world's 250 largest retailers reached \$4.5 trillion in fiscal 2014, and an average size of nearly US\$18 billion per company.

Reacting to the Deloitte report, Yusuffali MA, the Chairman of Lulu group said "I am very confident of the regional retail market and like in the past, will not slow down our expansion plans. The current negative sentiments on the market are temporary phenomena and companies with strong fundamentals and long term vision will march ahead. Next two years are very crucial for us as we embark on new markets of Egypt, Malaysia, Indonesia while strengthening our presence in the GCC and India." "Online is another area where we are going to focus more. Our lululewebstore which was primarily into consumer durables and electronics is now selling groceries and food products giving multi-channel shopping experience to our shoppers"Yusuffali added.

COMPANIES LOOK BEYOND FIREWALLS IN CYBER BATTLE 'HONEYPOTS' LEAD HACKERS TO FAKE DATABASES

TEL AVIV: With firewalls no longer seen as enough of a defense against security breaches, companies are looking at new tools to foil hackers trying to enter a computer network. US and Israeli startups are leading the way, with new approaches such as "honeytraps" that lure a hacker to fake data or "polymorphic" technology that constantly changes the structure of applications running on a computer. Some of the technology is still in the early stages and it remains to be seen whether it will be good enough to outfox the hackers.

But with corporate giants such as Sony and Twitter Inc facing high-profile hacks in recent years, companies are desperate for new ideas to make sure financial, personal and corporate data stays safe. "We view this (deception technologies) as a \$3 billion market over the next three years, with Israel and Silicon Valley being the epicentre of this innovation wave," said Daniel Ives, a senior technology analyst at FBR Capital Markets. TopSpin Security, Illusive Networks, Cymmetria and GuardiCore in Israel, California-based TrapX and Attivo Networks are among a handful of start-ups forging ahead with deception technology.

Israel's Morphisec and US Shape Security are developing "polymorphic" systems. Many of those companies use techniques partly

developed in the US and Israeli military that were taken to startups by veterans such as Gadi Evron, the head of Cymmetria and of Israel's Computer Emergency Response Team. TrapX Security offers DeceptionGrid, a technology using fake information that triggers a security alert. TrapX clients include Israel's central bank, US hospital chain HCA, Bezeq, Israel's largest telecoms group, and Union Bank of Israel, according to Asaf Aviram, sales director for Israel and emergent markets at TrapX. TopSpin Chief Executive Doron Kolton said his clients include one of Israel's top five banks, a large US hospital and a mobility technology company. The product is resold by Optiv Security in the United States and Benefit in Israel.

Early days

While still a fraction of the overall cybersecurity market, Gartner, a leading technology consultancy, sees 10 percent of businesses using deception tactics by 2018. But Gartner analyst Laurence Pingree noted that they "have so far had only nascent adoption" as many of the companies don't yet understand the technology. "Educating security buyers on its usefulness will be crucial," he said. Some in the industry note that several companies including FireEye and CrowdStrike tried to launch similar products



TEL AVIV: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (4th from left) meets with managers of cyber-technology companies during the International Cybertech conference in the coastal city of Tel Aviv. — AFP

three or four years ago before pulling back although analysts say the technologies have improved greatly in the past two years. "A lot of companies are looking at it but it's still early days," said a security executive with a Fortune 500 company.

He said deployments were quite limited,

with most trials where business test the product on a limited basis at no cost. Others said hackers may quickly be able to detect the traps. "They will be challenged by the fact that (some) hackers are so sophisticated they might detect decoy servers or fake data," said Ziv Mador, head of research at Chicago-

based cybersecurity firm Trustwave. The technology could offer a second layer of defense to firewalls, which cannot always block malicious attempts, he said, and did not rule out Trustwave offering deception tools in the future. TopSpin's Kolton also noted that deception would be "part of a bigger solution" and to "be combined with other things".

Trail of breadcrumbs

The system developed by TopSpin, whose investors include Check Point Software Technologies co-founder Shlomo Kramer, engages attackers once they have penetrated the network. It leads hackers to decoys by sprinkling "breadcrumbs", such as fake credentials. While the idea of a honeypot is not new, in the past they were used to alert IT administrators that there was a hacker in the system. With more advanced technology they slow the hacker and set off tools to stop them getting further into the system. If they follow the trail to the trap, the company knows they are a hacker. "When someone hits a honeypot it's malicious activity," Kolton said. Attivo's website says their system lures attackers into revealing themselves when they start to look for "high-value assets". It also promises no false-alarms, a problem with traditional detection systems. — Reuters

YAHOO JAPAN DEFENDS ONLINE IVORY SALES; CRITICISM GROWS

TOKYO: Yahoo Japan said yesterday it is strengthening policing of illegal ivory on its online commerce site as criticism grows it is supporting a trade that fuels the slaughter of wild elephants. A spokeswoman for the company said it prohibits sales of raw ivory and ivory products that breach a 1989 treaty largely banning the trade. Enforcement a challenge since Japan allows the sale of old ivory such as ornaments that were produced before the treaty came into effect. "Since there is a chance some sales may be illegal we are strengthening our policies. If we find a sale was illegal we cancel it straight away," Takako Kaminaga of Yahoo Japan's public relations office said. "We 'patrol' 24 hours a day."

She said Yahoo Japan, which is part owned by Yahoo Inc. and Softbank Corp., does not restrict sales of ivory that do not violate the law. Nearly 1.1 million people have endorsed an online petition by environmental groups aimed at pushing Yahoo Japan to stop its sales of ivory products. Various other online commerce sites, such as Amazon, say they have already stopped such sales or advertising. Raw ivory is sought after for making ornate traditional seals and other decorative items. Poachers kill tens of thousands of elephants a year to meet demand for the material, despite the trade ban, according to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species and other groups.

A Washington, DC-based conservation group, Environmental Investigation Agency, said late last year that it had found loopholes and weaknesses in Japan's ivory controls. The

group also said that the Yahoo Japan Auctions site sold more than 12 tons of ivory products, including whole elephant tusks, in 2012-2014. That site and others feature thousands of ads for ivory and ivory products. The international environmental campaign group Avaaz addressed its petition to Yahoo CEO Marissa Mayer and Manabu Miyasaka, CEO of Yahoo Japan, and "all other companies allowing ivory sales online."

"As global citizens, we are appalled that you allow ivory to be sold on your site/platform, fuelling elephant extinction," it says. "We call on you to urgently stop all ivory sales from sites/platforms in Japan and all other markets." Softbank said in a statement that it had no comment on the issue. Kaminaga, of Yahoo Japan, said the company was in touch with the Environment Ministry and other agencies on the issue and with Yahoo and other shareholders. "You can't say there's absolutely no intention to change," she said when asked if Yahoo Japan might alter its stance on the issue.

In September, the United States and China agreed to work toward nearly complete bans on the ivory trade, and Japan is increasingly isolated in its stance favoring continued sales. EIA, the conservation group, contends that widespread use of fake documents has enabled traders to "legalize" more than 1,000 tusks a year since 2011. Individually owned tusks face no registration requirement in Japan, and the tusks are not marked in any way to ensure that the documents are valid for the items being registered. — AP



PARIS: An employee of the French tourist agency '4 roues sous un parapluie' (4 wheels under an umbrella), drives a Citroen 2CV electric car past the Eiffel tower in Paris. — AFP

IN COAL-POWERED CHINA, ELECTRIC CAR SURGE FUELS FEAR OF WORSENING SMOG AUTOMAKERS BULLISH ON GREEN CAR PROSPECTS

BEIJING: Automakers' latest projections for rapid growth of China's green car market have added to concerns of worsening smog as the uptake of electric vehicles powered by coal-fired grids races ahead of a switch to cleaner energy. Volkswagen AG plans 15 new-energy models over 3-5 years, its China chief told a green car conference in Beijing on Saturday, predicting - like the government - that Chinese production of electric and plug-in hybrid vehicles would grow almost six times to 2 million annually by 2020.

At the same event, BYD Co Ltd's chairman told media that the Chinese automaker's electric vehicle sales would double in each of the next three years. The government has been promoting electric vehicles to cut the smog that frequently envelops Chinese cities, helping sales quadruple last year and making China the biggest market, the finance minister said at the conference. Less than 1 percent of passenger cars are now new energy, but the pace of growth raises their potential to worsen smog.

A series of studies by Tsinghua University, whose alumni includes the incumbent president, showed electric vehicles charged in China produce two to five times as much particulate matter and chemicals that contribute to smog versus petrol-engine cars. Hybrid vehicles fare little better. "International experience

shows that cleaning up the air doesn't need to rely on electric vehicles," said Los Angeles-based An Feng, director of the Innovation Center for Energy and Transportation. "Clean up the power plants." China plans to convert the grid to renewable fuel or clean-coal technology as part of efforts to cut carbon emissions by 60 percent by 2020.

That will speed the green impact of electric vehicles, said environmental science professor Huo Hong at the elite Tsinghua university. But that goal will be "really difficult to achieve." Tsinghua's studies call into question the wisdom of aggressively promoting vehicles which the university said could not be considered environmentally friendly for at least a decade in many areas of China unless grid reform accelerates. China's industry, environment and science ministries, which devise most new energy vehicle policies, did not respond to requests for comment. BYD and Volkswagen declined to immediately comment.

Policy mismatch

To promote new-energy vehicles, the government has offered various incentives in recent years including tax breaks, and set targets such as having 5 million new-energy vehicles on the road by 2020 - more than 8 times the current number. Authorities in some cities

particularly affected by smog have gone further. Beijing and Tianjin, for instance, have exempted new-energy vehicles from limits on the number of new cars granted licence plates, and exempted them from driving restrictions that other cars face on certain days of the week. This month, the industrial Hebei province decreed that all new residential complexes must have car-charging facilities. In western Beijing, 62-year-old retired truck and taxi driver Zhang Zhijun bought a BYD Tang hybrid last month and plans to trade in his petrol-engine Toyota Corolla for an electric car for short rides like taking his grandson to school. "Right now smog is very heavy in China. This way, if everyone does their part, it will definitely cut down on pollution," Zhang said.

But Beijing, Tianjin and Hebei are all more than 90 percent reliant on coal for energy, Tsinghua's research showed. Huo and academics point out that, at the very least, the proliferation of electric vehicles pushes more sources of pollution away from heavily populated urban centers. Whatever the impact, Qin Lihong, president of startup electric automaker NextEV, said cleaning the grid would be the quickest route to clear skies. "It's much easier for society to make hundreds of power plants better than change the hundreds of millions of cars in thousands of cities," he said. — Reuters



COLOMBO: Secretary General of CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species) John E Scanlon holds part of a cache of 'blood ivory' before it was destroyed in the Sri Lankan capital Colombo. Sri Lanka destroyed 359 pieces of ivory seized at the Colombo port in May 2012 while being illegally transported to Dubai from Kenya via Colombo. — AFP

BT CONNECT INTELLIGENCE IWAN LAUNCHED GLOBALLY

DUBAI: BT yesterday announced the global launch of BT Connect Intelligence IWAN, an innovative managed service that enables organizations to automatically route and optimize network traffic and gain visibility of applications performance without spending more on bandwidth. BT Connect Intelligence IWAN integrates the Cisco Intelligent WAN (IWAN) solution into the BT Connect portfolio of network services. The new launch builds on BT's existing intelligent network capabilities by using a hybrid environment and managed Software Defined Wide Area Network (SD-WAN) technology. It brings new options to reduce the cost of customers' networks whilst securing the performance of applications.

The services offered as part of Connect Intelligence IWAN also help customers reap the business benefits of the 'Cloud of Clouds' by taking advantage of broader virtualized functions such as application performance management and security. Walgreens Boots Alliance's businesses in the UK and in around 20 other countries are set to be some of the first BT Connect

Intelligence IWAN customers, taking advantage of the service's reach and scalability to support their international operations.

The first version of Connect Intelligence IWAN will bring the following benefits to BT customers: Virtual Private Network (VPN) capabilities across globally dispersed sites and different transport technologies. This enables organizations to reduce costs by securely interconnecting remote sites over hybrid network options, such as MPLS VPNs, private and public internet, and mobile, and to transfer information using powerful encryption technology; Applications are routed across the best path in the customer's hybrid network, based on real-time network performance; Faster performance for applications, which will improve productivity and user experience. It will also identify underperforming business processes. This includes acceleration of web based traffic such as online catalogues shown to customers in retail stores, or access to employee training videos;

Enhanced application visibility and analytics, available via centralized, user

friendly reporting, which gives customers deep insight into their application and network performance. This will also allow BT to enhance its monitoring and incident management service to customers. In addition, BT offers customers a fully managed IWAN service which includes comprehensive design, set-up and configuration. It also includes monthly reports from an Application Specialist on how their network and applications are performing, with recommendations on how to improve performance.

BT sees IWAN as one of the key stepping stones for customers when transitioning to future Network Function Virtualization (NFV) and SDN capabilities. BT is also working to provide customers with a comprehensive self-service capability to control their SD-WAN via BT's My Account portal. Keith Langridge, vice president of network services, BT Global Services said: "BT has been leading the research into emerging virtualization technologies from the beginning. For years, we have also been adding 'intelligence' to the network services we provide to our customers.

CISCO HELPS BUSINESSES TO ADDRESS 'SHADOW IT' 'YOU CAN'T MANAGE WHAT YOU CAN'T SEE'

KUWAIT: Shadow IT is rampant. For years, CIOs have known that business groups were circumventing the IT department to access public cloud services they felt they needed to do their jobs. Only recently have CIOs begun to realize the full extent of the cloud sprawl across their organizations and the pitfalls for their business. To help CIOs manage their shadow IT issues, Cisco is launching Cloud Consumption as a Service-a new software-as-a-service product that discovers and monitors public cloud services an organization is using.

Recent analysis by Cisco reveals the extent of the shadow IT challenge. The average large enterprise now uses 1,220 individual public cloud services. That's up to 25 times more than estimated by IT. And the average number of public cloud services has grown 112 percent over the past year, and 67 percent over the past six months. Even worse, there are significant business risks associated with uncontrolled adoption of public cloud services. These range from regulatory compliance and

data protection, to business continuity, cost and service performance. That's where Cisco Cloud Consumption as a Service comes into play. The primary function of the new service is to discover and continually monitor public cloud use across an organization. When combined with detailed analytics and benchmarking from Cisco, this insight helps businesses reduce security risks and better understand and manage costs. This helps IT team to partner more effectively with business groups and make educated decision about the right cloud services for the business. To help customers understand how cloud governance can be simplified, Cisco is offering a free 30-day trial.

Supporting Quote

"Organizations are facing an explosion in cloud use as business teams are going around the IT department to use public cloud services that they feel will help their business. This, in turn, is creating a huge challenge for IT leaders as the risks from

security and compliance to data protection and business continuity increases. Cisco's Cloud Consumption as a Service offering gives CIOs better visibility and insight into what services are being used and what they can do to control them. It helps our customers mitigate cloud risks, uncover redundant services to reduce costs, and compare providers and benchmark usage. Ultimately, it helps organizations strategically manage their cloud use and gain insight into their cloud roadmap." Ziad Salameh, Managing Director & General Manager Gulf, Levant & Pakistan and Middle East Services Leader, Cisco.

Price and Availability

The new Cisco Cloud Consumption as a Service is now available globally via qualified Cisco channel partners. The new service is currently priced at approximately \$1 to \$2 dollars per employee per month, depending on the size of the business. Interested customers can contact sales-cloudconsumption@cisco.com.

HEALTH MINISTER: BRAZIL IS ‘LOSING BATTLE’ AGAINST MOSQUITO

RIO DE JANEIRO: Brazil's health minister says the country is sending some 220,000 troops to battle the mosquito blamed for spreading a virus suspected of causing birth defects - but he also says the war is already being lost. Marcelo Castro said that nearly 220,000 members of Brazil's Armed Forces would go door-to-door to help in mosquito eradication efforts ahead of the country's Carnival celebrations. Agency spokesman Nivaldo Coelho said Tuesday details of the deployment are still being worked out.

Castro also said the government would distribute mosquito repellent to some

400,000 pregnant women who receive cash-transfer benefits. But the minister also said the country has failed in efforts against the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito that transmits Zika, dengue, chikungunya and yellow fever.

"The mosquito has been here in Brazil for three decades, and we are badly losing the battle against the mosquito," the ministers told reporters as a crisis group on Zika was meeting in the capital, Brasilia.

Virus' symptoms

A massive eradication effort eliminated *Aedes aegypti* from Brazil during the 1950s,



BRAZIL: A health worker shows larvae of the *Aedes aegypti* mosquitoes found inside a warehouse during an operation to combat the mosquitoes that transmits the Zika virus in Recife, Pernambuco state, Brazil. — AP

but the mosquito slowly returned over the following decades from neighboring nations, public health experts have said. That led to outbreaks of dengue, which was recorded in record numbers last year. The arrival of Zika in Brazil last year initially caused little alarm, as the virus' symptoms are generally much milder than those of dengue. It didn't become a crisis until late in the year, when researchers made the link with a dramatic increase in reported cases of microcephaly, a rare birth defect that sees babies born with unusually small heads and can cause lasting developmental problems.

The World Health Organization repeated Tuesday that the link remains circumstantial and is not yet proven scientifically. But worry about the rapid spread of Zika has expanded across the nation, and the hemisphere beyond. The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has advised pregnant women to reconsider travel to Brazil and 21 other countries and territories with Zika outbreaks.

One of them, the US territory of Puerto Rico, reported 18 new confirmed cases of Zika on Tuesday, though none involve pregnant women. One case had been reported earlier. Officials in El Salvador, Colombia and Brazil have suggested women stop getting pregnant until the crisis has passed. Repellent has disappeared from many Brazilian pharmacies and prices for the product have tripled or even quadrupled where it's still available in recent weeks since the government announced a suspected link between Zika virus and microcephaly. Nearly 4,000 suspected cases of microcephaly have been reported in Brazil since October, compared with fewer than 150 cases in the country in all of 2014.



BRAZIL: A health worker stands in the Sambadrome as he sprays insecticide to combat the *Aedes aegypti* mosquitoes that transmits the Zika virus in Rio de Janeiro.

Important position

Castro's remarks have proven controversial, both in and outside Brazil. World Health Organization spokesman Christian Lindmeier said he hadn't seen the remarks, "but in general terms I think that this would be a bit of a fatalistic approach because this should mean we could lay down all our approaches now and declare the war lost. 'I don't think this is the case,' he added at WHO headquarters, in Geneva. In Brazil, some called for Castro to be fired.

"He is incapable of occupying his position," wrote Helio Gurovitz, a columnist with

G1, the internet portal of the Globo television network. "To prove that Castro doesn't have the capacity to occupy such an important position, at such a delicate moment with the spread of the epidemic, all that's needed is a selection of such comments." Both Brazil's Zika outbreak and the spike in microcephaly have been concentrated in the poor and underdeveloped northeast of the country, though the prosperous southeast, where Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro are located, are the second hardest-hit region. Rio de Janeiro will host the Aug 5-21 Olympic games. — AP

US BOOSTS STUDY OF ZIKA, BIRTH DEFECT LINK, AS VIRUS SEEN SPREADING

HEALTH EXPERTS STILL HAVE MUCH TO LEARN ABOUT ZIKA INFECTIONS

CHICAGO: US health officials are stepping up efforts to study the link between Zika virus infections and birth defects in infants amid predictions for widespread circulation of the mosquito-borne virus within the United States during warmer months. The Director of the National Institutes of Health on Tuesday called for intensified efforts to study the impact of Zika infections, citing a recent study estimating the virus could reach regions where 60 percent of the US population lives.

The mosquito-borne virus has been linked to brain damage in thousands of babies in Brazil. There is no vaccine or treatment for Zika, a close cousin of dengue and chikungunya, which causes mild fever and rash. An estimated 80 percent of people infected have no symptoms, making it difficult for pregnant women to know whether they have been infected. On Monday, the World Health Organization predicted the virus would spread to all countries across the Americas except for Canada and Chile.

In a blog post, NIH Director Dr Francis Collins cited a Lancet study published Jan 14 in which researchers predicted the Zika virus could be spread in areas along the East and West Coasts of the United States and much of the Midwest during warmer months, where about 200 million people live. The study also showed that 22.7 million more people live in humid parts of the country where mosquitoes carrying the virus could live year round.

Newborn babies

Given the threat, Collins said "it is now critically important to confirm, through careful epidemiological and animal studies, whether or not a causal link

exists between Zika virus infections in pregnant women and microcephaly in their newborn babies." Microcephaly results in babies being born with abnormally small heads.

There is still much to learn about Zika infections, experts said. For example, it is not clear how common Zika infections are in pregnant women, or when during a pregnancy a woman is most at risk of transmitting the virus to her fetus. Collins said the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Disease is conducting studies to more fully understand the effects of Zika in humans, and to develop better diagnostic tests to quickly determine if someone has been infected. The NIAID is also working on testing new drugs that might be effective against the virus.

The blog post was followed by the announcement on Tuesday of new guidelines from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention providing instructions for pediatricians treating infants whose mothers may have been exposed to the virus during pregnancy. In those guidelines, the CDC made clear that it considers the Zika virus a nationally notifiable condition, and instructs doctors to contact their state or territorial health departments to facilitate testing of potentially infected infants.

Dr Kathryn Edwards of Vanderbilt University, who serves on the American Academy of Pediatrics' committee on infectious disease, said the guidelines were intended to help establish whether Zika causes microcephaly and to help pregnant women who may have been infected with the virus. Microcephaly is a lifelong condition with no known cure, the CDC website said. Symptoms range from mild to severe. In mild cases, infants often have no symptoms other than small

head size, but doctors still need to check their development regularly. In severe cases, babies may need speech, occupational and physical therapy.

Pregnant women

The guidelines for testing infants affected by Zika infections follows CDC guidelines for caring for pregnant women exposed to Zika virus, which were first reported by Reuters. The CDC said last week it is trying to determine how many pregnant women may have traveled to affected regions in the past several months. On Tuesday, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention added the US Virgin Islands and the Dominican Republic to its list of countries and territories with Zika transmissions, bringing the total to 24.

Travel companies, including United Airlines, have begun offering refunds or allowing pregnant women to postpone trips to regions affected by Zika with no penalty. There are no global estimates for how many people in the world have been infected by the Zika virus, World Health Organization spokesman Christian Lindmeier said on Tuesday. He said that because Zika has such mild symptoms, the virus has "not really been on the radar."

Lindmeier said it was not yet clear whether the virus affecting Brazil and other countries in Latin America and the Caribbean was a mutated version of the virus that has caused prior outbreaks. He said the WHO was working with the CDC, the Institut Pasteur in France and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine to establish that. "There is a lot of effort going into this now, on the ground, in the laboratories, everywhere," Lindmeier said. — Reuters

HEALTH SYSTEM CRISIS IS KILLING VENEZUELAN

CARACAS: Venezuelan opposition lawmakers on Tuesday charged President Nicolas Maduro's government with allowing the country's health care system to sink into decay so severe it has left many to die. The opposition-controlled National Assembly said that blanket shortages of medications and medical supplies affected 90 percent of the population in "the worst crisis in (the system's) history." Lawmakers also said the lack of drugs and supplies was linked to "the deaths of Venezuelans," urging Maduro to declare a health care emergency and to guarantee citizens access to basic medicines.

The accusations come days after opposition lawmakers rejected Maduro's bid to decree a state of economic emergency over what the president called the "catastrophic" state of Venezuela's economy. The Latin American country has the world's biggest known crude oil reserves, but a 70 percent plunge in crude prices over the past year and a half has slashed public revenues. In a legislative hearing on Tuesday, citizens Richard Medina and John Perez told how they recently lost their son to cancer and mother to heart disease because there were no drugs unavailable to treat them. Opposition lawmaker Dinorah Figueroa slammed Maduro for not addressing issues with the health system in his recent state of the union address. The lawmakers also criticized what they said were lack of sufficient hospital beds and high turnover among health ministers-three in the past five years. And they suggested Maduro's

government hid important information about recent malaria, dengue, chikungunya and Zika epidemics from the public, leaving Venezuelans "without adequate preparation". Maduro's allies in the assembly put forward their own proposal that doctors spend 20 percent of their time working pro bono to solve the crisis, although the measure did not get approved.

Opposition lawmakers last week rejected Maduro's bid to decree a state of economic emergency, deepening the tense political standoff that has seen Venezuela hit with shortages of food and goods. The decree would have given the president special powers to commandeer private companies' resources, impose currency controls and other unspecified measures. But the opposition speaker of the congress, Henry Ramos Allup, said it would be "irresponsible for the National Assembly to blindly approve a decree of such magnitude, scope and implications".

The same day, Venezuela's central bank released its first economic growth and inflation statistics in more than a year showing the economy shrank 4.5 percent in the first nine months of 2015. Annualized inflation in September hit a painful 141.5 percent, fueled by crippling shortages. Analysts say the political deadlock threatens to worsen the hardship that drove voters to hand the opposition a landslide election victory last month. They have warned of the risk of a repeat of violent street clashes that left 43 people dead in 2014. — AFP



RUSSIA: A woman wearing a face mask walks in a Metro station in Moscow yesterday. — AFP

DOUBLE FLU BLOW FORCES SAINT PETERSBURG SCHOOL CLOSURES

SAINT PETERSBURG: An outbreak of swine flu has claimed some 22 lives in Russia's second city Saint Petersburg and combined with high rates of seasonal flu to force authorities to close schools and send residents flocking to pharmacies. Saint Petersburg has recorded the highest number of swine flu deaths in an outbreak that has claimed some 80 victims nationwide since the start of the winter, according to AFP calculations based on statements by regional officials. Authorities say there are treating some 12,000 people with flu symptoms every day and up to 80 percent of these cases could be swine flu, also known as the H1N1 virus.

To stop regular flu and the H1N1 virus from spreading, the city's primary schools will be closed for two weeks from February 1, and some parents have already taken action. "I don't want to take any risks," said Lyubov Anikanova, who has refused to send her daughter to school over fears she could catch the flu. "We are hearing that swine flu is very dangerous this year." Russian officials have tried to downplay the seriousness of the outbreak with health minister Veronika Skvortsova saying Monday that the swine flu situation in the country was "completely under control."

The country's top doctor said on Tuesday that the recent uptick in flu figures was not out of the ordinary. "The incidence of flu is above average in some regions," the country's top doctor, Anna Popova, told Interfax news agency. "But overall the number of cases does not exceed the average over many years."

Rush at the drugstore

Despite the assurance from officials the recent uptick in flu figures was not out of the ordinary, Saint Petersburg head to drugstores to stock up on medication and masks, emptying the shelves of pharmacies across town. Some chemists have now already run-out of prescription flu medication and other flu-season essentials. "We haven't had many popular medications for a week now," said pharmacist Natalia Selezneva. Health authorities have pledged to restock pharmacies with 100,000 masks and flu medication to face increasing demand. "I would like to resist the panic," 67-year-old pensioner Maya Yakovleva told AFP. "But right now, the flu is everyone's favorite topic: where to buy (medicine), the number of people who have died. It seems this is all we talk about." — AFP

FEDERAL PAIN PANEL RIFE WITH LINKS TO PHARMA COMPANIES

WASHINGTON: Nearly a third of the members on a government panel that made headlines by calling an effort to curb overprescribing of OxyContin and other painkillers "horrible," have drug-industry ties. The Interagency Pain Research Coordinating Committee is a government advisory panel of federal scientists, outside academics and patient representatives. Of the 18 committee members at a recent meeting to discuss government handling of pain issues, at least five had financial connections to painkiller manufacturers.

One, a pain specialist from Duke University, has received thousands of dollars in payments from drug-makers, including OxyContin-maker Purdue Pharma and Teva Pharmaceuticals, which sells generic painkillers. Another, a patient advocate, holds a nonprofit position created by a \$1.5 million donation by Purdue. The revelation comes after the committee last month bashed a federal plan to recommend doctors scale back on prescribing painkillers for chronic pain. The guidelines by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention are intended to curb deadly overdoses tied to highly-addictive opioid drugs, including Percocet and Vicodin.

Federal staff

At the time, various committee members called the proposal "ridiculous," "horrible," and "shortsighted." A week later, the CDC said it would seek more public input on its guidelines - which were largely written behind closed doors. The apparent conflicts of interest on the panel underscore the pervasive reach of pharmaceutical-industry dollars, even among federal advisers who

are supposed to be carefully vetted for such connections before serving. Financial payments from drugmakers have been shown to shape doctors' medical decisions and researchers' conclusions. Concerns about that influence led the federal government to begin posting drug-industry payments to doctors in 2014.

Industry critics say the panelists should have disclosed their financial ties publicly at the meeting on Dec 3, and in some cases, recused themselves from the discussion. Dr Michael Carome of Public Citizen, a consumer watchdog group that is not connected to the panel, said the conflicts "reflect failings of the federal staff" who vetted the panelists. "It corrupted the process, or gives the perception of corrupting the process," he said. A spokeswoman for the Department of Health and Human Services said in a statement

that all current members of the panel "have met the criteria for membership, including disclosure requirements."

The National Institutes of Health, where the panel convenes, said it cannot release the financial disclosure forms completed by the panelists, even under the Freedom of Information Act. "This is exactly the type of information that should be made available to the public," said DrAndrew Kolodny, co-founder of Physicians for Responsible Opioid Prescribing, which advocates reducing painkiller use. The group is backed by Phoenix House, a network of rehabilitation clinics. One committee member who led the criticism of the CDC guidelines was Dr Richard Payne of Duke University. At the Dec 3 meeting, Payne questioned whether the experts who had helped draft the CDC guidelines

may have been disproportionately biased against drug therapy. "Were there any conflicts of interest - beyond just financial - but conflicts of interests in terms of biases, intellectual conflicts that needed to be disclosed?" Payne asked.

Specific donation

But Payne himself has financial links to multiple drug companies. Between 2013 and 2014 he received more than \$8,660 in speaking fees, meals, travel accommodations and other payments from pain drugmakers, according to federal records. More than half of that amount came from Purdue Pharma, whose long-acting painkiller, OxyContin, had sales over \$2.5 billion in 2014. Payne said in an interview with the Associated Press that as a professor, he does not regularly treat patients or prescribe medications.

"I've disclosed the educational activities I've done and who paid for them," he said. Payne also holds a chair at the Center for Practical Bioethics, a Kansas City nonprofit with longstanding ties to Purdue, Teva, Endo Pharmaceuticals and other drugmakers. In total, the Center for Practical Bioethics says drug and device companies have contributed about 4 to 5 percent of its funding in the last four years, though the center does not publish specific donation amounts. The center also employs another panelist, Myra Christopher, who took the lead in outlining how the committee should respond to the CDC guidelines, saying "we have sufficient concerns about the work that's been done and the negative impact it will have on our charge and mission; we would ask them to delay their timeline." — AP



MONTPELIER, Vermont: This file photo, shows OxyContin pills arranged for a photo at a pharmacy in Montpelier, Vt. — AP

FACE VALUE: HOW FERTILE WOMEN SPOT RIVALS

PARIS: It is not only animals that rely on physical cues to gauge the fertility of potential rivals for a mate, an unusual study asserted yesterday. Without knowing it, human women seem to be able to recognize others in the most fertile phase of their menstrual cycle, around ovulation, simply by looking at their faces, it said. And intriguingly, this ability was pronounced in women with high levels of oestradiol, a female sex hormone linked to high general fertility.

The findings implied that more fertile women, who are likely to have more children in their lifetime, "are better at guarding their mate from potential adultery," study co-author Janek Lobmaier of the University of

Bern told AFP. The paper was published in the Royal Society Journal Biology Letters. Previous research had shown that men prefer portraits of women taken around the ovulation period over those of the same women in a non-fertile phase.

Few studies, if any, have tested whether women too can discern such cyclical facial differences. Lobmaier and a team showed pairs of photographs of women-one taken in the most fertile and one in the least fertile phase of their menstrual cycle-to over 200 other women, some in an online survey and others in the lab. Unlike men, women did not find the faces in the portraits more or less attractive depending on when they were

photographed, the team found.

Subtle, but detectable

Overall, they also did not suspect either version to be more likely to "entice your date away from you", as the question was phrased. But looking at a subgroup of respondents for whom the team had data on naturally-occurring hormone levels, the team found an interesting trend. Those who were not ovulating but had high oestradiol levels were more likely to pick the photo of an ovulatory woman as a potential date thief.

"One explanation for our findings might be that ovulatory women (who are currently fertile) pose a greater threat to women with

high oestradiol levels (who are currently not fertile but have a high potential fertility)," said Lobmaier. The study did not test the potential influence of naturally fluctuating oestradiol levels. Many animals send conspicuous signals to indicate fertility-using plumage, colouring, scent or a special call.

"In humans, these changes are not obvious, so many researchers have suggested that ovulation is concealed in humans," said Lobmaier. "But there is accumulating evidence that there are subtle changes in human females that are not obvious, but they can still be detected."

Women are fertile for a relatively short period of their menstrual cycle-a few days

before and the day of ovulation. As with animals, it is theorized that if men can detect this window, it boosts their ability to spread their genes. "For women, there is perhaps no direct advantage to detect fertility in other women's faces, but their might be indirect benefits, for example by making sure her own partner does not commit adultery," said Lobmaier. The women in the study were not told its purpose. Lobmaier said the effects of this evolutionary ability were probably a "really, really, really small" part of human behavior. "They are interesting from an evolutionary point of view, but how big the influence is on our daily lives we can't really say." — AFP

'DOOMSDAY CLOCK' REFLECTS GRAVE THREAT TO WORLD

'UNLESS WE CHANGE THE WAY WE THINK, HUMANITY REMAINS IN DANGER'

STANFORD, California: Rising tension between Russia and the US, North Korea's recent nuclear test and a lack of aggressive steps to address climate change are putting the world under grave threat, scientists behind a "Doomsday Clock" that measures the likelihood of a global cataclysm said Tuesday. The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists announced that the minute hand on the metaphorical clock remained at three minutes-to-midnight. The clock reflects how vulnerable the world is to catastrophe from nuclear weapons, climate change and new technologies, with midnight symbolizing apocalypse.

"Unless we change the way we think, humanity remains in serious danger," said Lawrence Krauss, chair of the bulletin's Board of Sponsors. Krauss said the Iran nuclear agreement and Paris climate accord were good news. But the good news was offset by nuclear threats, including tension between nuclear-armed states India and Pakistan, and uncertainty that the Paris accord will lead to concrete action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Climate change

The scientists behind the bulletin adjusted the clock from five minutes-to-midnight to three minutes-to-midnight last year. They cited climate change, modernization of nuclear weapons and out-sized nuclear weapons arsenals as "extraordinary and undeniable threats to the continued existence of humanity." The clock was previously at three minutes-to-midnight in 1984, when the bulletin said talks between the US and Russia virtually stopped. From a climate change perspective, if midnight on the clock represents the disappearance of humanity, three minutes-to-midnight is overly dire, said Michael Oppenheimer, a professor of geosciences



STOCKHOLM: In this file photo, Climate scientist Richard Somerville, member, Science and Security Board, Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, right, unveils the new "Doomsday Clock," accompanied by Sivan Kartha, member, Science and Security Board, Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists and senior scientists at the Stockholm Environmental Institute. — AP

and international affairs at Princeton University who is not affiliated with the bulletin.

On the other hand, Oppenheimer said if midnight means humans have emitted so much greenhouse gas that dangerous climate change is inevitable, then three minutes is a "fair analysis." "I

think the jury is out as to whether the Paris agreement will make a significant difference," he said. "The key is whether countries over the next couple of years are able to agree on some important details that were left out." Michael Shermer, publisher of Skeptic magazine examining social and scientific controversies, said in an email that the Doomsday clock is "an exercise in pessimism and PR with little connection to the reality of moral progress made in the past half century." Shermer cited reductions in the number of nuclear weapons since the 1980s and the absence of war between Europe's great powers since World War II.

Tipping points

California Gov Jerry Brown joined former US Secretary of State George Shultz and former US Secretary of Defense William Perry for a discussion at Stanford University after the unveiling of the clock. Perry raised concerns about rhetoric from Russia about the use of nuclear weapons and said the threat of nuclear disaster was greater today than during the Cold War. Shultz said the US needs to engage Russia and China. Brown warned about "tipping points" in the fight against climate change. "And around a tipping point, we may not be able to come back to a stable planet or one we'll find very comfortable to live in," he said. The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists was founded in 1945 by University of Chicago scientists who helped develop the first atomic weapons. The clock was created two years later. — AP

SRI LANKA DESTROYS GIANT ILLEGAL IVORY HAUL

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka's government on Tuesday destroyed its biggest ever illegal ivory haul in the first public crushing of poached tusks in South Asia, intended to send a stark message to smugglers. The international trade in ivory has been banned in most of the world since 1989, but illegal smuggling persists in many parts of Asia where ivory is highly prized for medicinal and decorative uses. Sri Lanka said it was sending a strong message by destroying the haul, more than 350 tusks weighing about 1.5 tons that were displayed at the Galle Face promenade in the capital before being fed into a crusher to be sent to an industrial furnace.

The haul, which came from African elephants slaughtered for their tusks, was seized at Colombo's port nearly four years ago en route to Dubai. "There are some very small tusks which would have come from baby elephants," Colombo Customs Director Udayantha Liyanage told reporters. "We are trying to demonstrate that there is no value for blood ivory... It is horribly cruel and the elephants suffer for about a week before they die," he said.

Blood ivory is a term used by activists to describe tusks that are obtained illegally by slaughtering elephants. The ivory came from northern Mozambique and Tanzania and transited through Kenya to Sri Lanka on the way to the United Arab Emirates, said Secretary General of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), John E Scanlon. Scanlon, who was present for the destruction, said Sri Lanka's action demonstrated it will not tolerate the illegal trade.

"This shows the effectiveness of Sri Lankan customs in detecting this contraband in transit," he said. The number of African elephants killed for their tusks peaked in 2011, according to CITES, with about 30,000 ani-

mals slaughtered. However, he said many African nations were cracking down on the illegal trade and that as a result, blood ivory was becoming a low-profit, high-risk venture for smugglers.

Symbol of prosperity

The organizers observed a two-minute silence for the slain elephants before Buddhist, Hindu, Christian and Muslim leaders performed funeral rites for the animals. Customs director Liyanage detected the container, holding 359 pieces of ivory in May 2012, while it was in transit at the Colombo port. The container had been falsely labeled as storing plastic waste. Officials confiscated the ivory in line with CITES regulations, which have prohibited the transport of and trade in ivory since 1989, Liyanage said.

Sri Lanka's Finance Minister Ravi Karunanayake said the government had resisted pressure to hand over at least part of the contraband to Buddhist temples, which display tusks as a symbol of prosperity. "I congratulate the wildlife minister (Gamini Jayawickrama Perera) for resisting this pressure and going ahead with the ivory crushing," Karunanayake said. The illegal trade in ivory from African elephants is driven by Asian and Middle Eastern demand for their tusks, which are used in ornaments and medicines.

Most Sri Lankan elephants do not have tusks and the animals are venerated and protected by law. However, nearly 200 elephants are killed each year by villagers after accidentally straying onto farmland, while the animals themselves also kill about 50 people each year. Sri Lanka's elephant population has reduced to just over 7,000, according to a census five years ago, down from a population of over 12,000 at the start of the 20th century. — AFP

MIGRAINES MAY WORSEN BEFORE MENOPAUSE

NEW YORK: High-frequency migraine headaches, which occur at least 10 days a month, are more common in women during the transition to menopause, according to a new study. "For years women have been telling me as a headache doctor that their headaches worsen in perimenopause," but it hadn't been directly studied, said lead author Dr Vincent T Martin of the University of Cincinnati College of Medicine and co-director of the Headache and Facial Pain Program at the UC Neuroscience Institute.

Symptoms like hot flashes, irritability, insomnia and depression may start during the hormonal changes of perimenopause, when periods become irregular, but menopause does not officially begin until periods have stopped for one year. "Since the average age of menopause is 51 to 52, and the average transition is five to 10 years, women may see a worsening of their

migraines as early as 42 to 47 years old if they are going to have an average-age menopause," said North American Menopause Society executive director Dr JoAnn V Pinkerton. "The variability for normal menopause is 45 to 55, so women could see an intensification before or after that time."

Changes in brain chemicals may cause blood vessels to swell or dilate, putting pressure on nearby nerves and structures and causing a migraine, Pinkerton told Reuters Health by email. "Hormonal fluctuations appear to act as triggers for migraines, although the actual mechanism is not known," said Pinkerton, who was not part of the new study. Martin and his coauthors used data from a 2006 survey of more than 3,000 women ages 35 to 65 who experienced migraines before and during menopause and who self-reported headache symptoms and details of their menstrual cycles. — Reuters

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Destruction of Forfeited Ivory in Sri Lanka

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Kuwait Times

248 33 199



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EMBASSY OF JAPAN HOLDS EXHIBITION ON JAPANESE PHOTOGRAPHY

The Embassy of Japan in the state of Kuwait organized the contemporary Japanese photography exhibition in cooperation with DAI, KNCCAL, and Japan Foundation. The opening ceremony of the exhibition took place on Saturday January 23, 2016 at Al-Yarmouk Cultural Center. It contained 76 photographs by 23 photographers, which shows the myriad changes that took place in Japan between the period of rapid economic growth and the early 21st century. The exhibition will last until Friday, January 29th.



PALMS FADI ANDARI WINS KICK BOXING AND FITNESS TITLES

Palms Health Club Manager Fadi Andari won the Asian Championship for pro Kick boxing which was held in the Thai capital Bangkok. In the Second tournament which focused on Fitness and bodybuilding world championship, the champ Andari won the best natural body fitness and bodybuilding title to become the holder for two titles of two tournaments.

JW MARRIOTT HOTELS & RESORTS AND MARRIOTT CONTENT STUDIO RELEASE TRAILER FOR "TWO BELLMEN TWO"

JW Marriott Hotels & Resorts and Marriott International's Content Studio released the exclusive trailer for the second installment of the Two Bellmen short film franchise. Shot on

location at the world's tallest hotel, JW Marriott Marquis Hotel Dubai, 'Two Bellmen Two' reflects JW Marriott's commitment to luxury guest service, providing an entertaining and theatrical inside look into the action-packed world of two bellmen.

"Our bellmen are often the first to welcome our guests to JW Marriott," said Mitzi Gaskins, Vice President, Luxury Brand Management at Marriott International. "Our associates are known for going above and beyond to take great care of each and every guest that walks through our doors, and Two Bellmen Two provides an entertaining glimpse into the life of the bellmen - capturing the lengths that our associates will go to make that experience unforgettable."

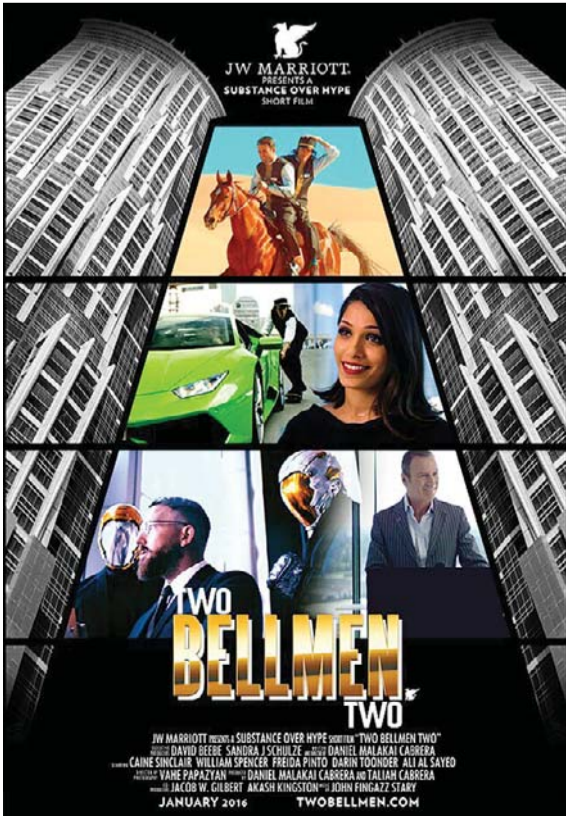
Slated to premiere on February 4, 2016, the Content Studio's

fourth original short film stars award-winning international actress Freida Pinto (Slumdog Millionaire, Planet of the Apes, Trishna) and sees the return of bellmen Gage and Christian, played by Hollywood actors and stuntmen William Spencer (Spider-Man; Spider-Man 2) and Caine Sinclair (NBC's Grimm; How I Met Your Mother). Other cast members include popular Dubai comedian Ali Al Sayed, actor Darin Toonder (June, Adrift; Flashback; Missed Connection) and a cameo from JW Marriott's celebrity brand partner and event planner Colin Cowie.

"Two Bellmen Two" begins with Leila Patel played by Pinto, a top executive traveling to JW Marriott Marquis Hotel Dubai to give an important presentation at the Luxury Symposium hosted at the hotel. Upon arrival, Leila gives her young assistant, Reed, the USB drive featuring her presentation, only for him to lose it moments later. Bellmen Gage and Christian quickly notice that something is wrong and spring into action, maneuvering the streets of Dubai to rescue the USB before time runs out.

"Two Bellmen Two" is the next short film from the global franchise where we are using original storytelling to engage with and win the hearts, minds, and wallets of next generation travelers," said David Beebe, Vice President, Global Creative + Content Marketing at Marriott International. "The JW Marriott Marquis Dubai was written into the script from scratch as a character along with the rest of cast and also features iconic locations throughout Dubai, ultimately inspiring viewers to travel."

Two Bellmen Two will have a global multiplatform premiere in February 2016 through a limited theatrical release, YouTube, Marriott.com and additional digital-platform rollouts, as well as via in-room and partner channels. In the following weeks, JW Marriott Marquis Dubai and JW Marriott L.A. LIVE will host private premiere events, inviting talent, press and executives to the hotels for exclusive viewings to celebrate the film's release. The film was written by Daniel Malakai Cabrera and overseen by executive producers David Beebe and Sandra J Schulze.



CBK TO MAINTAIN AND UPDATE IT SYSTEM

CBK's official spokesperson, Ya'qoub Habib Al-Ibrahim said that within the bank's strategy to develop its IT systems in order to provide the best services to its customers, CBK would run the usual maintenance and updating today which might result in temporary suspension of some of the bank's services. He added that all CBK branches would continue running as usual during the banks official working hours throughout the process.





AL-ISLAMIYYAH HOSTS CULTURAL LECTURE ON EASTERN AND ISLAMIC ART

Last Monday, Dar Al-Athar Al-Islamiyyah hosted a lecture as part of its 21st Cultural Season activities, featuring Professor Giovanni Curatola from the University of Udine, North Italy. Throughout his career, he wrote more than a hundred publications on Islamic art. Last year, he was the official curator of the exhibition "Al-Fann: Art from the Islamic Civilization," held at Scuderie Del Quirinale (museum) in Rome, Italy. The exhibition displayed objects from The Al-Sabah Collection, co-owned by Sheikha Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmed al-Sabah and Sheikha Hussah Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah. Curatola's lecture focused on the transition of Chinese dragons from Far Eastern art to Western art, including Islamic. Throughout the presentation, he encompassed the mythology, artistic visions, and cultural impacts of the mythical dragon. In the Middle East, snakes were the primary serpents depicted in Islamic art before the arrival and practical appearance of dragons on wood carvings, porcelain decorations, and other aspects.





00:20 Misfit Garage
01:10 Mythbusters
02:00 You Have Been Warned
02:50 You Have Been Warned
03:40 Storage Hunters UK
04:05 The Liquidator
04:30 Storage Wars Canada
05:00 What Happened Next?
05:30 How Machines Work
06:00 Siberian Cut
06:50 Wheeler Dealers
07:40 Misfit Garage
08:30 Storage Hunters UK
08:55 The Liquidator
09:20 Storage Wars Canada
09:45 What Happened Next?
10:10 How Machines Work
10:35 Mythbusters
11:25 You Have Been Warned
12:15 You Have Been Warned
13:05 Storage Hunters
13:30 The Liquidator
13:55 Storage Wars Canada
14:20 Siberian Cut
15:10 Wheeler Dealers
16:00 Misfit Garage
16:50 What Happened Next?
17:15 How Machines Work
17:40 What On Earth?
18:30 Unearthed
19:20 Troy
20:10 The Liquidator
20:35 Storage Wars Canada
21:50 Unearthed
22:40 Treasure Quest: Snake Island
23:30 Wheeler Dealers



00:35 Mythbusters
01:20 How It's Made: Dream Cars
02:08 Invent It Rich
02:55 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?
03:42 How The Universe Works
04:29 Mythbusters
05:16 Invent It Rich
06:03 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?
06:50 Prototype This
07:37 How Do They Do It?
08:00 How Do They Do It?
08:23 Mythbusters
09:08 How The Universe Works
09:53 Prototype This
10:38 How It's Made: Dream Cars
11:23 Food Factory
12:08 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?
12:53 Prototype This
13:38 Mythbusters
14:23 How It's Made: Dream Cars
15:10 How The Universe Works
15:57 Food Factory
16:44 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?
17:31 Prototype This
18:18 How The Universe Works
19:05 Mythbusters
19:50 Stephen Hawking's Universe
20:40 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?
21:25 How It's Made
22:15 How The Universe Works
23:00 Stephen Hawking's Universe
23:45 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?



00:40 Who On Earth Did I Marry?
01:05 Who On Earth Did I Marry?
01:30 The Haunted
02:20 Ghost Lab
03:10 Scorned: Crimes Of Passion
04:00 Deadline: Crime With Tamron Hall
04:45 Who On Earth Did I Marry?
05:10 Who On Earth Did I Marry?
05:30 The Haunted
06:20 Deadly Affairs
07:10 True Crime With Aphrodite Jones
08:00 Dr G: Medical Examiner
08:50 On The Case With Paula Zahn
09:40 Fatal Encounters
10:30 Murder Shift
11:20 Deadly Affairs
12:10 True Crime With Aphrodite Jones
13:00 The Will
13:40 I Almost Got Away With It
14:40 California Investigator
15:05 Dr G: Medical Examiner
15:55 Fatal Encounters
16:45 On The Case With Paula Zahn
17:35 Murder Shift
18:25 I Almost Got Away With It
19:15 The Will
20:05 Deadly Affairs
20:55 True Crime With Aphrodite Jones
21:45 California Investigator
22:10 Who On Earth Did I Marry?
22:35 Who On Earth Did I Marry?
23:00 Deadly Affairs
23:50 Swamp Murders



00:00 Violetta
00:45 The Hive
00:50 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
01:15 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
01:40 Wolfblood
02:05 Wolfblood
02:30 Violetta
03:15 The Hive
03:20 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
03:45 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
04:10 Wolfblood
04:35 Wolfblood
05:00 Violetta
05:45 The Hive
05:50 Mouk
06:00 Lolirock
06:25 Sofia The First
06:50 That's So Raven
07:15 Gravity Falls
07:40 Jessie
08:05 Shake It Up
08:30 Shake It Up
08:55 That's So Raven
09:20 That's So Raven
09:45 Austin & Ally
10:10 Austin & Ally
10:35 A.N.T. Farm
11:00 A.N.T. Farm
11:25 Jessie
11:50 Jessie
12:15 Disney Mickey Mouse
12:20 Hank Zipzer
12:45 Fish Hooks
13:10 Good Luck Charlie
13:35 I Didn't Do It
14:00 Dog With A Blog
14:30 H2O
14:55 Girl Meets World
15:20 Liv And Maddie
15:45 Jessie
16:10 Violetta
17:00 The Next Step
17:25 Liv And Maddie

17:50 Jessie
18:15 Austin & Ally
18:40 I Didn't Do It
19:05 H2O
19:30 Violetta
20:20 The Next Step



00:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
00:55 The Grace Helbig Show
01:25 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
02:20 E! News
03:15 #RichKids Of Beverly Hills
04:10 E! Entertainment Special
05:05 The E! True Hollywood Story
06:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
07:50 Style Star
08:20 E! News
09:15 Giuliana & Bill
10:10 #RichKids Of Beverly Hills
12:05 E! News
13:05 WAGs
14:05 New Money
14:30 New Money
15:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
17:00 Fashion Bloggers
17:30 Fashion Bloggers
18:00 E! News
19:00 House Of DVF
20:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians



00:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
01:00 Chopped
02:00 All Star Academy
03:00 Roadtrip With G. Garvin
04:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
05:00 Guy's Grocery Games
06:00 Chopped
07:00 Roadtrip With G. Garvin
08:00 Chopped
09:00 Grandma's Secret Cookbook
Special
10:00 The Kitchen
11:00 Barefoot Contessa: Back To Basics
12:00 Chopped
13:00 Guy's Big Bite
14:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
15:00 Roadtrip With G. Garvin
16:00 Chopped
17:00 The Kitchen
18:00 Silba's Table
19:00 Grandma's Secret Cookbook
20:00 Chopped
21:00 Guy's Grocery Games
22:00 Rev Run's Sunday Suppers
23:00 Reza, Spice Prince Of Thailand
23:30 Reza, Spice Prince Of Thailand



00:10 Pick Me!
01:05 Emmerdale
01:30 Coach Trip
02:00 Coronation Street
02:30 Murdoch Mysteries
03:25 Pick Me!
04:20 Safe House
05:15 The Chase
06:10 Cook Me The Money
07:05 Coach Trip
07:30 Code Of A Killer
08:25 Safe House
09:20 Murdoch Mysteries
10:15 The Chase
11:10 Coach Trip
11:35 Pick Me!
12:30 Cook Me The Money
13:25 Emmerdale
13:50 Coach Trip
14:20 Coronation Street
14:45 Murdoch Mysteries
15:35 Pick Me!
16:30 Midsomer Murders
18:20 Cook Me The Money
19:10 Coronation Street
19:35 Pick Me!
20:30 Midsomer Murders
22:20 Coronation Street
22:50 Emmerdale



04:30 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
07:00 Late Night With Seth Meyers
07:30 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
17:00 Late Night With Seth Meyers
18:30 Benched
19:00 Community
19:30 Baby Daddy
20:00 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
22:00 Web Therapy
22:30 Girls



00:00 Salem
01:00 Marvel's Agent Carter
02:00 The Flash
03:00 American Horror Story: Hotel
04:00 The Fosters
05:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
07:00 Drop Dead Diva
08:00 Witches Of East End
09:00 The Fosters
11:00 Drop Dead Diva
12:00 Coronation Street
12:30 Coronation Street
13:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
14:00 Witches Of East End
15:00 Live Good Morning America
17:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
18:00 Witches Of East End
19:00 American Idol
20:00 The Flash
21:00 Blindspot
22:00 Empire
23:00 The X-Files



00:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
01:00 Good Morning America
03:00 Satisfaction
04:00 Blood & Oil
05:00 Good Morning America
07:00 Coronation Street
07:30 Coronation Street
08:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
09:00 Supernatural
10:00 Coronation Street
10:30 Coronation Street
11:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
12:00 Resurrection
13:00 Shark Tank
14:00 Supernatural
15:00 Survivor: Cambodia
16:00 The Voice
18:00 Shark Tank
19:00 Supernatural
20:00 Resurrection
21:00 Shark Tank
22:00 Satisfaction
23:00 Olive Kitteridge



00:00 One In The Chamber
02:00 Open Windows
03:45 King Arthur
06:00 Jack The Giant Killer
08:00 Gone In Sixty Seconds
10:15 I, Frankenstein
12:00 Betrayed
14:00 Toin
15:45 Gone In Sixty Seconds
18:00 Forget And Forgive
20:00 I, Frankenstein
22:00 Automata



00:00 Open Windows-18
01:45 King Arthur-PG15
04:00 Jack The Giant Killer-PG15
06:00 Gone In Sixty Seconds
08:15 I, Frankenstein-PG15
10:00 Betrayed-PG15
12:00 Toxin-PG15
13:45 Gone In Sixty Seconds
16:00 Forget And Forgive-PG15
18:00 I, Frankenstein-PG15
20:00 Automata-PG15
22:00 Predator-18



00:00 Multiplicity
02:00 High Road
04:00 Big Fat Liar
06:00 The Love Guide
08:00 UHF
10:00 Big Fat Liar
12:00 Titeuf, Le Film
14:00 Charlie And The Chocolate Factory
16:00 UHF
18:00 The Waterboy
20:00 Malavita
22:00 The Trip To Italy



01:30 Belle-PG15
03:15 Goodbye World-PG15
05:00 InSight-PG15
06:45 Testament Of Youth-PG15
09:00 United Passions-PG15
11:00 InSight-PG15
13:00 Second Coming-PG15
15:00 Chalel Girl-PG15
17:00 United Passions-PG15
19:00 God Help The Girl-PG15
21:00 Begin Again-PG15
23:00 All The Wrong Reasons-18



01:15 Black Nativity
03:00 Rent
05:15 October Sky
07:00 Julie And Julia
09:00 Against The Ropes
11:00 October Sky
13:00 Great Expectations
15:15 See Girl Run
17:00 Against The Ropes
19:00 Rushmore
21:00 Frank
23:00 Waking The Dead



01:00 Snowpiercer-PG15
03:00 Dracula Untold-PG15
05:00 Parkland-PG15
07:00 Kon-Tiki-PG15
09:00 How To Train Your Dragon 2-11
11:00 Godzilla-PG15
13:15 Oggy & The Cockroaches: The Movie-PG
15:00 The Little Rascals Save The Day-PG
17:00 How To Train Your Dragon 2-19
19:00 Paul Blart: Mall Cop 2-PG15
21:00 Kingsman: The Secret Service-PG15
23:15 Sin City: A Dame To Kill For



01:00 Memory Loss
02:45 Egon And Donci
04:30 The Heart Of The Oak
06:00 Cher Ami
08:00 Goat Story 2
10:00 Zarafa
11:30 Memory Loss
13:00 Egon And Donci
14:30 Daddy I'm A Zombie
16:00 The Elf Who Stole Christmas
18:00 Zarafa
20:00 Blackie And Kanuto
22:00 Daddy I'm A Zombie
23:30 The Elf Who Stole Christmas



00:00 AmeriQua-PG15
02:00 Vamps-PG15
04:00 Christmas With Holly
06:00 Lizzie Borden Took An Ax
08:00 The Giver-PG15
10:00 A Turtle's Tale 2: Sammy's Escape From Paradise-FAM
12:00 Life Of A King-PG15
14:30 Pompeii-PG15
16:00 The Giver-PG15
18:00 Song For Marion-PG15
20:00 Tammy-PG15
22:00 Lost In The Cloud-18



03:50 One Summer Love
05:30 Beachhead
07:00 Improptu
08:45 The Apartment
10:50 Cannon For Cordoba
12:35 Hoosiers
14:30 Island Of The Lost
16:00 Futureworld
17:45 Little Sister
19:20 Lords Of Dogtown
21:00 Breaking Bad
21:45 The Sharkfighters
23:00 Requiem For A Dream
00:40 London
02:15 Requiem For A Dream



03:00 Crime Stories
04:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
05:00 The Ghost Inside My Child
06:00 The Haunting Of...
07:00 Homicide Hunter
08:00 Surveillance Oz
09:00 Surveillance Oz
10:00 Frenemies
10:30 Frenemies
11:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
12:00 Crime Stories
13:00 Homicide Hunter
14:00 After The First 48
15:00 Frenemies
15:30 Frenemies
16:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
17:00 Crime Stories
18:00 The First 48
19:00 After The First 48
20:00 Homicide Hunter
21:00 Crime Stories
22:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
23:00 50 Ways To Kill Your Lover
00:00 Private Crimes
00:30 Private Crimes
01:00 Britain's Darkest Taboos
02:00 Britain's Darkest Taboos



PAUL BLART- MALL COP 2 ON OSN MOVIES HD



03:05 Calimero
03:20 Zou
03:30 Loopidoo
03:45 Art Attack
04:10 Henry Hugglemonster
04:20 Calimero
04:35 Zou
04:45 Loopidoo
05:00 Art Attack
05:25 Henry Hugglemonster
05:35 Calimero
05:50 Zou
06:00 Loopidoo
06:15 Art Attack
06:35 Henry Hugglemonster
06:50 Calimero
07:00 Zou
07:20 Loopidoo
07:35 Art Attack
08:00 Calimero
08:10 Zou
08:25 Loopidoo
08:40 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
09:05 Sofia The First
09:30 Miles From Tomorrow
09:55 The Hive
10:05 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
10:35 Doc McStuffins
11:00 Sofia The First
11:30 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
12:00 Miles From Tomorrow
12:25 Special Agent Oso
12:40 The Hive
12:50 Handy Manny
13:15 Jungle Junction
13:30 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
14:00 Sofia The First
14:25 Doc McStuffins



07:00 Star vs The Forces Of Evil
07:25 K. C. Undercover
07:50 Supa Strikas



03:00 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
03:24 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
03:48 Henry Danger
04:12 Nicky, Ricky, Dicky & Dawn
04:36 The Haunted Hathaways
05:00 Winx Club
05:24 Sanjay And Craig
05:48 Sanjay And Craig
06:12 SpongeBob SquarePants
06:36 SpongeBob SquarePants
07:00 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
07:48 Sanjay And Craig
08:12 Harvey Beaks
08:36 Breadwinners
09:00 Get Blake
09:24 Rabbids Invasion
09:48 Henry Danger
10:12 Nicky, Ricky, Dicky & Dawn
10:36 The Haunted Hathaways
11:00 Winx Club
11:24 SpongeBob SquarePants
12:12 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
13:00 Breadwinners
13:48 Get Blake
14:12 Rabbids Invasion
14:36 100 Things To Do Before High School
15:00 Nicky, Ricky, Dicky & Dawn
15:24 SpongeBob SquarePants
15:48 SpongeBob SquarePants
16:12 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
16:36 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
17:24 Sanjay And Craig
17:48 Harvey Beaks
18:12 Henry Danger
18:36 Nicky, Ricky, Dicky & Dawn
19:00 100 Things To Do Before High School
19:24 Max & Shred
19:48 SpongeBob SquarePants
20:36 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
21:24 Breadwinners
22:12 Sanjay And Craig
23:00 SpongeBob SquarePants
23:48 Henry Danger
00:12 Nicky, Ricky, Dicky & Dawn
00:36 Max & Shred
01:00 100 Things To Do Before High School
01:24 Sanjay And Craig
01:48 Sanjay And Craig



04:25 Discovering: Lennon
05:15 Print The Legend
06:55 Cloro
08:35 Movie Talk
09:00 All On The Line
10:00 Barking Water
11:20 Rolling Stones: Crossfire Hurricane
13:15 Discovering: Queen
14:00 The Journey
15:40 Francine
16:55 Marvin's Room
18:35 Les Paul: Chasing Sound
20:05 Rolling Stones: Crossfire Hurricane
22:00 The Journey
23:40 This Way Out
00:00 The Red Road
01:00 Christmas, Again
02:25 Mrs. Brown



03:40 World's Worst Mum
04:30 Jon & Kate Plus 8
05:00 Little People, Big World
05:30 Cake Boss
06:00 Say Yes To The Dress: Ai Bridesmaids
06:25 Randy To The Rescue
07:15 Hoarding: Buried Alive
08:05 Dare To Wear
08:55 The Autistic Gardener
09:45 Jon & Kate Plus 8
10:10 Little People, Big World
10:35 My Five Wives
11:25 Cake Boss
11:50 Belief



I, FRANKENSTEIN ON OSN MOVIES ACTION HD

CLASSIFIEDS

Kuwait Times

THURSDAY, JANUARY 28, 2016



KNCC PROGRAMME FROM THURSDAY TO WEDNESDAY (28/01/2016 TO 03/02/2016)

SHARQIA-1
AMERICAN HERO 12:15 PM
ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: THE ROAD CHIP 2:00 PM
ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: THE ROAD CHIP 4:00 PM
ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: THE ROAD CHIP 6:00 PM
AMERICAN HERO 8:00 PM
AMERICAN HERO 9:45 PM
AMERICAN HERO 11:30 PM
AMERICAN HERO 1:15 AM

SHARQIA-2
CONCUSSION 12:00 PM
CONCUSSION 2:30 PM
CONCUSSION 5:00 PM
CONCUSSION 7:30 PM
CONCUSSION 10:00 PM
CONCUSSION 12:30 AM

SHARQIA-3
STANDOFF 11:45 AM
STANDOFF 1:30 PM
STANDOFF 3:30 PM
STANDOFF 5:15 PM
THE BOY 7:00 PM
STANDOFF 9:00 PM
THE BOY 10:45 PM
STANDOFF 12:45 AM

MUHALAB-1
EXPOSED 11:45 AM
EXPOSED 1:45 PM
NO FRI+SAT
ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: THE ROAD CHIP 1:45 PM
FRI+SAT
ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: THE ROAD CHIP 3:45 PM
ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: THE ROAD CHIP 5:45 PM
EXPOSED 7:45 PM
EXPOSED 9:45 PM
EXPOSED 11:45 PM

MUHALAB-2
AMERICAN HERO 1:00 PM
AMERICAN HERO 2:45 PM
SAALA KHADOOS - Hindi 4:30 PM
AMERICAN HERO 6:45 PM
RIDE ALONG 2 8:30 PM
AMERICAN HERO 10:30 PM
AMERICAN HERO 12:15 AM

MUHALAB-3
CONCUSSION 11:30 AM
CONCUSSION 2:00 PM
CONCUSSION 4:30 PM
CONCUSSION 7:00 PM
CONCUSSION 9:30 PM
CONCUSSION 12:05 AM

FANAR-1
AMERICAN HERO 12:00 PM
AMERICAN HERO 2:15 PM
AMERICAN HERO 4:15 PM
AMERICAN HERO 6:15 PM
THE REVENANT 8:00 PM
AMERICAN HERO 11:00 PM

AMERICAN HERO 12:45 AM
FANAR-2
STANDOFF
ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: THE ROAD CHIP 12:45 PM
ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: THE ROAD CHIP 2:45 PM
ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: THE ROAD CHIP 4:45 PM
STANDOFF 6:45 PM
STANDOFF 8:45 PM
STANDOFF 10:30 PM
STANDOFF 12:15 AM

FANAR-3
RIDE ALONG 2 12:30 PM
MIN DAHAR RAGEL - Arabic 2:15 PM
RIDE ALONG 2 5:15 PM
MIN DAHAR RAGEL - Arabic 7:00 PM
MIN DAHAR RAGEL - Arabic 10:00 PM
RIDE ALONG 2 1:00 AM

FANAR-4
CONCUSSION 12:15 PM
CONCUSSION 2:45 PM
CONCUSSION 5:15 PM
CONCUSSION 7:45 PM
CONCUSSION 10:15 PM
CONCUSSION 12:45 AM

FANAR-5
THE BOY 1:00 PM
THE BOY 3:00 PM
THE 5TH WAVE 5:00 PM
THE BOY 7:30 PM
THE 5TH WAVE 9:30 PM
THE BOY 12:05 AM

MARINA-1
AMERICAN HERO 12:45 PM
THE 5TH WAVE 2:30 PM
AMERICAN HERO 4:45 PM
AMERICAN HERO 6:30 PM
THE 5TH WAVE 8:15 PM
AMERICAN HERO 10:45 PM
AMERICAN HERO 12:30 AM

MARINA-2
CONCUSSION 11:45 AM
ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: THE ROAD CHIP 2:15 PM
CONCUSSION 4:15 PM
CONCUSSION 6:45 PM
CONCUSSION 9:15 PM
CONCUSSION 11:45 PM

MARINA-3
EXPOSED 11:30 AM
EXPOSED 1:45 PM
ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: THE ROAD CHIP 3:45 PM
ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: THE ROAD CHIP 5:45 PM
RIDE ALONG 2 8:00 PM
EXPOSED 10:00 PM
EXPOSED 12:05 AM

AVENUES-1
RIDE ALONG 2 12:45 PM
RIDE ALONG 2 2:45 PM

RIDE ALONG 2 4:45 PM
RIDE ALONG 2 6:45 PM
LOST IN THE SUN 8:45 PM
RIDE ALONG 2 10:45 PM
RIDE ALONG 2 12:45 AM

AVENUES-2
MIN DAHAR RAGEL - Arabic 12:15 PM
MIN DAHAR RAGEL - Arabic 3:15 PM
MIN DAHAR RAGEL - Arabic 6:15 PM
MIN DAHAR RAGEL - Arabic 9:15 PM
MIN DAHAR RAGEL - Arabic 12:15 AM

AVENUES-3
AMERICAN HERO 11:45 AM
AMERICAN HERO 1:45 PM
AMERICAN HERO 3:45 PM
AMERICAN HERO 5:45 PM
AMERICAN HERO 7:45 PM
AMERICAN HERO 9:45 PM
AMERICAN HERO 11:45 PM

AVENUES-4
CONCUSSION 12:00 PM
CONCUSSION 2:45 PM
CONCUSSION 5:30 PM
CONCUSSION 8:15 PM
CONCUSSION 11:00 PM

360°- 1
ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: THE ROAD CHIP 1:00 PM
ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: THE ROAD CHIP 3:15 PM
ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: THE ROAD CHIP 5:30 PM
ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: THE ROAD CHIP 7:45 PM
DARKNESS DESCENDS 10:00 PM
DARKNESS DESCENDS 12:15 AM

360° 2
EXPOSED 12:30 PM
EXPOSED 2:45 PM
DARKNESS DESCENDS 5:00 PM
EXPOSED 7:15 PM
EXPOSED 9:30 PM
EXPOSED 11:45 PM

360°- 3
STANDOFF 12:00 PM
STANDOFF 2:00 PM
ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: THE ROAD CHIP 4:00 PM
STANDOFF 6:00 PM
STANDOFF 8:00 PM
STANDOFF 10:00 PM
STANDOFF 12:05 AM

AL-KOUT.1
CONCUSSION 12:00 PM
CONCUSSION 2:30 PM
CONCUSSION 5:00 PM
CONCUSSION 7:30 PM
CONCUSSION 10:00 PM
CONCUSSION 12:30 AM

APARTMENTS FOR RENT

1 & 2 BEDROOMS - HALL -2 BATH - KITCHEN - BALCONY

Furnished & Unfurnished At Shaab With Sea View Including Water & Electricity - Satellite - Shaded Car Parking - Fully Furnished & Unfurnished - Free Maintenance

Contact: **99494337 - 67600972**

REQUIRED

COOK

- Specialized in Arabic Kuwaiti Cuisine/ Recipe
- Qualification: minimum of 5 - 10 years experience
- Country of Designation: United Arab Emirates

Send your CV to: **ahmedmawadda@gmail.com**
or call **0097192229665**

FOR SALE

Mitsubishi Lancer 2015
GLS, 2000 kilometer only,
free accidents, dark silver, 5
years warranty. Price KD
3600. Tel: 55305433.
(C 5115)
26-1-2016

and my address in India is
Puzhakkarayil,
Palackamattom
Kinginimattom Puthencurz,
Ernakulam, Kerala. **(C 5119)**

I, Iddinkunhi Alias Mustapa
S/o Belma Hasanabba, R/at
3600. Tel: 55305433.
(C 5115)
26-1-2016
Manjanady, Mangalore, have
changed my name as
Musthafa Iddin Kunhi vide
affidavit dated 6-8-15 before
notary Sirajuddin, Mangalore.
(C 5118)
28-1-2016

Shaik Abbas Ali (old sur-
name), S/o Shaik
Nazeeruddin, holder of
Indian Passport No.
G2275319. D.No. 7/111,
Maruthi Street, Akkayapalli,
R.V.Nagar (Po) Kadapa, Y.S.R
(Dist) hence have been
change my surname, my
father surname Syed Abbas
Ali (new surname) S/o Syed
Nazeeruddin.
27-1-2016

Prayer timings

Fajr: 05:18
Shorook 06:41
Duhr: 12:01
Asr: 15:00
Maghrib: 17:21
Isha: 18:41

Directorate General of Civil Aviation Home Page (www.kuwait-airport.com.kw)

In case you are not travelling, your proper cancellation
of bookings will help other passengers to use seats



Arrival Flights on Thursday 28/1/2016

Airlines	Flt	Route	Time
MSC	415	Sohag	00:05
KLM	411	Amsterdam/Dammam	00:20
JZR	267	Beirut	00:30
JZR	539	Cairo	00:40
FDB	069	Dubai	00:55
RJA	642	Amman	01:05
THY	772	Istanbul	01:05
SAI	441	Lahore	01:30
DLH	635	Doha	01:35
PGT	858	Istanbul	02:00
UAE	853	Dubai	02:30
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:30
OMA	643	Muscat	02:55
FDB	067	Dubai	03:05
MSR	612	Cairo	03:10
QTR	1076	Doha	03:15
KKK	6507	Istanbul	03:20
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:25
LMU	510	Cairo	04:05
JZR	503	Luxor	04:25
QTR	8511	Doha	04:40
DHX	170	Bahrain	05:40
THY	770	Istanbul	05:55
FDB	5061	Dubai	06:30
BAW	157	London	06:40
JZR	529	Asyut	06:50
KAC	412	Manila/Bangkok	07:20
QTR	1086	Doha	07:40
FDB	053	Dubai	07:45
KAC	302	Mumbai	07:50
SVA	512	Riyadh	07:50
KAC	206	Islamabad	08:25
KAC	352	Kochi	08:30
KAC	346	Ahmedabad	08:30
KAC	344	Chennai	08:30
UAE	855	Dubai	08:40
KAC	362	Colombo	08:50
KAC	332	Trivandrum	08:50
IRA	667	Esfahan	09:00
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:00
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	09:20
QTR	1070	Doha	09:25
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40
OMA	641	Muscat	10:05
IRM	1180	Mashhad	10:10
IRA	673	Ahwaz	10:10
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40
SYR	341	Damascus	10:55
UAE	873	Dubai	11:05
RBG	553	Alexandria	11:15
JZR	165	Dubai	11:30
AGY	682	Asyut	11:40
NIA	151	Cairo	11:55
MEA	404	Beirut	11:55
KAC	204	Lahore	12:20
FDB	075	Dubai	12:25
MSC	401	Alexandria	12:30
JZR	561	Sohag	12:45
JZR	241	Amman	12:50
UAE	871	Dubai	12:50
MSR	610	Cairo	13:00
THY	766	Istanbul	13:45
KAC	382	Delhi	13:50
KNE	460	Riyadh	13:50
QTR	1078	Doha	14:10
FDB	057	Dubai	14:10
AXB	393	Kozhikode	14:20
SVA	500	Jeddah	14:30
KAC	672	Dubai	14:45

KAC	284	Dhaka	14:45
KAC	788	Jeddah	14:50
GFA	221	Bahrain	15:00
KNE	472	Jeddah	15:05
NIA	251	Alexandria	15:30
OMA	645	Muscat	15:30
KAC	562	Amman	15:40
ABY	127	Sharjah	15:45
UAE	857	Dubai	15:45
JAD	301	Amman	15:55
JZR	535	Cairo	16:10
JZR	779	Jeddah	16:10
QTR	1072	Doha	16:10
FDB	051	Dubai	16:30
JZR	257	Beirut	16:30
KNE	474	Jeddah	16:35
ETD	303	Abu Dhabi	16:40
RJA	640	Amman	16:55
KAC	542	Cairo	16:55
JZR	787	Riyadh	17:00
SVA	510	Riyadh	17:15
GFA	215	Bahrain	17:30
MSR	614	Cairo	17:50
KAC	678	Muscat/Abu Dhabi	17:50
KAC	118	New York	17:55
JZR	777	Jeddah	17:55
UAE	875	Dubai	18:00
KAC	502	Beirut	18:00
FDB	063	Dubai	18:05
JZR	177	Dubai	18:20
KAC	786	Jeddah	18:30
ABY	123	Sharjah	18:45
KAC	742	Dammam	18:55
QTR	1080	Doha	18:55
KAC	614	Bahrain	19:10
KAC	774	Riyadh	19:25
GFA	217	Bahrain	19:30
KAC	618	Doha	19:35
KAC	104	London	19:40
KAC	154	Istanbul	19:45
KAC	674	Dubai	19:45
KAC	176	Geneva/Frankfurt	19:55
MSR	618	Alexandria	20:05
KAC	538	Sohag	20:05
KNE	480	Taif	20:10
JZR	189	Dubai	20:15
FDB	061	Dubai	20:20
OMA	647	Muscat	20:20
ABY	121	Sharjah	20:30
FDB	5053	Dubai	20:55
DLH	634	Frankfurt	20:55
JAI	572	Mumbai	20:55
MEA	402	Beirut	21:20
ETD	307	Abu Dhabi	21:20
ALK	229	Colombo	21:25
UAE	859	Dubai	21:40
GFA	219	Bahrain	21:45
JZR	125	Bahrain	21:55
QTR	1082	Doha	22:00
KLM	417	Amsterdam	22:05
KAC	981	Chennai/Ahmedabad	22:25
ETD	309	Abu Dhabi	22:25
KAC	564	Amman	22:25
FDB	059	Dubai	22:30
JZR	185	Dubai	23:15
UAL	981	Bahrain	23:25
PIA	205	Lahore	23:40
FDB	071	Dubai	23:45
THY	764	Istanbul	23:50
JAI	574	Mumbai	23:55
MSC	403	Asyut	23:55

Departure Flights on Thursday 28/1/2016

Airlines	Flt	Route	Time
AIC	976	Goa/Chennai	00:05
JZR	528	Asyut	00:05
BBC	044	Dhaka	00:10
PIA	216	KHI	00:40
FDB	072	Dubai	00:40
MSC	404	Asyut	00:55
JAI	573	Mumbai	00:55
MSC	416	Sohag	01:00
KLM	411	Amsterdam	01:35
KAC	283	Dhaka	02:10
THY	773	Istanbul	02:30
SAI	442	Lahore	02:30
DLH	635	Frankfurt	02:35
KAC	203	Lahore	03:05
KAC	381	Delhi	03:30
THY	771	Istanbul	07:05
FDB	5062	Dubai	07:10
GFA	212	Bahrain	07:15
JZR	240	Amman	07:15
FDB	054	Dubai	08:30
QTR	1087	Doha	08:40
BAW	156	London	08:45
SVA	513	Riyadh	08:50
JZR	256	Beirut	09:05
JZR	534	Cairo	09:15
KAC	787	Jeddah	09:25
ABY	126	Sharjah	09:40
UAE	856	Dubai	09:55
KAC	101	London/New York	09:55
KAC	541	Cairo	09:55
IRA	668	Mashhad	10:00
KAC	561	Amman	10:00
KAC	671	Dubai	10:05
ETD	302	Abu Dhabi	10:25
KAC	501	Beirut	10:30
JZR	778	Jeddah	10:30
FDB	056	Dubai	10:35
KAC	153	Istanbul	10:40
KAC	677	Abu Dhabi/Muscat	10:50
QTR	1071	Doha	11:00
KAC	165	Rome/Paris	11:00
OMA	642	Muscat	11:05
IRA	672	Ahwaz	11:10
IRM	1181	Mashhad	11:25
GFA	214	Bahrain	11:25
SYR	342	Damascus	11:55
RBG	554	Alexandria	12:00
JZR	776	Jeddah	12:20
UAE	874	Dubai	12:30
AGY	683	Alexandria	12:40
MEA	405	Beirut	12:55
NIA	152	Cairo	12:55
KAC	785	Jeddah	13:00
FDB	076	Dubai	13:10
MSC	402	Alexandria	13:30
KAC	537	Sohag	13:35
JZR	786	Riyadh	13:45
JZR	176	Dubai	13:45
MSR	611	Cairo	14:00
UAE	872	Dubai	14:15
THY	767	Istanbul	14:45

KAC	481	Taif	14:50
KAC	673	Dubai	15:00
FDB	058	Dubai	15:10
QTR	1079	Doha	15:10
AXB	394	Kozhikode	15:20
JZR	188	Dubai	15:40
GFA	222	Bahrain	15:45
KAC	617	Doha	15:45
KAC	773	Riyadh	15:50
KAC	741	Dammam	15:50
KAC	613	Bahrain	15:50
SVA	505	Jeddah	16:00
KNE	473	Jeddah	16:05
ABY	128	Sharjah	16:25
OMA	646	Muscat	16:30
NIA	252	Alexandria	16:30
JAD	302	Amman	16:40
KAC	563	Amman	16:45
JZR	266	Beirut	17:05
KNE	475	Jeddah	17:25
ETD	304	Abu Dhabi	17:30
FDB	052	Dubai	17:35
QTR	1073	Doha	17:40
UAE	858	Dubai	17:45
JZR	538	Cairo	17:45
RJA	641	Amman	17:55
SVA	511	Riyadh	18:15
GFA	216	Bahrain	18:20
JZR	184	Dubai	18:40
MSR	615	Cairo	18:50
JZR	238	Amman	18:50
JZR	124	Bahrain	19:10
JZR	554	Alexandria	19:10
FDB	064	Dubai	19:20
ABY	124	Sharjah	19:25
UAE	876	Dubai	19:30
GFA	218	Bahrain	20:15
KAC	353	BLR	20:40
QTR	1081	Doha	20:50
KAC	351	Kochi	20:50
KAC	543	Cairo	20:55
KAC	343	Chennai	21:00
MSR	619	Alexandria	21:05
KNE	461	Riyadh	21:10
ABY	122	Sharjah	21:15
OMA	648	Muscat	21:20
FDB	062	Dubai	21:20
DLH	634	Doha	21:45
FDB	5054	Dubai	21:50
DHX	171	Bahrain	21:50
JAI	571	Mumbai	21:55
ETD	308	Abu Dhabi	22:10
KAC	301	Mumbai	22:10
MEA	403	Beirut	22:20
ALK	230	Colombo	22:25
GFA	220	Bahrain	22:30
UAE	860	Dubai	22:55
QTR	1083	Doha	23:05
KLM	417	Dammam/Amsterdam	23:05
KAC	205	Islamabad	23:10
ETD	310	Abu Dhabi	23:15
FDB	060	Dubai	23:35
KAC	411	Bangkok/Manila	23:35

CROSSWORD 1151

1	2	3		4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11		12	13	14
15				16									17		
18				19							20	21			
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80				81						82			83		
84				85									86		

ACROSS

1. The act of slowing down or falling behind.
4. Lacking mirth.
12. A secret society of white Southerners to resist Black emancipation.
15. A rapid bustling commotion.
16. A drug (trade name Tolinase) used in treating stable adult-onset diabetes mellitus.
17. The longest division of geological time.
18. (prefix) Reverse of or absence of.
19. Hairy aromatic perennial herb having whorls of small white purple-spotted flowers in a terminal spike.
20. A telegram sent abroad.
22. An Arabic speaking person who lives in Arabia or North Africa.
24. A dull persistent (usually moderately intense) pain.
25. A native or inhabitant of Denmark.
26. A numerical scale used to compare variables with one another or with some reference number.
28. Clarified butter used in Indian cookery.
30. Liquid containing proteins and electrolytes including the liquid in blood plasma and interstitial fluid.
32. The capacitance of a capacitor that has an equal and opposite charge of 1 coulomb on each plate and a voltage difference of 1 volt between the plates.
36. A compartment in front of a motor vehicle where driver sits.
39. Concerning those not members of the clergy.
42. A young woman making her debut into society.
44. An organization of countries formed in 1961 to agree on a common policy for the sale of petroleum.
46. A collection of objects laid on top of each other.
48. The first month of the civil year.
50. A person who has lied or who lies repeatedly.
51. A city in east central Texas.
53. Weight to be borne or conveyed.
54. Of or relating to a speaker of the Tamil language or the language itself.
56. A skullcap worn by religious Jews (especially at prayer).
58. Unfilled or frustrated in realizing an ambition.
61. A fine cord of twisted fibers (of cotton or silk or wool or nylon etc) used in sewing and weaving.
62. A cry or shout of approval.
65. The chief solid component of mammalian urine.
67. A state in northwestern United States on the Pacific.
68. Baked dish of layers of lasagna pasta with sauce and cheese and meat or vegetables.
70. A unit of magnetomotive force equal to 0.7958 ampere-turns.
71. Mild yellow Dutch cheese made in balls.
75. Thickening of tissue in the motor tracts of the lateral columns and anterior horns of the spinal cord.
76. A change for the better.
80. A sudden loss of consciousness resulting when the rupture or occlusion of a blood vessel leads to oxygen lack in the brain.
81. A cut of pork ribs with much of the meat trimmed off.
83. (British) A waterproof raincoat made of rubberized fabric.
84. Serving as an essential component.
85. A battle during the American Revolutionary War (1777).
86. The residue that remains when something is burned.

DOWN

1. An island of central Hawaii.
2. Make more attractive by adding ornament, colour, etc..
3. A gland in which gametes (sex cells) are produced.
4. Greenwich Mean Time updated with leap seconds.
5. The Hebrew patriarch who saved himself and his family and the animals by building an ark in which they survived 40 days and 40 nights of rain.
6. Angular distance above the horizon (especially of a celestial object).
7. Tropical Asian starlings.
8. An agency of the United Nations responsible for programs to aid education and the health of children and mothers in developing countries.
9. A person who lacks good judgment.
10. A radioactive transuranic element produced by bombarding plutonium with neutrons.
11. The last (12th) month of the year.
12. Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
13. A commercial center and river port in western Germany on the Rhine River.
14. Hinge joint in the human leg connecting the tibia and fibula with the femur and protected in front by the patella.
21. (Babylonian) God of storms and wind.
23. Any of numerous hairy-bodied insects including social and solitary species.
27. Being ten more than one hundred eighty.
29. A sock with a separation for the big toe.
31. King of Saudi Arabia since 1982 (born in 1922).
33. A quick reply to a question or remark (especially a witty or critical one).
34. United States writer of poems and plays about racial conflict (born in 1934).
35. Surveying instrument consisting of the upper movable part of a theodolite including the telescope and its attachments.
37. The capital of Western Samoa.
38. A signal transmitted along a narrow path.
40. That is to say.
41. The sound made by corvine birds.
43. Fierce wild dog of the forests of central and southeast Asia that hunts in packs.
45. A Ukrainian peninsula between the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov.
47. A person to whom money is paid.
49. Spoken as if with a thick tongue.
52. A white metallic element that burns with a brilliant light.
55. A gift or money given (as for service or out of benevolence).
57. A unit of conductance equal to the reciprocal of an ohm.
59. A starlike object that may send out radio waves and other forms of energy.
60. An ancient city of Sumer located on a former channel of the Euphrates River.
63. Divide by two. divide into halves.
64. An analytic or interpretive literary composition.
66. (informal British usage) Aggravation or aggression.
69. Plant with an elongated head of broad stalked leaves resembling celery.
72. Fallow deer.
73. Type genus of the Anatidae.
74. Austrian physicist and philosopher who introduced the Mach number and who founded logical positivism (1838-1916).
77. A self-funded retirement plan that allows you to contribute a limited yearly sum toward your retirement.
78. Remaining after all deductions.
79. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
82. A class of proteins produced in lymph tissue in vertebrates and that function as antibodies in the immune response.

Yesterday's Solution

H	A	G		A	S	P	A	D	A	N	A		P	S	T
E	L	L		A	P	O	L	O	G	U	E		E	T	A
A	C	E		R	A	T	T	L	E		O	A	K	E	N
P	A	N	D	O	R	A			D	A	N	M	A	R	K
			E	N	E	S	C	O		D		A	N	N	A
C	L	A	N		R	H			R	A	Z	Z			
Y	E	M	E	N	I		U		A	N	A	E	M	I	A
B	A	O	B	A	B		N	E		A	M		A	B	M
O	D	E		I		G	B		B		A	B	U	S	E
R	E	B	E	L			A	B	C	S		O	V	E	N
G	N	A	T		A	A	R	E		P	A	R	E	N	T
			H	A	N	D			S	A	B	A			
S	A	H	I	B			A	D	A	R		X	I	A	N
I	P	E	C	A	C		K	A	L	K	A		C	I	A
D	A	B		S	A	M	A	N	A	L	A		O	R	B
A	R	E		E	B	E	N	A	L	E	S		N	S	U

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

There is some nervous frustration today that could make it difficult to make wise decisions in the workplace just now. Work, achievement and ambition have a deep meaning for you and you put a lot of effort into getting things organized and completed. Any difficult clients or co-workers are easier to experience than you think. You will be able to handle emotionally charged issues and may even be able to look at the lighter, more positive side of difficult situations. Consider a shopping trip today, but do not splurge as a way to vent your emotions. Perhaps a friend would like to join you. Compare prices and you will be pleased with the results. With your batteries recharged, you may want to enjoy a movie this evening.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

You may feel that you do not want to involve yourself in some moneymaking opportunity today. Others may make you feel that you may have made a mistake. Do not spend so much time wondering if you did the right thing-you did. Wait a day or so-you will have a better idea of how you want to invest your money. You will be clearing away old debts and paperwork today. Anything that slows you from your goals may need to be reassessed or discarded. Clear thoughts about the past may be on your mind just now. This afternoon you will have a better focus on what you want to relate to others and goals for yourself. You have support from your family for whatever you want to do at this time. Show people your lighter side this evening.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

You have the ability to turn a negative situation into a positive one with your insights. You will have a big influence within group meetings or with authority figures. Your emotional strength may come from your strong friendships. When a loved one comes to you with a quandary, first ask what he or she considers the smart answer might be if a friend needed help with that same question. You will be helping this person to be self-reliant and discovering a good way to prevent an emotional overload for yourself. Your creative side is at a high this evening. This, along with the ability to put your thoughts into words, allows you to bewitch and transport others to new and positive heights. Perhaps you have a story to tell about your household-good for you.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

You will find trustworthy people to help you with your ideas today. Your abilities in guiding groups may find you interested in helping a scout group or in some volunteer group later today. If this does not fit your definition of a way you could help-find one for yourself. It is important to share your spirit and your knowledge in a volunteer program. Start out slowly but add additional days when you can. You will find that any nervousness will become mellow as you involve yourself in this program. Others may find you especially witty and eccentric this evening. You may have insights or breakthroughs concerning your living situation or life circumstances.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

You have a great deal of understanding and sensitivity about the needs of others and as usual, you may find yourself listening to a multitude of problems. If you have a calendar available, with your schedule, you will be able to stay on your time schedule and stop for a few minutes to visit or be helpful to someone before your next meeting. Your calendar is full today but you can create some time later for a consultation with someone... This person can use the time to write down the questions he or she will want to ask. Your communication abilities are easily understood and accurate. You may have some psychic visions this afternoon.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

You will assert yourself with confidence today-others need your guidance. People will listen and see the importance of doing things with your guidance. You stay up-to-date with the times as you constantly gain information through reading up-to-date reports and through educated friends in the business world. You know a little about almost everything and you enjoy conversations that increase your information. This temporarily quenches your need for mental stimulation. This is one of the best days for work, love and passion. Take lunch with a friend or loved one today. Spend special, uninterrupted times with a loved one each day-even if it is of short duration. Whatever it takes, begin a habit that will help to deepen your relationship.

WORD SEARCH PUZZLE

Movie Actresses 2

Find and circle all of the Movie Actresses that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell the name of a movie for which Louise Fletcher won an Oscar.

H C L A R K S O N N O D N A R A S
A O D R E H C O N I B O N Y Z N E
Y M W E A V E R I F O N D L S Y B
E C C F S E D E L P Y E W I I T U
K A R F M C M O S T R G V E E S L
I D U I I O H R R E B R E S W R L
D A Z E T R E A H K R U N T T U O
M M E F H W C N W E B I R H B C
A S L P T E T I E S N A E U P K
N L L I T E G N R H L E A B R E N
S I W S L H S O U G I E C O M E O
E N E F T L O D I T N T A R A R T
T N G L E M S E H E C S M U N T
A E E T J O H A N S S O N C K S I
B Y R O N A H O L P O R T M A N W
O S P A C E K S R E T L A W S U S
A G I M R A F N S T A W E S D T

BATES, Kathy
BINOCHÉ, Juliette
BRESLIN, Abigail
BULLOCK, Sandra
BURSTYN, Ellen
CLARKSON, Patricia
CRUZ, Penelope
DELPY, Julie
DESCHANEL, Zoëy
DUNST, Kirsten
FARMIGA, Vera
FLETCHER, Louise
HAYEK, Salma
HEIGL, Katherine
HUDSON, Kate
JOHANSSON, Scarlett
KIDMAN, Nicole
KNIGHTLEY, Keira
LINNEY, Laura
LOHAN, Lindsay
MACLAINE, Shirley
MCADAMS, Rachel
MOORE, Julianne
PFEIFFER, Michelle
DUNST, Kirsten
FARMIGA, Vera
FLETCHER, Louise
HAYEK, Salma
HEIGL, Katherine
HUDSON, Kate
JOHANSSON, Scarlett
KIDMAN, Nicole
KNIGHTLEY, Keira
LINNEY, Laura
LOHAN, Lindsay
MACLAINE, Shirley
MCADAMS, Rachel
MOORE, Julianne
PFEIFFER, Michelle
PORTMAN, Natalie
REID, Tara
ROBERTS, Julia
RYDER, Winona
SARANDON, Susan
SMITH, Maggie
SPACEK, Sissy
STEENBURGEN, Mary
STEWART, Kristen
STREEP, Meryl
SWINTON, Tilda
THURMAN, Uma
TOMEI, Marisa
WALTERS, Julie
WATTS, Naomi
WEAVER, Sigourney
WEISZ, Rachel
WINSLET, Kate
WITHERSPOON, Reese
ZELLWEGER, Renee



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Wisely giving yourself time to think through tough situations at work will help you create some positive opportunities for growth. You can demonstrate great understanding and sensitivity to the needs of others at this time and you are in a good position to lead or guide others to a positive outcome. Broadening your intellectual and spiritual horizons takes on a high priority. You are intent on seeing the big picture and getting to the point. You can bring this about through travel and further education. Being in touch with ideas and people on a grand scale keeps your mind busy. This is a good money day; in fact, beginning now through this next Sunday, every day is a good money day! You use your common sense and help influence others.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Your career will get a boost and many doors of opportunity will open-there are lots of choices. Seemingly, all of a sudden-everything is going your direction. Now is when the energies to succeed are most active; moving forward with your goals is a good thing and possible and you should take advantage of every moment. Plan an excursion with your loved ones soon, something that would create uninterrupted time together, such as time working together in camping or bicycling, touring or visiting a tourist attraction. This time presents the opportunity to talk and get to know each other's dreams and hopes. This evening is a good time to face unfinished personal business, calls you need to make, letters you need to write, etc.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Secondary jobs are as much a part of your life as a regular job routine. Now that the holiday job opportunities are over, you may be looking for another type of second job. Setting up a small business in your home may take priority. Taking chances with your creativeness can bring big rewards your way. You could be lecturing or writing-you will find that your ideas are appreciated to understand. Young people play a big part in this afternoon's agenda. You are excited and admired for your thoughtful ways. New ways to communicate will bring a lift to your mental energies. Listen to the advice that a partner or loved one gives to you this evening. There may be some small adjustment to make that will help you work out some ongoing problem now.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

If you work for a large company, you may want to find ways in which to influence the superiors to put in an exercise room in the building for the employees. You will be thinking along improvements in your health as well as some stress-relief techniques for all. This is a good workday with lots of interaction and success at solving any problems that should arise. Writing down your thoughts is the best way to get a good focus. You can plan and express clear thoughts after a review of your notes. After some research, you will find answers that will help you complete a task that has been hanging undone for some time.



Aquarius (January 20-February 18)

This morning is good for practical ideas and planning about your work or vocation; a meeting with your superiors might be beneficial. You could get all involved in some problem-solving issue later today, but it seems to end as quickly as it begins. You receive recognition or special attention regarding your particular skills and abilities. You are looking great in the workplace as well as with your peers. You will find that you have enough motivation for whatever you set out to accomplish today-the desire to achieve success sets you apart from others. Your physical vitality is strong. This afternoon you may decide on some personal changes, such as a new hairstyle or some fun fad item. Enjoy tonight.

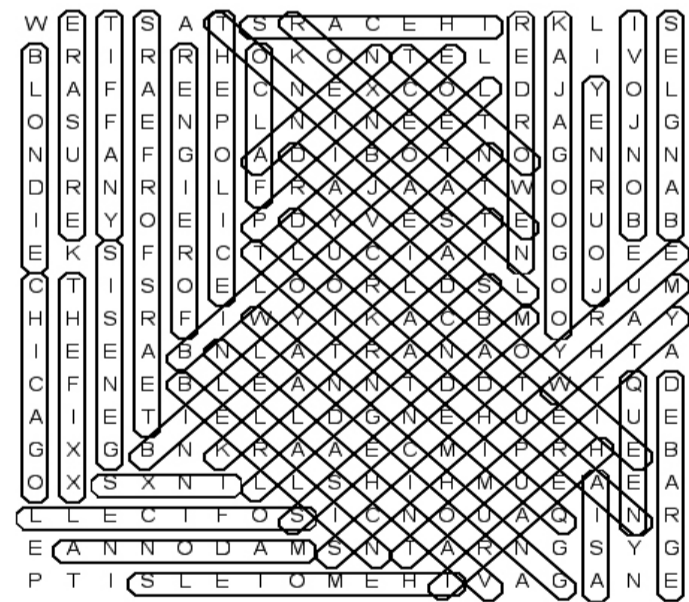


Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Business partnerships need your concentration now. There are conferences, reviews, encouraging news and plans to be constructed. Plans could be written out each day and reviewed the next morning. Long-range and long-distance matters will be in focus soon so any plans along these lines can be coordinated soon. Social get-togethers can wait awhile so your concentration should be either on work or home; now is the time to do a bit of work. Away from work, your relationships are important-other matters will grab your attention later. Create a comfortable area to converse and chat with those you love. Read, see a movie, update your paperwork or clean the refrigerator-and all those things that you decided not to handle last year.

Yesterday's Solution

80's Radio Hitmakers



ASIA
BANGLES
BERLIN
BILLY JOEL
BILLY OCEAN
BLONDIE
BON JOVI
CHICAGO
DAVID BOWIE
DEBARGE
DURAN DURAN
ERASURE
EURHYTHMICS
FALCO
FOREIGNER
GENESIS
HEART
INKS
JOURNEY
KJAGOGOGOO
MADNESS
MADONNA
NENA
NEW ORDER
PRINCE
QUEEN
QUIET RIOT
ROXETTE
SCANDAL
SOFT CELL
TALK TALK
TEARS FOR FEARS
THE CARS
THE FIXX
THE MOTELS
THE POLICE
TIFFANY
TONI PETTY
TONI BASIL
TOTO
VAN HALEN
WANG CHUNG
WHAM!

The hidden song title is: WALK LIKE AN EGYPTIAN

Daily SuDoku

6								
			2	8	5			
	9	7			4			
	3			5	2	9		
2	7						5	4
		5	3	1			2	
		5				1	7	
		7	4	8				
								9

hard

Yesterday's Solution

6	5	8	4	1	7	2	3	9
2	3	7	8	5	9	6	4	1
1	9	4	3	6	2	7	8	5
7	4	5	9	2	3	8	1	6
3	6	1	5	8	4	9	2	7
9	8	2	1	7	6	3	5	4
5	2	9	6	4	8	1	7	3
4	7	3	2	9	1	5	6	8
8	1	6	7	3	5	4	9	2

medium

The Roaccutane effect!

Your skin says so much about a person, it reflects your state of mind, health and diet. If you eat clean and work out you get rid of toxins in your body, drinking loads of water also flushes out those toxins leaving you with a radiant glow. Those are just some factors that can make your skin look and feel better, however, lately I've been going through a lot with my

skin. About three years ago I used to take Roaccutane to clear up my skin due to extreme tanning and sun exposure. It worked wonders, and left my skin looking and feeling better than ever. Recently, I've been applying more makeup and having many makeup artists apply makeup on me as well as being on many photoshoots, and along the way my skin started to break out and I have these small annoying bumps appearing under my skin that aren't irritated or red just small bumps, and having been gone through this skin process before it just upsets me to see my skin going through such changes again, and what's worse is that I'm the one to blame.

We forget that our skin is the largest organ that we have, and we always aim to achieve that flawless skin look by layering make up, but we never put that much effort to actually have flawless and healthy skin using no products at all, which is sad. I'm not one to talk because I basically do what I'm asking you guys not to do! Only because I went through the process of

harming my skin then being on medication to fix it, it's horrible and selfish to do that to myself.

So, many girls and guys ask me on my Snapchat and Instagram about Roaccutane and how it's like to be on it. It's actually not as bad as you think it is! I hear all these horror stories about girls losing it and being suicidal when on Roaccutane, which I think is a bit drastic. I understand that it might cause people to become moody, as dehydration causes headaches and frustration, because that's what this medication does. Roaccutane dries up your skin to dry up all the oil that might cause the break out, which leaves you with dry skin. One of the worst things that I had to go through with Roaccutane, which is happening right now, is having to deal with very dry and flaky lips! No lip balm or lipgloss will ever save you from this. Personally, that's the worst thing I've experienced, and probably having to drink loads of water which never seems to be enough.

Monthly blood test

Another common thing that people worry about is the break out that takes place during the course of medication, which is very normal. Many wonder why this happens since this medication is for clearing up your skin, but during the medication all the existing breakouts will actually increase then eventually dry up and

clear your skin. For example, the last time I took Roaccutane my intake was 40mg for four months, and this time around its 10mg for three months, and this time around I've experienced more breakouts than the last time, given the fact that the dosage was higher the first time and that's completely normal!

Taking a monthly blood test is also another thing you should consider before going on Roaccutane, because it usually starts to effect your liver when taking high dosages and not much water intake. My doctor always makes me draw blood before continuing the next month.

Regardless of all the controversial things you hear about Roaccutane one thing is for sure, that it definitely clears up your skin, I think all the issues we hear about are the results of people not taking care of themselves during the course of medication, which means no tanning, if you're planning to get pregnant don't go on the medication, even six months after stopping the course, you must drink loads of water as well as check with your doctor regularly.

If you're thinking of clearing up your skin, you should also take care of your body while you're feeding it any sort of medication, not only Roaccutane, it just comes with the package.



Prince invites 'Purple Rain' rival to famed studio

Morris Day played Prince's arch-rival in "Purple Rain" but three decades later, the Purple One is inviting his film nemesis to perform at his home studio. Prince announced a concert at his Paisley Park studio complex outside Minneapolis on Friday night with Morris Day and The Time as the main attraction. The show, revealed via social media on Tuesday, is not advertised as featuring Prince but marks a rare appearance by Day on the star's home turf after years of apparent distance.

As a teenager before his rise to stardom, Prince played with Day in clubs in Minneapolis. Day starred in the 1984 cult classic movie "Purple Rain" as a flamboyant artist who tries to kick "The Kid"-Prince-off the billing at the First Avenue club. The real-life

relationship between the two remains a subject of conjecture, but Day and Prince have done little together since the 1990 film "Graffiti Bridge," the sequel to "Purple Rain." Prince, 57, has increasingly been opening the doors to Paisley Park, his state-of-the-art studio and vault for master recordings that holds a mythical status for fans who enter.

Last week alone Prince put on a concert at Paisley Park in which he sang and performed on unaccompanied piano-a first in his career-and on another night hit the turntables as DJ for a dance party. Prince has described the Paisley Park events-where guests have their names at the door with no physical tickets-as a way to avoid price-gouging scalpers, an issue that contributed to his cancellation of a recent planned tour of Europe. —AFP



In an Oct 24, 2008 file photo, actor Abe Vigoda attends the Friars Club Roast of "Today Show" host Matt Lauer in New York. —AP

Abe Vigoda, 'Godfather' star, dies at 94

Abe Vigoda, the sad-faced star of Francis Ford Coppola's classic film "The Godfather," died Tuesday at 94, his manager told AFP. The actor died at the home of his daughter, Carol Vigoda Fuchs, in New Jersey. "She went to get him something to drink and when she came back he was gone," said manager Sid Craig, who represented him for decades. Vigoda apparently died of old age. "He didn't seem particularly sick or tired. I don't think Abe was ever sick," Craig added.

Vigoda was born in New York City to Russian Jewish immigrant parents. His father was a tailor. The actor cut his teeth on Broadway. But arguably his greatest on-screen impact came when Vigoda played sunken-eyed mafioso Sal Tessaio in "The Godfather." He was also famous for playing detective Phil Fish on television's "Barney Miller." The character was so popular it was spun off into its own series, "Fish." In his later years, the twice-married Vigoda was mistakenly reported to have died on several occasions, becoming a running social media joke. —AP

Def Leppard to debut new music video in 'Guitar Hero' game

Def Leppard is pouring some video into "Guitar Hero." The rock band will be the first artist ever to debut a new music video through the long-running video game series. The music video for "Dangerous" from the band's recently released self-titled album premiered yesterday on "Guitar Hero Live," the latest edition of the Activision rhythm game franchise. "It seems like everything has been done, and MTV doesn't really exist anymore, so it's cool there's another medium to represent the song now," said Def Leppard guitarist Phil Collen in an interview.

"Guitar Hero Live," the first new entry in the series in 5 years, introduced live actors, a new guitar-shaped controller and the online music video network "GHTV," which allows players to strum along to tunes as music videos or live performances are streamed in the background.

"GHTV" currently includes more than 300 songs. "I think music videos became painful for a while," said Collen, who's been with the veteran British rock band since 1982. "You had to do them. They cost so much money. It was very corporate. This is cool because it goes back to being artistic."

"GHTV" will also add music videos for Def Leppard hits "Let's Go" and "Rock of Ages." Other videos being added to the service this week include The Strokes' "You Only Live Once" and Miles Kane's "Don't Forget Who You Are." Def Leppard, also known for such songs as "Pour Some Sugar on Me" and "Photograph," is currently on tour in the US. The band recently postponed performances after singer Joe Elliott lost his voice. "We have our fingers crossed," said Collen of a quick recovery for Elliott. "Hopefully, he'll be OK for our Friday show. This is the first time this has happened in about 30 years." —AP



This image provided by Activision Publishing Inc. shows Def Leppard performing "Dangerous," in a scene from the video game, "Guitar Hero Live." —AP

Cultural journey: Islam in China

The introduction of spreading of Islam in Chinese history

The exchange between China and Arabs and other Muslim nations has a long history, which began before the rise of Islam. In Syria and other Arab countries, some unearthed Chinese silk ribbons which were embroidered with Chinese characters, have been found and verify that trade between China and those Semitic groups began early in the history.

With an extensive exchange between China and other nations especially in the peak of Tang (618-907) and Song Dynasties (960-1279), Islam was finally introduced into the Chinese territory. The new type of culture contained two features. First, there are theological doctrines such as the theory of the Unity of God (Tawhid), chain of prophecy and the Day of Judgment and the five pillars. Second, there are religious rituals such as the daily prayers and societal practices that included the prohibition of consumption of certain types of food.

Strong homogeneity

Because of the effective policy of the equal importance of the three religions that had been pursued by the first Emperor of the Tang, Li Shimin, Taoism had become popular, Buddhism had flourished and Confucianism had thrived. The tripartite balance of the three religions impelled Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism to assimilate from each other forming an open-minded cultural mentality. In light of the type of alliance in these triads, Islam faced two different types of responses. On the one hand, strong homogeneity of the Chinese native culture and its

integration of the three religions (Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism) perceived Islam as an alien religion that posed a potential threat. On the other hand, Islam was regarded merely as the folklore and folk customs of the Arab nations due to the following factors: First, Islam was adopted only by a local minority; second, Muslim clergy was not engaged either in proselytizing nor dissemination of the Quraan among the non-Muslims in China.

During the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368), Islam was the most spread all over China as there was an increase in the number of Muslims from Arab and Central Asia especially the Persian Sufi coming to the east with the returning troops of Mongolia. These Muslims included not only businessmen but also craftsmen, religious professionals, aristocrats and military service men that even had settled down and many would become farmers bringing the wasteland under cultivation later on. This fundamental development resulted in the formation of the Muslim society in China. The social status of them was a little bit inferior to the Mongolians but superior to those Hans and the Southerners. It is only in the Yuan Dynasty that the professional religious personnel of the Chinese Muslim came into existence. Those professional religious personnel consisted of some religious scholars, religious executors, and Sufi friars alike. Those professional religious personnel, nevertheless, had never been trained in China, but originally on its original settlement—Arab and the Central Asia especially the Persian Sufi.

'Foreign import'

When Zhu Yuanzhang established the Ming Dynasty (1368-1636), due to both the perspectives of the elite as well as public opinion, the political atmosphere became unfavorable to the development of Chinese Islam and the Muslim society. As a result, the Muslim community in China became isolated in China and alienated from the Islamic world. In spite of its obvious negative results, there was a favorable outcome of this alienation as Muslims in China attempted to assimilate ideas such as the Confucianism and other schools of Chinese traditional philosophy that were well received in the mainstream of the Chinese culture.

Their image changed from a "foreign import" type of society to one of the minorities that harmonized with the major texture of Chinese society. An example of this adaptation was in Muslim's adoption of Chinese surnames during the Ming Dynasty due to both political coercion as well as the natural result of cultural blending. No matter its population of Chinese Muslim and knowledge of Islam, no matter its spread and development, the Chinese Muslims of the Yuan Dynasty had laid a concrete foundation for the further studies of the Islamic culture in the Ming and Qing Dynasties (1636-1911). With emerging Chinese Muslim Madrasa's education, handwritten copying Quraan was a required assignment for religious students, and numerous copying professionals were coming forth. Thus handwritten copies of Quraan in China were regarded not only as sacred texts but also as art works which were presented once to Egyptian King by a Chinese Imam in late Qing Dynasty.



In this Jan 21, 2016 file photo, Robert Redford, founder and president of the Sundance Institute speaks at the premiere of "Norman Lear: Just Another Version of You" during the 2016 Sundance Film Festival in Park City, Utah. —AP

S Korea unveils K-pop band with infinite members

The company that pioneered South Korea's all-conquering K-pop industry unveiled its new boy-band concept yesterday—a group with limitless members, singing in multiple languages and based in cities from Asia to Latin America. SM Entertainment, which handles some of the biggest names in K-pop, including Super Junior and Girls' Generation, said the new band represented the final incarnation of the "Korean wave" that began with the export of Korean TV dramas and pop music in the late 1990s.

"This is the true localization of K-pop," SM Entertainment founder Lee Soo-Man said at a launch in Seoul. The group, or rather collection of sub-groups, will go under the umbrella title of NCT, which stands for Neo Culture Technology—a name that some fans quickly took to ridiculing on social networks. "Sounds like a tech company," tweeted one K-pop aficionado, while another said NCT was an acronym better suited for a national examination. Lee said the group already had 40 members, of

which a handful would form an initial unit that will start performing in Seoul and Japan in the next few months.

"New members will be freely recruited with no limits on the number," Lee said. Other NCT incarnations will later be unveiled in major Chinese cities, including Beijing and Shanghai in the second half of the year, followed by "units" in Southeast Asia and Latin America. As well as singing the same songs in different languages, they will produce content especially tailored for their particular markets. "This is the last stage of the Korean wave," Lee declared, saying the idea went beyond "simply exporting K-pop products" to creating joint ventures with local companies. Some industry observers noted that the NCT concept bore striking similarities to the hugely popular Japanese girl band AKB48 that has been around for more than 10 years. Originally made up of 48 members, but now numbering more than 130, AKB48 is split into several teams who can perform simultaneously in several places. —AFP



Models present creations for Chanel during the 2016 spring/summer Haute Couture collection. — AP/AFP photos



US actress Gwyneth Paltrow poses for photographers before Chanel's Spring-Summer 2016 Haute Couture fashion collection in Paris.

Gwyneth Paltrow hits Chanel's eco-couture show in Paris

A relaxed Gwyneth Paltrow looked very much the part as she arrived at Chanel's "atmosphere of calm" eco-show inside Paris' Grand Palais. Here are the highlights of Tuesday's spring-summer 2016 celebrity-filled couture collections.

The celebrity mood garden
A huge "mood" garden decor - replete with a relaxation pond, forest and grass - greeted the 43-year-old Oscar-winner Paltrow, who posed for cameras in a check Chanel skirt suit with high collar near some steps leading up to a minimalist wooden hut. It was so realistic there was even a small swarm of flies buzzing around on the verdant lawn - and with it Lagerfeld may possibly have created the world's first couture ecosystem. Paltrow, who curates healthy lifestyle publication "Goop," looked around in awe, clearly approving of the Chanel designer's newfound green musing. Other celebrity attendees included actresses Monica Bellucci and Diane Kruger.



Paris Fashion Week

Chanel gets curvy for spring
It was delicate couture magic with a hint of reality. Chanel's sports-infused display saw sparkling smooth oval shoulders and curved collars define the silhouette on fastidiously embroidered gowns and skirt suits. This curved aesthetic - apparent also in oversize bulbous chignons, curved cork platforms and unusual double-eye makeup - was inspired by the 1932 cubist sculpture "Head of a Woman" by Pablo Picasso. But this was at times a very contemporary collection - with assorted iPhone pockets hanging loosely from the models' waists.

The eveningwear was somewhat more enchanted - with strapless dresses or pants with a train complemented by painted capes with rhinestones, wide-cut boleros or embroidered jackets. There were fairy-like touches - like a pale pink silk gown, with Tinkerbell-like zigzags cut into a tiered skirt and large diaphanous cuffs. A glimmering cape in lame and chiffon on model-of-the-minute Gigi Hadid also added to the magical vibe.

Ecological couture (kind of)
Couture is not the industry most readily associated with ecology. But if it's up to Lagerfeld, whose latest passion is the garden, things may well be about to change. Aside from the show decor, all the jewelry and embroideries in the 75 Chanel looks were made from wood shavings, paper and straw. They were, of course, given a Chanel-style makeover: fastidiously painted, treated and molded by the atelier into exquisite shapes and paillettes that resembled white feathers and flower petals. "Ecology is something that's never been used in high luxury before," explained the couturier - who then had trouble with the traditional concept of conservation. "Bees are an endangered species, so I took a load of them and stuck them on the dresses," he quipped, referring to what one press spokesman quickly clarified as being merely bee-style embroideries. Lagerfeld also didn't miss the opportunity to distance himself from the wider eco-fight: most eco-fighters, he said, "don't take care of their appearance."

Models present creations for Giorgio Armani Prive during 2016 spring/summer Haute Couture collection.



Models present creations for Stephane Rolland.

Paris Fashion Week



Armani prive's watery show
Armani's timeless couture show was as if washed with water - attended by stars Iggy Azalea, Charlotte Rampling and Juliette Binoche. Blue,



dered jumpsuit conjured the silhouette and scaly texture of a mermaid. The 59-piece collection showcased looks of pure luxury in shimmering pale silks, chiffon, tulle and satin with emphasis on sweeping ball gowns, 1930s short or A-line minis. But at times, the aesthetic came across as a tad repetitive.

Bouchra Jarrar's opposites
It was the masculine versus the feminine for lauded designer Bouchra Jarrar. She presented a short but sweet collection Tuesday afternoon that featured a recurring silhouette that unfurled at the chest organically. Multiple-layered flying jackets with billowing lapels came on myriad looks of which the masculine edge was softened with panels of luxuriant fur. Military jackets and military bell-bottom pants - similarly - were matched with delicate materials, such as an ivory lace see-through top where the model's nipples were visible. The best looks were the simplest. A diaphanous draped silk gown was twinned with "don't mess with me" military stomper boots. It was, needless to say, very sexy.

Stephane Rolland's opera star
It was the most archetypical "couture" show yet from Parisian designer purist Stephane Rolland. Models held numbered cards - as they did in the era of the late Christian Dior - in uber-feminine designs that aimed to evoke "a star of the Garnier Opera House" in Paris. Huge pleated skirts and ruffles exploded from the waist in a series of dramatic, sculptural silk ball gowns. Elsewhere, there were welcome traces of the somewhat space-age style that has marked Rolland's previous seasons, such as a white sheath dress with silicon feathers on a stole sliding down a shoulder, caressing a sensual horizontal slip at the thigh. — AP



Models present creations for Giorgio Armani Prive during 2016 spring/summer Haute Couture collection.



purples and turquoises graced the long line of narrowly-changing silhouettes. Wave-like ruffles graced dark pants, a blouse resembled a shellfish, and a pale purple embroi-



Models wear creations for Elie Saab's Spring-Summer 2016 Haute Couture collection presented yesterday in Paris.



Designer Elie Saab waves after the presentation of his Spring-Summer 2016 Haute Couture collection presented yesterday.





Models wear
creations for Elie
Saab's
Spring-Summer
2016 Haute
Couture collection
presented
yesterday in Paris.

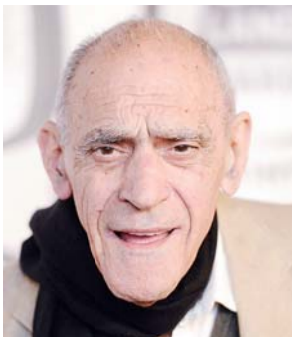
Paris

Fashion Week



Abe Vigoda,
'Godfather' star,
dies at 94

35



The Viking longboat burns during the annual Up Helly Aa festival in Lerwick, Shetland Islands, on January 26, 2016. Up Helly Aa celebrates the influence of the Scandinavian Vikings in the Shetland Islands and culminates with up to 1,000 'guizers' (men in costume) throwing flaming torches into their Viking longboat and setting it alight later in the evening (Inset) The Galley is burned by Guizer Jarl Mark Evans (standing on boat, right) and members of the Jarl Squad, during the Up Helly Aa Viking festival. —AFP

With relish, Kabul's middle class embraces the food truck trend

When the first Lazeez food truck arrived in Kabul many mistook it for a rickshaw and wanted to hail a ride-the yellow chassis and three wheels so reminiscent of taxis popular in South Asia. But it took little time for the city's emerging middle class to embrace the novelty of canteens-on-wheels serving Western fast foods around town. Parked on one of the capital's busiest roads, Obaidullah's truck-emblazoned with a giant hot dog, and the Lazeez logo-is unmistakable. He serves a handful of customers, who are seemingly undeterred by the roadside pollution, and bullish about the sourcing and sanitation of the meat.

"Us Afghans are immune to all sorts of illnesses," jokes Mohammed-an oral hygiene student buying a quick burger. Food hygiene is terri-

ble in Afghanistan, with 60 children out of 1,000 dying from diarrhea before the age of five, according to the French NGO Acted. So for Naveed Noori, who founded Lazeez with his cousin Abdullah Karim, finding meat without breaking the cold chain-the series of transportation and storage options that maintain a given temperature-is a challenge.

Naveed buys his hot dogs frozen from Karachi, the Pakistani port megacity located 1,400 kilometers from Kabul. "We have to pay attention to the conditions of the journey to be sure everything is going well, otherwise our cargo rots," says the 26-year old entrepreneur. For now, Naveed has found a successful route: Mohammed says his burger tastes just fine, as does the hot dog he also purchased, even if the fare is a long way from the tempting morsels

available from food trucks in Paris or New York.

\$150 a day

It has been a year and a half since the six food trucks emblazoned with the Lazeez logo-meaning "delicious" in Dari, one of Afghanistan's two national languages-began crisscrossing the streets of Kabul. Today Naveed has 15 employees and business is going well-for example, Obaidullah says the truck he manages serves between 30 and 60 customers a day. After expenses and paying his employees, Naveed pockets \$150 a day, a fortune in Afghanistan where 72 percent of households earn less than \$150 a month and social inequalities are enormous.

His success is even more impressive given that spiced dishes of lamb,

mutton and rice still enjoy pride of place in Afghan cuisine, rather than the American fast food which has become so entrenched elsewhere. "Unfortunately no food truck offers Afghan dishes," laments Nassir, a student who is getting ready to chow down on a chicken sandwich from Manoto, a food truck also doing the rounds in Kabul like Lazeez.

"Sure I'd prefer rice and Afghan dishes but they don't have them," says Saifuddin, a cleaner. "I work for the council so I get a special price-I pay 50 afghanis (less than a dollar) for my hotdog instead of 100," he explains. "Even so, that's expensive because I earn 6,000 afghanis (\$87) a month and I've got 12 mouths to feed," he says wearily.

Burgers and bribes

The popularity of food trucks in

Kabul owes less to their culinary offerings than the slow lifestyle changes of an emerging middle class. The country's middle classes speak English and work in foreign NGOs, government ministries or Western companies based in Afghanistan. They stand apart from the vast majority of the population, in which just 32 percent of adults can read and write, according to a 2011 UNESCO figure. Congregating in Kabul, this worldier group has a need for speed. Take Idriss Atef, a telecommunications engineer who is paying a flying visit to a Lazeez food truck.

"It's the first time I've eaten from a food truck," he admits. But, echoing workers in London or New York, he adds: "I'm busy, I don't have time to go to a restaurant, sit down and order something." Naveed's

success is all the rarer in Afghanistan, far from being a haven for entrepreneurs despite all the promises from President Ashraf Ghani, himself a former economist with the World Bank.

Red tape, renewed violence, and endemic corruption have not helped to create a business-friendly environment in the country. In 2014 Transparency International ranked the country 172 out of 175 in its Corruption Perceptions Index. Naveed knows something about corruption and can always count on the police to stop him from selling his hot dogs. "They don't know that it's only a food truck, nor do they know where we're allowed park," he explains. So, for a quieter life, he resorts to bakshish-a bribe "in the form of money or burgers". —AFP



An Afghan customer buys a burger from a Lazeez food truck in Kabul. —AFP photos



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